

PRAIRIE REGION NEWSLETTER

February 2014

Co-liaisons, Deb and Sheila, are just back from the annual meeting of Grandmother Regional Liaisons (GRLs) at the Stephen Lewis Foundation office in Toronto. We had a wonderful, informative (and fun) two-and-a-half days of learning and networking. In this newsletter, we will share some of the highlights that will help you and your groups with our collective and very important work.

Let's start with a question: Do you know how much the Grandmothers Campaign has raised since its inception in March 2006? Answer: an extraordinary \$19+ million! And when the numbers are in from the final push before the December 31st deadline, this number may well be closer to \$20M.



As the Grandmothers Regional Liaison Team, we discussed how to mark 10 years of the Grandmothers Campaign – in 2016. With the grannies and the projects at the heart of everything we do, we will ask them how they would like to mark the occasion. Watch for more information on this exciting milestone in the months to come.

Always so special is hearing from members of the **Programme Team**. These remarkable women outlined the work of the community-based projects in several different areas:

- *land grabbing* – the projects assist the grandmothers with obtaining documents for themselves and the children, and help to educate chiefs and the community
- *access to health care* – national healthcare costs for beneficiaries are often prohibitive, yet there is an overall increase in people accessing healthcare
- *rural issues* – isolation, access to healthcare, nutrition, resources
- *emotional health* – trauma, depression, alcoholism
- *diversity in age* – pensions don't take effect until age 60, and that is too late for the younger grandmothers raising orphans
- *grandmother-led initiatives* – grandmothers are activists and advocates. They are forming health clubs and leading initiatives such as a pink ribbon/red ribbon campaign. A community in Zambia has formed a women's club for the purpose of expanding income generating activities – fish ponds, cattle ranching, grinding mill for their own maize. And other grandmothers are offering support through therapeutic activities like yoga and exercise programs.
- *emerging and evolving issues* – post-tribunal activity, some grandmothers went back and got involved on boards
- *housing* – assisting grandmothers to situate themselves with a place in the community

The **External Relations** team shared an exciting bit of information – the SLF is working with a new company to create the on-line fundraising software. In addition, a new Personal Event Module will be available shortly – it will be perfect for Scrabble.

A visit from the **Finance Team** came with a reminder for groups to send in their membership lists (if you haven't done so already this year.) This is the best way to ensure your members don't receive direct mail solicitations or phone calls. A great information and reference tool is the Treasurer's Kit. If your group doesn't have a copy, please contact the Liaison for your province. Did you know that you can request the amount that your group has raised for the SLF? This is a great motivator for our collective work in support of the G2G campaign.

'Getting the Word Out' was a timely presentation on social media. We learned how our groups can use Facebook and Twitter to quickly and effectively reach hundreds of people. A toolkit is being developed to support us becoming more comfortable with social media as an outreach tool. Presented by the Manager of **Campaigns and Community Outreach**, this enlightening session helped to alleviate some of the concerns around the use of social media, and encouraged a few of us to get on Twitter. Are you on Facebook? Have you "liked" the SLF page? Have your members "liked" the G2G page?

Let's Soldier On
These children need us.
They are our future.
~ Chiedza, Zimbabwe

In addition to these staff teams, we heard from a group of experienced grandmother volunteers who are working on the **Speakers' Bureau Kit**. Nearing completion, this document will include three sections – what every grandmother should know; what everyone making presentations should know and should include in those presentations; and a 'train the trainer' section. Please watch for this in the near future; likely the Spring of this year!

Every year, **Ilana** joins us for a presentation or a Q & A. Like last year, we followed the Q & A format. The basic themes were:

- *Funding* –
 - there was a pull-back in funding last year due to the recession and cutting back on support for AIDS and women's issues globally. The contributions of some agencies were flat-lined, which meant the projects had to make do with less. Some Foundations have even been steadily shutting down their Africa projects over the last few years.
- *Tribunal*
 - *Why was it held in Canada* – to hold the Tribunal in Africa would have meant trying to determine which country to ask, and that is far too political. Canada is a neutral place, and by virtue of our presence on the world stage, the SLF was able to make this into an international event which was the hope of the grandmothers.
 - *Purpose of the Tribunal*: in part, to deepen the understanding of Canadian Grandmothers and the public. Much has changed since 2006 – it is not the same struggle it was then. Prior to that, the African grandmothers were seen as poor and pathetic. Within a few years, they were seen as courageous and resilient, and now they are considered experts in AIDS, on human rights, and so much more. As a people's tribunal, the event gave **voice** to the context of the human rights issues on the Continent – projects can now use the 'call to action' – the "international" community is watching – more useful as a tool to their advocacy.

- *Follow-up* – the African grandmothers are starting to talk about human rights. They are serving on municipal boards, state government boards. There is systemic change – survival has moved to activism around land rights and pensions, to name just two. The hope is to raise funds for African grandmothers for their own advocacy opportunities – by women; for women - at the grassroots for national level gatherings for networking around local, regional, national level initiatives. In each country there are different obstacles in every place; what are the impediments to progress on human rights? What are the laws? What are the policies that we need to pay attention to?

Importing **African Crafts** for resale to the Canadian marketplace has been talked about at the SLF for some time now. Building on the success of the Kazuri jewellery, a new pilot project is being explored with a Grandmother business woman in collaboration with the SLF, to find out whether this can happen in a sensitive manner, without being too onerous from a cost and logistical perspective. We'll provide more information as it becomes available.

And with all that, and more, we left Toronto feeling energized and ready to help you grow the Campaign.

What's Happening within the Prairie Region?

Africa Trip. There will be 22 grandmothers going at the end of this month, along with some SLF staff, to visit community-based projects in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Africa. Three members of the Prairie Region – Deb Radi and Nina Logan from Winnipeg, and Sheila Fahlman from Regina – will be part of the Canadian grandmothers delegation. We are hoping to have lots of stories and photos to share with you upon our return. We look forward to sharing our experiences with your local groups.

G4G Saskatoon's 9th Annual Fundraising Dinner. Friday, March 7th 2014 at the Western Development Museum, Saskatoon. The speaker is Dr. Gretchen Roedde (gretchenroedde.com). Tickets are available from Jenifer 306-242-4989 and Bonnie 306-374-2689, as well as McNally Robinson Booksellers, for \$40 each. Deadline for tickets is February 28th; get yours early, we sold out last year!

Grands 'N' More Winnipeg's 3rd Annual Scrabble for Africa. Saturday, May 3rd, 2014 from 1 to 4 p.m. at St. Andrews Anglican Church, 2700 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg. Contact Nina Logan at ninalogan@shaw.ca for more information.

G4G Regina's 8th Annual Dinner and Silent Auction. Friday, May 9th, 2014 at Queensbury Convention Centre, Regina. Tickets \$65 per person. More information will be available later – please check the website www.grandmothers4grandmothersregina.com.

Prairie Region Gathering. You are invited to attend the Prairie Region Gathering to be held in Saskatoon on Friday, September 26 (evening), and Saturday, September 27th until 4:00 p.m. at St. Paul's United Church (454 Egbert Avenue). Please mark these dates on your calendar and plan to join us for two days of sharing and fun. The committee is currently finalizing details for this event and full details will be forwarded in the near future. When considering accommodations we will be able to provide you with the names of hotels that might suit your needs and we are asking our membership if

they are willing to billet participants. If you wish to set up a display, or to have items for sale in our market place, please let us know on the registration form. More information will come out later; in the meantime, if you have questions, please email the planners at prairiegathering2014@gmail.com. There is also discussion underway to rent a bus that would start in Winnipeg and gather grandmothers on our way to Saskatoon. Please contact Deb Radi dradi@mymts.net if you are interested in exploring this opportunity further.

Please let us know of any spring events your group is holding, and we'll post it here. The next newsletter will be prepared after Deb and Sheila get back from Africa – and recover from jetlag!

If you would like more information on any of this material, please let us know. We're also here to support you and your groups, so please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

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