

LENNOXVILLE AND DISTRICT WOMEN'S CENTRE: THE VOICE OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING WOMEN IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

Cheryl Gosselin
Lennoxville, Quebec

The Lennoxville and District Women's Centre (LDWC) fonds contains a rich and varied collection of source material detailing the activities of the Centre since its beginnings in 1981. The documents were organized by the LDWC's official historian Pat Boychuck and then donated to the Eastern Townships Research Centre Archives in 2002. While the fonds has yet to be processed, its contents provide an excellent research tool for those wanting to study the evolution, nature and functions of the LDWC – how its members mobilize for social change and the type of community outreach activities organized by Anglophone women of the Townships area.

Origins of the LDWC

The idea for a women's centre in Lennoxville came from a small group of individuals who wanted to establish "a permanent location where [English-speaking] women could meet on a regular basis to talk, share ideas and hold activities."¹ Committed to making this a reality, the group designed and distributed almost 3000 questionnaires to determine if others shared their vision of a women-sponsored, community-oriented service for women only. Inspired by the results of their survey, the founding group held its first official meeting in April 1981 with 21 women wanting to serve on its board of directors. A charter was granted by the provincial government in May of the same year. Between September 1981 and April 1982 a constitution along with a set of procedures and policies were written to reflect the Centre's goals and feminist direction. Structurally, the LDWC is a nonprofit, volunteer organization that is run on a collective basis. The collective decision-making process is guided by a Board of Directors which is elected by the membership at the annual general assembly. Each board member is responsible for a specific function and/or program such as activities, the news-

letter or the memberships. Paid office staff handle day-to-day operations, help out committees and organize volunteers. All members have a voice in matters that concern the orientation of the Centre. The following mission statement is designed to fulfill the goals of a multi-service women's centre:

[S]erving English speaking women throughout Region 05 ("Estrie"), we are a volunteer group dedicated to helping women develop their full potential. We encourage women to participate in their communities through education, political, and social activities. We accomplish this by offering a meeting place and resource centre for women, formal and informal educational opportunities, a liaison between English-speaking women and existing services, and an information and referral service.²

LENNOXVILLE AND DISTRICTS WOMEN'S CENTRE: CONSTITUTION

Article 1: Name

The name of this organization is "Centre des Femmes – Lennoxville et environs."

Article 2: Objectives

To provide a resource centre and meeting place for women of Lennoxville and the surrounding area.

To encourage women to participate fully in their community, through social, educational and political activities.

To provide formal and informal learning opportunities to women.

To provide an information and referral service to women.

To provide a liaison between English-speaking women and existing services for women in the area.

Article 3: Membership

Anyone may become a member on payment of the annual membership fee.

Membership runs from September 1 to August 31. The annual membership fee will be decided by the Board. Anyone joining after March 1 will pay one half of the annual fee. Each member receives a monthly newsletter, is entitled to vote at any general meetings, and is eligi-

ble to participate at a reduced rate in activities offered through the Women's Centre.

Article 4: Board of Directors

The Centre will be governed by a Board of Directors consisting of: Co-Ordinator, Assistant Co-Ordinator, Funding Officer, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Secretary, Information Officer, Publicity Officer, Membership Officer, Program Co-Ordinator, Telephone Co-Ordinator, Newsletter Editor, and three Members at large.

Article 5: Election of the Board

The term of office of members of the Board runs from June 1 to May 1. Only members in good standing may serve on the Board.

Election will take place by secret ballot (except in the case of election by acclamation) at an Annual General Meeting held by April 15. The date of this meeting will be determined by the Board and must be published in the February newsletter, along with a detailed description of each Board position open. Notice of the meeting will appear in the local newsletter (*The Record*) one week before it is to take place.

A Nomination Committee will be struck in February or early March. It will consist of two members of the Board and two persons drawn by the Board from the membership at large. The duties of the Nominations Committee will be: to accept nominations for Board positions; to actively solicit nominations for the posts for which no candidates have come forward; to submit names of nominees with their background information to the Editor of the newsletter in time for publication in the March newsletter.

Those wishing to nominate persons to run for Board positions must submit nominees' names and relevant background information to the Nominations Committee no later than one week before deadline for submissions to the March newsletter.

Ballots will be counted by two secretaries appointed by the Board.

Article 6: Board Vacancies

Should the Board receive written notice of resignation from a Board member, the position thus left vacant will be filled by appointment of the Board and ratified by the membership at the next Board meeting. (Voting privileges will be extended to all members present for this item.)

Any Board member who misses three Board meetings in a row without notifying the Co-Ordinator or Recording Secretary and supplying a valid reason will be assumed to have resigned, and the appropriate member of the Board will notify her of this assumption.

Article 7: Meetings

Board Meetings. The Board will meet once a month. A quorum for these meetings consists of 2/5 of Board members in good standing. The Co-Ordinator will ordinarily chair. All Centre members may attend, and their verbal contributions will be welcome. The Recording Secretary will take minutes.

At these meetings the Board will vote on minutes of the previous meeting; the Treasurer will present a financial statement, giving present balances in all accounts, as well as any other financial information deemed relevant; additional material to be presented will include changes in programming, comments, committee reports, and notices of upcoming meetings and events.

The Co-Ordinator may delay the vote on any matter for one month so that members have an opportunity to think over the issue.

A 2/3 majority will be necessary for an affirmative vote.

Annual General Meetings. There shall be one vote for each member. There shall be no voting by proxy.

Article 8: Notice of Meetings

Board and Annual General Meetings will be announced in the newsletter.

Article 9: By-Laws

The organization will be subject to By-laws adopted by the Board. By-laws will be amended by 2/3 majority of the Board. Notice of the proposed by-law change must appear in the newsletter one month before the meeting.

Article 10: Amendments

The constitution may be amended at a Board meeting by the affirmative vote of 2/3 of the Board members present. Notice of the proposed amendment must appear in the newsletter one month before the meeting.

Article 11: Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Centre will run from April 1 to March 31 inclusive. An accountant will audit our books each year; the Treasurer will prepare a financial statement to be presented at the Annual General Meeting in April.

Article 12: Committees

The decision to strike any committee will be taken at Board meetings. Any committee will consist of members in good standing and will include at least one Board member in addition to the Co-Ordinator, who is ex officio member of all committees. The Board will decide the extent of a committee's responsibility to the Board at the time the committee is struck.

The LDWC first constitution presented at the first Annual meeting 14 April 1982

LDWC Program

To carry out its objectives, the LDWC has developed and implemented a number of services, activities and events over the years. As the Centre grows and learns from its experiences, it remains flexible and always ready to rethink or adapt its strategies. One of the LDWC's first priorities was to establish an educational program. Workshops are designed to inform participants about a number of current and popular subjects. Topics range from how to budget household finances, life after a divorce, making a living will, basic car repair and maintenance, breast cancer awareness, GMOs in our food, learning better parenting skills as well as various creative arts workshops. More formal courses include office management, simple accounting techniques, French language instruction and computer training. Annual events are organized to promote community interest in the LDWC and its commitment to serving the needs of Anglophone women in the area. Events such as the Open House in September, the Holiday Hands Open House in December, the International Women's Day Supper on March 8 and Take Our Daughters to Work Day in late April reinforce the exigency of ensuring that women's equality rights remain a top priority on the public agenda of our governments.

Domestic violence and poverty experienced by women and their children are the two long-term, and growing, issues that the LDWC works to combat. The Centre makes a concerted effort to alert the



Source: ETRC, fonds Lennoxville and District Women's Centre Fonds, P131

public about the epidemic of violence against women in our homes and communities and the lasting repercussions experienced by the victims. The LDWC, working in tandem with the police, a local women's shelter and rape crisis centre, has mounted a sustained prevention and educational campaign directed at youth in schools, university students and members of the public at large. These programs are designed to make people aware of the problem, to

help the victims of violence and to end it. Intervention services are also provided by the LDWC in the form of compassionate listening sessions and a part-time, professional crisis counselor. Unfortunately, violence and poverty are often, though not always, experienced together. The Centre's staff works tirelessly to eradicate poverty by offering food bank services, operating a community kitchen and distributing second-hand clothes to needy families.

For English-speaking women living in rural areas of the Eastern Townships, the realities of violence, poverty and a lack of services are felt even more acutely because of their physical and cultural isolation. Recently, the LDWC launched an outreach program to bring its objectives to women in the outlying areas of the region. Women in the Stanstead, Coaticook, Sawyerville, Richmond and Bury areas now benefit from the Centre's information and referral services, activity programs as well as its anti-violence and anti-poverty initiatives. The LDWC plans to expand its outreach project to all areas of the Townships including Knowlton and Cowansville.

A Description of the Lennoxville and District Women's Centre Fonds

The LDWC fonds contains source material pertaining to the women's centre's objectives of helping women reach their full potential and achieve their equality rights. Detailed files on the LDWC's anti-violence³ and anti-poverty campaigns⁴, the enhancement of women's economic choices through expansion of educational opportunities⁵ and the promotion of women's physical and mental well-being⁶ are useful aids for the researcher. In addition, the

fonds includes files on the day-to-day operations of the Centre, its activities, annual events, funding sources, government contacts and liaisons with other community organizations.

The fonds also contains minute books, annual general meeting notes, by-laws and procedures, newsletters, correspondence, newspaper columns written by the LDWC and clippings related to women's issues, public relations materials, photos, information about membership in umbrella organizations like the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and *Le regroupement des centres de femmes du Québec*, financial statements, grant proposals submitted to various government organizations and many other documents. The collection and processing of the LDWC fonds is an ongoing project as the Centre's historian has agreed to continue compiling and depositing documents to the ETRC archives on a regular basis in the future. These fonds are a valuable tool to all researchers interested in the evolution of the LDWC and its membership as well as the historical and social context for the mobilization of English-speaking women of the Eastern Townships. The official history of the LDWC will be written, and, along with interviews conducted among past and present members, the fonds will prove to be an indispensable source for the necessary research.

NOTES

- 1 ETRC Archives, Fonds Lennoxville and District Women's Centre, Minutes for 6 February, 1981, p. 131
- 2 ETRC Archives, Fonds Lennoxville and District Women's Centre, By-laws, 1982, p. 131
- 3 Bad Dates: Interactive Theatre Workshop
- 4 Community Kitchen
- 5 Tools for Life Project
- 6 Breast Cancer Awareness

**THE LENNOXVILLE & DISTRICT
WOMEN'S CENTRE**

WOULD LIKE TO

WELCOME

you to Our

OPEN HOUSE

WHEN: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1990
7:30 P.M.

WHERE: 151A QUEEN ST.
LENNOXVILLE

ADMISSION IS FREE!

WE WILL BE SERVING

FINE DESSERTS

LENNOXVILLE & DISTRICT
WOMEN'S
CENTRE

151-A QUEEN ST.
P.O. BOX 102
LENNOXVILLE, QUE
J1M 1S7
(819) 564-6626

EVERYONE WELCOME!

COFFEE KLATCH



A coffee klatch is an exchange among women on issues of concern to women.

When: 10:00 A.M.

Wed. April 24: Living With a Difficult Partner
Wed. May 8: Obsession With Losing Weight
Wed. May 22: Empty Nest = New Life

Where:

Lennoxville & District Women's Centre
151 A Queen Street

No need to register.

A babysitter is available free, for children between 1 and 5. Just call one day ahead at 564-6626 to book your child's place.

For more information call: 564-6626





"Some Bread and Some Roses"
Women Fighting Against
Women's Poverty

International Women's Day Celebration

Tuesday, March 7, 1995

SUPPER: (For women only)
5:30pm

COST: \$2.00 + donation + canned goods

Reserve now, space is limited (564-6626)
(Free Babysitting Available)

St. Anthony's Church
104 Queen Street
Lennoxville

**Musical Performance by
Montreal Folk Singer
"Penny Lang"**

Men and Women Welcome

8:00pm PRICE: \$3.00

Bring your own wine

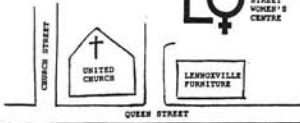


Lennoxville & District
WOMEN'S CENTRE



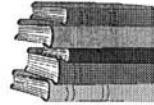
THE LENNOXVILLE AND DISTRICT WOMEN'S CENTRE

564-6626



**Our Centre has something of
interest for women of all ages!**

**Drop by and visit our library. Browse
through our ever-growing collection of
videos and books written by and for
women on a variety of interesting
subjects.**



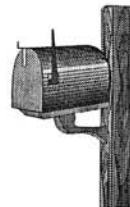
**Leaf through our many free and
informative pamphlets on issues
ranging from drugs and alcohol to
starting a small business to health
care.**

**Stop by for a cup of coffee or tea and stay to
chat with one of our friendly employees or
volunteers. Let us help you with a problem.
Take advantage of our referral service. We
can help you find a doctor, lawyer, support
group, apartment or whatever else you may
need.**



**Stay tuned for announcements regarding
workshops on a wide variety of topics such
as: C.P.R., Stress Management, Budgeting
on a Shoestring, Achieving Happiness,
Mother/Daughter Relationships, and many
more.**

**Become a member today and you
will receive our monthly
newsletter which is packed full of
information regarding community
events, women's issues, and our
many wonderful workshops.**



**THE LENNOXVILLE AND DISTRICT
WOMEN'S CENTRE HAS LOTS TO
OFFER YOU!**

Celebrate with us!

**International
Women's Day
Dinner**

**Friday, March 11
6:30 p.m.**

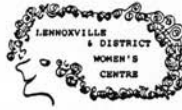
**At Lennoxville United Church Hall
6 Church St., Lennoxville**

**With special guests
THE RAGING GRANNIES**

**Space is limited so RESERVE NOW
564-6626**

 Sponsored by
Lennoxville & District Women's Centre
in co-operation with
WUSC/AI Refugee Student Committee



151-A QUEEN ST.
P.O. BOX 102
LENNOXVILLE, QUE
J1M 1S2
(819) 564-6626

WOMEN'S HEALTH ISSUES WORKSHOP

**HEART DISEASE OSTEOPOROSIS
MENOPAUSE CANCER**

FREE TO ALL INTERESTED WOMEN
ANIMATED BY: DOLLENA WARREN-GIGUERE
NURSE

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION FOR
MIDDLE-AGED WOMEN ON

NOVEMBER 28, 7:00 P.M.
at the
LENNOXVILLE & DISTRICT
WOMEN'S CENTRE

SPONSORED BY LENNOXVILLE & DISTRICT
WOMEN'S CENTRE

FOR REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION
CALL 564-6626



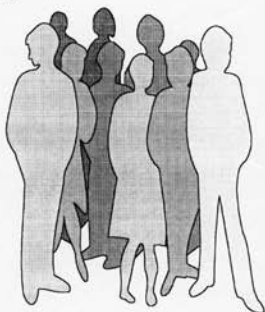
Suicide Prevention Workshop



Given by the Lennoxville & District
Women's Centre

*Suicide is a tragic event which
affects all of us*

*Come and learn
more about this
difficult topic*



When: Dec.3, 1996 7:00 - 9:30p.m.

Where: Lennoxville & District Women's Centre
 **151A Queen St. Lennoxville**

Please call to reserve your place at 564-6626

*The Lennoxville & District Women's
Centre Presents:*

Common Law Marriage and Divorce

**Know your rights! This
workshop is a MUST for any
woman living with someone,
married, or just thinking
of moving in with someone.**

When: Saturday, April 27, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

**Where: Lennoxville Women's Centre
151A Queen St.**

**If interested, please phone the
Centre at 564-6626**



The Lennoxville & District Women's Centre

Invites you to our

HOLIDAY HAND OPEN HOUSE



Monday, December 6, 4:00-7:00 p.m.

Drop off your
donations for

l'Escale, a shelter for
women and children
who are victims of
domestic violence.
Then join us for a
cup of eggnog and
some goodies



**Donations may include
deodorant, toothbrushes,
toothpaste, shampoo &
conditioners, razors, soap
or stuffed animals. Food
donations are also accepted.
No donation is too small.**

Everything helps.



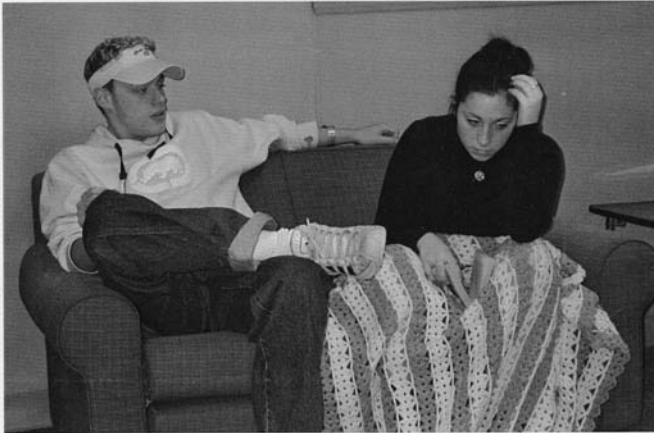
257 Queen St.





BAD DATES

Changing Attitudes through Theatre



Setting Up Your Own Educational Theatre Troupe



GREETINGS

August 1981

You are now reading the first newsletter, issued by the new "Centre des Femmes Lennoxville et Environs". We hope that you will find it interesting, informative and worthwhile. If you do, we then look forward to sending you our next editions, as well as receiving interesting comments and contributions from you.

THE WOMEN'S CENTRE'S FOUNDING MEETING was held on April 29, 1981 in the library of the Lennoxville Elementary School. There were 24 women present. At this meeting volunteers were obtained for the formation of a Charter Committee and a Location Committee. Both these are temporary committees needed to form the Centre. They will disband when their job is done. Volunteers were also found for executive positions as well as members at large on a Board of Directors for the Centre. We were very encouraged by the enthusiastic response. Thank you.

The First Board of Directors Meeting was held on Tuesday, May 12, 1981 in the library of the Lennoxville Elementary School. Eleven women attended this meeting. The different executive positions were clarified and now are as follows:

Co-ordinator	- Bette Napier
Assistant Co-Ordinator	- Melanie Bivar
Funding Officer	- Virginia Naeve, assisted by Louise Orr
Treasurer	- Pat Boychuck
Recording Secretary	- Rina Kampeas
Corresponding Secretary	- Pauline Keenan
Information Officer	- Geraldine Kirouac
Publicity Officer	- Melanie Cutting
Membership	- Marilyn and Maralie Durrell
Program Co-Ordinator	- Judy Green, assisted by Jo Cooper-Desfossé
Babysitting Investigator	- Louise Orr
Newsletter Editor	- Shirley Callagher

The members at large are Marguerite Luce, Lillian McFaul, Marie McLean, Irene Perkins, Mary Purkey, Eva Scheib and Helen Taylor.

The Location Committee reported that there were possibilities of renting space in the old wing of the Lennoxville Elementary School. We took time out to look over this space. Further inquiry is now being made as to rent, renovations, etc. Other areas have also been investigated and there are also possibilities at the Lennoxville United Church.

- 2 -

The Charter Committee had the application forms ready to be approved and sent, and we agreed on the official name of "Centre Des Femmes Lennoxville et Environs".

A Constitution Committee was formed at this meeting. It also will be temporary - a committee of 4 women to investigate the constitution of other centres, in order to draw up what they will then feel is pertinent to our needs.

Funding for our future needs was also discussed. It was suggested that we have a fund-raising event as soon as possible. Bette Napier put forward the possibility of a garage sale at her home.

This Garage Sale will be held either on Saturday, June 6, or June 13, at 8 Prospect Street, in Lennoxville. We are looking for any suitable items - all would be most welcome. Please label everything with a price and drop them off at Bette's home, at the above address, no later than June 5. The date of the sale will be verified later and if you could possibly assist us on that date, please notify Bette, at 563-2782, or Marilyn Durrell, at 563-2149.

Membership was also discussed at this first Board meeting. It was decided that a fee of \$5.00 would be asked in order to cover the cost of the Charter, the newsletter, postal enquiries and expected rent charges. This fee would be renewable each May 1st. It will allow the member a vote at the Centre's Annual General Meeting; ensure her receiving the Newsletters; give her a discount at all activities of the Centre, when there is a charge. Those interested in becoming members should send in the enclosed coupon, or way arrange for membership at the next Board meeting, which will be open to all.

The Board of Directors will be meeting on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:45 p.m. Until a permanent location is found, this meeting will take place in the library of the Lennoxville School. The next meeting will therefore be on June 9.

Apology! It has been brought to our attention that some of those who volunteered to be part of the board of Directors did not receive notice of the first meeting. We regret this very much, and we sincerely intend that this situation does not occur again.

Richmond - we would like to draw your attention to an evening planned in Richmond. On Monday, June 1, 1981 at 7:45 p.m. at the St. Francis Elementary School. There will be a discussion on "Problems of the Circulatory System". The guest speaker will be Dr. Hugh Scott of the C.H.U. Everyone is most welcome. (Organized by Adult Education Services of the E.T.R.S.B.)

Input - We are looking for ideas for the Centre and for this newsletter. Both are for your use; entertainment; enlightenment; support. What you want or need, we hope to give. Communication is the first step. Send your ideas or comments on the Centre to Bette Napier, 6 Prospect Street, Lennoxville, J1M 1M8. For the Newsletter, send them to Shirley Gallagher, 25 Conley St., Lennoxville, J1M 1M1, or hand them in the next meeting.

Hope to see all of you there,

Shirley Gallagher

SHIRLEY GALLAGHER
editor