

United Nations Platform for Action Committee (Manitoba)

UNPAC (MB) Annual General Report 2004-2005

Visit our Website www.unpac.ca

UNPAC (MB) ANNUAL REPORT 2004-2005

The UN Platform for Action Committee (UNPAC) in Manitoba, Canada was established in 1995 after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China 1995 to advocate for the implementation of the Platform for Action born out of Beijing as well as other United Nations agreements which advance women's equality. UNPAC's predecessor was the UN Decades for Women, which was formed when Manitoba women participated in the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985. Ten years later, 45 Manitoba women went to Beijing for the Fourth World Conference, participating in both the UN conference and the parallel NGO Conference. They returned to Manitoba with a commitment to see the recommendations in the Platform for Action implemented.

Mission Statement:

UNPAC will support the objectives of the Platform for Action by working through community action and with other organizations, locally and globally, for equality, development and peace.

UNPAC Coordinating Committee for 2004-2005

Liz Sarin /Janet Carriere, Co-Chairs

Susan Hancharyk, Treasurer

Jennifer deGroot, Project Coordinator (staff)

Babs Friesen

Stella LeJohn

Roberta Bishop

Joan Butcher

Gisele Saurette-Roch

Roberta (Robby) Simpson

Muriel Smith

The Coordinating Committee extends their heartfelt appreciation to Babs Friesen for her devotion to UNPAC and the coordinating committee. Babs plans to retire from the coordinating committee this fall. She has been with UNPAC since its beginnings and will continue to care for our archives.

2004-2005 Activity Highlights

The members of the coordinating committee are dedicated women, who volunteer their time to advocate with a strong voice for women's equality. They meet each month from September to June, with many other sub-committee meetings and on-going communication in between, to manage UNPAC's overall direction, locally and globally. Some of their activities this past year were:

- Committed funds for office space at 60 Maryland Street, which officially opened in October 2004.
- Received a mandate at the 2004 Annual General Meeting to proceed with the Gender Budget Project as the next major undertaking and authorized the submission of a project proposal to the Status of Women for funding. Our proposal was supported by the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council, Child Care Coalition of Manitoba, Women's Centre in Brandon and Manitoba Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF).
- Prior to receiving funding approval from the Status of Women, allocated funds for a part-time staff member to initiate work on Gender Budget Project for the period of April 2004 to March 2005.
- In December 2004, Liz Sarin, as the representative of UNPAC, presented information on UNPAC's history, the Women & Economy project and follow-up project on Gender Budgets, to the Standing Committee on Status of Woman roundtable in Ottawa.
- Nominated Jennifer de Groot to attend the Preparatory Meetings for Beijing +10 in Geneva from December 9-16, 2004. Muriel Smith, also, attended.
- Authorized the financial support provided to Jennifer de Groot for travel expenses and attendance at Beijing + 10 conference in New York from February 28 to March 11, 2005. Three other UNPAC members were in New York as well, Muriel Smith, Beryle Jones and Stella LeJohn.
- Mary Scott coordinated the electronic newsletter Snippets throughout the year, bringing together news highlights from local, national, and international activities of relevance to women. The newsletter greatly extended the reach of UNPAC and its profile in the community.
- Members volunteered time to screen, interview and contact candidates for the Gender Budget project assistant/community educator positions.
- Revised By-laws in the UNPAC (MB) Constitution for voting at the 2005 AGM.

UNPAC Open House

UNPAC held an open house on January 5, 2005 at the UNPAC (MB) office located in Centre for Christian Studies, 60 Maryland Street, Winnipeg, MB, R3G 1K7.

Jennifer deGroot and Muriel Smith shared their experiences and the issues from Geneva, where they attended the European Preparatory Meetings for Beijing+10, held December 2004. Jane Kagolo from Uganda shared the HIV/AIDS issues in her country and her experiences working with women and children.

*Respectively submitted,
Liz Sarin and Janet Carriere, Co-Chairs*

Gender Budget Project

Submitted by Muriel Smith, Chair, Gender Budget Project Advisory Committee

As was done with the Women and Economy Initiative in 2001-03, the Coordinating Group appointed a Gender Budget Advisory Committee to oversee the hiring of staff and the day to day work of the Initiative. The current Gender Budget initiative grew out of the realization that many needs of Manitoba women were profoundly affected for good or ill by the provincial budget and its processes that has not as yet fully integrated the concerns and experiences of women. The Advisory Committee members for 2004/2005 were Roberta Bishop, Liz Sarin, Susan Hancharyk, June Menzies and Gisele Saurette-Roch with Muriel Smith as Chair. They have served as backup to part-time Project Coordinator Jennifer deGroot in the somewhat complicated process of developing a fundraising proposal for Status of Women Canada. When the two year grant was approved late in February, along with HR Committee members Janet Carriere and Roberta Bishop, they assisted in recruiting and hiring two more part-time women, Kreesta Doucette and Rebecca Thiessen, with the skills required:

- Facilitation skills to develop outreach to rural and northern women to elicit their concerns, and
- Artistic flair to help with the preparation of outreach materials to demystify the provincial budget and its processes so more women might participate in the Minister of Finance's pre-budget consultations.

A committee of Wise Women who act as consultants for the project has also been formed and includes Dr. Lorna Turnbull, Shauna MacKinnon, and Hari Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton.

In addition to being a sounding board for staff, the Chair accompanied Jennifer to an exploratory meeting with the Minister of Finance to promote Gender Based Budgeting, and to subsequent meetings with staff of Treasury Board to share resources on Gender Based Budgeting, and to develop a strategy for the incorporation over time of gender analysis into provincial budgeting. The Chair and Jennifer have also been attending community Gender Budgeting Coalition meetings, and both attended the regional and international meetings for Beijing+10 in Geneva (December '04) and New York (March '05) where they networked with women engaged in gender budgeting from around the world, and acquired many new resources to add to the growing collection of gender budget resources housed at the new UNPAC office. Following the Geneva conference Jennifer wrote an article for Canadian Dimension magazine entitled, "Backwards to Beijing+10" highlighting the recent FAFIA report on a gender analysis of federal budgets from 1995-2004.

Jennifer has participated in activities of the Just Income Coalition including meeting with Minister of Labour Nancy Allan in November '04, preparing a submission to the Manitoba minimum wage inquiry in December '04, speaking at a press conference in January '05, and also prepared a piece on women and minimum wage which was distributed through the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' Fast Facts. Jennifer also prepared a submission to the Federal Homelessness Initiative consultations and has responded to a number of speaking requests primarily at the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba.

For on-going information on UNPAC's Gender Budget Project please visit the UNPAC website at www.unpac.ca

Report on CRIAW Think Tank

Submitted by Robby Simpson

On behalf of UNPAC, I attended a Think Tank sponsored by CRIAW (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women) held in Ottawa, April 11-12/05.

The theme of the Think Tank was **Women's Economic Security**, and the basis of discussions was the fact that women in Canada are facing increasing and deepening poverty, with specific groups of women being particularly affected: racialized women, Aboriginal women, immigrant women, older women, single mothers, women living with disabilities. The Think Tank participants perceived a direct link between poverty and the abdication by the government of its role as a provider of social services. Current government policies focus on 'labour force attachment' and 'the market' to address economic and social concerns and, as a result, issues of poverty, social justice, human rights, accountability, are being "lost in the maze of the market."

Economic security, broadly defined, means having all that a person needs to survive. Labour force attachment and reliance on market forces does not create economic security. Fundamental changes have occurred in the nature of paid work, and many jobs are precarious, underpaid, and without benefits. Not everyone is equipped to be 'entrepreneurial' or self-employed. The credentials of immigrant women are often not recognized. There is systemic racism in many workplaces. Regulated childcare is unavailable and unaffordable for many women who wish to work. Employment insurance is restrictive and does not apply to the majority of workers. And without safe housing, good health and education, women cannot compete in the job market.

Recognizing that all these issues are connected, CRIAW is using an Integrated Feminist Framework (IFF) as a basis for research and analysis around the issue of women's economic security. Some of the areas and ideas raised for discussion at the Think Tank were:

- Human rights. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (signed by our government) states that an adequate standard of living is a human right. A human rights framework would connect govt. policy to women's substantive equality, and could be used as a basis for national standards. All legislation must now be viewed through a corporate (NAFTA) lens. Why not a human rights lens as well?
- How can women's unpaid work as homemakers, caregivers, and volunteers in the community be valued and remunerated?
- Being over-worked leaves no time to maintain family life and quality of life. Time must be seen as a valuable commodity.
- The women's movement needs to mobilize as an agent for social change.
- We need to use our resources in government, but not make the state the sole object of our strategies. We need alternative, non-state solutions as well, and we can look to global social movements for ideas and inspiration.
- Alternative and gender-based budgets – which is UNPAC's current project and the reason UNPAC was invited to attend the Think Tank.

This is a very brief and partial overview. For more on CRIAW, visit www.criaw-icref.ca.