

Glacier Grannies

B.C. Islands Regional Grandmothers' Gathering, Sept 24, 2011

Courtenay, BC

Last Update: Sept 29, 2011

Evolving Collaboration was the theme of the second ever B.C. Islands Regional Grandmothers' Gathering.

This theme was captured from the moment the Gathering opened with a song circle led by Tina F. of the Merville Grandmothers. Before we knew it Grandmothers from all over Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and Powell River were singing together, smiling, and somewhat amazed by the sound we could create together!

After opening remarks by Lorraine W, Co-Chair of the Glacier Grannies, Barb T. Past Chair of the Glacier Grannies, and Carol J., Regional Liaison, guests from the Stephen Lewis Foundation took centre stage. These guests were:

- Zahra Mohamed, the new Grandmothers Campaign Co-ordinator,
- and Alexis MacDonald the Director of External Relations .

Zahra began by recognizing some of the major contributions of the B.C. Islands Grandmothers groups:

- The Textile Art Campaign by the Glacier Grannies
- The Bike Rally by the Victoria Grandmothers for Africa
- The Hornby Island Chair Auction, by the Hornby Island HUGGS
- The Stride National Walk, which Campbell River and other groups participated in
- The outstanding craft work done by many of the Islands' groups

Project Updates from Zahra Mohamed, SLF Foundation

Zahra described her experiences with several projects in Africa. Before becoming the Grandmothers Campaign Coordinator, Zahra worked as a project coordinator in Africa.

Ugandan Project

On the occasion of a Christmas holiday celebration with a project in Uganda, Zahra learnt how piggy banks and "sack gardens" have made a tremendous difference in enabling communities to feed themselves and send children to school.

Zahra remarked at how honoured she was to receive food gifts on behalf of the foundation at the event. The grandmothers giving the gifts needed the food themselves, and it was later re-distributed in the community. However the strong spirit of giving was integral to the event, and it made her realize how important celebration and sharing are to community-building.

Mozambique Project

In Mozambique, the SLF funds one staff person for a group called MANTRAN. This is an advocacy group that has stopped the shutdown of paediatric hospitals throughout the country, and that is now the go-to group for media when they want comments on issues related to HIV/AIDS.

MANTRAN has evolved to the point where it is developing policies for government consideration. Other aid groups support MANTRAN because it does the job of HIV/AIDS advocacy, allowing them to focus on their core missions.

Kenyan Project

Zahra spoke of the Karoedfod Project in a remote part of Kenya, close to Tanzania. Twenty years ago elderly women in the area set a goal of educating their daughters to read and write. They were successful in sending them through to Grade 7 and beyond.

The SLF funds a community-based group that provides home-based care in the area. This group is headed up by one of the daughters of the original founders of Karoedfod, a woman named Mary. Mary has now decided to pursue another phase of her life, and is handing her leadership responsibilities off to Eunice, a third generation daughter.

It is rewarding to see how the education of girls has led to strong leaders and enhanced community services throughout successive generations.

SLF Foundation Update from Alexis MacDonald

Alexis stressed how important the SLF principles, such as

- Giving directly to community groups
- Moving quickly and avoiding red tape
- Have a flexible and easy proposal submission process
- Uncovering the real needs of communities
- Visiting and communicating regularly with projects

have been key to the success of the foundation.

Alexis also told us that the SLF is staffed by 30 employees and supported by many volunteers. She explained that of the funds raised, fully 90% of the money raised by the Grandmothers Campaign goes to HIV/AIDS projects in Africa.

Since the financial crisis of 2008, many HIV/AIDS groups have had their funds reduced drastically. Because of this, the SLF spends money on fundraising for its general fund, but not for the Grandmothers Campaign, as we do that part of the job for them.

To date, \$12 million dollars has been raised by Grandmothers groups, and \$1 million of that has come from the BC Islands groups.

In regards to the East African famine, the SLF has raised extra funds for community organizations in Ethiopia, Uganda and Namibia.

For more information on SLF financials, visit:

<http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org/who-we-are/financials>

CAMR was discussed and Alexis indicated that it is very important and the SLF foundation has embraced the bill. However, the foundation does not have the resources to do advocacy directly, and thus they try to achieve it by supporting the Grandmothers efforts.

Alexis also stressed that the Foundation does advocacy by doing its core mission, that is, funding community groups that ease the pain of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Marketplace

Throughout the day the crafts that the BC Islands groups are famous for were on display.

It was impressive to see the creativity and skill of the Grandmothers crafters!

Afternoon Workshops

After a delicious lunch prepared by the Glacier Grannies (which featured the soup recipes available at the end of this document), attendees participated in one of three workshops:

- Making & Marketing our Products
- Planning & Promoting our Events
- Maintaining our Momentum

Making & Marketing our Products

After looking at all the beautiful products made by the various groups there was a discussion about maintaining quality control, price points, and where to sell items. It was noted that a better price can be achieved in some venues than others.

Planning & Promoting our Events

This workshop was ably led by Janet F. of the Merville Grandmothers.

Each grandmother group broke apart to evaluate one of their recent events in the areas of Key Elements, Promotion, Partnerships and post-event Evaluations. Then everyone got back together and shared their experiences.

Janet presented a very useful to assess fundraising ideas. That is, to first determine if the idea is consistent with the group's mission and if there is enough lead time. Then to assess "energy" for the idea, that is, how many people would vote:

- A – agree with the idea, will help
- B - agree, can't help
- C – disagree but won't block consensus
- D - oppose

If there are enough A's, then the idea goes forward.

Everyone liked the "Energy" assessment idea and appreciated Janet for sharing it with us.

Maintaining our Momentum

This workshop was led by Barb T. of the Glacier Grannies and Carol J. of the Victoria Grandmothers.

Carol led teams through a planning process for groups. Afterwards, Barb led a discussion on keeping meetings and fundraising work fun!

Workshop Sharing

The entire group was brought together and ideas from each workshop were shared.

Lynda Harris of the Powell River Grandmothers then told us about a very successful fundraiser their group had just held (it raised over \$7,000!).

They showed the film "Under the Bushy Trees" about a school building project in Chad. The project was initiated by a woman from Powell River, and a film was made about it. The film presents the challenges that were faced by trying to impose solutions on another society, and how the situation was successfully resolved.

Closing Comments and Song

The day ended with everyone appreciating their shared experiences.

Tina F. closed the Gathering by leading everyone in a beautiful "grandmother" song.

Appreciations

The BC Islands Granny Groups thank the SLF for sending Zahra and Alexis to be part this event. We thank the women themselves for the interesting information they shared and their enthusiasm for all things “Grandmothers”.

Thanks to everyone who attended this Gathering, especially those who travelled from other areas.

Finally, thanks to everyone at the Glacier Grannies who was involved in organizing and holding this event, including the incredible lunch team.

Recipes

Chicken Black Bean Soup

Barb T., Glacier Grannies

2 cans black beans- drained and rinsed

1 28 oz can diced tomatoes

1 ½ to 2 cups frozen corn kernels

3 cloves garlic –minced

2 tsp dried oregano

2 tsp cumin

1 jalapeno pepper -finely chopped

4 cups chicken broth

Mash half of the beans in a large pot. Add remaining ingredients and bring to boil over medium heat. Reduce and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes. Increase heat and add;

1 ½ to 2 cups cubed cooked chicken (can use fresh and increase cooking time)

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

¼ cup lime juice

Simmer 2-5 minutes.

Serve with sour cream and chopped fresh cilantro if desired.

Freezes well.

Hearty Lentil Soup

Barb L., Glacier Grannies

Heat 1 tbsp olive oil

Add 1 onion diced

2 minced garlic cloves

1 stalk celery (cut up)

1 carrot (cut up)

Cook 3 - 5 minutes

Add 1 red pepper (cut up)

2 tbsp lemon juice

1 tsp cumin

1/2 tsp cinnamon

1/4 tsp cayenne

Cook 2 minutes

Add 28 oz plum tomatoes & juice

4 cups chicken broth

1 cup dry lentils

salt

Bring to boil then reduce heat.

Simmer 25 minutes.

Add 1 potato (cut in chunks).

Cover and simmer until lentils soften.