

# RURAL WOMEN'S ACTION WORKSHOP

## Carlyle, Saskatchewan

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Project #127



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*for* WOMEN'S HEALTH

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**PRAIRIE WOMEN'S HEALTH**

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**RURAL WOMEN'S ACTION WORKSHOP  
Carlyle, Saskatchewan**

August 2006

**Workshop facilitation by Noreen Johns  
Report by Noreen Johns and Joanne Havelock**

Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE) is one of the Centres of Excellence for Women's Health, funded by the Women's Health Contribution Program of Health Canada. The PWHCE supports new knowledge and research on women's health issues; and provides policy advice, analysis and information to governments, health organizations and non-governmental organizations. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policy of the PWHCE or Health Canada.

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# INTRODUCTION

This document reports on the Rural Women's Action Workshop held on April 7-8, 2006 in Carlyle, Saskatchewan.

This work with rural women began as a follow-up to the *Rural Remote and Northern Women's Health* report, and was moved forward by the creation of the Rural Women's Issues Committee of Saskatchewan (RWICS).

## **Rural, Remote And Northern Women's Health Report**

In June 2004, the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE) and the Centres of Excellence for Women's Health (CEWH) released the report *Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health: Research and Policy Directions*. This was a comprehensive, national project on the health concerns of women who live in rural, remote and northern Canada (see page 3). As requested by the community women involved in the project, a plain language community kit was developed shortly afterwards. PWHCE also committed to providing other follow-up to the research report. In September 2004 PWHCE began working with rural women in Saskatchewan as one step in carrying forward the *Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health* report's recommendations.

A Rural Women's Health Workshop was held November 17, 2004 at the Christ Lutheran Church in Young, Saskatchewan. The purpose of the workshop was to offer women the opportunity to become familiar with the national Report's recommendations and determine other recommendations and follow-up action for Saskatchewan. Some of the participants had participated in focus groups as part of the initial research for the national project. New participants included rural women, Métis women and Francophone women.

The women at the workshop identified a wide range of factors affecting the well-being of rural women in their local communities, and began determining actions to address these factors. It was evident that more time was needed to move from ideas to actions. The Rural Women's Issues Committee of Saskatchewan was formed at that meeting, to determine how this group might meet again, and also how to involve other rural women in similar events.

## **RWICS Workshops**

RWICS held a second workshop in Young, Saskatchewan on March 15, 2005, sponsored by PWHCE. To address the issues identified at the November meeting the women produced detailed action plans and made personal commitments to move the actions forward. RWICS received a grant in April 2005 from the Women's Program of Status of Women Canada. The grant, combined with continued support from the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence, the Centre for Rural Studies and Enrichment in Muenster, Saskatchewan, and the support of its enthusiastic volunteer committee members, enabled RWICS to propel its work.

As a result, workshops were held on:

- April 25th - 26th, 2005 in Nipawin, Saskatchewan
- May 17th -18th, 2005 in Swift Current, Saskatchewan
- April 7th - 8th, 2006 in Carlyle, Saskatchewan.

## **RWICS Goals**

Saskatchewan has a strong history with women and women's organizations leading the way to many policy improvements and important social reforms. In recent years changing demographics, reductions in funding to women's organizations and the triple workload that rural and farm women carry, have made it more difficult for rural women's organizations to remain active and present their views.

In its work RWICS hopes to link with individuals and organizations working to improve the situation of rural women and to help to bring the recommendations of rural women forward to decision-makers. Our goal is to support and encourage rural women to name their own issues, create their personal action plans and achieve their own visions.

## Rural Remote and Northern Women's Health National Project

**In 2001 the four Centres of Excellence for Women's Health (CEWH) and Health Canada started a two-year national study on rural, remote and northern women's health. The final Report was released June 2004.**

The purpose of the study was to develop a policy framework and a research agenda on rural and remote women's health in Canada. The Centres had noticed that although there was new interest in doing research on rural peoples' health, and there was endless discussion about health care and health care reforms in the media and elsewhere, there did not seem to be much understanding at all of the needs and concerns of women. Although 30% of Canada's population live in rural and remote locations and most rural residents are female, rural women in Canada have largely been invisible to researchers and policy makers.

The study was funded by the Women's Health Bureau of Health Canada with assistance from the Office of Rural Health (Health Canada) and the Institute for Gender and Health of the Canadian Institutes for Health Research. A research steering committee, composed of the CEWH directors and seven other academic and community-based researchers, and a representative from Health Canada, directed the study.

Rural women were deliberately consulted so that they could contribute their knowledge to help develop better policies and programs and to create effective research and program agendas for rural women's health. All the work was done in both French and English.

The study included a number of steps:

1. A roundtable discussion involving rural residents and health researchers in October 2001.
2. A thorough review of Canadian literature in English and French on topics relating to women, health and rural living.
3. Twenty-eight focus groups, video and teleconferences from coast to coast to coast (including remote communities and the high Arctic) involving over 200 women between November 2001 and January 2003.
4. A second roundtable for rural health policy makers in November 2002.
5. A national consultation in March 2003 at which 50 researchers, participants, policy makers and managers from all parts of Canada addressed the question: "What are the challenges and opportunities for ensuring the best state of women's health in your community?"

Members of the steering committee analyzed the data at various points, with all the findings synthesized in a final **Summary Report, Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health: Policy and Research Directions**.

Women who were involved in the national study asked that a plain-language kit be developed to help share and disseminate the research findings more widely. The **Community Kit** provides summaries and background information about the national research project, as well as information for local communities to use in advocating for change.

The Report is written in sections that can be used together or separately. The Report and the Community Kit are on the PWHCE website and available from:

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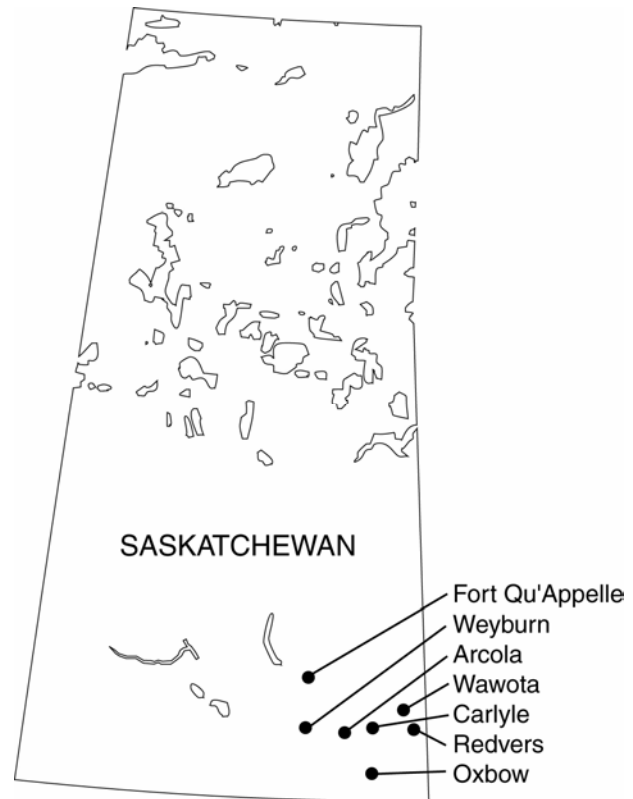
# THE WORKSHOP PROCESS

The workshop in Carlyle was held at Carlyle United Church. The 12 participants attending were from several communities within an hour's drive of Carlyle: Weyburn, Redvers, Oxbow, Wawota, Arcola and Fort Qu'Appelle. The participants were from a variety of backgrounds with farm, business, teaching, ministerial and other work experience. The Rural Women's Issues Committee members were in attendance and joined the group work, often acting as a resource.

The meeting room featured a display of relevant reports from the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence, a display showing the origins and achievements of RWICS, and a table with information about organizations providing services of interest to rural women.

The event started Friday April 7th in the evening and continued on Saturday morning and afternoon. Some participants could only commit to attending either the evening session or the day session, but most attended the full workshop. The workshop began with each participant introducing herself – her home location, her occupation, if she was representing an organization, and her main reason for attending the workshop. Everyone was then invited to a meal provided by a local caterer.

The meeting reconvened with an overview of the workshop process by facilitator Noreen Johns. Joanne Havelock of PWHCE described the Centres of Excellence on Women's Health and the *Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health Report* that inspired this process.



## We're All Stars

Participants were then invited to “give themselves a star” – writing on a paper star a brief description of an achievement where their contribution had made a difference to the community. Women were encouraged to be proud and recognize that their hard work, planning skills and enthusiasm had yielded some good results. Many noted special events they had planned, or organizations they had started or

revived. They had worked at the local community level and also with women's and business groups in a wide variety of ways. When all the stars were posted on the wall, participants all gave themselves a pat on the back.

# ISSUES AND VISIONS

The next step in the workshop was identifying issues and visions.

The process used for the workshop involved asking the participants to identify individual issues that affected themselves, their families and their communities, writing them down on paper. Doing this on her own allowed each participant to reflect and bring forward her own issues.

Then, participants were challenged to imagine each set of suggested actions a victory complete – what would they expect to see? Again, the women had time to reflect on their own, imagining positively what they would like to see in the future, and writing it down.

Participants then picked the 3 to 5 visions most important to them. They wrote a short phrase describing their vision on a large index card. They were then invited to share their individual visions with the group and place them on the bulletin board.

At this point the workshop ended for the evening. The issues and visions are listed on the table on the next page.



<b>ISSUES AND VISIONS – CARLYLE</b>	
<b>ISSUES</b>	<b>VISIONS</b>
The exodus of our young people – out of the province.	Good training programs, decent wages and jobs.
The number of farms that are not viable.	Farmers have learned more marketing skills and are more knowledgeable about world demand for their crops. World hunger is less, prices have improved.
The farm community and what I perceive as a lack of respect for production of quality food (i.e. the move from agriculture to agribusiness).	NFU 16 point plan <sup>1</sup> coming to fruition.
Depopulation of rural Saskatchewan and the lack of policy re: environmentally friendly transportation policies. Railways need to be public institutions – their monopoly has cost our communities their spirit.	Railways expropriated and made into Crown Corporation. Nationalized for affordable travel and transporting of grain and raw materials – public and community driven.
The loss of rural infrastructure (highways, railways and lines).	Gas revenues and taxes should fund highways and other infrastructure – such as elevators and railways.
Affordable housing and the lack of housing in our community.	Two years – 3 apartment buildings.
Elder poverty (majority of elders appear to be female).	Policy to restore dignity – adequate financial resources for elderly living in poverty.
The amount of parents who aren't supporting their children. They think of themselves first and don't give the children the love and support they need.	
Support for violence victims in town/single parents. Drug and alcohol abuse by teens.	Events for single parents. Shared babysitting.
Access to resources for women and children experiencing domestic violence in rural areas.	Resourced rescue team/prevention through education. Local community protocol around violence in families. Rural Violence Intervention Program.
How to help the children in our communities to stand up to the predator on the Internet and drug dealers – an enormous problem.	

<sup>1</sup> National Farmers Union, *Solving the Farm Crisis: A Sixteen-Point Plan for Canadian Farm and Food Security* Submission to Hon. Wayne Easter, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, January 20, 2005 Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. <http://www.nfu.ca/>

Access to timely health care – wait times are too long for cancer surgeries.	Money for prevention programs – take diagnostic prevention seriously. More surgeons.
Support for persons and families with mental illness.	Everyone knows how to get mental illness services and everyone who needs service gets appropriate services.
It would be nice to have a doctor come and stay in community for more than 2 or 3 years. The problem with people having to go so far for medical help. Traveling to Regina for cancer treatment is a concern.	Now the doctors are still here after they know your history.
Support for cancer victims/survivors in rural areas.	Started last spring – a tea honoring Carlyle’s cancer survivors. Need someone to convene a series of gatherings where cancer survivors would feel comfortable meeting for support.
The facilities – or lack of them – for the increasing numbers of seniors.	Improved support for families caring for older family members.
Our rural health care – hospital closures, etc.	Elderly people can stay in their town instead of moving to a larger centre.
Not enough respite for people looking after people with disabilities.	
Care more for our earth.	Everyone is happy to recycle and save our resources.
Flares from the oil wells and their effect on air quality. Flare gas – this is our air. We have to live here.	Natural gas flares turned into energy for movable greenhouses and/or piped to natural gas plants.
I am concerned that too many of us are too inward looking and don’t see the bigger picture.	With mobile society, we will all be more aware of other people’s problems.
We need better communication between the younger families and community organizers.	We have a vibrant, happy community – working together for good of us all.
The lack of community workers [volunteers] among our young people.	A vibrant healthy community.
Dwindling attendance in our church.	One church united.
My concern is church deficit.	Larger congregation, more young people. Greater fundraisers. Finally, a balanced budget.
Our community’s church. It is at the point where it will likely be closed and some of community will be very upset about this.	
Understanding and respect among races.	People greeting each other in coffee shops and on the street across races.

## **SETTING PRIORITIES AND PLANNING FOR ACTION**

### ***“The Cure for Half-baked Strategies is Action Detailing”***

In the next step of the workshop, participants grouped the visions together and created headings for the groups. These are seen in the information below.

Participants then gave priority to which of the grouped visions they would like to start work on. This was done by using the tried and true process of placing coloured dots next to the visions on the wall.

Each woman was able to work in two small groups situations to begin action detailing. The groups were provided with forms to document their planning sessions in detail. They entitled and described their vision, and set out actions. Given the busy lives of women, and the long-term nature of the work needed, it is not surprising that they did not necessarily commit to specific timelines for many of the steps.

After the small group discussions, a group spokesperson explained their plans to the larger group. Women were very enthusiastic about what they hoped to achieve.

Please refer to the following pages that summarize these plans.

## **ACTION AREA: HEALTH CARE**

### **Concern: Health Care**

- Not enough respite for people looking after others with disabilities
- Medical treatments so far away
- Social support for people with mental illness
- Support for cancer patients
- Cost of psychotherapy - “mental health is more than meds”
- Healthcare wait-times too long
- Persuade the doctors to stay
- Rural health care

**GOAL:** Everyone knows how to get services and everyone who needs service gets appropriate services.

**ACTION:** Get Health Boards to print business cards with health services information

1. Draft and send a letter of request to the Sun Country Health Region & Regina-Qu'Appelle Health Region Boards for business cards containing health service information to be distributed to the households in the health region – a contact card for health care services. List Health Services, Health Board Members.
2. Be prepared to speak to Chair of Board or at Board Meeting, include costs benefits to people, how to distribute cards.
3. Find board member names and addresses. Have cards out in the fall newsletter.

**GOAL:** Cancer support group in every community in S.E. Saskatchewan.

**ACTION:** Call Cancer Society re what supports are available and contact CWL about what they are doing on this.

1. Talk to Catholic Women's League re their cancer initiative.
2. Call Cancer Society to see what supports are there.

## **ACTION AREA: RELATIONSHIPS**

### **Concern: Broken Relationships**

- Us + Them = We
- Children without parental support
- Protect children against predators
- Save our earth
- Understanding and respect among races

- Resources re domestic violence.
- Afraid that we are too concerned with our own affairs

**GOAL:** Eliminate family violence

**ACTION:** Continue support for Violence Intervention Program (VIP)

1. Establish a rural violence intervention program – with support from VIP.
2. Invite people for presentations.
3. Information centre at church, especially re phone line.
4. Info in church bulletin.
5. Volunteer for V.I.P. program and get training and experience.
6. Continue women helping women: group looking at addressing this issue in Wawota.
7. Build local protocol in communities.
8. Send info re protocols.

**GOAL:** Role models for children.

**ACTION:** Build mentoring relationships for children

1. Encourage existing groups through volunteering - Girl Guides/Boy Scouts/4H.
2. Sunday school/Cadets.
3. Community sports groups.
4. Support mentoring that carries a value of healthy role models.

**GOAL:** Environment.

**ACTION:** Work on these topics

1. Eliminate gas flares.
2. Phone Saskatchewan Environment every time you smell gas (if you can smell it, it is over eleven parts per billion – too high).
3. Find out more about gas, flares, and effects.
4. Do a fact sheet and distribute so concerned people know what to do.
5. Write a letter to the editor – newspapers.
6. Water quality.
7. Learn more about what is in water in this area.
8. Check the water quality report from your RM.
9. Check your own well water.
10. Land ownership.
11. Find out about Act allowing foreign ownership of land and purchases by oil companies.

12. Learn more about farm environmental impact studies and plans.

**GOAL:** Talking Circle/ Listening Circle.

**ACTION:** Build understanding between the white and First Nations communities in rural Saskatchewan.

1. Bring the two cultures together by inviting women from both to a Listening Circle.
2. Build and discover networks by finding out about each other's cultures – difference and similarities.
3. Learn, share and exchange.
4. Who are we?
5. What do we know that we can share and learn from each other?
6. What issues/concerns do we share?

### **ACTION AREA: SPIRITUAL DIS-EASE**

**Concern: Spiritual Dis-Ease**

- Church closing – community sadness
- Declining number of young families in church
- Dwindling church attendance
- Church deficit

**GOAL:** Wider church family – attendance/smaller deficit.

**ACTION:**

1. On a separate evening offer an alternative service for families who don't find Sunday services fit their schedules – more music and social time.
2. Phone or visit new people to invite them to church – tell them what church has to offer – choir, United Church Women, Bible Study, Sunday School.
3. Phone tree for special activities invitation.
4. UCW Christmas party open to all congregations.
5. Have special speakers evenings.
6. Attend invited events in other churches so they will reciprocate.
7. Welcome new people who do come – take them for coffee after.
8. Offer rides to church.
9. Recognize volunteers in the church.
10. People who lose their churches feel a sense of loss. They need to be approached and welcomed by all in their next community church.

11. Combined clergy for special services/joint services among towns (week of prayer for Christian Unity – lunch hour).
12. How to make church a priority, more attractive? E.g. interesting choirs, music, fun children's time, kid's choir, Easter Sunrise Service and Breakfast.
13. Need more than church groups working for community.
14. Have to change the face of our church.

### **ACTION AREA: DEMOGRAPHIC DISORDER**

#### **Concerns: Demographic Disorder**

- Communication between generations
- Lack of young community workers
- Volunteer burnout in our communities
- Keeping our children in Saskatchewan
- Exodus of young people

**GOAL:** A community good ideas group.

**ACTION:** Create a place where people bring good ideas and put them on the table.

1. Check with family centre board.
2. Get a group of people together and see what comes out of it.

### **ACTION AREA: RURAL ECONOMY**

#### **Concerns: Rural Economy**

- Farm profitability
- Agriculture not equal to agribusiness
- Concerned about farm failures
- Women recognized as farmers
- Railways being 'de-railed'
- Loss of rural infrastructure – highways, railroads, elevators and much more

**(Comment:** the participants did not have time to give this topic a full discussion, but recognized its key importance in relation to the other issues they raised.)

**GOAL:** Railroads owned by/and for the people of Canada.

**ACTION:** Further discussion around transportation needs and communication re the options.

### **ACTION AREA: BASIC NECESSITIES**

#### **Concern: Basic/Life Necessities**

- Elder poverty - majority female
- Poverty and food banks
- Facilities for the increasing number of seniors
- Lack of housing in our community – affordable
- Support for single parents

**GOAL:** To live in a society that does not need food banks

**ACTION:** Link with existing advocacy groups and continue conversations about rural poverty.

1. Advocate for adequate living for people who are physically and mentally disabled or raising a family alone.
2. Provide respectful assistance through a system that treats people with dignity.
3. Raise minimum wage so low-level jobs are a living.
4. Support and add rural voice to:
  - NAPO - National Anti-poverty Organization
  - RAPM – Regina Anti-poverty Ministry
  - Social Justice Coalition
  - What about broke farmers?
5. Give credit for the employment programs that have worked and note that most of the people still on welfare have multiple barriers to employment, health, literacy, addictions, education, age, etc.
6. Housing is key especially for families.
  - Christmas hampers, there were many in the area – what about the rest of the year?
  - Poverty Conference, Spring 2007 on models for economic security, transition to work.
  - Recognize value-added worth of people living below poverty who look after selves and others.
  - Food Bank Sundays to donate for hampers at Carnduff, Gainsborough, Carlyle.
  - Weyburn Salvation Army.



**GOAL:** Get the word out to the community for senior's services  
**ACTION:** Ensure Senior Directory is distributed in libraries,  
Town/RM Offices, health centres, and, of course, Senior  
Centres.

1. Contact Saskatchewan Senior's Mechanism and ask where directories are distributed.

# WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS

In their evaluations of the event participants indicated appreciation for the leadership and organization that went into the event and the good food that was provided. “Found this experience very enlightening and hopeful.”

The women felt that during the workshop they had been able to express themselves and say what they wanted. They indicated an interest in receiving further information on: poverty action groups, prevention programs on violence and health, Aboriginal issues, natural gas well flares and environmental effects, rural women’s issues, and RWICS.

Women said that the workshop was informative and had inspired them to continue on with their previous work, build awareness, become more informed and carry out the new actions identified in their group discussions.

Getting together with other women was seen as very important. “Interaction with other women was the most valuable part of it.” It was “...a real opportunity to network with other rural women of S.E. Saskatchewan and have the opportunity to discuss issues important to all of us.” “It is really encouraging to be with others who feel the need for change, or progress, or empowerment.” The workshop emphasized for them the importance of keeping up the spirit and working together. “The words “dignity” and “respect” are essential for our conversations and strategies.”

Some of the key points that they had learned from the workshop are that a person can get help if they know where to go and persevere in contacting people at higher levels when needed. They took note of the phrase “the cure for half-baked strategies is action detailing.”

The participants wanted to make sure others heard about the Violence Intervention Program, Saskatchewan Senior’s Mechanism, and fraud awareness. They wanted others to know about “the fact that there is rural poverty although it is often hidden“ and the importance of acknowledging and appreciating volunteers who support children and are role models. They wanted to share with others their thoughts. “That urban residents care about rural problems.” “Women have a voice and there is so much information out there.” “There are so many good women in rural Saskatchewan.”

# **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

This group may not meet again formally, but individually or by small groups they will continue their actions steps. Groups and individuals will contact RWICS via email, telephone or Canada Post as they make progress on their research and action items. Their information will be forwarded to the full group. The women are encouraged to offer assistance to the work plans of others. Participants will be kept informed via newsletters, email and the RWICS website and will be invited to future events or provincial forums organized by RWICS.

**"The Cure for Half-Baked Strategies is Action Planning"**  
**Rural Women's Action Workshop**  
**Carlyle, Saskatchewan – April 7 - 8, 2006**  
**Report Action Chart**

GOAL			
<p><b>HEALTH CARE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Everyone knows how to get services and everyone who needs services gets appropriate services.</b></li> <li>• <b>Cancer support group in every community in southeast Saskatchewan.</b></li> </ul>	<p>Get Health Boards to print business cards with health services information.</p> <p>Call Cancer Society re what supports are available. Contact Catholic Women's League re their cancer initiative.</p>	<p>Draft letter to Health Region and speak to Health Board meeting.</p>	
<p><b>RELATIONSHIPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Eliminate family violence</b></li> <li>• <b>Role model for children.</b></li> <li>• <b>Environment</b></li> </ul>	<p>Continue support for Violence Intervention Program. Volunteer and get training and experience. Continue Women Helping Women group in Wawota.</p> <p>Build mentoring relationships for children. Encourage existing groups through volunteering (Girl Guide, Boy Scouts, 4-H, Sunday school, Cadets, sports groups).</p> <p><b>Eliminate gas flares.</b> Phone Sask Environment every time you smell gas</p> <p><b>Water quality.</b> Check your own well water.</p> <p><b>Land ownership.</b> Research foreign ownership act and oil company purchases.</p>	<p>Establish rural violence intervention program with VIP - invite people to presentation, provide information centre at church</p> <p>Support mentoring that carries a value of healthy role models</p> <p>Find out more about gas, flares and effects</p> <p>Check the water quality report from your RM.</p> <p>Learn more about farm environmental impact studies and plans.</p>	<p>Build local protocol in communities. Send out information on protocols.</p> <p>Do a fact sheet and distribute so concerned people know what to do. Write a letter to the editor.</p> <p>Learn more about what is in water in this area.</p>

<b>GOAL</b>			
<b>RELATIONSHIPS (Continued)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Talking Circle / Listening Circle</b></li> </ul>	Build understanding between the white and First Nations communities in rural Saskatchewan.	Bring the two cultures together by inviting women from both to a Listening Circle. Build and discover networks by finding out about each other's cultures.	Learn, share and exchange: who are we, what do we know that we can share and learn from each other, what issues or concerns do we share?
<b>SPIRITUAL DIS-EASE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wider church family, better attendance, smaller deficit</b></li> </ul>	Try new ways to have activities and welcome new people.	Link to other churches. Look at role of church.	
<b>DEMOGRAPHIC DISORDER</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A community good ideas group</b></li> </ul>	Create a place where people bring good ideas and put them on the table.	Check with family centre board.	Get a group of people together and see what comes of it.
<b>RURAL ECONOMY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Railroads owned by/and for the people of Canada</b></li> </ul>	Further discussion around transportation needs and communication re the options.		
<b>BASIC NECESSITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To live in a society that does not need food banks</b></li> <li>• <b>Get the word out to the community for Seniors' services</b></li> </ul>	<p>Link with existing advocacy groups and continue conversations about rural poverty</p> <p>Ensure Seniors' Directory is distributed in libraries, town/RM offices, health centres, and Senior Centres.</p>	<p>Add rural voice to existing organizations working on poverty issues.</p> <p>Contact Senior's Mechanism and ask where directories are distributed.</p>	Advocate for better conditions.