

LEADERS FOR TOMORROW: RURAL WOMEN CREATING CHANGE

Report on the workshop held in Davidson, Saskatchewan
February 7 & 8, 2009

**Facilitation:
Joanne Havelock**

**Workshop write-up:
Joanne Havelock
Noreen Johns**



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Project #189



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INTRODUCTION

This document reports on the “Leaders for Tomorrow: Rural Women Creating Change” workshop held Saturday February 7 and Sunday February 8, 2009 in Davidson, Saskatchewan.

The workshop was part of the Rural Women’s Issues Committee of Saskatchewan’s project, “Empowering Rural Women’s Voices”.

This project began in 2005, with support from Prairie Women’s Health Centre of Excellence and Status of Women Canada.

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. The triple workload includes on-farm and off-farm work, in addition to the homemaking, parenting and maintaining community organizations. In the overload, community involvement may not be possible, and separate women’s organizations often do not flourish.

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.

History of the RWICS Project

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) in 2005.

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. 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. In 2005 and 2006 RWICS received grants from the Women's Program of Status of Women Canada, for the project entitled "Empowering Rural Women's Voices". The grant from SWC, 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, the following further workshops were held in rural Saskatchewan:

- April 25th - 26th, 2005 in Nipawin
- May 17th -18th, 2005 in Swift Current
- April 7th - 8th, 2006 in Carlyle
- October 20-21, 2006 in Unity
- October 27-28, 2006 at Christopher Lake

The Rural Women's Policy Forum was held on November 24-26 at St. Peter's College in Muenster. Women from the community workshops joined other women at the Policy Forum to discuss the results of the local workshops and develop priorities for future work. The theme of Leadership was chosen as the one that should be the focus of future RWICS work. On February 7 and 8, 2009 the workshop "Leaders for Tomorrow: Rural Women Creating Change" was held at Davidson.

In addition to the workshops, RWICS established a website, produced and distributed reports from its workshops to rural women, researchers and policy-makers, and had coverage of its event in rural media. A small grant program supported local women's events that addressed the themes identified in the RWICS workshops.

Rural Remote and Northern Women's Health National Project

In 2001 the 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 while there was endless discussion about health care and health care reforms in the media and elsewhere, there did not seem to be much understanding of the needs and concerns of women. Although 30% of Canada's population lives in rural and remote locations and over fifty percent of 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 Centres of Excellence for Women's Health 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 DAVIDSON WORKSHOP PROCESS

The “Leaders for Tomorrow: Rural Women Creating Change” workshop was held Saturday February 7 & Sunday February 8, 2009 at the Sacred heart Parish Hall in Davidson, Saskatchewan.

The workshop was intended to bring together rural and urban women in a dialogue about recognition of and support for the leadership of rural women.

Twenty-six women attended. Participants included those who had attended previous RWICS workshops, those involved in organizations providing leadership on issues of concern to women, residents of Davidson and area, and facilitators. The four corners of the southern half of the province were represented as participants traveled from Carnduff, Cutknife, Gravelbourg, Griffin, Invermay, Kelliher, Lake Lenore, Middle Lake, Regina, Rosetown, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Wadena, Webb and Zelma. Some participants were not able to attend on Sunday, but most stayed for the full workshop.

Handouts for participants included: the event poster, the agenda, a PWHCE handout, handouts on the three presentations, the paper “Leadership Training Opportunities for Rural Women in Saskatchewan”, expense forms and the evaluation form.

The meeting room featured a display of relevant reports from the Prairie Women’s Health Centre of Excellence and a display showing the origins and achievements of RWICS. Organizational displays were set up by Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan, Heartland Health Region, and Business and Professional Women. Other displays featured Métis cultural traditions, books written by Saskatchewan rural women, and photos and artifacts from a Canadian Foodgrains Bank food study tour to Zambia and Mozambique.

The event was advertised through a mail-out to RWICS participants, e-mails to RWICS participants and women’s organizations, a Coming Events notice in the Western Producer, display ads in the Davidson and Craik newspapers and posters and handouts given to organizations and other locations in Davidson.

“Leaders for Tomorrow: Rural Women Creating Change”

**February 7 & 8, 2009, Sacred Heart Parish Hall,
417 Lincoln Street, Davidson, Saskatchewan**

A workshop about rural women and leadership.

Bringing together rural and urban women in a dialogue about recognition and support for the leadership of rural women.

Saturday

10:00 AM **Introductions**

10:30 **Rural Women’s Priorities:** Presentation on RWICS findings from workshops held with rural Saskatchewan women.

11:00 **Activity Highlights:** Sharing by individuals and groups attending the workshop about what they are doing or could do regarding the priorities identified by rural women.

12:00 **Lunch:** Viewing displays, special event “In Motion”

1:00 PM **Leadership:**

Greetings from Mary Jane Morrison, Mayor of Davidson

Communication exercise: “Yes, but ...”

Presentation and discussion: What leadership roles are rural women currently fulfilling?

What is needed to encourage and support rural women in leadership roles, especially in public life? What can we do as individuals and groups to support rural women in their current leadership roles and encourage them in new roles?

3:00 **Break**

3:15 **Making Their Voices Heard:** Communication methods for getting the accomplishments and views of rural women more widely recognized. Communicating with rural women.

5:30 **Supper**

7:00 **Speaker**

Jeanne Martinson, Martrain Corporate and Personal Development,
“Personal Leadership for Women Making a Difference”

Sunday

8:30 AM **Breakfast**

9:00 **Caring for Ourselves:** Discussion and relaxation with yoga. What women can do to keep their energies high.

10:00 **Break**

10:15 **Leadership Modules:** Discussion to determine the topics to cover in leadership training for rural women and the best way to get the training to rural women.

11:00 **Looking to the Future:** Creating linkages between rural women and other women working for women in Saskatchewan.

12:00 **Lunch**

1:00 PM **Leave for home**

Sponsored by the Rural Women’s Issues Committee of Saskatchewan
For more information call (306) 585-5727, or e-mail pwhce@uregina.ca

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**Status of Women
Canada**

**Condition féminine
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PRAIRIE WOMEN’S HEALTH

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Workshop Events

The day began with a Métis blessing by Viola Bell. Participants then introduced themselves briefly: who they were, where they lived and their occupation, and what their interest was in leadership for rural women.

A presentation was given by Noreen Johns on the RWICS project and findings from the workshops held with rural Saskatchewan women.

Participants were then invited to write down on yellow sticky notes the things they were doing that would support some of the goals from the RWICS project, or things that they would like to be doing. Then in a large group, each participant discussed the most important action.

After a delicious lunch, Mary Jane Morrison, Mayor of Davidson, brought greetings from the Town of Davidson. Participants asked her questions about how she became involved in public office.

The group was then led by Anne McDonald of Prairie Improv in a communications exercise. Participants were asked to imagine planning an event, then starting each sentence with, "We are holding this event, but" For example, "We are holding a picnic, but there might not be enough food." They were then asked to start each sentence with "We are holding this event, and ...". For example, "We are holding a picnic, and everyone will bring something so there will be lots of food." The exercise brought out the need to achieve the balance between cautious or critical thinking that brings out the "Yes, but ..." and the creative and optimistic thinking that comes with saying "Yes, and ..."

A presentation on leadership and rural women was given by Joanne Havelock, followed by a discussion. What leadership roles are rural women currently fulfilling? What is needed to encourage and support rural women in leadership roles, especially in public life? What can we do as individuals and groups to support rural women in their current leadership roles and encourage them in new roles?

After coffee, the women had a lot of fun with another communication exercise led by Anne McDonald. Participants gathered in a circle, then tossed a beanbag to another person, always tossing to someone who hadn't received the beanbag yet. This established a pattern of tossing the beanbag. Then Anne added in another, then another bean bag, so that in the end there were four bean bags being tossed around the circle in a pattern - in a way like musical rounds. It was necessary to call out the name of the person you were passing to in order to

ensure they caught the bean bag. As if this was not challenging enough, we were then asked to continue to pass the beanbags in a pattern, but also moving around the room. The end result was a very lively, noisy laughter-filled session. Afterwards we talked about how this related to the challenges we often face in communicating with others.

The final session of the afternoon was a presentation by Joanne Havelock and Sylvia MacBean about communication methods for getting the accomplishments and views of rural women more widely known, and ways that interested groups could communicate to rural women.

After supper, Jeanne Martinson of Martrain Corporate and Personal Development gave an informative and lively talk about "Personal Leadership for Women Making a Difference". She provided us with insight into the Four Cornerstones of Leadership: Insight, Courage, Self-Discipline and Influence.

Sunday morning began with breakfast. Participants were then asked to answer questions about what they did to care for themselves and keep their energies going. These thoughts were written on yellow stickies and placed on the wall. Then Jeannie Allan, an exercise and yoga instructor, who is a farmer near Davidson, led the group in warm-up exercises and yoga stretches. She encouraged everyone to take the time for the simple steps that can lead to better health and fitness.

The paper, "Leadership Training Opportunities for Rural Women in Saskatchewan" had been included in the handout materials for the conference. A discussion was started on the topics to cover in leadership training for rural women and the best way to get the training to rural women. Some time was spent on the question of defining who the target audience would be. Who are rural women? Does this include town women or just farm women? The group noted that the definition of rural seems to be different if you are living in Toronto or Weyburn. Also the group discussed who needs training and what kind - younger women, older women, and women who are in management or in leadership positions already.

The final session of the morning was "Looking to the Future: creating linkages between rural women and other women working for women in Saskatchewan". The group discussed the option of having an e-mail list, list serve or other communication about topics of interest to rural/small town/ farm women.

The idea of an organization linking rural women was discussed. The few women's organizations in rural Saskatchewan are having a difficult time keeping going. It did not seem useful to try to create another organization involving these women. The participants did feel that it would be beneficial to have an organization that would link together rural and urban women. In fact, it would be also be good to include women from all geographic locations in the province. The group discussed how there was a need for an umbrella organization at the provincial level where women's organizations could share information about their goals and activities. This information-sharing could lead to some groups working together on common goals and projects.

After lunch, the discussion of next steps continued for an hour. The participants decided to form a committee to explore the options of creating an organization that would link rural and urban women and women's organizations and possibly be a provincial level, umbrella organization. The work of the committee would involve finding out more about what other women's organizations are doing in the province already and looking at various possibilities for how an umbrella organization could work. The formal meeting closed with a blessing by Viola Bell. Then those women who were able to stay a bit longer were treated to a presentation of pictures and video by Sylvia MacBean on the Canadian Foodgrains Bank food study tour to Zambia and Mozambique.

DISCUSSION NOTES

During the meeting the views of participants were obtained with large group discussions recorded on a flipchart and with opportunities for participants to record individual ideas on yellow sticky notes, which were then placed on wall charts. The individual comments were recorded. These discussion notes are a summary in paragraph form.

1. ACTION ON RWICS THEMES

After seeing a presentation on the findings from the RWICS workshops, participants wrote on sticky notes to identify issues they would like to emphasize under the priority areas previously brought forward in RWICS workshops. Many of these ideas arose again during the weekend's discussions.

Leadership

The first point that was raised was the need to define what we mean by "rural". For example when people have off farm jobs they don't identify themselves as being rural. This topic was discussed again later in the workshop - in the Communication section.

A participant wrote, "Rural women are doing a great job in many ways already. They just need more support & recognition." Another had a goal of seeing women sitting on boards equal in proportion to men.

One participant noted her concern about the overall atmosphere, "Policies and issues are overwhelming and people don't care, are poorly informed, [there is a] breakdown of community and generations, no respect for people or the environment."

Another note said, "We need to encourage involvement of new people." Suggestions from others on this topic included encouragement for involvement such as childcare support, and acceptance of new ideas and initiatives from the younger generation. "Organizations should be flexible and be willing to meet at different times, instead of saying, "We've always met at this time."" A participant emphasized how it is important to make sure events have a clear purpose and are well-run. When she attends workshops and events, she "Wants value for time spent- [the events] must be educational and worthwhile." Organizations were encouraged to provide support for new members and leaders. Women were encouraged to "Be mentors to newcomers." One participant wrote,

“Some of the biggest complainers about women taking on leadership roles in the community are other women! How do we educate them – they can be rather vocal.” Another participant stated that she wants “...women to make a difference and be listened to.”

The value of writing, research and educating students about rural issues was stated. A suggestion was that “Women can contribute by educating themselves about women’s issues and then educating others.” And, “It is important to connect to others through relationships and communications.” The idea of a formal organization at a provincial level, or a “Reorganization of Saskatchewan women’s group (provincial) for common goals”, was brought forward. One participant said there is a need to “Lobby – meet with government officials for systemic change.” Training is also needed to help advocate for individuals trying to access services and create systemic change. Women need to understand the law and have access to courts to challenge constitutional violations. There is a need to “Advocate for rural families facing systems that then depend on them for basic needs, such as food.”

Some suggestions were made about the need to communicate about women’s issues at the local, provincial, federal and global levels. These included a website that is kept fresh and rejuvenated, with E-zine articles and Search Engine Optimization to increase traffic to the website. Planning events with speakers would attract a wider audience. There could be contact with the media and independent radio, press releases to media engines, and well-crafted letters to various levels of government.

Health

Self care was identified as important by a few participants, and this was discussed in more depth later in the workshop: “Self care – respect self, relaxation care – all to energize”. “Self-care – enough sleep, read good books, good food, warm baths, rent DVD’s, wear what I like.”

Encouraging respect was seen as important to health. Another participant identified the need for advocates for rural women around health issues and for patients and families navigating the health care system. Language barriers can still be a problem for First Nations and Métis people, Francophones and people from cultural backgrounds where English is not the main language. There was also a comment on the importance of self and family education on physical and mental health, nutrition and how to lead better lives.

Better health care was noted to include better communication, better handling of patients by the front desk, and eliminating harassment. Services that were said to be needing improvement or enhancement were: home care, medical diagnostic services, rehabilitation services, promoting more information on midwifery in our health care system and support for alternative services. One participant wrote of her concern about men's health (her spouse) and noted that women get a letter to remind them to get their pap test and mammogram and men should also get a letter to encourage them to go and get a regular medical examination. The idea of compensating for transportation was seen as especially important regarding health care services. Even if it is a volunteer driver for health care, the person being transported pays for mileage and the meals of the driver and this can be expensive.

Eliminating emotional and physical violence was seen as a priority by several participants, stating the need to "Work more on issues of violence against women – especially rural and farm women."

Concerns were also expressed about some government policies. "You can't apply for the caregivers' deduction on your income tax return unless you quit a full time job outside the home." If you are at home already you don't get any recognition. "The survivor's allowance (\$5000) is taxable. Should the Federal Government be taking tax from the meager survivor's allowance?"

Community

Participants highlighted the need to support local community – women, schools, jobs, and recreational facilities. Opportunities for education would help lead to advancement. Providing transportation to those traveling to appointments, work or meetings outside the community was cited as something that would help communities.

One woman commented on her loss of identity as "rural" because she now works in town. Another stated the need for a link between urban and rural women. One of the notes set up the suggestion of diversity and inclusion workshops to create a platform for immigrant women to connect with other women. Participants discussed how there is a need to inform rural people about cultural ways that are new to them, especially in light of the upcoming increase in immigration that is planned for Saskatchewan,

Rural people are often poorly informed about what is going on at the policy level and don't feel connected to policy.

People are connected through technology, but not person to person.

Sometimes we are “Dialoging with different languages” - whether through different languages or different technologies.

Poverty received attention. A participant wrote of the need to have a “Network with poverty, labour, church...to address poverty issues”. Other suggestions were to provide public education on poverty issues – locally, provincially, nationally and internationally, including doing media interviews about poverty.

Participants wrote of the importance of supporting community involvement. “Believe in the power of community and neighbors helping neighbors.” They wrote of the breakdown in community functions such as suppers and the role of churches, and the divisions between the generations. One participant wrote of the bittersweet situation in rural Saskatchewan, “The economy is better but the community is gone”. Or “Saskaboom good but...”

Some national policy issues were also brought forward. The elimination of free trade would create a better economic balance between rich and poor, according to a participant. One woman asked, “Who created this financial crisis? Are we going to change the system or prop it up?” The Canadian policy on immigration was noted as “...tearing apart families”. And finally, a participant asked, “We spend a lot of time wondering and working out how to assist with childcare but what about the other person filling in on the mother’s full time job? What credit in society does that person get?”

Farming

Better compensation for farmers and for farm women and equal pay for women were identified as important issues.

The need for food labeling and reading of food labels was stated, to have awareness of what people are eating and the nutrients in them. Participants wrote that it would be beneficial to “Buy local foods and eat less pre-packaged foods”, especially food grown within a 100 mile area. Agricultural practices regarding environment and health were mentioned as needing attention. A participant noted that concern about “Food policy in Canada. Food sovereignty. Where does your food come from?” Another commented, “Free trade has not benefited many people world wide – only multi-nationals.”

Environment

Similar to the participants in the earlier workshops, women wrote of the need to do composting, to recycle and to conserve energy. A problem identified was “Consumerism – planned obsolescence – abuse of earth’s resources”. Participants felt it was important to “Simplify lifestyle and consume less”. The need for safe water was an identified priority, as was the need for industry to respect the environment and people and not cover up the problems of the nuclear industry.

What Are We Doing Now?

In the large group, each participant reported on one or two key activities that they were doing as an individual, or that their organization was doing, that related to the RWICS themes. Some activities were also identified on the sticky notes on RWICS themes.

Current activities of organizations and individuals:

- Business and Professional Women’s organization provides workshops in Regina and Saskatoon.
- Canada Without Poverty (formerly the National Anti-Poverty Organization) addresses the structural causes of poverty and promoting lasting solutions to poverty.
- The Federation Provinciale des Fransaskoises is providing a six session (18-hour workshop) on “Women, Money & Economics”. The majority of the communities are rural. This project is funded by Status of Women Canada. FPF has offered mobile clinics in French on women’s health, breast cancer, family planning for teens and sexually transmitted diseases. Another project is “Smoke-free Olympics 2010” an anti-smoking project with high school students. FPF has been involved in a national study of French-speaking caregivers and services for them and a comparison of breast cancer rates among Francophone women and others.
- Active bringing attention to food policy and food sovereignty issues – “Buy Saskatchewan”. Media coordinator on “Food Miles Campaign” (organic and local food). Theatre about food.
- International Women of Saskatoon assists immigrant and refugee women and their families, residing in Saskatoon and area, through free programs and services designed to support their settlement and integration into their community.
- Working with Métis and French organizations and other community and school activities.

- Prairie Improv's activities include workshops on communications that can help women to make a difference and be listened to.
- Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry is an outreach ministry of the Wascana Presbytery of the United Church of Canada. RAPM advocates on behalf of individuals trying to access services and work to address the causes of poverty and improve policies and programs related to poverty. The organization provides individual and systemic advocacy training. RAPM is receiving an increasing number of calls from rural areas for individual advocacy.
- Saskatchewan Status of Women Office provides International Women's Day grants, Saskatchewan Women's Directory, statistical reports about women. Works to bring forward women's issues in government.
- International women of Saskatoon) platform to bring immigrant women on board, create safe places to share. Photo essay at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon.
- Active with the Saskatchewan Women's Institutes, encouraging involvement and education.
- Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan provides workshop in urban areas and has rural members.
- The Women's Mid Life Health Centre in Saskatoon offers referral based clinics, public forums and a library and resource centre. The group is in support of portable health testing. The group offers presentations on women's health - a new program is about metabolic syndrome.
- Conducts research and educates university students about doing research on farm issues and violence against farm women.
- Conducting research about linking women and policy and translating that into action.
- Doing work and research on safe water and food/food sustainability.
- Provided leadership that led to the recycling program being set up in Davidson.
- Taking part in the SEARCH project in north central Regina then using that experience for future leadership work
- Working to build community capacity with a food group, literacy, and information in food boxes.
- Working to eliminate violence, teach respect and self-respect in her church role.

- Writing about farm women's issues.

Many individuals and organizations are already doing work related to rural women and communities, and will continue their important efforts. Some organizations and individuals would like to undertake some new additional activities.

New activities organizations would like to do:

- Business and Professional Women's organization workshops could be provided in rural areas, and BPW also has speakers available.
- Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry would like to provide support for rural advocates in terms of training and possible mentoring - individual and systemic advocacy training. Would like to work with legal groups to help create Poverty Law Clinics and access to courts to challenge constitutional violations.
- Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan could provide entrepreneurial training in communities: self assessment, financial, business planning, human resources, and marketing.
- Women's Mid-Life Health Association of Saskatchewan could provide presentations on their organization and on women's health.

New activities individuals would like to undertake:

- Add my voice to issues of women, rural life, and those living in poverty.
- Address issues of abuse and stress.
- Address the problem of the lack of clear direction and communication which she is identifying as a major difficulty, in health care and elsewhere.
- Advocate for rural families facing systems that then depend on for basic needs.
- Become a policy analyst/policy maker.
- Concerned with information technology issues.
- Create communication links among women.
- Get Canada to have a food policy that is more than a "Cheap Food Policy".
- Improve communications – women in her area need sessions like this, but don't hear about them. Put into action some ideas for public relations, advocacy.

- Inform social services workers about farming and how policy affects farmers.
- Interested in self care and caring for and about neighbors.
- Learn more about policy analysis and the power of community.
- Organize Saskatchewan women's group.
- Participate in Prairie Lily Feminist Society to discover their visions.
- Work on the need for a formal provincial organization for woman.

2. LEADERSHIP ROLES

In a large group discussion the many roles played by rural women were noted on a flipchart.

What Leadership Roles are Rural Women Doing?

Rural women's roles in public life currently include: Members of Parliament, Members of the provincial Legislature, Mayors, Rural Municipality and Town Councillors, School Board members, Credit Union Board members, Enterprise Region representatives. Through their work, women are Health Region CEO's, organizational executives. Women play a greater role in the formal leadership of religious organizations, as clergy, church board members, representatives on Church Councils, heads of women's church organizations, and in sending forward resolutions to church provincial or national decision-making bodies. Women lead activities in fundraising and as newsletter editors in many organizations. Participants also mentioned their roles as activists on important issues.

The leadership of women is vital as childcare providers, mothers and grandmothers. Women provide support to others. When they think of supporting husbands, they like to think of it as providing support, not to the "better half", but the "other half". Some participants spoke about their role in keeping the family farm running - "managing the farmer", while others said they were "being the farmer", or being an "Agrowoman".

Women are active as teachers and principals, and recreation leaders, such as being leaders for Guides or sport coaches. In the health field women predominate and are also First Responders.

What Roles Would You Like to See Rural Women Taking?

Many roles were identified as being currently filled by women, although numbers are small in many of the elected positions.

When asked, “What roles would you like to see rural women taking?”, one participant responded “Any role they wish”. Some would like to see more women (and businesswomen) involved in their communities in key roles. They would like women in senior management positions in general and especially as managers in the occupational fields that employ mostly women i.e. education and health care. For example, how many members of the recently renewed Regional Health Boards are women? On the other hand, one participant would like to see more women who are volunteer firefighters. Another area would be to see women active in a provincial organization for rural women.

3. INCLUSION

Including Young People in Leadership Roles

In a large group discussion, participants said they thought many young people were too busy with jobs, children, hockey, etc., to get involved in leadership or maintaining organizations. Others thought that it was really a matter of choice.

The participants felt that to get more young people involved it is important to welcome newcomers, give young people a chance and don't have the same people doing things all the time. Take time and be patient and don't expect new people to do things exactly the same way as was done previously. Let them go ahead and figure things out. Give new ideas an opportunity. Be willing to transfer power. In the workplace, encourage and mentor new employees. Send out staff to be involved in their community.

Participants also commented on how inclusive children can be of newcomers, not hampered by old stereotypes.

Including Seniors in Leadership Roles

The discussion noted that some seniors have spent many years contributing to the community and may start to want to take it easy. But they have a wealth of knowledge and experience that we can benefit from. Also some seniors are lonely and could use more social connections.

As individuals we can visit and connect with seniors. Seniors can be included through outreach activities of organizations. People can meet at coffee time at church. One town had “secret mentor” activities,

making connections between the generations. Some seniors volunteer to read at schools. Seniors clubs provide new experiences, especially for farm women moving to small towns. A women's coffee row would also be a good idea.

One participant mentioned that there is a seniors' council in Saskatchewan. There is the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism, made up of member organizations representing the interests of seniors throughout the province.

Including People of All Cultural Backgrounds in Leadership Roles

To become an elected leader, a person needs acceptance among the majority of community members. So general acceptance of people from all cultural backgrounds is important.

Towns in Saskatchewan are becoming more multicultural. Communities must provide support to newcomers to Canada, as well as the government, but there is not enough support from the government. Advocates for newcomers are needed. As Saskatchewan's population changes, the cultural make-up in a community can change. Sometimes the changes can leave a former majority in a minority position, for example in some Francophone communities.

Participants in the workshop said that it was important to respect all cultures. Be open to people from other cultures, go to visit them. Take the time to get to know people, learn about their culture and rights and respect them for who they are. Respect them and earn their respect. Let go of stereotypes. Try different approaches to involving them. Recognize that you can't make them do things your way. Overcome the impact of the 9-11 events.

The importance of being careful with language in how you refer to people was brought forward. Ask individuals how they would like you to refer to them or their background. This was especially mentioned with regard to Aboriginal people - do they want to be referred to as First Nations or Métis person or another way. One woman told a story of being referred to in a way that was intended to be funny, but was actually offensive.

Diversity training could be helpful. Society in Canada has discriminated historically. We need to understand our history. Translate the national anthem so everyone can sing it. Avoid divisive politics.

The participants discussed the need to understand the differences between First Nations and Métis people. “Aboriginal peoples” is an official term in our constitution including: First Nations with Status or Treaty Rights and Non-Status Indians, Inuit and Métis people. There are also people of mixed backgrounds that don’t easily fall into these categories. Members of the various Aboriginal peoples have some differing rights and access to services. The participants felt that Aboriginal people should be included, perhaps by creating activities directly involving Aboriginal people. For example, Intercultural Grandmothers Uniting is an organization with groups of women meeting to talk about what concerns them or what is going on in their lives and their community. This year the Immigrant Women of Regina organization has an International Women’s Day event with Aboriginal women.

Is Everyone Involved?

Participants talked about how we include everyone: girls, women, seniors, elders, and people from all cultural backgrounds. In order to include people, participants again emphasized the need to respect people. They suggested creating safe spaces for knowing each other and building community. One participant commented that she contributes to inclusiveness by “Raising my children in an atmosphere of non-violence and respect for diversity.” Another mentors younger women and tries to provide a role model of respect and balance in life.

4. SUPPORTS FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

Participants were asked:

What is needed to encourage and support rural women in leadership roles, especially in public life? What could you do as individuals and groups to support rural women in their current leadership roles and to encourage new roles?

We often hear the phrase, “We’ve come a long way.” So some people have the attitude that all women “have made it”. But this is not true.

Participants would like to see rural women getting credit in their community for all the roles they are taking. Communities can recognize local women’s contributions on International Women’s Day on March 8th or on other occasions.

Women who are not rural can learn more about what the issues are for rural women. Urban women at the workshop said they would want to, “Be with rural women in their struggles. When they speak, we stand

with them.” Workshop participants said that it is important to share the vision of rural women, use various communication strategies, and keep connected. “We are Women Working Together for a Better Tomorrow.”

A participant noted, “Everything in our lives is political. But we need to differentiate between making policy and partisan politics. Understanding this difference is important for getting women involved.” To achieve greater participation participants suggested fostering more consultation processes and communication between rural women and policy makers and promoting clearer understanding of recent political and policy decisions and their relevance to farm women. They also suggested that when research is done we need to translate the research into practical steps for action.

Workshop participants had a number of recommendations regarding leadership:

- There could be more women on Boards and Commissions. People often get on Boards and Commissions because they are representing organizations. That makes it difficult for someone who is not in an organization.
- It would be easier for women to participate if Board meetings were held at a time that accommodates working women - many are working during the day. Others work shiftwork. So this needs to be taken into consideration. Women know their expertise is valuable. One participant commented that all government board members should be reimbursed for time spent at a rate commensurate with management pay. Employers could support participation by recognizing the time spent on municipal, health, school, and other boards as legitimate and recognize employees’ need for time off without difficulty. There could be childcare provided by boards that young women participate in, or costs of childcare covered.
- How can we involve younger women in women’s health issues, or other public issues? Number one - provide low cost, universal, high quality childcare. Look at what has been done in Quebec.
- There should be a more effective policy and infrastructure for all caregiving - not only childcare facilities but eldercare facilities also. Another way to support mothers is to help them find time for themselves, for self care.
- The work-family balance is a concern of young women. In this regard organizations could be more flexible and work with varied schedules. One resource is the Balancing Work and Family Unit

that was part of Saskatchewan Labour and is now part of the policy unit in Advanced Education Employment and Labour.

- What gets women involved in leadership roles? Invitations to participate and encouragement and support.
- It is helpful when men actively recognize and approach women to seek public positions. There is an increased participation of men in supportive roles at both family and community levels, i.e. men doing more behind the scenes in community volunteerism, stay-at-home Dads. Unfortunately the stay-at-home Dads are not recognized and don't get much support. Several participants said, "We are raising our sons to be supportive of women's issues." Others commented on how younger men are more respectful and more readily support women on Boards and in leadership positions.

Taking on a leadership role isn't always easy. One participant said that her standing up for what she believes in isn't always appreciated - people are concerned because "she is a feminist and she is French". Another commented that on the other hand, sometimes standing up for yourself is good, because she is invited to participate on Boards because she is known to think independently and will put forward her ideas. Still when you are on a board, you can have an idea, but it is often a man that validates ideas.

The women discussed how men and women work differently. Women will often talk about each other and take differences of opinion to heart, while men will argue strongly in a meeting, then go for a beer afterwards.

Several ideas were put forward for women supporting each other.

- Women on a Board or Council or in Cabinet need support - they don't want to be a lone voice talking about women's issues. Women need to support each other. Men can also support women's issues and this is very helpful. In supporting another woman in leadership, it needs to be the right woman - someone that understands women's issues. Do go ahead and support that "right woman", back them up. Ask them "What can I do to support you?" and follow through. Women who want to be leaders should find two or three women in their community that support them in their role in the public - they can help with many things, office administration or working on a project.
- Women can help each other by sharing experiences and information. Mentoring can be so valuable. Be a role model. Find a role model. Be a mentor. Find a mentor. Take Business and Professional Women's mentorship training program.

The topic of leadership training was discussed.

- Skills training will also help women be stronger leaders. Women can help others by donating to women's scholarship funds, or sponsoring membership fees, meeting or convention costs for other women.
- We need to overcome the feeling of so many women that they "aren't a somebody".
- Leadership training can include topics such as: how to be in politics, expectations of your role, what are you giving up, dealing with comments on hair and clothes, self assertiveness, confidence, how to handle others' concerns about your being a woman that speaks out or being a feminist. And remember, women on Boards, "Get men to make the coffee first!"
- There are campaign schools for women in other parts of Canada. Check out the women politicians' association of Canada. Business and Professional women had a proposal about offering training. Perhaps Status of Women Canada could fund leadership training.
- Another skill is advocacy. The Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry is hoping to offer workshops on advocacy for rural women - assisting individuals interacting with social systems and dealing with systemic problems at a larger level. There could also be training for volunteer drivers to become advocates for the senior they take to a medical appointment. Another skill in trying to create change in social systems is lobbying.
- The Federation Provinciale des Fransaskoises has a 3-year project doing workshops on economic development with Francophone women in Saskatchewan.

Some differing views were expressed about volunteerism. One participant said, "Women are expected to volunteer for things that should be paid, such as caregivers." Some participants agreed that "If society needs all these jobs then all these jobs should be paid for." One woman said, "Every job should be paid work – to bring value for time spent. End volunteerism!" Some participants agreed that this end to volunteerism is needed, especially for women, such as women volunteering in a hospital gift shop. But other participants commented that "Being a volunteer gives people a way to reach out." Some were concerned that paying for all services would make the health bill go up. Others said that it is really technology that drives health costs.

5. COMMUNICATION

Some of the participants felt that before we could discuss communications from or to rural women, we needed to define what we meant by “rural”. Does it include women from towns, farms, the countryside and acreages? In Ontario at a meeting they were defining rural as being when you are 20 minutes or more from health services. Statistics Canada defines rural as being a non-CMA - that is not in a Census Metropolitan Area, such as Regina or Saskatoon. Then everything outside those two cities in Saskatchewan is rural to them. But there are different sizes of population centres in Saskatchewan. There are the big cities of Regina and Saskatoon and medium cities such as Moose Jaw and Prince Albert. Saskatchewan has several small cities such as Estevan, Weyburn, Swift Current, Yorkton - places are called a city if their population is over 5000. Then the next level is towns, such as Davidson and then villages and hamlets such as Zelma. Then we have farms and ranches, acreages, countryside, remote and Northern locations.

We need labels to identify things, but we should be careful with them. We need to name things to understand them, to acknowledge them.

Participants asked whether we could capture the connection somehow - maybe not using the word “rural”? A participant who does research at the university commented that it is not likely that we can come to a clear definition of the word “rural” - there has been a big debate at universities for many years trying to define “rural”. Another participant commented, “Rural is a state of mind.”

A brief discussion was held concerning messages that rural women might want to convey, or that others would want to convey to rural women, but there was not enough time left to really fill this out.

6. CARING FOR OURSELVES

This topic was included in the workshop because it was identified in the earlier RWICS workshops as affecting women in their everyday lives as in their roles as leaders. Participants were given a list of questions and asked to note their answers to questions on yellow stickies which were then placed on wall charts. Participants then informally discussed what was on the wall. This was followed by a short exercise session. The instructor commented that even taking small steps towards self-care and exercise on a regular basis would lead to improvements in health and sense of well-being for women of all ages. She also told the group about training that is available for people who have an interest in being a fitness leader.

What are 3 things you currently do to care for yourself and to keep your energy high?

Getting enough hours of sleep was identified as being of major importance. But the most discussion was around getting exercise. Some participants are able to go for walks, some are runners. “I walk a lot. If I am in Regina between appointment or meetings I walk around the lake (1 hr 15 min)” One participant made sure to schedule time for horseback riding. Other participants said they tried to eat nutritiously and avoid processed food, additives, and sugar, and took vitamins.

On the health services side, participants mentioned that they got regular checkups; others used massage therapy, meditation and Reiki. And pampering oneself was seen of good value. Having a bubble bath was a favorite mode of relaxation for one participant. Others mentioned regular hair and nail appointments, and another said “Every 6 weeks without fail I get my hair cut and colored.”

Keeping in touch with family helped women to keep energized. “Spend lots of time with kids and grandkids. “ “Play with my granddaughter.” Another said what kept her going was “Spend time with my girlfriends, lunches, walking; exercise, aerobics, yoga; read books”, “Meet with friends; stop and have tea; walk” and “Go out for supper with 3 women friends of 40+ years”. Another talked with friends when upset or needing to vent. Playing cards with friends and relatives was one woman’s way to relax. Another commented “I surround myself with like-minded people.”

Sometime this involved taking a weekend away with a sister or friends. Or short trips alone. One participant mentioned taking a week tropical vacation.

Others identified more solitary activities as a way of relaxing, such as, “Rise early and knit quietly for 1 hour before work”, or “Sit by the creek – watch the water flow – leaning on a tree”. Music was important for several participants. One said she liked to “Listen to music/dance/sing (like no one’s listening or watching)”. Watching movies and reading books were other popular ways to relax. “[I] ... Buy (and read) one book a month (at least) that I read just for fun.”

One participant said she kept energized because, “I focus my energies on issues, projects or work that I believe in and am passionate about.” Another found that focusing on her goals was important.

And finally, “When I make supper, hubby cleans up!”

What are 3 things you would like to be doing?

Starting and sticking to a regular exercise program was mentioned by several participants. Gardening and taking walks were two activities identified. Spending more time meditating or praying was a priority for one woman. The women would like to eat more healthy foods and take supplements and vitamins regularly. Spending more time with children, family and friends would be desirable, especially taking time to travel on holidays together.

Some women wanted more time for themselves. “Spend more time for me... ‘my time’!” Another wanted “More time for myself – for writing – for shopping – for thinking – for badminton – to go out with friends ... more holidays away.”

Not surprisingly the readers wanted more time to read, such as “Read a good book and have a good cry.” The women would like to have time for other hobbies. One woman would like to “Sit down at my sewing machine. I miss it!” Another wanted to learn to play the fiddle, and another wanted to scrapbook old photos.

And one woman stated that she would like to “Pass the torch of important issues to others”.

What are the barriers to taking steps for self care?

Lack of self value, not enough self-discipline or self motivation, guilt and “laziness” were identified as barriers to self care.

“What stops me from exercising – weather, laziness, work.” Many said that their commitments to others were a barrier. “Taking care of all the others first” “Put others before myself”. Another put it very clearly when she wrote, “No time, higher priorities.” Others talked about having “Too many commitments (causes).” “Long days, short nights.” “Trying to stop burning the candle at both ends.” “Time scheduling for me comes last!”

Lack of money was also a barrier for several women. While to go out walking for exercise may only require someone to have a decent pair of runners or walking shoes, being able to purchase such footwear could be too costly for some women.

What supports do you need to take steps for self care?

The women identified several internal values as needing support: “Better self motivation”, “To be able to live out my belief that I am worth the effort”, and “Belief in my own value”.

Less concern for others would help some women. Others mentioned the need for better self-organization, a realignment of priorities, and time to feel focused on self care.

Positive reinforcement would help in the form of “Words of praise” and “Laughter”.

Having to do more self care for health reasons or encouragement by health practitioners would motivate some women. One said she would be encouraged by “The nagging of my husband and doctor”. Support from their spouse or their children was mentioned by several women. Many mentioned friends, such as “Supportive friends who listen, understand and give gentle pushes”, “Friend asks me for a walk” and “Friends – we keep each other going.”

On the community side, having more people (women) in rural Saskatchewan would help, as would having supportive women’s organizations. Some mentioned making use of exercise programs in their area, others noted that there was a lack of local programs, another wanted a work wellness program. (Because this was a mix of farm, small town and urban women - this cannot be taken as a comment on the availability of services in rural areas.)

A better financial situation would help some to take more steps to self care.

7. LEADERSHIP TRAINING

This topic was discussed in the large group and the discussion recorded on a flipchart.

The women talked about why we need to involve others in taking on leadership roles. One main reason in rural Saskatchewan is to replace those who are retiring. Participants felt that we need to encourage women in advocacy roles beyond their local community, and encourage women to “Vote for something instead of against something”.

Some participants wondered if there is too much of a “Me” focus nowadays versus the “we focus” or cooperative focus in the past,

keeping people away from community involvement. Others weren't sure if that was so. The participants noted that sometimes communities can be cliquy, stopping new people from taking part. They talked about how to reach out to get new women involved. Direct invitations are often the best way to get people involved. "Tap them on the shoulder" and ask them.

When it came to talking about leadership training, they wondered who needed training versus who would actually want training. One participant commented, "You can change people in two ways: by education and by suffering." People have to be receptive to the education. "Will the women who could use it actually participate?" was another point raised. One participant stated that, "Young women here today at this workshop are already at second base – they know a lot already". She compared their knowledge and experience to what she knew at that age.

The women noted that the location of training and who is involved in planning will affect the success. And we need to be realistic about how we define success - it is not a failure if you don't get 25 women out to a session. "Getting a small group out is fine. Out of five women, one can become a leader."

Sometimes it might be necessary for a woman to travel to another community for training, but rural people are used to travelling. Rural women will travel, but some don't want to go too far. How far is too far? Maybe within one hour of home, so they can go back at night or don't have too far to go if they have to get back quickly. On the other hand, one participant quipped, "Ladies from the city don't want to travel outside the city – that is the problem!"

The women questioned whether training needs for rural women are different from other women. Some wondered if the training is really needed or is it just a case of needed to build the confidence of rural women. They thought the women should be told, "Don't hesitate, jump in, learn by doing". On the other hand some participants said that while you can learn by doing, "... having some skills training is helpful." Even current leaders can always learn something to help them be better leaders. The women discussed what kind of training might be required - what are the current gaps in training. They felt that everyone needs validation. It is very important to validate younger women, and not to have any women holding back because they are thinking, "I'm a nobody". We need to train women "... how to believe in themselves". But it can be more difficult for women trying to create change. Sometimes women are called "loud" or "feminist" if they speak out. On the other hand,

certain people get asked to go on boards because they are known to speak out and put their opinions forward.

Several participants talked about the value of having a mentor or someone to look up to for advice, “Someone to bounce ideas off of”. One woman spoke about how she had an older woman as a mentor that was very helpful. Participants also noted that women could benefit from training in how to mentor others.

A participant suggested having a mentorship program that included:

- Scholarships, travel pool, memberships funding, conference fees
- Mandate, criteria, administrating committee, fundraising committee’
- Mentors providing training and support for training (like AA sponsor)
- Support groups
- Information about groups in central locations

Other training topics included: Board development, proposal writing, accounting for non-profit organizations, and advocacy skills. A participant who has worked with many organizations said that what is also needed is “high end training” for women in leadership positions in large organizations.

Another important skill the participants identified is maintaining a balance - not letting oneself get low energy. “Learn to say no”, “Don’t let self care go down the drain”, and don’t “Get stretched too thin”. Women need to be taught where to focus, “To be effective – prioritize”.

There was also discussion about what training opportunities are already available. One participant pointed out that while there is training out there “... the needs are different for women”. Some training opportunities were highlighted in the paper handed out at the workshop called “Leadership Training Opportunities for Rural Women in Saskatchewan”. Some other options identified were:

- 4-H training
- Business and Professional Women has leadership training sessions. The cost to pay BPW (honourarium) depends on what you charge to those attending – main cost is travel and accommodations. BPW is in Regina and Saskatoon.

- Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan has finance workshops that would apply to any organization. They are willing to go to rural areas (forty percent of WES members are rural)
- Regional Colleges offer courses and will help set things up if there is local interest.
- Canada Revenue Agency runs programs for charitable organizations.
- Social Services life skills programs are helpful to identify skills and build confidence.
- Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry goes out to communities for free to do advocacy training for people who are assisting individuals getting the assistance or services they need, and for advocating for improvements in services and policies.
- The Vibrant Communities organization offers training.
- The Viterra (What Pool) training workshop for farm leaders for the Farm Leader's Council is taken from the Pacific Institute. It focuses on people looking at themselves and seeing strengths and skills and identifying things that are holding them back.

The workshop participants felt that further research or an audit is needed on what is available for leadership training, and then determine what is missing.

A participant commented that before looking at the paper that was distributed and hearing the discussion, she didn't realize what was available for leadership training. A suggestion came forward that an information clearing-house would be helpful.

It was noted that accessibility was the big issue in the past but, "Technology will open up opportunities in rural Saskatchewan". Women could use "Training on how to use the Internet productively to learn leadership roles - how do you weed out all the stuff you don't want on the Internet?" Apparently, Watrous has a good course in computer training for 50 years and over. However, participants pointed out that "Not everyone has access to high-tech tools or knows how to use them". "We're in a transition when it comes to technology, but the more that there is technology, the more the non-technical people are isolated". One woman was worried that "We may lose our comfort in relating to real people" with the increased use of technology.

Participants recognized that it takes more time and energy to communicate, and it is important to use many communications media. You need to ask, “What is the medium that is going to achieve your goals?” The women said we need to use communications media “...and also touch people on the shoulder”.

Another concern was that training will cost some money. Many can't afford even \$100 and would need expenses covered to participate, so trainers need to make sure cost is not a problem for low income people. “Everything doesn't have to be free but we need to recognize the difficulties for low income people.” “Keep expenses low, pay gas, get billeted.”

What organization would provide an information clearing-house? The participants did not know of which organization in Saskatchewan could fulfill this function, especially if we wanted a focus on women.

The women also spoke about the need for women to have some way to keep connected. Not everyone is aware of events going on. “We need a central organization to provide the information.” Unfortunately, “... there is no more Saskatchewan Women's Agricultural Network”. In the province there is a lack of coordination. For example the Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women is no longer active. And while there is a lot that can be done to communicate through the Internet, and groups can have meetings over the telephone, women still need to meet face to face.

8. LINKAGES

This discussion focused on creating linkages between rural women and other women working for women in Saskatchewan.

Organizations Involving Rural Women

Participants agreed that women's organizations need some administrative and organizational support. For example, they noted that the Rural Women's Issues Committee of Saskatchewan had support from Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence, which has contributed to the success of RWICS. Another participant told the group that Saskatchewan Women's Institutes (SWI) had an office, but no longer. Without an office it is very difficult. The leaders of SWI were teachers, etc. and they did a lot to educate and inform and link together rural women, but now the membership is declining. Perhaps the organization name scares people off. The functions of the organization are still useful, but younger women don't seem interested.

There was some discussion about how long it is possible to keep organizations going. It may not be the fault of anyone, but times change. Organizations have a life cycle. The fabric of Saskatchewan culture is changing. When the land was settled there were few educational and social opportunities in rural areas. Nowadays in Canada women in rural areas have reasonable educational levels, women are older and there are fewer women, so that affects the draw for an organization that emphasizes information. Whereas, in comparison, in some countries, women still have very poor access to learning opportunities. Women are also very busy, so that affects the time available for organizations. But there still can be a way to keep organizations going.

Participants asked:

- Is there a need right now for rural women to connect?
- Is there a need for a new organization?

Several issues were brought forward. One participant stated that “Many women’s issues are threatened, such as pay equity. There is also a need to bring women’s health needs forward to Regional Health Boards”. Other women highlighted the concerns with women and human rights. “Canada has ignored United Nations recommendations on the rights of women and had to appear before a UN committee because of it.” A consultation related to United Nations recommendations is being organized. The issue of violence against women was raised. A participant stated that “Shelters can’t advocate or it will threaten their funding”. Literacy programs have been taken away. The women also acknowledged the need to address Aboriginal issues. Since the Saskatchewan Status of Women Office consultations were cancelled, participants hoped that they would be rescheduled. They were extremely disappointed that PWHCE would no longer be funded, as it appeared would happen at this time.

The conclusion was that there were issues affecting women that needed to be addressed.

One of the goals of the RWICS project was to create linkages between rural women. The participants commented that to try to make an organization that is “rural” is difficult. “... to some rural means farm, to others rural means farm and small town, to others it is anything outside of Regina and Saskatoon. It is not clear.” Another participant commented that, “‘Rural’ not a good word because it is not defined, we should take out the word ‘rural’”. One of the key statements by a participant was, **“Everyone is concerned about rural women, we are also concerned about women in the city, our daughter is**

raising children in the city.” The women felt that the rural-urban division is not so relevant anymore because people live in the country, work in the city, the lines are blurred.

Linking Women Provincially

The women agreed that one group can't do it all in addressing all the issues. They also thought that women need to get together at least once a year at a provincial level. The idea of a provincial organization was more well-received than the idea of a rural organization.

The women then determined to set up a working committee to look at a provincial organization. It would take time to set up a provincial organization, so in the meantime the group could communicate through the list-serve re provincial organization.

A participant asked whether another organization was needed, or could the work be tacked onto another committee. Someone explained that the need to have women organized provincially was identified previously, and the YWCA organized a meeting in Saskatoon 2 or 3 years ago, but the committee afterwards wasn't able to follow up. The list serve from that meeting still exists. Women here can be part of it. The group agreed that the role of the new organization would have to be determined through further discussion. Would it be involved in lobbying or advocacy? Participants said that as things progressed, MLA's, MP's, MLA's and Senators should be notified about the new group.

The idea would be to create an organization that would link together Saskatchewan women from all geographic areas: farms, ranches, acreages, small towns, remote and northern areas, small cities, and large cities. The sense of it was that there are differences in some of the situations of women in these different locations that should be understood and respected, but there are many similarities in the barriers to overcome and visions that women hope to achieve.

The idea of creating this organization linking together Saskatchewan women from all geographic areas was supported unanimously by the workshop participants. Seven participants said they would be able to be active on a committee. The committee's mandate was set by the workshop as

- “Explore the options for creating a provincial women's organization”
- “Explore and recommend various structures available to allow and/or support the development of one provincial body to represent issues of concern to women”

This would involve formulating the purpose of the organization and contacting other organizations. The committee was instructed to report back to the workshop group. This work was seen as an effective way of furthering the goals of RWICS to involve and raise the issues of rural women.

Some suggestions were made for the organizational structure. Perhaps it could be a coalition of groups, with options for individuals to be members at large. One of the main roles of the organization would be to communicate “who is doing what”. Women’s groups would be encouraged to support each other’s initiatives when they were in agreement with the objectives. It was recognized that the groups, “Will have to discuss common objectives, [and they] may not agree on everything”, but they could “Work together on common goals”. “Women need to listen to other women. We may have some disagreements but we can work together.”

The individual women who volunteered to be on the organizing committee were asked what their interest was in doing this work. Urban women said they were “Interested to learn about farm and rural issues” One woman said that she wanted to contribute to help make the new group well-organized. Another was interested in contributing her skills to the group. One woman commented that she enjoyed working with such a group of dynamic and powerful women. Some participants had been advocating for women’s issues for many years. They had been “Interested in a provincial group for a long time”. “Women lost ground in the 1990’s”. “Its time for women to get together”. “Women are over 50% of the population” “Its time to rebuild the power base.” A representative of a Francophone women’s group said that Francophone women have worked to maintain their funding and their organizations” and can and want to contribute to the women’s community in the province. And a participant stated that she wanted to be involved to help “Bring respect among different cultural groups - it is women who can lead the way”.

WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS

At the end of the Workshop, participants filled in a response to the following statements on their evaluation form - Taking Stock “I didn’t get a chance to say; I would like to know more about; I will follow up this session with/by; The most significant thing I heard someone say today; My comments on the day; This is what I want to make sure is heard by and shared with others ...”.

I didn’t get a chance to say...

Several participants stated that they had a chance to say most of what they wanted. Participants expressed appreciation to the organizers of the event. One stated, “ ... I think that this was the best Rural Women’s meeting that I have attended.” Women offered “Thanks to the younger women who offered such enthusiasm and expressed themselves.” On the other hand, some participants stated a need to have more clarification of future steps following the workshop.

Participants would have liked to talk more about the value of diversity training, listening to others’ stories, finding commonalities, extending the olive branch. They would have liked to discuss the lack of welcome for newcomers or new residents in some towns. Another topic could be the immigration laws in Canada. A participant wanted to let people know that regulations for large corporations are being unnecessarily applied to and imposed on small communities, e.g. at fall suppers and farmers’ markets.

I would like to know more about...

Participants would like to have more time to spend to get to know the other participants. Urban women would like to learn more about rural issues (both small town and farm issues). They would like to know more about how to build a stronger network among women, and how to get women’s groups in their community to work together. One participant wanted to learn more about the Intercultural Grandmothers Uniting group. Another wanted to learn more about the Pacific Institute leadership course and places to read policy and research documents on-line

The need was identified for additional information on the (now inactive) Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women. They would also like to know about how this type of organization would relate to Status of Women Canada and the Saskatchewan Status of Women Office. There is confusion between the mandates and roles

of the federal and provincial government offices - are they involved in networking groups, being clearing houses for information gathering and dispensing? What are their roles beyond the grants to organizations from Status of Women Canada or the grants for International Women's Day events from the Saskatchewan Status of Women Office?

I will follow up this session with/by...

Several participants will be involved in the steering committee regarding the rural-urban- umbrella provincial women's organization. The women will be "Keeping informed, keeping connected, thinking about where I can offer and give back." Those from organizations will inform their boards of this weekend. They will be "Encouraging rural women to get together and talk about the problems they are faced with everyday and to search for solutions." Those actively working on particular issues will "Keep on slugging, lobbying governments on many issues." Another participant said she would be "Developing my leadership skills and looking for leadership opportunities, seeking out stories and awareness of women's and rural issues and ways to stay connected to urban and rural life."

Issues that they will act on include work around food security and sovereignty, and local organic sources. Some were intending to express concern about the changes to funding for PWHCE and the need for continued funding.

And finally, a participant indicated an interest in getting more physical exercise, while another said she would take the fitness leadership training course identified in the workshop.

The most significant thing I heard someone say today was...

"Women's issues are definitely on a burning platform."

"How difficult it is to define rural ... we need to define/identify our commonality." "Rural women" is not defined. Women everywhere have some issues in common. Let's join together in these common issues." The need for a provincial base expressed by many was seen as very significant, and also the interest expressed in participating in policy making groups. They appreciate the phrase "Leadership does not stop here." The "yes, but" vs. "yes, and" exercise was a highlight. Appreciation was also expressed for the idea that "Self-care is necessary. Care for you first so you will be capable of caring for others." One participant appreciated learning about the opportunity there is " ... to become a fitness leader in my community."

My comments on the day...

Overall participants enjoyed the event. “Really informative, interesting & worthwhile. Thank you! Great handouts”. Participants appreciated the venue and presentations “Good facility; excellent meals; excellent presentations...” They appreciated the chance to be involved and the level of participation by all those attending. “[It was] Energizing to be with such dedicated, concerned, and knowledgeable women. Thanks for the opportunity.” Other comments included: “Fantastic women; fantastic dialogue; fantastic day” “Wonderful and fun and sharing of ideas.” “Good company, good conversations, good food. Thank you for listening to my opinions and allowing me the opportunity to come and participate.”

For improvements, one participant suggested greater clarity on the workshop objectives - if the women attending were already leaders - do we need to spend time on talking about how to be a leader? The need for clarity about the definition of rural was also identified. “Start out with the definition of “rural” so we are all on the same page.”

This is what I want to make sure is heard by and shared with others...

An urban woman commented on what she would like to say to rural women, “I want to learn about your struggles and successes and be of service in whatever way.” Another wanted to say, “That we are moving forward!”

Participants wanted to say in regard to women’s organizations, that “We need a group... not just sure what we will call it and what it will look like.” “We need a forum to meet provincially – even once a year.” They also said that there is a need for a paid position to coordinate all different groups and help them organize and support each other. They identified the need to invite and welcome women to take leadership roles and then mentor/support them and not to use labels or judgments to limit people’s abilities to contribute. “Women are important in Saskatchewan. They are the backbone of Saskatchewan.” “We need a means of talking to our governments to bring solutions for our clientele and communities as we see the need!!”

Comments were made on the importance of the environment. “Environmental issues are at the heart of everything – economics, social, our very life on earth. Every decision making process should include its impact on the environment as the first criteria.” Another

was very concerned about the expansion of nuclear industry and oil sands.

And finally, the women got a laugh out of the Women's Creed: "Live your life in such a way that when your feet hit the floor in the morning, Satan shudders & says..."Oh shit...she's awake!!"

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The results of this workshop will be available on the RWICS and PWHCE websites and distributed to participants.

Until the RWICS project funding ends, March 31, 2009, RWICS will support the initiatives forthcoming from this workshop. The RWICS steering committee will be completing its final report on the RWICS project by the end of May 2009. After this point RWICS could apply for another Status of Women Canada grant, if the RWICS committee continues. Another group involving rural women could also apply for Status of Women Grants in the 2009-2010 fiscal year. With the unfortunately anticipated changes to funding for PWHCE, that organization will no longer be able to provide the support that it has been giving to RWICS. [Note that while PWHCE did receive funding, announced after the Davidson workshop, it was not the core funding that had given it the ability to support RWICS in the past, but project funding, so that resources must be focused on the projects.]

Until the end of March, participants are recommended to contact RWICS through the PWHCE contact address. After that contact would be through the rural/small town/farm/ranch list serve, or through shared email addresses. This does leave out women who do not have email. The RWICS Steering Committee will retain the contact information for anyone who participated in the RWICS workshops. At this time it is not clear if there would be a need for a future mail-out to the RWICS participants and where the funding would come from to do this, and if it could be picked up on a volunteer basis.

One participant volunteered to start and be the moderator of a list-serve on topics of interest re rural - small town -ranch - farm women. Once this is set up, individuals can send information of interest to the moderator who will send it out to participants on the list. Replies will be sent to the moderator, who will then forward the replies to the individuals on the list serve. This list will be open to participants in RWICS workshops, as well as others who may be interested, such as women living in these areas (rural/small town/ranch/farm women), government workers, academic researchers across Canada, and other interested individuals. Examples of information to be included: news items, upcoming events, government reports, academic research directly related to rural/small town/ranch/farm women's lives. We

anticipate that the postings to this list serve will not be too frequent so as not to over-burden participants with information.

Eight workshop participants volunteered for the committee to investigate the possibilities of setting up a rural-urban-umbrella women's organization. These women were from rural and urban locations, and the majority of them had lived on a farm or in a small town at some time.

There will need to be communication among the committee members and communication back to the participants in the Davidson workshop. A participant offered to set up a list-serve for the rural-urban-umbrella organization as it develops. If this listserv contains information of importance to rural and urban women and discussion of women's issues in general, there will be some overlap with the rural/small town/ranch/farm women list serve. So further thought may need to be put into how these two information-sharing functions will relate to each other.

There are a number of opportunities with regard to leadership training. Additions could be made to the list of leadership training opportunities in the "Leadership Training Opportunities for Rural Women in Saskatchewan" paper circulated at this workshop. This paper will be posted on the RWICS website. Further investigation could be done to identify other leadership opportunities. A clearinghouse of information about leadership would be helpful. There is a fitness leadership training course that women can take. RWICS participants could take Business and Professional Women (BPW) courses, join BPW, and then offer the courses in rural areas. Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan can provide training courses in rural areas if a group is interested. The Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry is interested in offering training in advocacy helping individuals accessing social welfare systems or experiencing poverty, and training in how to advocate concerning policy issues. The Regional College in Davidson is also quite interested in helping to organize leadership training for women. Saskatchewan women MLA's and the Saskatchewan members of the Committee for Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Government of Federation of Canadian Municipalities who were notified about the Davidson event expressed interest in future events or work on this topic.

An opportunity for future involvement will be an upcoming consultation related to United Nations recommendations on Canada's fulfillment of commitments to improve the rights and status of

women. And hopefully the Saskatchewan Status of Women Office will reschedule its consultation forums for Saskatoon and Regina.