

SPRING 2012 **NEWSLETTER** About the Nelson

Women's Centre

The Nelson and District Women's Centre has been open since 1973, and is the oldest rural women's centre in Canada. A project of the West Kootenay Women's Association, the Centre continues to sponsor many interesting projects and events, and we invite all area women to join us.

RARE CANADIAN PERFORMANCE BY TRET **FURE - SEPTEMBER 1, 2012**



Tret Fure is one of the most prolific artists in the contemporary singersongwriter arena. Her career has spanned over four decades. She has re-established herself in her folk work

and has never sounded better. Tret is prominent in the women's music scene and will be making a rare appearance in Nelson to lend support to this Nelson and District Women's Centre fundraiser. Performing during Kootenay Pride weekend, she will present an acoustic performance sure to engage the audience. She will be performing songs from her recent CD, 'Horizons,' as well as older tunes. 'Horizons' spotlights Tret's amazing vocals and virtuoso guitar playing. This performance is not to be missed. Tickets will be available soon at Otter Books and the Women's Centre. More information on our website soon.

SAVE THE DATES!

WKWA Library Book Sale June 23 SelfDesign High 10 am - noon

Sept 1 **Tret Fure**

> SpiritBar, 8:30 pm A fundraiser for the **Nelson Women's Centre**

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Executive Director Report By Tasha Bassingthwaighte

Spring is bursting with new growth in the garden and in the Centre. We have a new project called Community Threads which will consist of free workshops teaching textile skills such as sewing, quilting, knitting, and felting, in addition to weekly mentoring sessions. Most mentors and facilitators will be senior women sharing their knowledge with senior and non-senior women alike. The project will last a year. There are still lots of unknowns with this project, and all interested women are invited to join the steering committee for Community Threads. Just call or email me if you want to get involved (tasha@nelsonwomenscetnre.com or 352-9916).

The first round of the GAP Theatre Project is over and it was very successful! It consisted of ten teenagers who met for ten weeks of Theatre of the Oppressed workshops talking about gender-based oppression (that is, sexism, homophobia and transphobia) and creating scenes from their lives about their life experiences with these forms of oppression. We then showed these scenes as interactive theatre in Salmo, Nelson, and Castlegar. Elsewhere in the newsletter, you can read Sandra's review of the Nelson performance. The great news is that this project will continue this next year, thanks to Columbia Basin Trust and SelfDesign High. You'll hear more about it in the fall.

We have been working on several renovation projects in the Centre this winter and spring. We are making the Centre more easily accessible for those of us with mobility issues. There will be railing put in the front and back shortly, a new wheelchair door has been installed in the back, and the downstairs bathroom has been proved to make it easier for women with wheelchairs, strollers, or walkers to use. The Food Security Committee has started meeting again, figuring out ideas

for increasing the amount of healthy, fresh food the Women's Centre offers to the women who come in to the Centre. This includes our own garden, getting donations from local stores, and connecting with farms and productive gardens in the area. We'd love you to be involved in this! Email or call to find out the next meeting time.

The next few months will bring the busyness of a few new hirings: a Program Coordinator to replace Jackie, a Youth Program Coordinator to replace Marya who is moving to Ontario, and a new Community Threads Coordinator. I have been accepted into a (mainly distance education) program through the Canadian Women's Foundation and the Coady International Institute of St. Francis Xavier University. The program has invited 25 women from across the country to study leadership, organizational development, and social change. I'll be going to Nova Scotia for ten days in June for the first residential portion of the program. I'm sure I'll I come back with lots of new ideas and inspiration for the Women's Centre!

NOTICE! For those of you who are unaware, WKWA has recently changed the official title of "WKWA Coordinator" to "Executive Director". It has been brought to our attention that this stimulated discomfort for some. Please take this opportunity to send your suggestions or alternate solutions for what would be clear and recognizable job titles while remaining within out feminist values of non-hierarchical structures. Upon receiving your feedback, the CC will revisit the decision around this job title. Send comments to info@nelsonwomenscentre.com."

I SWAM THE SKEENA

Interview with Ali Howard



In 2009, Ali Howard swam the entire 610 kilometre length of the Skeena River, from the Sacred Headwaters to the Pacific Ocean, to educate people about the importance of the Skeena, one of the world's longest undammed rivers and the second longest river in British Columbia, after the Fraser. Wild salmon are at the heart of what makes the river special.

Ali was raising funds for conservation efforts in protecting the Skeena Watershed – in particular, two proposed coalbed methane gas developments at the headwaters that pose a threat to wild salmon.

"I felt deeply connected to the Skeena River as the source of many things. The swim was a defining moment and a significant part of my life," says Ali, who runs a health food store in Smithers, B.C. It took her about 25 days to make the trip.

"Everything I asked my body to do, it did. It shows you that a regular person can make a difference, and you can say no."



Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition P.O. Box 70, Hazleton, B.C. VOJ 1YO

info@skeenawatershed.com In April, Ali Howard was in Nelson as a keynote speaker for the Environmental Justice Regional Teacher's Conference, organized by WKWA member **Shannon Lanaway**.

Some of Shannon's treasured moments:

- Friday night free bannock and borscht at Taghum Hall
- Youth submissions from the environmental documentary contest, 'What You Love about the Kootenays'
- Meeting Marrow, the domesticated wolf
- Laughing my head off at Lucas Meyers as he performed his 'Apologisation to Mother Earth' as 'Randy from Creston.'

"The personal and environmental impact the event had on the participants helped me realize the power of knowledge all people have when they are given the right context to share and be valued for this knowledge. I loved the connections I was able to make with community nonprofit organizations, and I loved encouraging some creative activities in which people can be involved.

"An example was the Critical Mass community bike ride to the Taghum Hall opening of the conference. The date for Critical Mass bike rides world wide takes place on the last Friday of the month, which is when the conference started. I organized a truck to provide cyclists a ride home after the event and wrote encouraging signs and taped them to posts and road signs to add a little humour."

WKWA BOOK SALE!

We are looking for books of all types (no encyclopedias or textbooks, though) for our upcoming book sale at SelfDesign High on Saturday, June 23rd, 10 am to 12 noon. If you can help, bring 'em in! Either to the WKWA Library or through the slot in the back door if we're not open. Thanks!

GAP THEATRE FOR YOUTH

"Just a Friend" and "Rumours" Review by Sandra Hartline



Who remembers what it was like to be a teenager? Who has seen oppression and not known what to do? Can youth (and the rest of us) move beyond perceived gender roles and learned behaviours and become more honest with each other?

These were some of the questions explored by ten young people and their theatre audience at a recent performance in Nelson. In a project sponsored by the West Kootenay Women's Association with financial assistance from Columbia Basin Trust and SelffDesign High, the youth spent three months collecting their own stories and personal experiences. The results were the entertaining, engaging and thought provoking short pieces, "Just a Friend" and "Rumours."

The situations ranged from whether or not a guy should open a car door for his

girlfriend and what she should wear to a party to a scary scene in which a group of guys are planning to rape a girl after one of their friends claims to have dumped her. After each play was performed by the actors, members of the audience jumped in during a replay with ideas for interventions to transform the story onstage.

Some of the concerns voiced were a lack of solidarity between women, a need to address fears in relationships, and reclaiming language around body size and appearance. Audience members and actors alike expressed the need for honesty rather than the need to protect self-image and reputation, to get people talking to each other and bringing issues and concerns into the light, not to take things at face value or to always believe what you hear.

I noted a certain amount of resistance from those onstage and those in the audience. Change can be awkward and may take practice. There are skills to be learned for sure, and there needs to be a spectrum of ideas for intervention and change.

Many thanks to the courageous performers, who included Lu Schmunk, Michaela Davies, Sasha Baines, Taisa Reid, Raven Truth, Theo Mackenzie, Taavi Wickman, Anais Fevrier, Bhodi Cartland and Paisley Randell in sometimes gender-bending roles.

After the Nelson performance, the young actors presented the plays at the Mir Centre for Peace in Castlegar. The Gender Action Project (GAP) will have another round of workshops and performances in the West Kootenay next fall and winter.

CANADIAN VOICE OF WOMEN FOR PEACE AT THE UNITED NATIONS

By Hannah Hadikin, Board Member, VOW

Since the 1970's the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) as an accredited non-government organization (NGO) has maintained an affiliation with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

This affiliation allows for VOW to officially participate at the annual meeting of the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. This participation takes the form of workshops around the priority theme for the year, the preparation and delivery of briefs and meeting with the Canadian Mission to the UN.

Each year the CSW considers a priority theme and often an emerging issue. The overall focus is always gender equality, development and peace.

During the first two weeks of March, between 2,000 – 5,000 women activists gather at the UN to learn, teach, lobby, examine progress and network extensively. Most of these "gatherings" take place at the UN Church Centre, a highrise building located across the street from the UN headquarters.

Member States and representatives of UN entities, along with ÉCOSOC organizations are expected to provide information and insights, towards the implementation of agreed conclusions around the priority theme. These high level,

formal meetings are restricted to delegate representatives.

For the larger majority of women attending the CSW, it is the parallel events that are organized outside of the formal program of the Commission that offer a chance to meet wonderful women from all parts of the global community.

Over the course of the two weeks, women delegates attend panel discussions, roundtables, workshops and forums. There are also evening events which with many interesting social flavors.

Stunning headdresses or traditional head wraps, as forms of cultural expression or in some cases as signs of spirituality, graced the workshop rooms. Luxurious African textiles, accessories of beads and bags, truly offered a journey through cultural passageways.

Women delegates from Africa, to the eastern Mediterranean region, from the Americas, to Europe, from Asia

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to the Western Pacific region, share their efforts to implement genderresponsive approaches. Women share both their inspiring and often very painful stories - stories of strength and courage in dealing with the persistent realities of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease, conflict and war. It's an opportunity to bring these critical issues to the forefront of our understanding.

I met with women from many countries, including Rwanda and the Congo. I listened to testimonies of how sexual violence and rape become deliberate strategies of war, robbing the lives of women and girls. I also heard how in Rwanda, post-conflict, women are actively engaged in using their wisdom and compassion to ensure sustainable peace.

Over the past 56 years, themes have focused on education and training for women, women and health, women and the media, women and the environment and the girl child.

This years theme: The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges, provided me with an opportunity to participate on the VOW panel addressing militarism and the alarming amount of public funds going to bloated military budgets and away from social programs in rural areas.

their families, not unlike of those in developing countries. I spoke of some of our local programs, such as Women In Sustainable Housing (WISH), that have given women hope.

As always, I remain thankful for the opportunity that VOW provides for me, each time I participate at the CSW. It is always an amazing experience. I continue to process the life stories, the passion and courage, shared by so many women over the duration of the conference.

I also believe very firmly that the UN needs women to hold member states, including our own Canadian government, accountable in the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, which acknowledges the impact of war on women and calls for a gender perspective in peace, security, policymaking, peace negotiating, and peacekeeping.

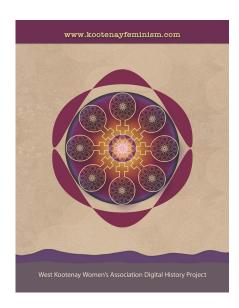
For VOW to continue its peace dedicated work, it needs your help. Please consider a membership or donation. Check out our website at www.vowpeace.org



My presentation provided a lens into

our local, rural landscape and the situation facing many women and

www.kootenayfeminism.com Audio & Video Launch



On March 11th, there was a WKWA celebration of International Women's Week at the Touchstones Museum of Art and History, where Marcia Braundy and her colleague, Miriam Needoba, the project's audio/visual technician, took the audience on a tour of new audio and visual material for our existing website,

www.kootenayfeminism.com

Project funding was provided by the Barber Historical Digitization Program at UBC, a mentorship grant from the Kootenay Columbia Cultural Alliance and the BC 150 Heritage Legacy Fund, which provided the initial startup money.

Dr. Braundy, the website's founder and project manager, received the 2011 Barbara Roberts Award from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) for her work on this project, in which she created a space for the voices of all the extraordinary feminist women of the Kootenays who have done so much for our communities through service, the arts, politics, journalism and media.

"The digital history presents the efforts of West Kootenay women to create a more just,

joyful, safe and supportive society where women and girls are valued for their contributions, and have access to real choices regarding how they live their lives, earn their livings and find their rightful place in community contributions," Marcia said.

"While we have not yet achieved this goal for all women across Canadian society, and too many are still falling through the deep cracks of poverty, violence and injustice, the website is a rich testament to the work undertaken during the past 40 years."

"I have lived for many years in the Kootenays, and shared in many of the initiatives described on the website. The element that stands out for me has always been the integrity of the ways in which women of the Kootenays lived out their principles in their daily lives. The way in which you lived your life was the important thing."

I attended this launch along with some other feisty and appreciative women. We discovered that the website is rich with history, including the 1974 Pass Creek women's festival (the first in British Columbia), the Ad Hoc Singers women's singing group, a little-known visit by Nellie McClung to the local Women's Institute in the 1920s, and more recently, an event in 2011 called Feminism Across the Ages, which featured women representing nine decades telling their individual stories. I especially liked the 2008 interview with former WKWA coordinator Karen New Moon about her involvement with the Nelson and District Women's Centre beginning in 1994.

Have a look! There are many interesting videos on this new version of the website. Many thanks to Marcia, Miriam, and to the women who have worked with WKWA over the years.

A CONVERSATION WITH AUTHOR JENNIFER CRAIG, Ph.D.

Tell me about your books?

Yes Sister, No Sister is a nursing memoir set in 1950s Yorkshire. It was first published in 2002 after 27 rejections. Then in 2009 it was taken up by a mass paperback publisher and came out in 2010. It went straight into the best sellers list, and was there 17 weeks. Now it's been shortlisted as one of three for One Book One Kootenay at the library. All the libraries advertise the three books and ask the public to vote. Now it's up to the public.

Jabs, Jenner & Juggernauts A Look at Vaccination. I am passionate about vaccination and the damage it does. I just had an article published in the International Medical Council on Vaccination. For more information on Vaccines there is Edda West in Winlaw BC, Vaccine Risk Awareness Network Inc. She puts out a newsletter. Her website is: www.vran.org

What is your latest book about?

The book I am writing now is about an older woman and I think her age is 64, she has some savings from being married, she is divorced and had enough money to buy a house in Nelson, and she worked as a waitress at a café on Baker Street. One day the cafe went up in flames and on the same day she lost all her investments. In order to survive she decided to start a grow op in her basement. So that is what the book is about, having a grow op. Part of it is about her friends, the group the Company of Crones. It is fiction.

Was there something that triggered your shift to go from Nursing into Homeopathy?

A lot of water flowed under that bridge. Forty years of it before I got to homeopathy. I was trained in Allopathy, so it was quite a shift in thinking there is a different way of looking at medicine in homeopathy which made sense to me.

The Nelson Women's Centre had a Health Interest Group. Penny Bonnet was going to study homeopathy through a correspondence course and I decided I would too. That's how I got into homeopathy, directly through this group. I wish there was still a health interest group at the Women's Centre.

When I first came here the Women's Centre was above Gerick's Cycle and there wasn't much for women in my age group. That's why we started the Company of Older Women, because I met Betty Daniel's friends. We all met for lunch and decided to start the Company of Older Women.

What brought you to Nelson?

I immigrated to Canada in 1961 to Vancouver. I came to Nelson because of my daughter. She was working here as a student biologist and I flew up here to see her. I was having my prosperous period which lasted about four years. Thought I'd invest in a house as a rental for my daughter and her friends to live in, it wasn't for me. Lots of things happened and I finally moved up here myself.

ABLE ONE: A SINIXT STORY



Part of the Kettle Falls of the Columbia River, 1860, Library of Congress archives

In this essay I acknowledge the Sinixt, on whose traditional territory we live. Thanks to Marilyn James and Eileen Delehanty Pearkes for their knowledge and their help.

Catherine Fisher

Able One was born early in the nineteenth century. What we know about her comes from a book called *In the Stream*, by Nancy Perkins Wynecoop and Nettie Wynecoop Clark.

Nancy Perkins Wynecoop, born 1865, was Able One's granddaughter, and she spent many hours with her as a young girl, listening to her stories.

She began to gather these together. The work was slow, and the manuscript was completely destroyed in three different house fires between 1900 and 1932.

Wynecoop was in great physical pain the last years of her life, but worked furiously to complete the book. She died in 1939, aged 64 years.

Her daughter, Nettie Wynecoop Clark, completed the book and had it published.

1815, at Low Pass, near presentday Bossburg, Washington, a Sinixt woman gave birth beside a bathing pool warmed by hot stones at a winter village called sntklhelhxewiltn.

The baby's father was Skie-Yaw-Teekin (Withered Top), chief of the Sinixt.

This name was given to him because he had buried three sons and a daughter. Withered Top was elderly, and partially blind. It was sometimes said of him, "his eyes follow his dead children."

Withered Top named his daughter Sipi't'sa (Able One) because "she covers the space of four children- a sprout of a weakened tribe, and my last growth."

After her birth, Able One was washed and oiled by the women of the tribe, and then wrapped in soft skins padded with the down of the cattail.

The first known contact between Sinixt and the arriving Europeans is four years before the birth of Able One, but the European presence was felt by the peoples of the plateau at least 30 years earlier, with the coming of diseases like smallpox, influenza and measles.

In 1825, when Able One was ten years old, she asked her mother to explain 'death', as she was afraid every time she heard about it or thought about it. Here is how her mother answered:

"My daughter, your very discontent must be employed to teach you the true meaning of life, and this is to obey and keep in the stream. Come, and I shall give you an object lesson."

A brisk walk brought them to the bathing pools arranged along the river's edge. A cheerful fire crackled in the willow-curtained

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nook where bathers dried themselves after the bath. The sun had dipped behind the hills, and the raw spring air was tempered for the weary labourers by a refreshing bath and clean garments. The pools hissed and bubbled, throwing steam into the clean, sparkling air. The river was rippling and ready to refill the pools as soon as the soiled water was bailed out, quickly carrying away all signs of dirty water and replacing it with a cold, clean supply. With a short paddle, redhot stones were thrown together with a measure of clean ash, into the pools, turning the water a smoky colour while the next pool was bailed out refilled with clear water and tempered with a hot stone or two. The bathers would step down in the first pool and then step to the clean pool before drying before the fire.

Able One noticed every move, wondering where the object lesson lay. "Take that slab and bring me that lump of foam beside the rock in the river," her mother said.

In a few minutes Able One placed the slab beside her mother and stood in the glowing warmth of the blaze. She felt sweeping chills go over her body. Her mother always seemed strange when she was about to reveal a sacred sign or truth. Today Able One understood that her mother felt the same chill and reverence toward the secret law of nature as revealed by the Great Spirit.

"Little Girl," her mother said, "let me put this in your hand and we will see what you shall learn. I will close my eyes and wait for you to tell me what you see." Placing a small portion of the foam on the outstretched hand she bowed her head and closed her eyes.

"Mother, I see a white mass of foam. One has a rainbow in it. Now it has burst and leaves only water." She held her hand toward the sunny hills of the east and discovered more rainbows. They were soon gone and only a wet place was left. A moment of exposure to the wet blaze left no further sign. "They are gone, "she said. "Lost. I shall return the remaining foam to the river so that it shall not perish, it will return to the water at death. Does this mean we are the foam of the Great Spirit? That we must keep in the stream that the council teaches so that we will return to

the main Spirit like the foam goes back to the great growling water?"

In 1832, Able One married a man called Kee Kee Tum Nouse (Shadow Top). They had six children. As her children grew, Hudson's Bay Company traders came to the region. A major outbreak of smallpox followed, which spread with terrifying rapidity among the Sinixt. Many were sick and few recovered. Able One's family was not spared. One son and her husband, Shadow Top, were carried away that year.

The coming of the settlers had changed the way of life of the Sinixt, and money now became a necessary currency. Able One was not always able to care for her family, and difficult times followed.

Later in life, Able One stayed with the family of her daughter Helena (the mother of Nancy Perkins Wynecoop). Nancy described her grandmother in this way:

My grandmother lived with us, clinging always to the Indian customs. She preferred food cooking in baskets by placing hot stones among the food. I can see her yet, lifting the hot stones with two sticks and dropping them into the baskets. We might prevail upon her to sleep in the house during winter, but as soon as spring came we would miss her. We always knew then that she had set up her tipi not far away and would remain there until winter snows drove her in.

I was with my mother's people a great deal. I can remember lying on the mat after the evening meal, my feet toward the fire in the centre of the tipi. The only light was from that little blaze. I shall never forget the feeling of contentment.

Nancy Perkins Wynecoop, asked about her education:

"I have been asked if I went to college, but my school education consisted of about five months in the public school, and I have never had a lesson in grammar. My education has come by absorbing what went on around me. My grandmother was my best teacher. "

WOMEN'S CENTRE DROP-IN

Our location is 420 Mill Street in Nelson. Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 12 to 4 pm. Free tofu, bread, canned goods and clothing are available.

Drop-in NewsBy Jackie Cole

In the last newsletter, it was a privilege to introduce myself to you as the new Program Coordinator. I have loved every minute of my time here at the Women's Centre over the past few months. It has been an honour to reconnect with women I have know for a long time and meet many new amazing people.

Ironically this job (which fits me so well!) has empowered me to make some big decisions in my life – the biggest being that I have decided to stop working outside of the home. Every day during Drop-in hours, I talk to women and we reflect on the choices they have available to them. Part of what I do here is to ask women how they can make choices for themselves which are healthy – how can they find balance in their lives. These conversations have helped me to realize that I need to make some changes in my life which are drastic.

So I will be leaving the Women's Centre at the end of May. Using my car less, spending less, loving more, and having time to really focus on the little and older people in my world feels like the right thing for me at this time. I would so like to thank all of you for all the stories, laughter, tears, hard work, and fun! The next woman to hold this position will be very blessed indeed. WKWA and the Women's Centre is one of those places in the world where huge things happen in small ways. It has been a PRIVILEGE!

New Spaces The upstairs transitions are just about complete. The sewing room has been moved and the upstairs office has been transformed. For a month women have been working on transforming the front hall - Keira Zaslove has been spearheading this project and eight women have contributed their artistic creativity. The downstairs bathroom also has had some renovation and feels fresh and roomy. Also, we are installing railings outside of the Centre.

Practicum Student The Women's Centre had a Selkirk College practicum student, Zoe Mackay, for the month of May. Thank you, Zoe!

Free Store Thank you to all the volunteers who have been maintaining the Free Store over the past few months (You know who you are!). Through February we gathered T-shirts for a Women's textile project at the Jiquillo Community Centre in Nicaragua. You can check it out at youtube, search "monty's beach lodge" and view the video called "meet Sarah". Thank you Sarah for including us in this process!

Garden News The Grade 10/11 group from SelfDesign High came to wake up the Garden on April 25th. The first meeting for the garden was May 17th. We are still looking for fertilizer, straw and plants.

Wish list The Drop-in has an ongoing need for household items like toilet paper, light bulbs, garbage bags, dish soap, blue bags, toiletries and personal care products. And we continue to be in need of protein sources (tuna, seeds, etc), and veggies for the food shelf.

NOTICE TO OUR WKWA MEMBERS: The Coordinating Collective has proposed some changes to the bylaws. See our website or come visit the Centre to see the changes. We will

be having an open meeting for members to learn more, discuss the possible changes, and give their input on Tuesday, July 31st at 7 pm. The new bylaws will be voted on at September's AGM.

This issue of the WKWA Newsletter was produced by Sandra Hartline, Hannah Hadikin, Jennifer MacMullin and Catherine Fisher. A special thanks to ANKORS for photocopying. What did you think? Contact us at 250-352-9916 with your suggestions on newsletter length, colour, style and content. Thank you!

THIS IS YOUR OFFICIAL INVITATION TO JOIN THE

WEST KOOTENAY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION Membership Application

Your \$15-40 and up (sliding scale) gets you a newsletter three times a year, library borrowing privileges, WKWA information as it happens and the chance to "associate" with some of the finest women in the Kootenays. If you can't afford the dues, send us back this form with a contribution, or offer to do a work trade of four hours; call the Women's Centre to arrange this. Please make cheques payable to WKWA. Our address is 420 Mill Street, Nelson, BC V1L 4R9. For more info please call 250-352-9916. Please note if you are also making a donation of \$20 or more, we will provide you with a note of thanks and a tax receipt will be issued.

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Please check if you are interested in the following:		
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