

Between Friends



FRIENDS OF WOMEN'S STUDIES GROUP NEWSLETTER • www.uwindsor.ca/womens

Volume 6, Number 1 September 2009

Welcome to the Ninth Year

By Anne Forrest

Welcome to the 9th year of the Distinguished Visitor in Women's Studies program. Hard to believe but here we are, hosting another outstanding Canadian feminist activist. She was introduced to us—in spirit—at our Sneak Preview on August 27.

We were fortunate to have this year's preview event in the garden of Debra Henderson and Alan Wildeman. The setting was charming, the weather supportive (the rain agreeably held off to the next day), and the food excellent. The culinary highlight was the watermelon salad. It's been acclaimed by so many we've included the recipe on p.4. If you make it, watch out: the recipe is from University Catering so it makes plenty for 60.

The other *Sneak Preview* highlight was Veronika Mogyorody's introduction of Nettie Wiebe, our Distinguished Visitor 2009. Veronika is a Nettie fan, as you'll see from the excerpts of her talk on p.2. Certainly, there is much to admire. Nettie is an organizer and a doer: she brings people together to make a change, here and now. She is globally minded: she cares about the environment because she cares about all living things. She's also an engaging public speaker.

Nettie describes herself as an ecofeminist. This perspective covers a very large territory (see p.3). To give our Distinguished Visitor Week a clear focus we are highlighting issues connected to food: where and how it's grown or raised, who harvests and prepares it, who has access to fresh, nutritious ingredients, who doesn't, and why. These concerns are central to Nettie's life and politics, and to her week in Windsor.

Coming to university isn't what it used to be. Check out Women's Studies' efforts to help first-year students settle in on p.4.

Quotable Quotes

In 1995, Nettie Wiebe became the first female President and CEO of the National Farm Union. Often the only woman at the board table,

I was always there with the security of knowing that I had been duly elected by my own organization to represent the family farm, and I always felt completely confident doing that, knowing that on these family farms women are key to the survival of and the work of the farm.

Quotable Quotes

Our *Quotable Quotes* come from an interview with Nettie Wiebe by Renée Bondy. Nettie's full biography is available at the Distinguished Visitor website:

www.uwindsor.ca/wsvistor.

Peek at the Week

October 22-29, 2009

Friday 23 October

Public Announcement to the Press

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Location: Toldo Health Education Centre, Room 203

Community Organization Luncheon

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Location: All Saints' Church Parish Hall
330 City Hall Square W.

Sunday 25 October

In Conversation With...Nettie Wiebe

2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: Seasons Bistro,
5975 Malden Rd., LaSalle

Tickets: \$250 (free for 250 members)

Wednesday 28 October

Community Dinner

5:30 p.m. reception, 6:30 p.m. dinner

Keynote Speaker: Nettie Wiebe

Location: G. Caboto Club
2175 Parent Ave.

Tickets: \$60

On-campus parking is available at the Assumption Church lot on University Ave. or in the University pay-and-display lots located on Huron Church Rd. at Peter St. or on Sunset Ave. south of Wyandotte Ave.

For more information or to purchase tickets, call 519-253-3000 ext. 3727, e-mail wsvistor@uwindsor.ca, or visit room 253 Chrysler Hall South, 201 Sunset Ave.

Putting Our Words Into Action

This year's concern for food makes us mindful of those who don't have enough. We will be accepting food contributions and monetary donations at DV events for the homeless women who use the services of the Well-Come Centre for Human Potential.

Nettie Wiebe

by Veronika Mogyorody

(Excerpts from a talk at the Distinguished Visitor *Sneak Preview* on August 27, 2009)

Food, faith and the rural community have been Nettie Wiebe's core values throughout her life. She has stated that "to save family farms and the communities that support them we need to develop the expertise of how we can stay on the farm, live together in *community* and care for the environment and the quality of our food."

As the daughter of Mennonite farmers who came to Canada seeking religious freedom for their pacifist faith, she grew up understanding the notion of co-operative community in a family of fifteen siblings. She experienced inter-dependence as a form of strength and respected individual diversity. Therefore it is not surprising that she should come to embrace a movement like Ecofeminism which welcomes social and cultural diversity, and promotes biological diversity.

Nettie and her husband, Jim Robbins, live in Saskatchewan near the town of Laura, where their family homestead "Maida Vale Farm" is located. It consists of 925 acres of mixed-use organic farmland and over 2000 acres of pasture and hay for cattle. Like most farmers, Nettie and Jim are required to work off-farm in order to keep the family farm solvent. Since 1998, Nettie has taught philosophy at St. Andrew's Theological College at the University of Saskatchewan.

As with everything Nettie does, she takes her role as educator quite seriously and sees higher education as a place "to re-imagine the world" and help students "to re-evaluate the status quo". "It is a place", she says, "to ask questions which provoke wider and deeper thinking, challenge conventional methods of analysis, and facilitate the possibility for "radical transformation". When asked about the role of Women's Studies she says, "the wonderful thing about Women's Studies is that it pays careful and real attention to all of those subtle social, political, and economic structures which inform women's lives."

It is impossible to list all of Wiebe's accomplishments but I'd like to highlight just a few. In the 1980s, she became an active member of the National Farmers Union and served as Women's President from 1988 to 1994. During her tenure she launched one of the country's first "rural childcare" co-operatives under the federal childcare policy. She also undertook to strengthen the voice of rural women and helped develop the "farm women's radio project" which broadcasted rural women's perspectives on major social and farming issues. In 1995, Wiebe was the first woman elected NFU President.

Through her efforts, the NFU successfully established solidarity links with women in the Nicaraguan farmer's union. She is a co-founder of the *Via Campesina*, an international movement of peasants, landless rural women, indigenous communities, and agricultural workers.

The objective of those who initiated the *Via Campesina* was to develop cooperation and unity among small farm organizations around the world in order to promote gender parity and social justice. Over time its mandate has expanded to include such issues as the preservation of land, water, seeds and other natural resources; food sovereignty and fair trade; appropriate technology and sustainable agricultural production; and the rights of peasant farmers and migrant farm workers.

I think we are very fortunate this year to have Nettie as our Distinguished Visitor. She is someone able to bring together ecofeminist scholarship with personal and political activism, and draw our attention to ethically informed approaches to social change and environmental sustainability. In our preparation to understand Nettie and her work, I leave you with a short quote from her:



*I am a mom, a farmer, and a political and social activist. That is my identity. I try and make what I do fit and weave into what I am. It always seems to me that part of the difficulty people have in holding it all together is that, for them, it isn't woven together. I try to root myself in an integrated way. That gives me strength — my family, my being a mom, my cooking, my gardening, my canning, my writing of academic articles, my speaking, my teaching — I try and make it a coherent piece. I think that it is often hard for women. They think they have to leave the things they care about and put on their clothes and go to work. And they are not supposed to bring any of the emotional, domestic, and political baggage into the work place. I think that is disempowering. I have always tried to consciously hold it together, because for me a good life is an *integrated life*.*

In Conversation with... Nettie Wiebe

Sunday, October 25

2:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Seasons Bistro

5975 Malden Rd., LaSalle

This event is complementary for 250 for \$250+ members.

Community Dinner

Planting Hope and Cooking Culture: Women set the table for a healthier food system

Wednesday, October 28

5:30 p.m. Reception 6:30 p.m. Dinner

Caboto Club

Tickets: \$60 Students: \$15

Reflecting . . . on difference

by Carol A. Reader

Friend of Women's Studies

I expected that writing a couple of paragraphs for this newsletter, about what I saw as the continuity from one Distinguished Visitor to the next would be a lighter, enjoyable piece of writing. Not least, because I have found it hugely motivational and empowering to be a part of the *Friends of Women's Studies* and the *Distinguished Visitor Program*.

So, I started thinking about the continuity. I became almost overwhelmingly disheartened at the themes of societal hatred, violence, marginalization, and fragmentation which I found common to all. Oh dear, I thought, this was never what I left the DV dinner feeling – so what else did I get from them all? Well . . . hope . . . that women united could achieve equality, an end to discrimination on grounds of gender, race, ability, religion, ethnicity, sexuality. Belief . . . that humans could be civilized, that they would discuss difference in order to comprehend it, to live respectfully of it, and understand that it is these multi-faceted differences which make our world interesting.

I joined the *Friends of Women's Studies* in February 2004, the year the performance artists Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan visited. I remember their short film *Homogeneity* which while supposedly showing gay culture's desire to conform to the societal "norm" seemed to me to show how dull and uninteresting life would be without difference – but of course not "my" difference. Since Dempsey and Millan the DV program has explored the problems experienced by women of colour, violence in all women's lives, First Nations' marginalization and invisibility, and last year a return to the plight of immigrant women particularly as it pertained to the veil. Each year has highlighted issues which do not conform to the Canadian "norm," i.e. white, heterosexual, English speaking, Christian, and each year I try to take another step towards understanding difference and what it means to live that "difference."

I thank Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan, Akua Benjamin, Lee Lakeman, Lee Maracle, and Uzma Shakir for sharing their stories of difference with me – their courage, resilience, patience, hope, and belief that society can change and I will work with them to make that change happen . . . sooner.

Quotable Quotes

In Nettie Wiebe's view, the grassroots role that women play as cultural transmitters is key to the maintenance of a viable food culture. She observes:

when we gather around an important occasion, it is still often around food. And that's important because it's women who put that together.

Bookfest Windsor
November 4-7, 2009
www.bookfestwindsor.ca

Ecofeminism

by Veronika Mogyorody

Ecofeminists believe that solutions to ecological problems *must* be tied to social and gender transformation. Ecofeminists argue that there is a strong parallel between the oppression and subordination of women and the degradation of nature. Let me illustrate the point by using agriculture as an example.

On a global scale, women are responsible for at least 60 percent of the world's food production. In Asia and Africa, the proportion is closer to 80 percent. Yet, while women do most of the agricultural work and have been keepers of much of the indigenous farm knowledge, they own as little as 2 percent of the world's land and have very little or no influence on agricultural policies. Their voices are not heard, and their contributions unrecognized.

As small women-run farms continue to be pushed to extinction in developing countries and replaced by large monoculture farms run mainly by men, we begin to lose the regional biodiversity of crops and expose the land to greater use of pesticides, herbicides, and other toxic materials.

In countries where women have traditionally carried the responsibility of food production there has been increasing global pressure to displace women farmers by buying up their land, and raising the price of seeds. These are the same seeds that women have cultivated and saved for generations, and which they no longer have access to because agribusiness has secured the patent to these seeds, pricing them far beyond the means of most women farmers.

In other words, the devaluation of women and the exploitation of resources and the Earth are directly connected.

This photo deserves a caption. If yours is best you'll win a ticket to this year's Community Dinner. Send your submission to wsvsitor@uwindsor.ca by October 22, 2009



Just a Number?

by Heather Perry

Student, Women's Studies & Social Work

Throughout my secondary school career I was being prepared for university. Unfortunately, many teachers felt that to prepare me for the harsh world that is university, they needed to tell me straight up that I would only be a number. "Professors will not know or care who you are and your new identity will simply be a series of numbers."

During my previous two years at the University of Windsor, I have learned that this is not the case. University is a chance to be known, get involved and gain knowledge to help you succeed.

This summer, I was given the opportunity to place calls to Women's Studies students entering first year and assist them with any concerns or questions that might be bouncing around their minds. I made my way through a list of twenty-nine eager and nervous students.

While holding conversations with many first year students, I found myself right back in my size seven, grade twelve shoes. I was taken back to my summer before starting university and the many concerns that sometimes kept me up at night. Was I taking the right classes? Campus is so big, what if I get lost? Will my professors like me? What if I do not maintain a high average?

Having a combined major in Women's Studies and Social Work only doubled my confusion and concerns. I remember being overwhelmed by the thought of being completely independent and responsible for my learning.

As I made my calls, I offered them some comfort by telling them my concerns when I was a new student. I poured my heart out to them with stories of highlighting campus maps to outline how to walk to each building, trying to memorize my student number, and the search for textbooks in the bookstore that left me walking around in circles.

All the students I held conversations with were very appreciative to have someone there for them and let them know that they are not all on their own. I reassured them with my personal phone calls that in Women's studies at the University of Windsor, you may have a student number, but that number does not define you.

Savory Watermelon Salad

2 Watermelons	2 Cups Feta Cheese
1 Bunch Green Onions	1 Cup Olive Oil
1 Tbsp Ginger, minced	1/3 Cup Red Wine Vinegar
1 Bunch Basil + 1 Bunch Mint	Kosher Salt and Pepper to taste

Cut the watermelon into 3/4" cubes. Finely slice the green onion. Very finely mince the ginger. Chiffonade the basil and mint. Crumble the feta. Mix all ingredients together. Drizzle the olive oil and vinegar over the salad and season with salt and pepper.

Courtesy of Catering Services, University of Windsor

Windsor International Film Festival

November 6-15, 2009

www.windsorfilmfestival.ca

A Woman's Place is...

by Heather Hartley

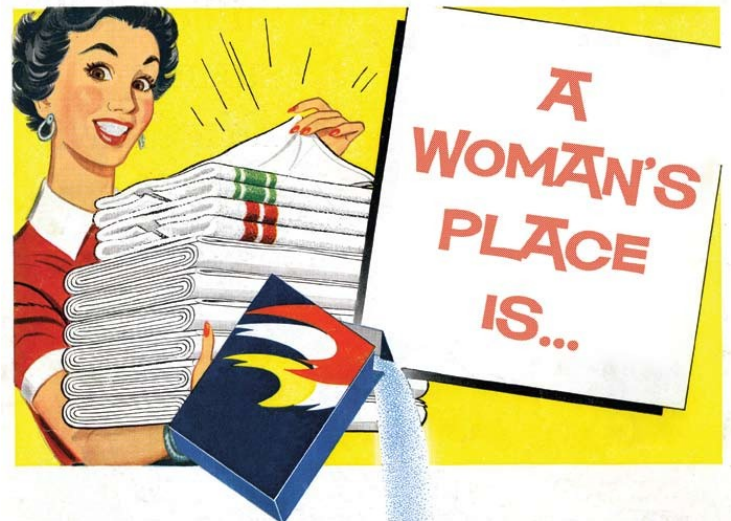
On Friday, September 11, faculty and senior students in Women's Studies greeted new majors at the annual Windsor Welcome Week event. Anne Forrest kicked things off, thanking everyone for coming, introducing faculty and calling on senior students to introduce themselves.

After a lunch of pizza, salad and cookies, new students formed small groups for the picture scavenger hunt. Accompanied and assisted by senior students the groups deciphered clues and found places on campus that will be important in their time at the University, including the library, the bookstore and the Womyn's Centre.

At each place a staff or faculty member gave a bit of information about the services and opportunities available and gave each participant a small gift. Women's Studies students took pictures of themselves in the various locations to commemorate their experience and they will receive a CD with the pictures in the near future.

Faculty participated in their own scavenger hunt, which was designed to give them a look at the student experience on campus. They found out where students apply for OSAP (Ontario Student Loan Program), where they get their meal cards and visited a residence hall. Pictures of faculty around campus will be included on the CD.

It was great to meet new students and hopefully we were all reminded that, "A Woman's Place is... Wherever She Chooses!"



Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women 27th Annual Fundraising Banquet

Saturday, October 3, 6:30 p.m.

G. Caboto Club, Windsor

Tickets: \$50 Students: \$20

For more information: www.wwwwiw.org

University
of Windsor
thinking forward