

Collective Joyful Action for Change

Wednesday, February 22, 2017 7:00-8:30pm

Room 424 at the Beveridge Arts Centre at
Acadia

Meeting Summary



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Participant List

- Anne Stieger
- Brian Dorey – Glooscap First Nation
- Cari Patterson (facilitator) – Horizons Community Development Associates
- Carolyn Campbell
- Cathy Vey
- Duncan Ebata – The Spot Community Food Hub
- Ellie Valle (facilitator) – Horizons Community Development Associates, Acadia Student
- Erin Crandall – Acadia Faculty
- Fred Williams – NDP (Kings South Executive)
- Heidi Kalyani – Transition Town Initiative, Oro! Orkestra, Heart Wide Open
- Jeffrey Sacks – Acadia Faculty
- Karen Shepard – Transition Town Initiative, Just Us Centre for Small Farms
- Lesley Winter – Transition Town Initiative
- Lorraine Street – Wolfville Area InterChurch Council
- Mary Sweatman – Acadia Department of Community Development
- Penni Burrell – Health Board, Raging Grannies, Quaker - Indigenous
- Rachel Bridner – Acadia Faculty Union
- Sarah Pittoello – Councilor, Just Us Centre for Small Farms

Introduction/Opening & Welcome

- Wolfville and Annapolis Valley area folk came together to talk about kind, loving, collective, sustained, coordinated, and joyful community action to address social justice issues. Participants were set to explore the possibilities of coordinating our efforts, sharing the work, keeping each other informed, sustaining and supporting each other, going forward together from a place of love and compassion, calling attention where it is needed, and being aware and staying sane. The event was organized and facilitated by *Horizons Community Development Associates, Inc.*
- On behalf of *Horizons*, Cari Patterson introduced the event. She acknowledged that the meeting was taking place on Mi'kmaq territory, set a warm tone for the meeting, and overviewed the purpose of the session: to explore whether/how we might go forward together in a coordinated way in our community's efforts for social justice.

Video Presentation

- To ground the meeting in an open, kind, and thoughtful place, Cari showed a [short video](#). The video was a protest song by MILCK called *I Can't Keep Quiet*, about having a strong and collective voice for justice. It was first performed at the Women's March on Washington and later performed in Toronto in front of a crowd of singers where Choir! Choir! taught the crowd their arrangement of the song.

Getting to Know Each Other and Our Work

- With the space introduced and hearts opened up, we went around and introduced ourselves, including any groups we represented, and our area of focus in social justice work.
- There were people with many hats on representing different groups such as the Transition Town initiative, Oro! Orchestra, Heart Wide Open, Acadia Faculty Union, municipal government, Just Us Centre for Small Farms, The Spot Community Food Hub, Glooscap First Nations, Acadia Department of Community Development, Health boards, Raging Grannies, Wolfville Area InterChurch Council, the NDP, and more.
- People also had various areas of focus for their social justice work, and many were centered around folks' jobs. There were focuses on First Nations, Truth and Reconciliation, and in particular the settler's responsibilities; food organizations and banks, sustainability, and viewing food as the center of other issues; politics, including election reform; gender equity; Canadian Muslims; Unions and labour issues; refugee support; population health, including viewing poverty as a product of various social systems; mothers and young families; and making connections in general.

What Brings Us Joy?

- It is easy to feel disheartened and demoralized from current events, and draining problem-focused justice work. A way to combat this is by focusing on the joy we experience in our work for change.
- As such, the group went around and discussed what they found joy in in their justice work.
 - Aha moments! "Moments working with clients when they have their own insight, an 'aha' moment where they feel relieved and free to move forward. They are recognizing that they had their own answers!"
 - "Offering a gift of trusting others is joyful for me."
 - "When a student in the department of Politics organized a rally in Wolfville in response to the government's decision to drop electoral reform. They went from studying politics to participating in politics. The rally brought students and members of the community together. This situation makes it feel like education is working."
 - "Being part of something that enhances community, such as something inclusive and celebratory."
 - "Events, where people are learning and feeling the need to ask questions about so called 'common sense'."
 - "Feelings are what we need. Satisfaction, gratification, pride, purpose, and hope."
 - "Yesterday, I shared a piece of raw, lavender infused cheese a friend made, with another friend and she said, 'Ah this is what cheese could be like in Nova Scotia.' I see why mindfully tasting food matters; at a certain point, words can no longer describe the joy good food can bring. As we stood there, aroma wafting, mouths full, we were smiling at each other, connected. The item of food didn't matter, it was about the connection, appreciation and sharing. "

- At 'Oil + Water' Council of Canadians event in Lunenburg, I heard accomplishments by Fisher Group to protect inlets. I learned that most Nova Scotians prefer the environment over jobs."
- "Deep connection and belonging in a dance circle with people of multiple ages, genders and ethnicities..."
- "Deep connection and unity in a circle of people singing together about peace."
- "Food waste dance party + Soup making in public. The turn-out was 800 instead of the expected 400. It brought together people across all backgrounds, from academics to the homeless. There was a community of organizers. There was wish-energy; it was positive, joyful, yet the issue was visually clear through piles of food waste to cook in the soup. It was action-oriented; we were finding solutions together. It was an exciting event; people were supported, joyful, and connected across stigma."
- "Connecting with people! (Like Cari) Participating in the Wolfville Women's March because even though I was alone, I felt connected to my immediate community and beyond."
- "The Women's March on Washington in DC. The genuine surprise of how many people there were on the mall and how overwhelmingly positive everyone was, gave me a glimmer of hope."
- "Working as a part of a successful electoral campaign, knowing I had helped to improve political diversity."
- "Students presenting to council on youth engagement issues in Windsor and Kentville."
- "Moms in Motion presenting to a Recreation Nova Scotia conference. It felt like a connection to community, a shift with me, gaining a wider perspective, and practicing servant leadership."
- "Springhill High School presentation on Aboriginal and Treaty rights. So hopeful that education can enlighten and bring people together."
- Large moments, like lodging a human rights complaint.
- Exciting opportunities, like having summer games in the future to bring Aboriginal peoples together.
- Current positive actions that have an impact, like education and hiring.

Core Discussion

- The group discussed the future and how to work together by speaking about a couple of categories. Below is a summary of what was discussed in reference to the respective categories.
- Mapping
 - In our mapping efforts, we should map out the social justice work that various governments have done. Where government has been helpful, what they have done, etc.
 - It is also important to map outside of our own circle here. See [Spring Tide](#) for example.
 - Is there a map of social justice work that already exists? We can leverage that for our own use. Kentville has an [asset map](#).

- A Free School for Social Justice can have a mapping function built-in.
- Who can someone contact to learn about a specific issue? Can there be a database for this information?
- Having a map with pins and information that is editable by everyone would be helpful.
- Coordinating our Efforts
 - Having a [resistance calendar](#) would be good.
 - We should come together at different times – not just during times of crisis where we need a vigil.
 - We need to figure out how to have a good relationship with government representatives, the people with whom we sometimes need to advocate for change. Is there a way we can do this? Can we find or create a toolbox for others to draw upon?
- Sharing the Work
 - We can have a sister city (in the U.S.?) where we partner and work together.
 - We could also belong to an umbrella group, where there are multiple partnering towns.
 - Having a talent bank – what we each can offer each other. It would be a database of our individual talents and services we could provide.
 - This can also include a barter-type system where work can be exchanged with each other, and have an accompanying guide.
- Keeping Each Other Informed
 - How can we be effective? We have talents and skills, but may not know how to use them and actually create change.
 - A social media page for the region's social justice work would be a good place to share information, ideas, and learn.
 - This can also be a Bulletin Board of sorts where anyone can post to advertise or educate.
 - Knowledge sharing events for us all to come together and share our collective knowledge would be helpful.
 - '101' events for us to learn about an area or facts on an issue would be helpful.
 - Leveraging the Valley Events page and creating a Social Justice category could stir more interest and engagement.
 - Acadia has a wide-reaching Listserv, and we can use that to promote events, by forwarding it to members in this group with access to it.
- Supporting & Sustaining Each Other
 - Having a Free School for Social Justice could be successful and useful.
 - We should have other communities be engaged apart from the one that is the focus of an event or movement, and we can support each other in this way. This is because other communities outside our own spheres can have more pull or add more credibility to a cause.
 - We don't know what supports are needed. This is more about basic needs; are we meeting the basic needs of each other so we can continue our work?

- Doing it All from a Place of Love and Compassion
 - We should also realize that other types of passions are valid and useful emotions; such as outrage. Outrage can be important in making change, and can also be joyful in a way.
 - We have to celebrate. We need to celebrate our accomplishments, our achievements, and what is good that is happening. We cannot just be stuck in the tiring and heavy social justice work where we see only problems. We must come together not just in bad times – but in good times as well.

Next Steps & Closing

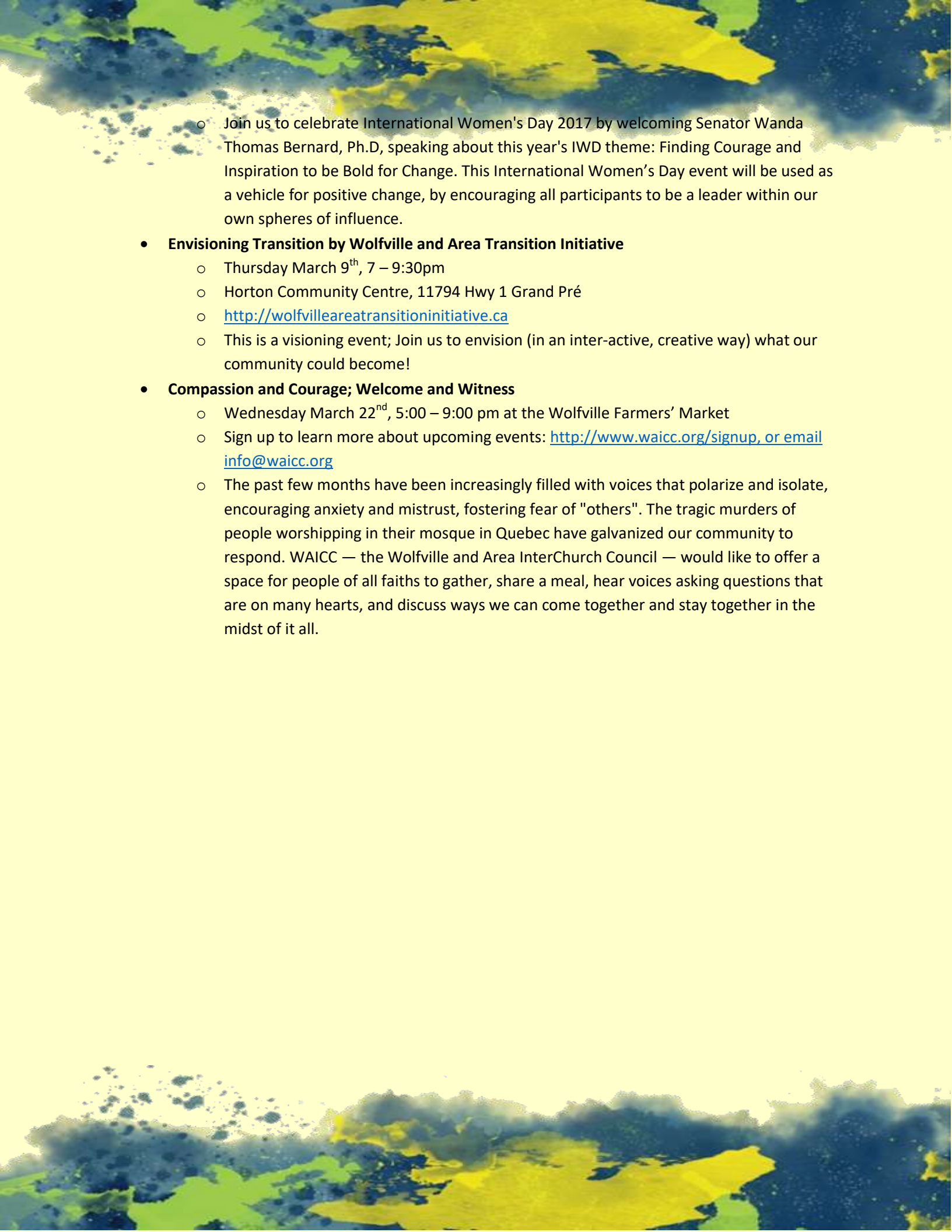
- An event around social justice is never complete without a call or pledge to action. We have created together some next steps after the meeting. After all of this was shared, the event was closed with an energy and drive to promote and work for social justice.
- This summary will go out and be shared with others. There are upcoming events to attend that are listed below.
- Duncan will contact Valley Events to see if it may be possible to establish a Social Justice category for us and others to use.
- We should invite people in to this discussion and circle with us.
- We should hold a 101, celebration, and mapping event for all of our groups and causes.
- Should we become a group? We may have a name or a social media page.
 - Should we be a Valley Activist Network?

Facebook Group for this work: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CollectiveJoyfulActionForChange/>

Horizons Website Section for this work: <http://www.horizonscda.ca/actforchange.php>

Future Events

- **Kirtan evening by Heart Wide Open**
 - Wednesday March 1st, 7 – 9pm
 - Lahara Yoga Studio, 360 Main Street, Wolfville
 - Suggested contribution \$5 - \$10
 - <http://www.heartwideopen.ca>
 - An evening of uplifting and heart-opening kirtan-style singing meditation with Ken Shorley, Heidi Kalyani, Andy Kavanagh and others! Gentle yoga from 7 - 7:30pm with Dianne MacPhee. Kirtan is an ancient Indian yogic practice of singing or chanting from the heart. It's a celebration, a meditation, a rejuvenation — and a powerful way to connect both with yourself and with community.
- **International Women's Day Event: by Acadia University Faculty Association Women's Committee**
 - Thursday, March 9th, 5-7pm
 - KCI Centre Auditorium at Acadia University
 - <https://www.facebook.com/events/122456688266001/>

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- Join us to celebrate International Women's Day 2017 by welcoming Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard, Ph.D, speaking about this year's IWD theme: Finding Courage and Inspiration to be Bold for Change. This International Women's Day event will be used as a vehicle for positive change, by encouraging all participants to be a leader within our own spheres of influence.
 - **Envisioning Transition by Wolfville and Area Transition Initiative**
 - Thursday March 9th, 7 – 9:30pm
 - Horton Community Centre, 11794 Hwy 1 Grand Pré
 - <http://wolfvilleareatransitioninitiative.ca>
 - This is a visioning event; Join us to envision (in an inter-active, creative way) what our community could become!
 - **Compassion and Courage; Welcome and Witness**
 - Wednesday March 22nd, 5:00 – 9:00 pm at the Wolfville Farmers' Market
 - Sign up to learn more about upcoming events: [http://www.waicc.org/signup, or email info@waicc.org](http://www.waicc.org/signup,or_email_info@waicc.org)
 - The past few months have been increasingly filled with voices that polarize and isolate, encouraging anxiety and mistrust, fostering fear of "others". The tragic murders of people worshipping in their mosque in Quebec have galvanized our community to respond. WAICC — the Wolfville and Area InterChurch Council — would like to offer a space for people of all faiths to gather, share a meal, hear voices asking questions that are on many hearts, and discuss ways we can come together and stay together in the midst of it all.