

Oct 31 2008: NAMC/MOTHERS Help Form International Mothers Network

Pictured: Linda Lisi Juergens, Executive Director, NAMC, Andrea O'Reilly, Associate Professor, School of Women's Studies; Director: Association for Research on Mothering, Lorri Slepian, NAMC Co-founder and board member

Over 100 attendees representing more than 20 organizations, plus interested individuals, activists, academics and researchers, gathered in Toronto on Oct 25 - 26, 2008 for an International Conference on the Motherhood Movement. This event was organized by the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) and was embedded in their annual Mothering Conference. The aim was to gather mother advocacy groups as well as those knowledgeable about matriarchal societies and a gift economy to explore collaboration and on-going communication. The first effort at bringing mothers advocacy groups together for collaboration occurred at the 24th National Conference of the National Association of Mothers' Centers (NAMC) in April 2008 where over a dozen US mothers groups began a dialogue in a "getting to know you" environment.

The National Association of Mothers' Centers (NAMC) and its MOTHERS Initiative (focusing on advocacy to minimize the negative economic impact of being a care giver) is proud to have been involved in this historic international gathering and the formation of the International Mothers Network (IMN). The NAMC / MOTHERS were represented by Linda Lisi Juergens and Lorri Slepian. Linda presented on MOTHERS Uniting & Organizing for Change - The Next Step in Building a Mothers Movement and Lorri spoke about Building a Mothers Movement From the Ground Up - A 35 Year Mothers' Center Journey.

The goal of the IMN is to strengthen the mothers network by bringing together diverse groups working to influence public discussion and explore alternate economic and societal structures that will lead to a more mother-centered world, a world of care and concern. The IMN will create a sense of community among groups, help movements grow, involve new and diverse partners, promote public awareness and affect change. These lofty goals were made all the more evident by the current worldwide economic turmoil and acknowledgement that "business as usual" is not working.

The IMN will proceed with the following guidelines:

Participating organizations need to be inclusive organizations.

Growth will happen slowly and carefully over time in a decentralized fashion to allow adequate opportunities for input from all. Mutual respect is essential and there is no expectation that participating groups will take on any other participating group's issues.

This forming group will immediately reach out to other like-minded mothers groups worldwide to participate in our network prior to an official launch (North American, European and South African groups were in attendance.)

Rather than membership, participation will be the key, allowing groups to participate whenever and however appropriate for them.

Some basic ways to participate are: to be listed on the website, to organize an annual May action, to invite IMN groups to your events for further dialogue, or to participate in other IMN groups' events.

The following steps will be taken:

A website, www.internationalmothersnetwork.org, is being created for all participating organizations to be listed with links to their respective websites and updates on their activities.

Hosting of the website will be rotated among participating organizations with ARM taking the first hosting responsibility. A quarterly e-news will be collated with updates from participating organizations to highlight actions and opportunities for collaborative action or participation.

An IMN launch date of World Women's Day on March 8, 2009 is proposed.

The month of May will be the IMN's month for action under the slogan of Mothers and Children Claiming Public Spaces. Each participating group will do whatever activity they choose in solidarity with other actions taking place

throughout the world. Some ideas that surfaced were: participating in the international Mile for Mothers (mothers walking in a public place to bring attention to their issues organized by the Slovak Mother Center); a public reading of poetry related to mothers's issues, etc. Creativity is encouraged.