



# Our Voices

SUMMER 2008 VOL. 1 ISSUE 2

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## THE POWER OF DIVERSITY

Written by: LeAnn Brown

**BACK IN THE DAY**, we didn't speak of diversity. You never heard the word. You did hear about strange (mostly frightening practices) in other churches, about odd foods cooked in other kitchens, and weird music floated from the new neighbour's windows. In the small town where I grew up it was all about conforming to assigned social norms and punishing those that didn't. As a child I imagined other places—large cities where no one would make you account for your failure to conform. Maybe it was a craving for diversity or maybe it was simply the firm belief that no one has all the answers.

But just recently my naive dream was trashed. While looking for an apartment in Toronto I heard about an old gent from the neighbourhood who had a system to keep the neighbourhood "good". When a house came on sale the residents would go to the real estate agent to ensure they did not sell to certain people. No Jews, for example. My childhood dream of a less restrictive place burst into flames as

I realized that each neighbourhood was like a small town with the same smallness. Each neighbourhood or small town creates its own measuring stick and all else is measured according to this standard. The power structure in the neighbourhood determined who was allowed in and on what terms.

Keeping diversity out, for that old gent meant keeping the neighbourhood "good". But things change. Neighbourhoods diversify when people learn to look beyond stereotypes and social norms and to treat each other well. Diversity is about breaking down the power structure and declaring new standards of practice.

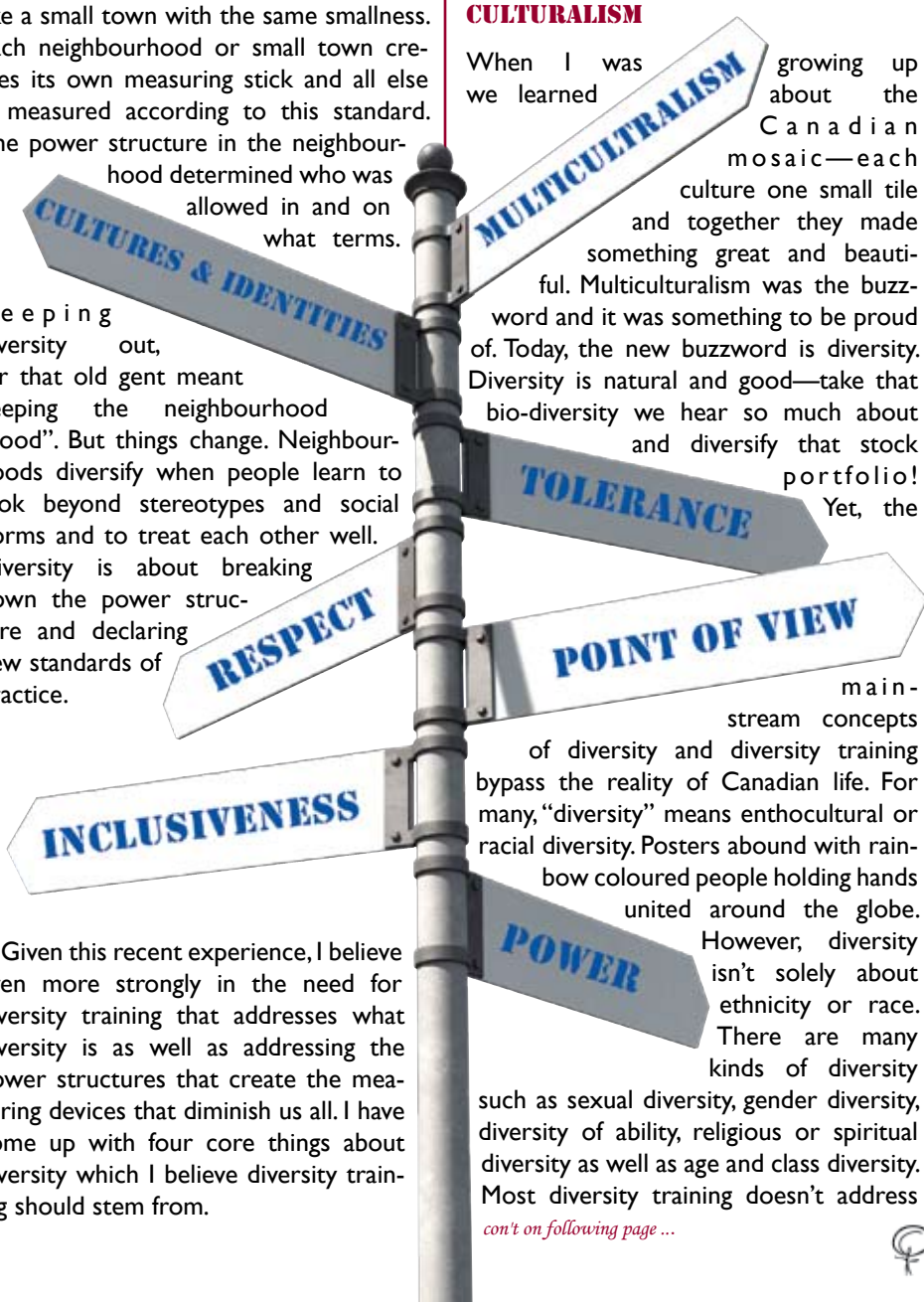
Given this recent experience, I believe even more strongly in the need for diversity training that addresses what diversity is as well as addressing the power structures that create the measuring devices that diminish us all. I have come up with four core things about diversity which I believe diversity training should stem from.

### DIVERSITY IS MORE THAN MULTICULTURALISM

When I was growing up we learned about the Canadian mosaic—each culture one small tile and together they made something great and beautiful. Multiculturalism was the buzzword and it was something to be proud of. Today, the new buzzword is diversity. Diversity is natural and good—take that bio-diversity we hear so much about and diversify that stock portfolio! Yet, the

mainstream concepts of diversity and diversity training bypass the reality of Canadian life. For many, "diversity" means ethnocultural or racial diversity. Posters abound with rainbow coloured people holding hands united around the globe. However, diversity isn't solely about ethnicity or race. There are many kinds of diversity such as sexual diversity, gender diversity, diversity of ability, religious or spiritual diversity as well as age and class diversity. Most diversity training doesn't address

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LETTER FROM  
THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## *A Note on Diversity*

The word "diversity" means different things to different people. Mainstream thoughts about diversity focus on racial and cultural difference which excludes all other forms of diversity including: gender, age, ability, sexuality and many more. At the Women's Resource

Centre, we seek to promote education and awareness of all forms of diversity with the goal of creating a more self-aware, knowledgeable and conscious campus community.

Diversity is one of the Women's Resource Centre's five pillars of work. We learn, share and teach about diversity in many ways. First, we advocate for gender equality recognizing that this form of equality can not be achieved without ending all other forms of inequality. Second, the WRC employs an anti-oppressive model that focuses in people's strengths and capacity for leadership and success, regardless of their identity. Third, although we are a centre dedicated to the promotion of a safe and healthy environment for female gendered individuals, we welcome individuals of all genders and identities to take part in our work and visit our centre to learn more. Of particular importance to us, is recognizing how different aspects of a woman's identity can affect her overall experience as a woman. The WRC provides interesting programs related to diversity such as:

### *Working Against Racism*

A group dedicated to increasing the awareness of the effect that racism can have on our campus community and developing strategies for creating a positive and tolerant UofC.

### *Women's Global Voices*

A program focused on helping international women, and women immigrants and refugees adapt to life in Canada through empowering popular-education based tools.

### *Male Allies*

A program for male identified or male gendered individuals interested in supporting women in achieving gender equality through the recognition that equality improves the lives of everyone.

The Women's Resource Centre strives to act as a resource for diversity knowledge, education and awareness for the University of Calgary community. We hope that you will join us in this project. If you would like to learn more, please email us at [women@ucalgary.ca](mailto:women@ucalgary.ca) or check us out online at [www.ucalgary.ca/women](http://www.ucalgary.ca/women)

*Stephanie Garrett*  
Stephanie Garrett  
Executive Director

these other diversities or at their associated cultures. Getting locked into ethnocultural cross training is a great disservice to the term "diversity". We also need to acknowledge that diversity training that deals with generalizations runs the risk of stereotyping individuals. While we need more cultural information, we also need to remind ourselves that we are dealing with individuals and each person is not one identity but an intersection of many cultures and identities. Diversity training should empower and guide us to look at individuals not solely as representatives of cultures, but also as individuals with unique and valid points of view.

### **DIVERSITY IS MORE THAN TOLERANCE**

I tolerate pain, I tolerate loud cell phone users (usually), and I tolerate bad Calgary drivers. Diversity is more than tolerance. It is about understanding the world from another point of view and accepting that point of view as valid. This requires us to question our own assumptions and implicit learnings so entrenched that we may not even be aware of them or how they limit our acceptance or even entertainment of other options. While I was teaching abroad the local economy collapsed and there were very few and very limited social programs. A news

*Diversity is more than tolerance. It is about understanding the world from another point of view and accepting that point of view as valid.*

item caught my eye: A man experiencing financial ruin cut off his son's hand. The other teachers (Canadians, Americans, and Australians) discussed the situation and we concluded that the man was either insane or "evil". The consensus was that he should go to prison for a long time. Some of my students however, had another point of view. They saw it as their failure as fellow citizens and as those responsible to voting in the government that had the poor social programs. The man acted to ensure that his son receive financial aid, aid that he would not otherwise get. He was not viewed as

evil or insane but as a man acting out of desperation. The concept of collective responsibility shocked me. I had seen the situation as the father's sole responsibility and I was overwhelmed by the idea of collective responsibility. While neither point of view is true or untrue, the outcomes are very different. A justice system based on this worldview would regard the situation very differently than a Canadian court. The other thing that struck me was the strength of looking at the situation with both points of view. It changed the concept of responsibility for me. This is the strength of diversity: it opens us up to previously unthinkable possibilities.

### **DIVERSITY IS NOT NEW**

While diversity training is a fairly new concept, diversity is not new. We have always had it. However, today cultures that have been hidden or quiet or

bound and gagged are making themselves known. Equal opportunity and liberation movements have allowed many people to enter the workforce and to be vocal about their status and/or culture. The workplace reality today includes transgender individuals, wheelchair users, women in headscarves, and 65+ yoga instructors. The real change that has taken place is that a climate of inclusiveness has emerged. Inclusiveness happens when those in the positions of power understand the necessity and the power of including those outside the power structure norms in the processes of living, such as the workforce and the neighbourhood.

### **DIVERSITY IS ABOUT RESPECT**

True diversity is about respecting others. It is about being open to and understand-

ing the validity of other ways of being. To do so we must unlearn the implicit lessons of our society – that “the other” is bad, inferior, or dangerous – that “we” are solely imbued with the true way of living/being/thinking.

“The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you. They are unique manifestations of the human spirit.”Wade Davis

For me, this quote captures the true spirit of diversity. Yes, we need to learn about each other, but we also need to understand our position in the power structure and what we bring to the learning such as our judgments, and our sense of “the right way” to do things. We need to be able to by-pass what makes us judgmental and closes us off from the spirit of inclusivity. Diversity has the power to change us all for the better, one neighbourhood at a time. **WRC**

#### WRC PROGRAMMES

## *What's New in Working Against Racism?*

This year at the WRC we are introducing the Working Against Racism (WAR) program which is a continuation of previous programs aimed at promoting diversity on campus. This year WAR has many exciting events planned, beginning with a training program focused on the roots of racism. This workshop will examine prejudice as it occurs on many levels: how we first assimilate ideas of superiority/inferiority through popular media and social institutions (school etc.), and then examining both the overt and subtle ways in which racism plays out in daily life.

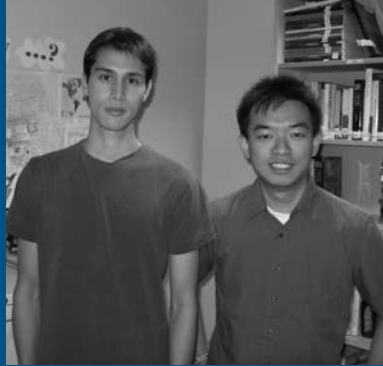
This workshop promises to be both emotionally and intellectually challenging, as prejudice and privilege must be challenged at a deep personal level, which is usually an unsettling experience. The benefits however, outweigh this initial struggle many times over, as we are able to share a transformative experience which ignites new passion towards fighting discrimination and hatred in all forms. A second workshop we are planning will be on “Becoming Agents of Change” which includes a focus on how white women can become effective white allies.

Beyond the training programs, WAR also has a handful of interactive events designed to promote discussion of what racism looks like on campus. This will include a monthly film series which will be followed by an informal chat. We are also hoping to launch a short speaker's series, a monthly book club, and an ad-busting workshop with a specific focus on the representation of women of colour in the popular media. All in all, WAR's vision for the year is to host inspiring events which forge new alliances between students who have a passion for promoting equality, diversity and social justice. Most of us feel strongly about ending prejudice and discrimination, now let's move to do something about it!

WAR and the WRC are always looking for volunteers, so if this interests you drop us an email or stop by! (WAR: [wrcwwar@ucalgary.ca](mailto:wrcwwar@ucalgary.ca) & WRC: [women@ucalgary.ca](mailto:women@ucalgary.ca)). **WRC**



*Patricia Minor, WAR Team Leader*



## \* *Hot Topics*

# Male Allies at the WRC

Written by: Kristine Morris

One of the most commonly asked questions at the Women's Resource Centre is "Are men welcome at the WRC?" The answer to this question is that all individuals, regardless of gender or gender identity, are welcome at the WRC if they are working towards gender equality.

The next question that commonly gets asked is "Why should male gendered individuals be involved in working towards gender equality? Isn't that something for women to worry about?"

All men have, or have had, women in their lives in some capacity; mother, aunt, grandmother, sister, wife, girlfriend, daughter. Any combinations of these relationships occur in a man's life, meaning that what affects the women in his life also affects him to some degree. As long as there is violence against women, for example, there will be the risk of violence against one of the women in a man's life; this alone is reason enough to work towards change for women, is it not?

Nighat Gandhi, a feminist activist and writer puts it so eloquently in her article "Can men be the allies of feminism?" when she says:

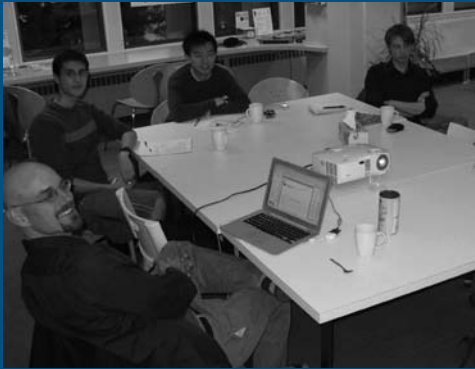
It is not enough for men to say that they are not personally involved in the oppression of women. This is passivity. Each time a woman is not allowed to reach her full personhood, each time a woman is abused in any way simply because she

is a woman—beaten, burnt alive, raped, maimed, or denied her right to be born—and well-meaning men turn the other way, they participate in the ongoing oppression of women. For silence is a form of participation. Neglect is participation. And so is indifference. Neither silence, nor indifference, nor neglect are acts of love.

Bell Hooks also speaks of working together toward affecting change in her statement about male allies:

When women and men understand that working to eradicate patriarchal domination is a struggle rooted in the longing to make a world where everyone can live fully and freely, then we know our work to be a gesture of love. Let us draw upon that love to heighten our awareness, deepen our compassion, intensify our courage, and strengthen our commitment.

These are powerful, meaningful statements about the need for male participation in obtaining gender equality. These statements, however, come from women's voices, and it is important to hear what men have to say about the issue of male allies, as well, so let us turn to statements from men with regards to being allies; what are some of their views on participating in 'feminism' and working as allies towards gender equality? One man, Michael S. Kimmel, Ph.D., from the Department of Sociology from



**“One of the most important things we can do is educate ourselves.”**

**– Rowan Sciban, Male Allies Co-Team Leader [Referring to men’s role in promoting gender equality at the first Male Allies meeting of the year]**

the State University of New York at Stony Brook, had this to say about men and gender equality:

I believe that changes among men represent the next phase of the movement for women’s equality—that changes among men are vital if women are to achieve full equality ... I believe that these changes among men will actually benefit men, and that gender equality is not a loss for men, but an enormously positive thing that will enable us to live the kinds of lives we say we want to live. (2005)

Another man, Aaron Kroontje, a U of C student, in his unpublished article “The Impetus for Change: Why White Middle Class Males Should Back Gender Equality” says this:

Half the population of the entire human race is female; that is half of the world’s potential. Everyday when women ... are held back from achieving their full potential the entire world suffers ... without gender equality [the] realities of patriarchal society will remain and our fight to survive on this planet, which requires everything we can muster, will be fought with one hand tied behind our back.”

What, then, do men gain from ‘feminist’ work at the WRC? Well, men and women cohabitate this planet. Our lives are inextricably linked, there-

fore our issues, our concerns, and our battles are also linked, whether we realize this or not. Kimmel reminds us that most men do not even realize that they are gendered individuals; so powerful is the message that ‘gender’ means ‘woman’.

It is important to note that speaking of gender, in and of itself, can be problematic, with all the hues and nuances that surround gender identification, so I will focus instead on feminism as an ideology. Feminism is a powerful and effective ideology for all individuals, providing a framework to critique the interactions and institutions that we all find ourselves in, allowing us to understand these interactions and institutions as embedded within a field of power (Kimmel, 2005). Feminism, therefore, and being a male ally, provides men with the opportunity to delve into these critiques and better analyze the world in which they live.

What do all these statements, regardless of the gender of the author, have in common? The message is that for men to work with women towards gender equality will benefit both men and women alike. The pursuit for gender equality, the decision to be an ally is not a statement of martyrdom, but rather a conscious decision to make the world a better place for all of its inhabitants; and isn’t that what it’s really all about? **WRC**

## Advisory Committee Profiles

### ALEX JUDD

Alex is VP Operations and Finance for the Students' Union, University of Calgary. She was born and raised in Calgary, and has recently completed her BA in International Relations with a minor in Women's Studies. Alex has been an active member of the university community throughout her degree. She was a SU Operations and Finance commissioner for the past two years, President of the student club Feminist Initiative Recognizing Equality for the past three years, and has volunteered with NUTV, the Women's Resource Centre, the Eco-Club and World University Services Canada over the course of her degree. Her work with the WRC in the past includes facilitating community consultations during the development of the WRC, and acting as student volunteer coordinator for the WRC Grand Opening in October 2006.



Alex decided to join the Advisory Committee because of her role as the Students' Union liaison to the WRC. She is passionate about the strong leadership opportunities the WRC has provided for students in all areas of its programs and services. In particular, Alex believes that the WRC has greatly enriched the Women's Studies department at the U of C through offering creative and flexible

experiential learning programs in conjunction with required courses. She is also inspired by the leading role the WRC has played in its diversity work, and looks forward to collaboration between the Students' Union and WRC in this area. **WRC**

### GEORGE DEMIAN

George Demian holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Finance) degree from the Haskayne School of Business at the University of Calgary. He is currently working as a financial analyst at an international energy company and recently presented research on Alberta's royalty treatment of unconventional gas at the 19th World Petroleum Congress in Madrid, Spain.



As an undergraduate student, George's involvement at the U of C was both diverse and rewarding. As President of the Society of Undergraduates in Economics (SUE) his major accomplishments included the expansion of events under the "Economics Month" initiative and the establishment of the Economics Mentorship Program, a grassroots program that is currently in its second year of operation. Since 2006, George has raised over \$400,000 as Sponsorship Manager of the U of C Solar Team and helped lead the team to their best overall race finishes as Project Co-Chair and Business Manager during the 2007-2008 solar car racing season.

George's involvement with the WRC began in 2005 when he was selected to serve as a student representative on the President's Advisory Council on the Status of Women. On that council he worked to identify areas of interest to women on campus and would later be selected to serve on the WRC's advisory committee. In this capacity, George has had the opportunity to assist in fund raising and setting strategic goals for the centre.

In the community, George serves on the Natural Resources Committee at the Calgary Chamber of Commerce and as a member of the Environment Grants Advisory Committee at the Calgary Foundation. Since 2007 he has served as a Senator of the U of C acting as a bridge between the University and the greater Calgary community. **WRC**

**THE WRC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AC) WAS CREATED TO ENSURE THAT THE VOICES OF THE VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS ARE REPRESENTED WITHIN THE WORK OF THE CENTRE. THE AC MANAGE THE STRATEGIC ASPECTS OF THE CENTRE AND OFFER VALUABLE INPUT AND GUIDANCE ON THE FUTURE OF THE WRC.**

# What it means to be a Male Ally



**LIFE IS A LOT LIKE A THREE-LEGGED RACE WHERE MEN AND WOMEN ARE INEXORABLY TIED TOGETHER. BEING A MALE ALLY MEANS RECOGNIZING THAT MEN CANNOT RUN THE RACE ON THEIR OWN; WOMEN HAVE TO BE FREE TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL SO THAT THEY CAN RUN ALONGSIDE OF US.**

**WHEN WE WORK AGAINST PATRIARCHY, WE LOOSEN THE WEIGHTS THAT HOLD WOMEN BACK, MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR OUR PARTNERS, AND CONSEQUENTLY, OURSELVES.**

**- RAYMOND ANG, MALE ALLIES CO-TEAM LEADER**

# Volunteer Profile

## LEANN BROWN

LeAnn started working with the WRC after taking a spring community service learning course in anti-racist feminism. From there she developed a *White Ally* workshop that the Centre now uses to train all its volunteers and became the Team Leader for the *Working Against Racism* program.

LeAnn grew up in small-town Alberta. "I remember hearing the train whistle, and thinking 'I need to be on that train.'" From a town where strong women were common but feminism was a dirty word and cultural diversity was at a premium, LeAnn decided to travel around the world. She has visited Egypt, Morocco, Thailand, Japan, and India, among others. Traveling and living abroad, LeAnn experienced racism directly, but grew to a fuller understanding of the lingering impact of growing up with white privilege. In the four years she spent teaching in South Korea, she sometimes felt excluded and discriminated against.

Her already active, conscious anti-racist stance was deepened upon the realization that although she

could return to Canada and avoid that discrimination, her coworkers of color could not. She noticed too that, despite her best intentions, she treated some students differently than others based on their appearance—a devastating realization that has had a lasting impact on her commitment to being an effective and self-reflective ally.

She swiftly addressed the problem and has been working to keep doing so—and to encourage others to do so—during her stay with the WRC. Through WAR and the White Ally Workshop, LeAnn hopes to raise awareness that racism is happening all the time, and to give others the tools to do something about it. "[The WRC] shows people they have options. We've had so many conversations in this room, it's amazing. This is what it's about."

LeAnn is leaving the WRC to take a Master's Degree in Linguistics at the University of Toronto, with a special focus on the sociolinguistics of power. We will miss her!



### I support the Women's Resource Centre.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- I would like to volunteer.
- I would like to be notified of events & information.
- I would like to have a copy of the WRC newsletter.
- I would like to donate to the WRC

*There are several ways to donate to the Women's Resource Centre including online donations by credit card. We also accept donations by cash, cheques, and new books for our growing Women's Resource Library. A tax creditable receipt is provided with each monetary donation.*

#### Enclosed is my donation of:

\$50     \$75     \$100     \$\_\_\_\_\_

#### Send donations to:

Women's Resource Centre, MH318, 2500 University Drive  
 NW, Calgary, Alberta, T2N 1N4

**Online Donation:** [www.ucalgary.ca/giving](http://www.ucalgary.ca/giving)

## How can you support the WRC?

### BY VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers are the heart and soul of the WRC. All of our programs are led by volunteers representing different sectors of the community campus including students, staff, faculty and members of the Calgary community. The WRC team works to facilitate the projects, ideas and creative initiatives of our volunteers and the centre is defined by and for the women who volunteer with us and enjoy our space. Volunteering is an excellent way to take advantage of our beautiful space, interact with women from diverse backgrounds, and learn through dialogue and research.

### THROUGH SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship is an excellent way to see tangible growth and success at the WRC. Our yearly outcome-based assessments include important consultations with the users of the centre as well as key community stakeholders. When you support our centre you will receive a yearly package highlighting our activities, challenges and successes as well as newsletters describing upcoming events and including feature articles.

**GET INVOLVED!** If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, mentor or a sponsor, drop by our centre, visit our website at [www.ucalgary.ca/women](http://www.ucalgary.ca/women), call us at 403-220-8551 or email us at [women@ucalgary.ca](mailto:women@ucalgary.ca)

