

## Northern Women's Centre Began Through COLLECTIVE Leadership

There is a misleading reference to Northern Women's Centre in Alanna Buso's article "Gay Thunder Bay, the early years" in the Looking Back Thunder Bay Museum column of the Chronicle Journal September 18, 2016.

The Women's Centre was the collective creation by a large number of enthusiastic and dedicated women galvanized by the Northern Women's Conference of April 1973. The Centre operated as a collective leadership. It buzzed with committees of many women who volunteered their time and made the decisions of the Centre as a group. In 1982-1983, Fiona Karlstedt was employed as administrator, then Karen Maki served in that position and in the early 1990's Gwen O'Reilly took charge.

If you want to know more about early days of the Women's Centre in Thunder Bay, a good source is the Northern Woman's Journal. Check out Northern Woman's Bookstore website NWJ Archives <http://northernwomansbookstore.ca/index.php?pid=26>

Excerpt from 1973 issues:

"The Northern Women's Centre – Who Are We?

... a Place for all women, regardless of race, religion, creed, age, colour, marital status or class.

... a forum of women who get together for various reasons-- support, discussion, struggle, strength - you name it and it's happening.

Because of the way things are structured, what gets done and how we go about it are decided in a democratic manner by the group as a whole

- no formal structure, no executive -only a free and informal exchange of ideas.

Various committees handle various aspects of the Group's functioning (a finance committee, a housing committee, a flea market committee).

Why would I Be Interested?

Whatever your interest is you'll find other women with those interests.

Many small interest groups have grown and are growing out of our larger Centre meetings – working women, day care, consciousness raising groups, The Northern Woman (our newsletter) and Birth Control Information, to name just a few. We also have speakers every Thursday to talk on various issues- employment opportunities, birth control, abortion and other woman-related topics.

The composition of the Northern Women's Centre group as a whole represents different ideological views and approaches to the emancipation of women i.e. political affiliation (or lack thereof). However, the unifying factor is the sentiment that women should be emancipated."

Another informative source is in the Brodie Library Special Collections – Northwestern Ontario status of women initiatives, 1973-1987/Fiona Karlstedt Thunder Bay, Ontario: Northwestern Ontario Women's Decade Council, [1987]

Posted on Facebook 25 September 2016 by Sara-Community Williamson