

Working Group Year in Review

2004-2005 saw some great achievements for APIRG members to celebrate, as well as some challenges.

Achievements

- Created a dedicated staff position to support WGs and communicate WG-related matters to the APIRG board and members;
- Accepted three new working groups: the Mexico Working Group, Alberta Network of Popular Educators, and the Radio Access Working Group;
- Placed a CSL student with the Radio Access Working Group;
- Cut back on the number of WGs in order to better support fewer groups. Some WGs voluntarily dissolved, while others were transferred to more appropriate funding and support categories;
- Continued to support a number of WGs that were established in previous years;
- Improved services (i.e. website, application process, policies and access to funding for WGs);
- Introduced a new requirement for all groups: a financial contact person as well as a main contact person;
- Supported successful WG events and projects and the continued existence of last year's WGs;
- Made great improvements in regards to the appropriate use of APIRG funds and WG accountability;
- Provided training sessions in InDesign, media relations, consensus decision making, web design, banner making and financial reporting;
- Hosted an Info Fair during September 2004 that offered WGs a chance to present themselves to fellow students;
- Held a well-attended Working Group orientation meeting where WGs had an opportunity to meet each other and APIRG staff and board members, and review APIRG services and policies as well as offer valuable insight into their group's skills and needs.

Challenges and solutions

Overextension: Spreading support and resources between too many groups and individuals.

- Addressed by reducing and streamlining the number of WGs.

Stamina and sustainability: Groups formed and disbanded without meeting goals, or lingered without becoming active...or disappeared without accessing their funds.

- This was not as much of an issue in 2004-2005 partly due to the presence of the WG coordinator, and partly due to the fact that most of the WGs were active during the year.

Communication: Because two staff people and several liaising Board Members were assigned to follow-up with WGs, communication could become inconsistent, minimal or redundant.

- Having the WG Coordinator as the main contact with APIRG greatly improved communication.

Accountability and reporting: In some cases, progress reports from WGs were infrequent or nonexistent.

- Reporting and financial accountability were greatly improved this year!

Challenges for the coming year

- A need for greater access to training and workshops that address specific WG needs
- Greater opportunities for WGs to network and promote themselves
- More creative and diverse approaches to supporting and promoting WGs

working groups

Summary of Select Working Groups

Here are highlights from a selection of last year's active groups.
You may wish to visit www.apirg.org for a full description of each group.

Alternatives to the Canadian Banking System (ACBES)

We have made great headway into research on problems with the existing banking system in Western countries by looking at how the banking system interacts on both the micro and macro level of the capitalist economic system. Several members have also begun research on alternative banking models in Canada. We have consulted and collaborated with University of Alberta business professor Mark Anielski on his Genuine Wealth Accounting Model, a more accurate and expansive measurement of the community's well-being, which includes assessments of health, the environment, labour and people.

Activities

- February 25-27, 2005 - Our workshop at The Alberta Social Forum had a modest but energetic audience and we received great feedback.
- March 1, 2005 - Presentation with Deb Abbey, CEO of Real Assets (a social investing company) hosted by the University of Alberta's Women's Law Forum. This presentation also went incredibly well and we were encouraged by the audience response to our short video.
- March 10th, 2005 - Filmmakers Sheryle Carlson (Banking On Alternatives: A Look Into The Canadian Banking System) and Adam Cormier (Fixing Capitalism) presented sneak previews of their upcoming documentaries.

have contact with this kind of information, members leafleted one or two grocery stores on the last Saturday of each month.

- As of November 2004, we send "under the radar" news to our listserv at the beginning of each month. Our listserv consists of around 450 basic members and we have received positive comments from many of them.
- Since January 2005, our website is being updated regularly. Articles, events, news, research, links, etc are posted. We are still trying to improve this facet of our information dissemination arm. We have given much thought to information sharing and realize that, in this virtual age, our web site is crucial.
- We've created postcards to send to Prime Minister Paul Martin. This postcard campaign has gone better than expected. Instead of our estimated 1000 cards, we distributed at least 3000 between October 2004 to March 2005.
- We launched our "Mandatory Labelling Campaign" at Deputy Prime Minister Anne's McLellan's office. With the help of the Edmonton Direct Action Network, Biofreedom put on a "Jeopardy" show and presented a box full of food package labels to McLellan's secretary.
- Following this launch, we sent our campaign literature to many organizations. The Sierra Club and ACGC both featured our article in the winter issues of their newsletters.

Biofreedom

Biofreedom is committed to consumer advocacy and education concerning Genetically Engineered (GE) foods. We are conducting a public awareness campaign about the issues concerning genetic engineering and mandatory labeling of GE food products.

Activities

- Monthly meetings were held the First Thursday of each month.
- In an effort to reach people who would not normally



Brazil and Social Democratic Governance

Members of the Brazil and Social Democratic Governance working group kept busy by going through footage collected in Brazil - including interviews with municipal, state and federal politicians, activists, and Brazilians in general - on Brazil's democratic process and the rise to power of Lula Inacio da Silva, Brazil's working class president. From this, we created a short film, which can be accessed and downloaded on our website at www.apirg.org/~brazil.

The group plans to send this short film to grade 8 teachers throughout Alberta who teach Brazil as part of their social studies curriculum.



Campus Community Garden

The 2004 campus garden was a huge success. There was a lot of community support for the project and several past volunteers intend to return and volunteer in the garden next year. Because the garden is a seasonal project, no work was done in the garden during the Winter 2005 semester. A garden coordinator was hired in May 2005.

Expansion plans for the garden include naturalizing the north end of the garden. Less than five workshops were held at the garden in 2004; for 2005, we would like to bring in more presenters and possibly have the volunteers do presentations for the community. This year we would like for the volunteers to become more familiar with each, for which we will require funding so as to organize social events that foster group unity.

The University of Calgary Community Garden has contacted ECOS and expressed interest in collaborating with the UofA Community Garden on workshops.

Humanities 101

Our group has partnered with a number of agencies in order to ensure our longevity and establish our name in the community. The Learning Centre Literacy Association has been phenomenal as a resource and has not only assisted with curriculum development, but has introduced us to a group of students who have welcomed this program with open arms. The Centre has also been the site of our "Critical Thinking and Film" sessions.

In March 2005, The Boyle Street Community Co-op opened their doors to house our classes, and with their publicity, we have managed to generate even more interest in our program.

Dalbir Sehmbly, a PhD student in the English and Film department at the University, has been teaching the Critical Thinking stream of classes since September 2004. He has been focusing on developing practical skills such as communication, persuasion and analysis. Through careful consideration of newspaper articles, news broadcasts, and other mediums, his students have become more aware of the world around them and more confident in their ability to sift through messages in the media.

In March 2005, we offered a six-week stream in Art History and Photography. The objective of this course was to first provide students with the background knowledge of how various peoples have been captured on film, and how the perspective of the photographer may be different than what the subject is trying to convey. In the photography portion, the practical knowledge of focus, lighting, and composition was taught, cumulating in personal projects undertaken by students with the use of free disposable cameras. Dr. Keri Cronin, an Art History professor in the department of Art and Design, and Stephen Nagy, Iraleigh Anderson, and Jay, three students enrolled in the photography program at NAIT, undertook this instruction. They have inspired students to look critically at photography, from the difference between soft and hard light, to the narratives expressed in photographs, to techniques employed in black and white photography.

Due to students' expressed interest in Native Studies, we offered a drop-in lecture on the topic of strengthening relations between Aboriginals and the wider community in April. We hope to offer more Native Studies-centered classes in the future, possibly integrating cultural seminars in areas such as Aboriginal drumming and crafts.

The benefits of this project have not only been philanthropic in nature, but have also extended to cultivating a forum where knowledge and experience have been exchanged and nurtured. Students, instructors, and volunteers have gained perspective from participating in the program. We hope to continue our success in the Fall 2005 term, and we invite anyone who would like to get involved to join us in our endeavor!

working groups

Just Java

Just Java had a great year raising awareness among students, faculty and staff about fair trade coffee and the conditions that workers face in conventional trade practices. We put pressure on ARAMARK to offer fair trade coffee in its vendors on campus. We also had a fair trade info session to provide information to our members prior to sitting at Just Java tables. At the tables we provided fair trade coffee and information about fair trade.

Mexico Working Group

Work is underway for the Mexico Working Group's first project - tentative title "La Tira" (the fuzz, the cops). This documentary film will be a comparative study of the relationship between police and community in Edmonton and Mexico City. We will conduct interviews with police officers and civilian officials (both active and retired), journalists, community members, community activists and academics. We will also attempt to obtain live footage of the police forces in operation.

The first phase of the project will be carried out in Edmonton. Pending its successful completion, the second phase will be carried out in Mexico City in the Fall 2005 semester. Finally, we will conclude additional research and interviews in Edmonton as we begin to edit the material.

The final product will be bilingual. (When the dialogue is in English, there will be Spanish subtitles and when the dialogue is in Spanish, there will be English subtitles.) Once completed, the film will serve as an educational resource for both communities and will serve to enhance and link their respective dialogues about the relationship between police and people.

The Mexico Working Group is also supporting a year-long conference series, starting September 2005, at the University of Alberta. The series is being planned with the department of political science, The North American Mobility Program and APIRG. The overarching goal of the conference, entitled "North America: From Turtle Island to the Partnership for Security and Prosperity," is to provide a general overview of the meaning of North America as a distinct historical, political, economic, social and cultural region.

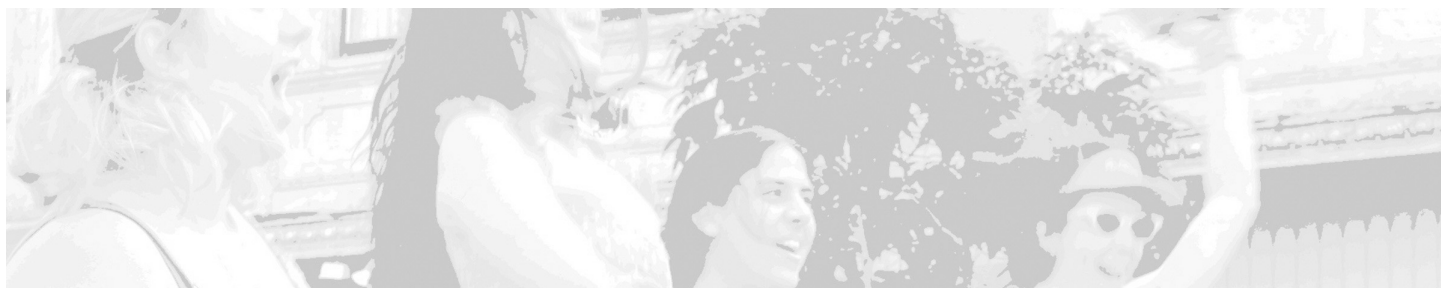
Radio Accessibility Working Group (RAWG)

Over the past year we:

- Created a season (12 half-hour episodes) of radio material produced by persons with hearing loss and distributed it for syndication to community radio stations across the country.
- Promoted awareness of issues surrounding the accessibility of radio and lobbied for radio accessibility protocols to be implemented on a national level.
- Gathered and distributed knowledge of methods of making radio content accessible (for example, an online database or tutorial section, or delivering workshops on captioning audio content to interested groups)

Plans for 2005-2006:

- 'Radio Free Week' - Participants volunteer to go without radio for a week and collect pledges.
- 'Experience Night' - This involves an all-ages concert where guests wear earplugs to simulate hearing loss, and thus learn about social implications of hearing loss, as well as have the opportunity to listen to music from a new angle. The Experience Night is an evening of music being heard from new perspectives, social interaction occurring with different methods and tools, and people learning new things about the world of sensory stimuli that surrounds them. An altered angle of perception requires an altered means of interaction with the external environment. Hearing patrons at an Experience Night find that their normal means of social interaction are not as effective as they once were, and thus adapt, learning to interact as someone with a hearing loss does.



Resources for Academic Excellence (RAE)

RAE in the Present: Tangible Results

- Successfully completed the fall 2004 semester with approximately 40 volunteers completing nearly 500 hours of in-school involvement.
- Partnered with the Sudanese Community of Edmonton, whereas 3 volunteers have completed about 50 hours of community service.
- Created and distributed 15 food hampers for families in need during the Christmas season. Additional food was donated to the campus food bank.
- Partnered with various organizations to raise money for international aid (tsunami), raising nearly \$700.
- Sponsored and aided HIP in the execution of various general interest forums and discussions (99 Problems and Sexism is One).

Restructuring

RAE has undergone restructuring as a result of a partnership with EISA. EISA has agreed to oversee the operations of RAE, while allowing RAE to maintain its autonomy. This agreement allows the following:

- RAE will receive resources from EISA such as ESL teachers who will train new volunteers.
- RAE will gain the opportunity to coordinate extra curricular activities for immigrant youth.
- RAE will receive valuable advertising for the programs through EISA and the Government of Alberta

Student Worker Action Group (SWAG)

We took on various activities last year with some mixed results. From strike support, to outreach, to putting on an event, we were certainly busy. Our activities include:

- **Literature Distribution** - Most of the literature has a labour focus, and is almost entirely oriented around current events. There is some agitational material, such as some "One Big Union" pamphlets, and some pamphlets on workplace direct action called "How to Fire Your Boss."

- **Student Outreach** - Outreach to students was probably our weakest area. We managed to get posters up around campus, and put on a concert during the winter term.
- **Anti-Fascist Organizing** - This is sort of a 'back burner' project. Over the winter, a group calling itself "Western Canada For Us" (WCFU), sprang up and started a website based in Edmonton. Members of SWAG helped to organize counter-demonstrations to white power and "Free Ernst Zundel" rallies. When white power literature began showing up in Strathcona and the North Side, we decided to make a concentrated effort to work against these people. This has meant some postering, but since a police raid the far right group seems to have collapsed. As it stands now we are working on keeping our eyes open, and working on networking with other anti racist groups.

- **Strike Support** - By far the most exciting, and rewarding work we have done over the past year has been strike support. During the A Channel strike (September 2003 to February 2004), we organized weekly pickets, did extensive flyering in support of the strikers, and met with numerous workers on a weekly basis.

The A Channel strike support allowed to us to coordinate solidarity pickets to get students out to support CEP local 1900. We were out there almost every Friday for five months, sometimes bringing more people than any of the unions. With this strike in particular, there was a student aspect that allowed us to build better solidarity between students and workers.

We also went out to support the Canada National Railways strike last spring.

Overview

By far our most successful work has been building solidarity between student workers on campus, and workers off campus. Other projects were valuable learning experiences, and allowed us, as activists, to pick up some new skills. We intend to build on what we achieved last year with outreach into the labour movement, and look inwards to campus a little bit more.

working groups

The Olive

This has been an exciting and very successful year for The Olive Editorial Group and Reading Series. As always, we will have hosted 8 readings by the end of the term, and each reading has had its own special charm and personality.

The Olive Reading Series happens on the second Tuesday of the month (from September - April) at Martini's Bar & Grill (9910 109th Ave). As well as host these readings, The Olive also publishes a small chapbook to accompany the readings. Because of the financial support of APIRG we are able to offer these chapbooks free of charge to our audiences (mostly comprised of undergraduate U of Alberta students). As well, each poet receives 10 copies of the chapbook as part of their honourarium for the reading. In part due to this unique combination, The Olive continues to enjoy a reputation among Canadian poets as a great (possibly the best!) place to read while in Edmonton.

In September we opened our fifth season with a reading by the University of Alberta's writer-in-residence, Karen Solie. In October, we launched two fine chapbooks by two of Canada's foremost poets, Don McKay and Shani Mootoo. Other readings included a wide range of poets from Canada and abroad including: Jill Hartman from Calgary, Edmonton's Karen Houle, Saskatchewan poet Sheri Benning and Amatoritsero Ede from Nigeria. In March we continued the tradition, which we began last year, of hosting a night of readings by the U of Alberta's senior poetry class, ENGL 494. This year we had a great reading by 6 fabulous new poets, all of whom are happy to be published in the chapbook and to have a public reading under their belts. Season 5 will end on Tuesday, April 12th with an exciting reading by two of Canada's premier poets, Douglas Barbour and Stephen Scobie. Barbour and Scobie are perhaps best known for their work as a sound-poetry duo, Re:Sounding. This will be a great way to end our season, and to mark the occasion we will be producing a CD of Scobie and Barbour performing.

During this year, The Olive has seen our audience grow to include a significant group of young and emerging poets who come to listen to the readings and also to participate in the open mic portion of the reading.

This year we have a new designer, (former Olive poet and U of A graduate) Jessica Hiemstra-van der Horst, who has done a remarkable job (for FREE!) of reflecting the work of so many different poets in her cover designs. Our own Lisa Martin-de Moor is our new

lay-out coordinator, and Lisa's hard work has allowed us to reinvent the chapbook form several times throughout the year. Thank you Jessica and Lisa!

Every month, from the microphone, we thank the generosity of APIRG for helping to fund this project, and every month we have the pleasure of introducing a revolving group of people to the diverse scope of a "Public Interest Research Group". The Olive remains an important cultural hub in Edmonton, one that we hope to maintain. For more information about our group, please contact us at oliveseries@hotmail.com.

Women's Centre Collective

The Centre has a few functions. First, it is a space dedicated to community building and activism, available for women and women-positive groups to claim and name for their own purposes. The Centre also offers funding and administrative resources for such groups to organize projects and events. Second, it houses a library of books, magazines and articles on feminism and women's issues for use by students, faculty and community members. It also houses the Dino Distro, a spot for feminist zine-makers to share ideas and distribute their work.

During the 2004-05 academic year, the Centre sponsored four events and two working groups. September's Take Back the Night honored women and children affected by violence and highlighted the importance of working towards making the streets safe for everyone. In October, sexual assault activist Jane Doe spoke of her struggle to challenge the Toronto Police over the gross negligence with which her rape case was handled. February brought Stand Up and Speak: An Evening of Spoken Word poetry with Victoria's Lisa B., Edmonton's T.L. Cowan and an open mic session. March's film series included a screening of Sister Secrets, and a 3-day Women's Health and Sexuality Film Festival. During the past year, the Centre also supported the pro-choice working group Voices for Choices and the zine-making working group Zinstas.

The U of A Women's Centre is currently in a state of transition and development, as we shift from being a new student group to being a stable and dynamic resource on campus. We are in the process of developing ways to make sure that there is continuity and reliability, and that the Centre is serving the needs of the campus community. We welcome with open arms anyone who is interested in helping to make the Centre a space for people to learn, teach, organize and create in a women-positive environment.

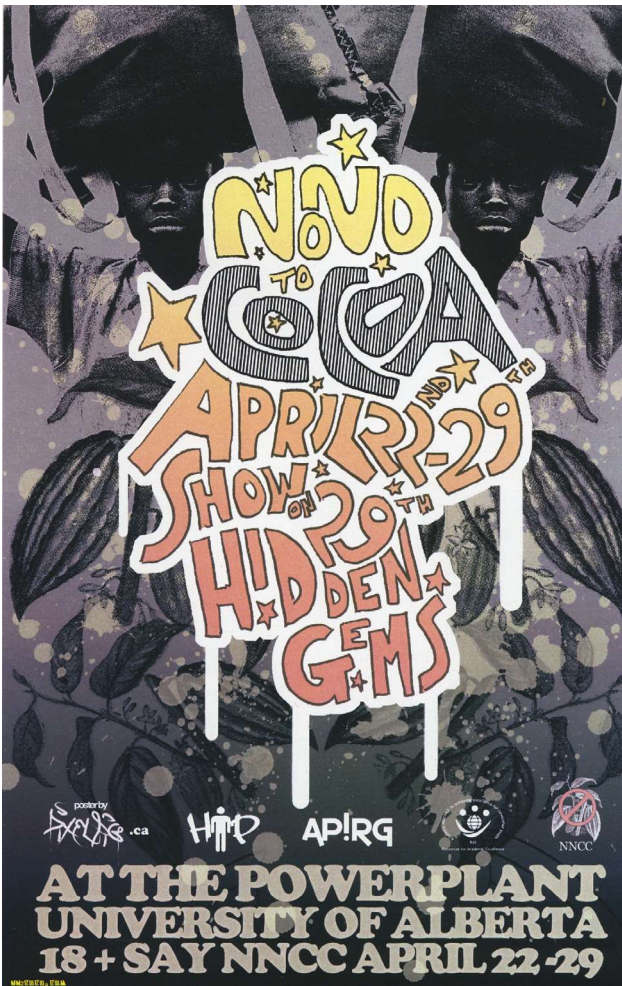
Volunteer at APIRG!

APIRG and its working groups are always looking for volunteers. Whether you have hours to spare or just a few minutes to kill, whether your style is dynamic or laid back, APIRG has shoes for you to fill.

Board participation
University and community outreach
Staffing the APIRG resource centre
APIRG office support
Media and technical support
Arts and graphics support
Skill sharing

Let us know what inspires you and we'll do our best to accomodate.

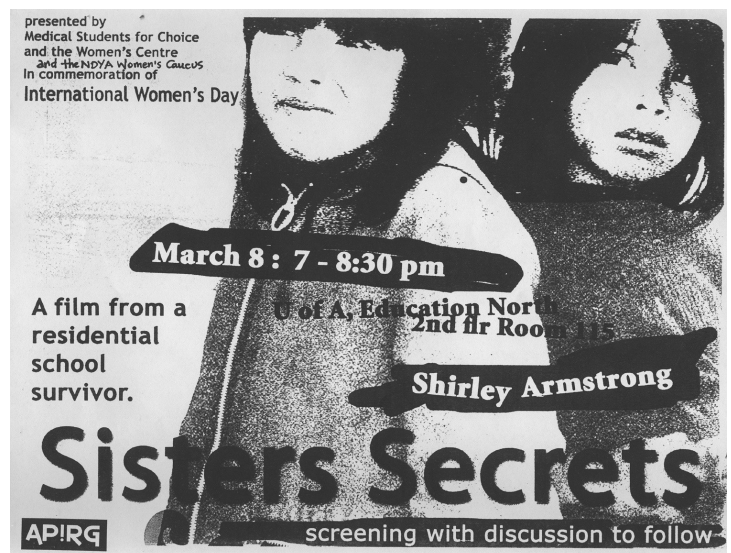
Call us at 492-0614, write us at apirg@ualberta.ca, or drop by the office in HUB Mall at the University of Alberta (9111 - 112 Street) and fill out a volunteer form. We would love to have you get involved.



APIRG thanks the contributors to this Annual Report

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