CENTRE CMMUNAUTAIRE DES FEMMES SUD-ASIATIQUES

In Tiohtià:ke (Montreal) on unceded Kanien'kehá:ka [Mohawk] territory

Bulletin août 2017



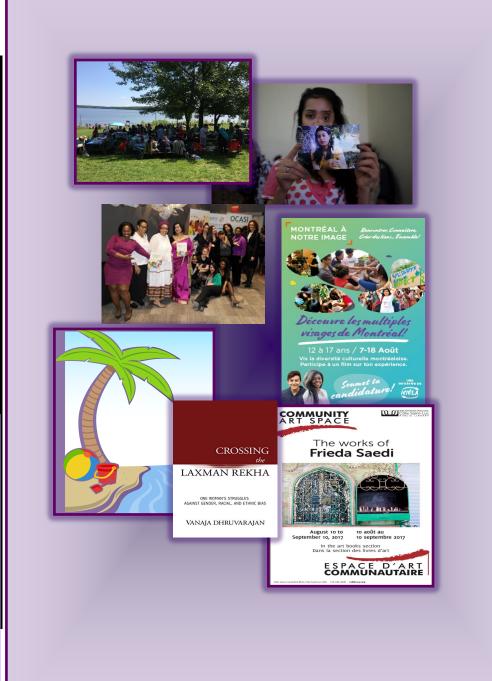
Le Centre communautaire des femmes sud-asiatiques

Inside this issue: Cover page Centre update, bulletin guidelines SAWCC picnic Joint NGO statement -**CERD** Graphic novel "I can have you killed" Crossing the Laxman Rek- 8 ha, the works of Freida Saedi, SAWCC summer camp SAWCC part time French course, Montréal à notre, **Presenting Rana Ayyub** Why I am Feminist 10 Activities, membership

Qu'en pensez-vous? What do you think?

- Let us know your thoughts about the bulletin.
- Que pensez-vous de notre journal?
- We encourage you to send in your stories and articles for upcoming newsletters in any language by the 25th of every month to:
- sawccbulletin@gmail.com
- Écrivez -nous à

sawccbulletin@gmail.com



CENTRE UPDATE



Centre Hours/heure d'ouverture

Monday & Thursday/lundi & jeudi 9am—9pm Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday/ mardi, mercredi & vendredi- 9am-5pm

From July 4th to September 4th:

Monday to Friday/ lundi à vendredi- 9am-5pm

The Centre is wheelchair accessible

Le centre est accessible aux fauteuils roulants.

<u>Volunteers</u> If you are interested in helping out at the Centre, please contact Juvaria (Ext. 104 or juvaria@bellnet.ca) to coordinate a meeting!

South Asian Women's Community Centre

(4)

1035, rue Rachel est, 3ième étage, Montréal, QC H2J 2J5

Metro Mont-Royal

Executive Council Meeting: Tuesday, September 5th at 6:00 pm. All are welcome.

SAWCC Bulletin -- submission guidelines:

SAWCC members are encouraged to send submissions to the Bulletin, to share items of interest with other members. Send submissions to: sawccbulletin@gmail.com

If using the post send to: SAWCC Bulletin, 1035 Rachel est, Montreal, Quebec, H2[2]3

Submissions should reach by the 25th of the month.

Submissions may be original work or reprints (with permission) and can include --

art, reports, photos, information, opinion pieces, short fiction, poetry, announcements, recipes, etc.

Publication criteria are guided by SAWCC's commitment to not negatively discriminate on the basis of physical and mental ability, religion, colour, nationality, age, sexual orientation and identity, caste, and class. Publication is further guided by the feminist ethos of sis-terhood, and principles of intersectionality*, equality, equity, and transparency. As well, material that may compromise confidentiality of individuals without their consent will not be published.

SAWCC reserves the right to select, reject or edit submissions. When authorship identified, items reflect the views of the authors.

*Intersectionality -- the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, that create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

SAWCC Picnic



and two cars with total of 110 participants. Due to heavy traffic and two accidents on the way delayed us longer than the expected time of arrival. Once we reached the Park its greenery, peaceful shady area and a cool breeze took away all the fatigue of the 3 hours ride to reach the Park holding our nature's call to use the washrooms. Once all settle down SAWCC offered samosas and juice to all participants. This time we had a raffle draw for the participants and three gifts were given to the winning numbers. The gifts were two family passes to Biodome, Botanical garden and Planetarium and a wrist watch. Children and adults equally enjoyed the water because the weather was perfect for swimming. Some of them enjoyed paddle boot available for rent on site. Abundant South Asian food was generously shared and appreciated by all participants. Overall the picnic gave us all to laugh, joke around, share and make new bonds among the participants. The SAWCC group left Beach around 5:00 pm tired but happy and looking forward to the next year SAWCC picnic.

Joint NGO statement - CERD

Joint NGO statement in advance of Canada's examination by UN CERD Committee

This joint statement is released by Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) appearing before the <u>United Nations Committee</u> on the <u>Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD Committee</u>), which will review Canada's compliance with the <u>International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)</u> on August 14–15, 2017, in Geneva.

Canada enjoys a global reputation as a country that respects human rights. Yet it has in many ways failed to comply with its international human rights obligations, including the obligation to guarantee equal rights and protection to all people in Canada on the basis of race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, and other related grounds. While Canada espouses a commitment to non-discrimination it has failed to comply with its own domestic human rights laws regarding racial discrimination and Indigenous rights. For example, the federal government has failed to abide by four Canadian Human Rights Tribunal orders issued between January 2016 and May 2017 to cease racially discriminating 165,000 First Nations children. Canada has failed to comprehensively address gender discrimination rooted in the *Indian Act*, despite being made aware of it by courts, the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, and outside legal experts. In so doing, Canada places itself above its own laws forbidding discrimination, sending a reckless and disturbing message to Canadians that discrimination is not allowed — unless it is the government doing it.

As Canadian NGOs, we believe that any UN review of Canada's record on racial equality and non-discrimination must first recognize nation to nation relationships between Canada and Indigenous Peoples as a fundamental starting point and must include Indigenous Women institutions within this Nation to Nation relationship. We call on the UN to require all governments in Canada to comprehensively deliver on the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a part of this acknowledgement, and put into practice the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples without further delay. Canada must put into action its stated commitment to a nation to nation relationship.

Canada has a long history of racism targeting Indigenous Peoples and communities of colour, including the enslavement of people of African descent, and various forms of legislated racism targeting Chinese, South Asian and other communities of colour. Racism has affected each of these communities differently. For Indigenous peoples in particular, racism is a matter of life and death as they experience the lowest socio-economic indicators, the highest rates of suicide and incarceration in the world, premature deaths, and the murders and disappearances of thousands of Indigenous peoples. In the spirit of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024), we expect to see concrete actions by the Government of Canada to specifically address anti-Black racism. This includes, but is not limited to, recognizing the rich legacy, historical struggle and many contributions of African Canadian peoples living in the lands now known as Canada for over 300 years. We also expect the Government of Canada to address other unique and specific experiences of racism, and urge it to introduce a new national Action Plan Against Racism, one that will address the universal and particular impacts of racism as experienced by different communities, including through mechanisms such as the consistent collection of disaggregated data across all of its various ministries and departments.

We ask the Committee to adopt an intersectional approach to examining the impact of racism on different racialized communities in Canada. We ask the UN to pay particular attention to the intersection between race and gender and gender identity as it affects Indigenous communities and communities of colour, recognizing in particular the deeply harmful reframing of Indigenous women's roles as a result of gender discrimination in legislation and as a legacy of residential schools, and the disruption in roles and relationship between Indigenous mothers and children.

Canada devotes significant resources to defending its failure to address the marginalization and victimization – including the criminalization and incarceration — of racialized communities, particularly Indigenous Peoples and African Canadians. Indigenous women represent 39% of women in prison and 43% of 12-18 year-old young women imprisoned in Canada. In 2010, the Parliamentary Budget Officer calculated the cost to keep one woman in a federal penitentiary as \$348,000 per year – more than \$90 MILLION per year is being spent to jail Indigenous women in federal penitentiaries alone. Canada can and must remedy these egregious policy decisions.

We urge the Committee to examine the discriminatory impact of Canada's immigration and refugee laws as they affect immigrants, migrants, and people with precarious status, particularly those from the Global South.

Finally, access to justice is a fundamental component of an effective human rights system to ensure non-discrimination. Canada has failed to provide sufficient support to persons or organizations filing equity-seeking claims, and it has taken no meaningful measures to ensure the full and proper implementation of the <u>UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders</u> domestically. For example, several NGOs in Canada experienced funding cuts after advocating different levels of government to end racial discrimination. Furthermore, Canada's revised Court Challenges Program limits funding to Charter-based litigation (thereby excluding cases pursued under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and other legal avenues challenging discrimination) and offers no funding for cases involving Indigenous rights or human rights defenders. The lack of protection for human rights defenders and the failure to ensure access to justice mute the ability of persons in Canada to seek redress for racial discrimination.

The United Nations treaty body system for human rights allows for a focused examination of specific elements of human rights and of particularly vulnerable populations (e.g., children, persons with disabilities, women). These specialized reviews by treaty bodies such as Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are vital to ensuring States fully comply with their international human rights obligations. We are grateful to CERD for its work and urge Canada to undertake special measures to resist any efforts to eliminate or erode the efficacy of UN human rights treaty bodies and to advocate with other State parties to ensure the treaty bodies are provided with the resources and support needed to complete their work.

We, the signatories to this statement, will use our appearance before the UN CERD Committee to speak out strongly on Canada's record on Indigenous rights, anti-Black racism, racial discrimination and human rights, and hold the Canadian government accountable in this important international forum.

Signed by:

Aboriginal Legal Services
African Canadian Legal Clinic
Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies
Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action
Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic
Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change
First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
Ontario Native Women's Association
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario

Graphic novel sparks Ontario-wide conversation about violence against women

Graphic novel sparks Ontario-wide conversation about violence against women. Four stories written by immigrant women on topics such as rape, sexual abuse and harassment, offer support to other immigrant women enduring similar experiences.



To mark annual **International Women's Day**, The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (**OCASI**) & Le Mouvement Ontarien des Femmes Immigrantes Francophones (**MOFIF**) launched the graphic novel "Telling Our Stories: Immigrant Women's Resilience". The graphic novel is part of a public education campaign to prevent sexual violence in Ontario.

On March 2nd, the first of several launches across the country took place in Toronto. The bilingual event brought in a crowd of more of than 150 people eager to learn more about how the novel was developed, meet many of the writers, and to support the initiative that is already impacting lives in the province.

The event included speakers and poets and readings of the novel and sparked a conversation about the prevention of violence against women in immigrant communities. The launch featured two special guest speakers; The Hon. Marie- France Lalonde, Minister Responsible for Franco-

phone Affairs and Nathalie Des Rosiers, MPP, who both spoke about the importance of the graphic novel and the positive impact the stories will have on the community.

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"We recognize that immigrant and refugee women who are survivors of sexual violence have unique barriers in seeking support due to fear of stigma, lack of support, victim blaming and lack of knowledge of supports available in their mother tongue" said Fayza Abdallaoui, President, MOFIF.

"We decided to use a graphic novel because it's a creative way to tell stories that can introduce new audiences to significant social issues in a visual, accessible and engaging way and add to the conversations in our communities to end violence against women" said Debbie Douglas, Executive Director, OCASI.

During the fall of 2016, 40 women gathered in three cities to participate in workshops to create the novel.

"We created a graphic novel that reflects directly on the real experiences of immigrant and refugee community members. That's why we held a series of creative writing workshops to get different ideas," said Coco Guzman, the content developer and illustrator of the graphic novel. The graphic novel also includes discussion questions for educators appear at the end of the novel to

help lead and spark important conversations about workplace harassment, marital rape and racism that immigrant and refugee communities can face.



"Telling Our Stories: Immigrant Women's Resilience" is available free of charge, and will be distributed in newcomer communities through settlement organizations, recep-

tion houses, organizations working with newly arrived refugees, as well as universities, places of worship, and other venues in Ontario. To order a copy of the novel, send an email to vaw@ocasi.org

To support and to find out where the next launch will be, follow us on social media at hashtag: #4ImmigrantWomen

http://ocasi.org/graphic-novel-sparks-ontario-wide-conversation-about-violence-against-women

'I can have you killed': Afghan woman fears husband after US denies asylum

Shakila Zareen's asylum application was initially approved after her husband shot her, but it was later denied under Donald Trump's new US migration policies

When Shakila Zareen learned that her husband planned to kill her, she fled to her mother's house. A few hours later, she was alone in the living room when her husband and two other men scaled the compound walls. As they came through the door, Zareen turned to see her husband aim a hunting gun at her and pull the trigger.



She woke up in a hospital the next morning after miraculously surviving the shooting and a gruelling seven-hour drive to Kabul. She traced her fingers over her bandaged face and realized that half of it was missing. Someone told her she had miscarried; she hadn't even known she was pregnant. She was 16 years old.

It was late 2012, and Zareen's life was shattered. Alerted to her ordeal, the Indian government flew her to Delhi and paid for nine reconstructive surgeries over three years. The UN granted her refugee status, and referred her for resettlement to the US.

In 2016, the US government conditionally approved that application.

Zareen, now 21, started to hope that she would be able to rebuild her life, far away from her abusive husband.

But a year later, on 23 June, US Citizen and Immigration Services notified Zareen she was ineligible for resettlement. The reason, the letter said, was "a matter of discretion for security-related reasons". "I couldn't believe it. I cried all the way home. Everybody in the street stared at me. The message made me so sick I had to go to hospital," Zareen told the Guardian.

When the US and its allies invaded <u>Afghanistan</u> in 2001, it claimed the advancement of women's rights as a central pillar of its mission. But cases like Zareen's demonstrate that progress remains largely in the abstract. Legal justice and protection for female victims exists on paper, but often not in practice. "The government has not been able to provide safe environments for women, not in the home, in the street or at work," said Fawzia Koofi, an Afghan lawmaker.

Zareen's asylum request was denied after the introduction of new <u>US immigration</u> policies under Donald Trump – but previous governments may have rejected her too. "Security-related" reasons for rejecting applicants are rarely disclosed. However, the Trump administration's incoherent policies, including a 50,000-person cap on refugee admissions – compared with 110,000 under Obama – will block even more Afghan women like Zareen from reaching the US. Admissions reached the 50,000 cap in July, leaving eligible only refugees with "bona fide" relationships to the US.

"Since this administration got into office, it has completely slowed down – if not stopped – any progress in cases with Afghans trying to gain asylum in the US," said Kimberley Motley, an American attorney working in Afghanistan. Koofi said: "There needs to be a balance between military and civilian efforts. I don't think women's rights are a priority for our international friends anymore."

Zareen's ordeal began in early 2012 when her brother-in-law – a young strongman in the country's northern Baghlan province – came to visit the family with a 20-man entourage. He forced Zareen to marry a friend of his who was 14 years her senior. Her family was powerless to stop the wedding: her father was bedridden from illness and died two weeks after the ceremony. "He couldn't protect us," said Shirin, Zareen's mother.

The abuse began immediately. Zareen says she was raped on their wedding night, and from then on her husband would beat and torment her. "I was very scared of him. He hurt me during sex," she said. "It was almost every day. Sometimes he would tie my hands." Her husband had powerful friends. Her brother-in-law was a local community liaison to the government, but both men also assisted the Taliban, Zareen said. A local parliamentarian, Haji Ashaqullah, confirmed the allegation. Paradoxically, the men's ties with the Taliban might have hurt Zareen's asylum claim. Refugee officials, not authorised to speak to media, said even tenuous connections with people labelled as insurgents can sink an asylum request, even if the insurgents are the very people the refugee is fleeing from.

Zareen and her husband later moved north to Mazar-i Sharif. One day, after a particularly horrific thrashing, she sought help from police. She told them about the beatings – and her husband and brother-in-law's links to the Taliban. A commander brushed her off, saying: "He is your husband. He didn't cut off your nose or ear, he just beat you. It happens," Zareen remembered. Not only did the police not protect Zareen, but someone informed the two men of her visit. In turn, Zareen's sister tipped her off that her life was in danger. Hours later, she was shot in the face.

Zareen's husband ignored multiple interview requests from the Guardian. In combative interviews, Zareen's brother-in-law denied all allegations and claimed she had shot herself. Asked about the allegations, he responded: "Do you know who I am?" Following the shooting, Zareen's husband was held in jail for 10 months, but was then released. According to Motley, Afghanistan's criminal courts often impose shockingly low penalties for crimes against women, charging attempted-murder suspects only with battery.

Nearly four years after the shooting, speaking from her apartment in India alongside her mother, Zareen said the asylum rejection had left her bereft and unsafe. "It's very easy for them to come to India," she said of tormentors. "They threatened me that India is only a step away, and that they can find and kill me any time." Zareen believes her well-connected husband could still carry out the threats, and she spends most of her time inside the apartment. He still calls her.

In recordings of a phone call heard by the Guardian, Zareen's brother-in-law threatens her and her mother in obscene language, as well as her brothers back in Afghanistan. He has called Zareen's mother, too. "He told me: 'I can kill your son, and when you come back for the funeral, I can have you and Shakila killed," Shirin said.

Crossing the Laxman Rekha: Dr. Vanaja Dhruvrajan

Crossing the Laxman Rekha: One Woman's Struggles Against Gender, Racial, and Ethnic Bias

The "Laxman Rekha," from the ancient Indian epic Ramayana, was a line drawn to protect Prince Rama's wife, Sita, from the dangers of the outside world. In Hindu culture today, the notion of the Laxman Rekha has shifted from protecting women to actually

circumscribing their conduct; it has become a metaphor for the proper behavior of Hindu women.

CROSSING the

The author, Dr. Vanaja Dhruvrajan presented the ideas in her book at a Women's History Month event at SAWCC several years ago. Since that time she has written her book and it's been published. Vanaja Dhruvarajan's book is now available on Amazon (kindle edition) and on Google Books for the printed edition.

LAXMAN REKHA

ONE WOMAN'S STRUGGLES AGAINST GENDER, RACIAL, AND ETHNIC BIAS

Vanaja dhruvarajan

Dr. Vanaja Dhruvarajan, adjunct professor at Carleton University (Ottawa), author of Women and Wellbeing, Hindu Women and the Power of Ideology, co-author of Gender, Race and Nation: A Global Perspective, and retired professor in the department of Sociology (University of Winnipeg), has dedicated her career to globalization, family and socialization, gender, anti-racism and knowledge monopolies. Dr. Dhruvarajan was the first woman in her small village in Karnataka (India) to have gradu-

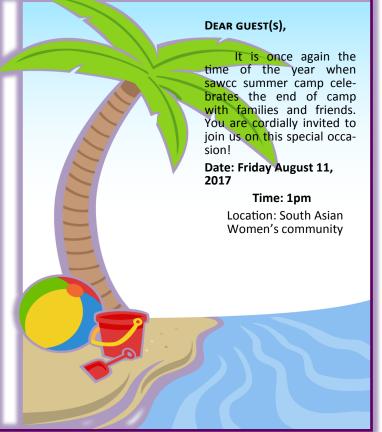
ated with a Bachelor's degree in the Arts. She went on to earn a doctorate from the University of Chicago, and accepted a teaching position at the University of Winnipeg, where she taught until her retirement. Her long and illustrious career has been remarkable in opening doors for women of colour who followed in her field. As an outspoken critic of conventions and traditions that hold women back, she has been a role model for many. Crossing the Laxman Rekha is her first attempt at telling stories - our stories - of South Asian women in Canada. Remarkable in its candour and expression, it is a story that must be told.



work at the Community Art Space at the

Côte Saint-Luc Public Library.

SAWCC summer camp



SAWCC Part-Time French Course

Do you wish to register for a part-time French course?

At South Asian Women's Center offers part time course.

You are eligible for part-time course if you:

- *Reside in Ouebec
- *Do not have sufficient knowledge of French.
- *have an immigration status that allows it

If you are eligible for part-time French course, you may be granted financial assistance for child care expenses

How to Register

You must register directly with our organization.

Address;

1035 Rue Rachel. 3rd floor.

Montreal, Quebec.

H2J 2J 5

Montréal à notre



Our potluck with projet Montréal à notre image, Iciéla, on Wednesday, August 16th at 12:00 pm at SAWCC. Please see our "activity section".

Presenting Rana Ayyub

CERAS will be presenting the fearsome journalist Rana Ayyub whose book exposure GUJARAT FILES is an amazing record of the way things are going and the ways people's rights and lives are being trivialized.

Thursday, 17th August, 6-8pm, at SAWCC

Sadeqa Siddiqui Essay Writing: Why I am Feminist by Charlotte Huebner

The essay from the second winner

When I was in grade nine, I absolutely hated French class. My French teacher would pace in front of the class with her bubble-gum high heels and instead of telling us about the nit picky accords des *participes passsés* and the art of French literature, she would talk to us about feminism. According to her, most things, be it the state of the Middle East or the size of Victor Hugo's beard, all boiled down to the inequalities between men and women. She would repeat the same things over and over again, while I would look at my watch wondering if it was broken because the hands seemed to be glued in place. But the thing is, I listened, and even though I was bored to death, her redundant statements stuck with me. I began questioning myself and realized that her ideas were not redundant, but crucial. I guess I have my French teacher to thank for making me such an ardent feminist (even though the following year I would go on to fail my *Bac en littérature*).

I never really understood why a simple truth is so hard to put into practice. Women-and men-are-equal: seven syllables that if universally applied could change the world. Think about how history would have been different if this maxim had been acknowledged... No one can change the past, but we can all work together to advocate for women's rights so that in the future, these seven syllables will be so self-evident that the bubble-gum French teacher will become a legend.

Nonetheless, the need for feminism extends far beyond the sphere of a simple definition. The cries for feminism can be heard almost everywhere. From the despairing voices of thousands of women who are sexually abused every day to the laments of girls who are told they cannot go go to school because... they are girls. For me, the cries for feminism are also heard among young boys who are taught to stop whimpering and "be a man."

I try to be a feminist 24/7 but despite my very best efforts, sometimes I catch myself going against the ideas I so fervently believe. I have worn Rosie the Riveter's vibrant red and white polka dot bandana to school by setting up a Women's Studies Club. I have picked up Virginia's Woolf's quill by directing and performing in the *Vagina Monologues*. I have laced up Katherine Switzer's running shoes—she dressed as a man and became the first woman to complete the Boston Marathon—and run ultramarathons, a sport where 9/10 of participants are male. Even if I have followed the trail carved by these feminist icons, and with every step have made it more and more enduring, I still have moments where I slip off the path.

Learning to be a feminist is a complicated process because misogyny is often internalized without us even realizing it. It starts from when we are young and given delicate porcelain dolls to play with while our brothers are given action figures with swords and shields. The other day, at the dance studio where I teach, I heard one mother say to another that her daughter wanted to play hockey like her brother, but that she preferred that her daughter stick to ballet so she can learn how to be elegant. Teaching girls that they need to be elegant and delicate is not a good thing.

It is true that for me feminism means equal rights for men and women, but for me it also means so much more. It means teaching others how to be feminists, so that someday I and all other women should not have to walk fast at night to get home because we are afraid. So that someday, we will not have to worry about being bothered on the metro because our skirts are too short. So that someday, everyone will be able to say why they are feminists.

Centre Cmmunautaire des femmes sud-asiatiques

South Asian Women's Community Centre 1035, rue Rachel est, 3ième étage, Montréal, QC H21215

Phone: 514-528-8812 Fax: 514-528-0896 E-mail: sawcc@bellnet.ca

36 years of sisterhood, strength, struggle and success 1981-2017

www.sawcc-ccfsa.ca

August 1 - Session to be de termined

August 8 - Yoga class

August 16 - Potluck

August 18 - Staff outing

August 22 - Nutrition and healthy habits

August 29 - Session to be de

termined

l août - Session sera déterminée

8 août - Cours de Yoga

16 août - Dîner causerie

18 août- Personnel sortie

22 août - Saines habitudes alimen-

taires et nutrition

29 août - Session sera déterminée

August 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Session to determine	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 Yoga class	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16 Potluck	17	18 Staff outing	19
20	21	22 Nutrition and healthy habits	23	24	25	26
27	28	29 Session to determine	30	31		

Membership Renewal

Please renew your SAWCC membership to ensure you get all the mailings and can participate fully in the organization.

Changes to your information (address, phone number, etc. email, etc.)? Download the membership form from our website, insert the correct information and send it along with your membership dues.

http://www.sawcc-ccfsa.ca/EN/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Membership-form.pdf

Please mail cheque to: SAWCC, 1035 Rachel est, Montréal, Qc., H2J 2J5.

Make cheque payable to: "South Asian Women's Community Centre".

Indicate in the note section: "membership".

Membership dues:

\$1-\$15 for a year, renewable each year

Making a donation to SAWCC at the same time? Donations of \$20 or more will receive a tax-deductible receipt. If including a donation indicate as well the amount towards "donation".