

We learned the power of laughter in one workshop and the reality of climate change on many women and many homes in another. There were opportunities to find out more about personal development and support for women experiencing abuse. The list goes on. But our thanks to Merkinch Community Centre for making us all so welcome. The crèche facility provided by Highland Council was much appreciated by many. WEA Women@Work provided a British Sign Language interpreter to ensure inclusion for all. Final comments are left to participants:

'What a triumph – I thought there was a great atmosphere and people were really enjoying themselves and taking the time to network and absorb all that creativity.'

'I feel proud to belong to such an inclusive and vibrant community here in Inverness.'

'Do it again!'



At home in the Highlands – Women's place in the world
 a celebratory event for International Women's Day
 Merkinch Community Centre, Inverness
 Saturday, 7th March 2009

Over 200 people attended this exciting event which was opened for us by Rosemary MacKinnon, chair of Women@Work. While there is much to celebrate since the inception of International Women's Day in 1908, Rosemary reminded us that *'Women do two-thirds of the world's work but receive only 10% of the world's income'*, so there are still challenges to be met. But for Inverness in this Year of Homecoming, the day was one of coming together, seeing the similarities between the skills women everywhere bring to the home, sharing a splendid variety of food and enjoying, watching, listening to and even participating in a spectacular array of cultural activity.

'It was a great combination of styles, talents, performances, displays and awareness raising'.

'I thoroughly enjoyed the day—such a buzz!'



'I only meant to drop in, but stayed the whole day!'

'It was full of interest, extremely friendly and a pleasure to be a part of it all.'

'Thank you for the crèche!!! I wouldn't be able to take part without it. Great day, so diverse!'

'More please... it was fantastic!'

Organised by Highland One World Group, WEA Women@Work and International Women's Group, Common Threads and Merkinch Community Centre with support from Highland Council and funding from the Women's Fund for Scotland





Food

Nothing brings people together quite like food. What a variety we had from West African to Middle Eastern, specialities from several Asian and Oceanic countries as well as local cheeses and bannocks. Fairtrade chocolate was an addition to the sweet counter. Thanks to all those who prepared and served the banquet. Donations invited for the food amounted to a magnificent £342 which was given to Oxfam to support one of their women's projects.

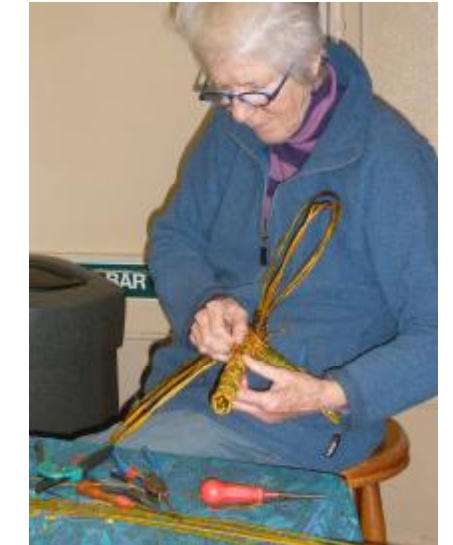


'Fantastic food. A terrific example of how to celebrate diversity.'



Skills and demonstrations

There was felting, spinning, quilting, embroidery. There was basket making from willow, butter churning, hairbraiding and henna. There was a celebration of tweed- fabric making to design and fashion, as well as crochet and knitting. What surprised and delighted people was how universal many of these skills are.



'An amazing range of talent and skill on show!'

Performance

From waulking song to classical Indian dance, from traveller story telling to the Chinese Ribbon Dance from Scottish Step, to poetry, to salsa, to clarsach, to Fijian dancers, butter making and others. We ended with the singing of *Bread and Roses*, the song that has become the anthem of International Women's Day led by Merkinch's Singing for Pleasure group.



'Thank you for a fabulous event. There was so much variety and talent among the women there... I wish I could have stayed longer!'



'It was inspiring.'

'I had so much fun and the atmosphere was so special as people shared their traditions and experiences.'

