

Changing Tides

Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign
Campagne des grands-mères à grands-mères

Ottawa-Gatineau Region
Région d'Ottawa-Gatineau

Editor's Notes

Congratulations to the organizers of the sold-out Preview Performance of *Les Belles Soeurs*, directed by Lorraine Hopkins of the *One World Grannies!* It was a grand success and greatly enjoyed by attendees.

On November 30, the *Unitarian GoGos* will be hosting a *WORLD AIDS DAY* presentation by Sandi London and Robin Scobie of their reflections on their trip to Africa in April. You are invited!

As Sarah notes in her *GRL Updates*,

confirmation has been received for the *20th Anniversary Gathering of the Stephen Lewis Foundation* – a three-day event in Ottawa with Canadian and African Grandmothers. Details are shared and more will be coming as program and venue are chosen!

Shelagh Jane Woods sent in an informative article of the *SLF/OWG Meeting* with MP Nasir Yaqvi sharing information about the SLF funding model, the impact of HIV and AIDS in Africa and the importance of working at the

Community level.

In January, the *2026 Regional Grannyfest* planning committee will start up. If you are interested in joining, please let Sandi or Sarah know!

We wish groups who are hosting craft and food fundraisers or other events much success in outcomes and good turnouts!

Mia Overduin, Editor

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UPCOMING REGIONAL/ NATIONAL EVENTS

November 30 at 10:30 a.m.
***Unitarian GoGos* will welcome you!** See brief write-up on page 6.

Available on Demand

Thursday, May 21, 2026

September 22, 23, 24, 2026

World AIDS Day Service* in support of *SLF* - Sandi London and Robin Scobie** will speak and show slides of their trip to South Africa and Eswatini at ***First Unitarian Congregation at 30 Cleary Avenue.

Presentations re. Africa Trip 2025 with Sandi and Robin

Regional Grannyfest 2026 – If you are interested in joining the Planning Committee which starts preparations in January 2026, please let Sandi and Sarah know.

20th Anniversary Gathering - Stephen Lewis Foundation – Ottawa, Ontario – Participate in celebration, march on Parliament Hill, host **all** our grandmother friends from across the country and Africa. More details to come! Looking for a suitable venue – let Sandi and Sarah know!

GRL Updates – November 2025

The big news for the region is that our Fundraising Preview Performance of *Les Belles-Soeurs* sold out! We raised over \$4,700 for the Grandmothers Campaign and there will be grandmothers at each of the remaining performances, providing information and collecting donations. Thank you so much to everyone who attended and encouraged friends and family to attend. And a huge thank you to Lorraine Hopkins, member of *One World Grannies* and director of the play, who proposed this amazing partnership and made sure it happened.

Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in obtaining a spot at either of the November **613 Flea Markets** but we will try again in January and February when the demand is likely to be lower. Thank you so much to all the crafters who worked hard to provide items and helped to populate our *Instagram* page.

I am delighted to announce that at the last *GRL* meeting it was confirmed that the **20th Anniversary Gathering** will be here in Ottawa, from September 22nd to 24th. Planning is in the very early stages, but responsibilities have been identified and we anticipate that grandmothers from across the country will be involved. Here in Ottawa, we will be looking for venues, suitable accommodation and making plans for hosting Canadian and African grandmothers. There will be a marketplace, organized by the Kingston grandmothers. We have requested that the *Solidarity Quilt* be available for display. It would be wonderful if we could revive the “*Beds Without Breakfast*” program and offer accommodation to our guests. And, we are hoping that with all the talented sewers in Ottawa, we can supply handmade “swag” bags for attendees. We will also be planning a march on the Hill and will be looking for opportunities to involve politicians at all government levels. Any and all suggestions to make this a truly memorable event will be gratefully received.

And please mark your calendars for our **Regional Grannyfest**, scheduled for Thursday, May 21st, 2026. Planning will begin in January. Anyone interested in

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GRL Updates – November 2025

joining the planning committee is welcome, just let us know.

I know many of you are involved in Christmas sales, everything from crafts, to wine, cheese and bake sales. We wish you a successful fundraising season at this challenging time.

Yours in solidarity,

Sandi and Sarah

Sandi (sandilondon01@gmail.com) / Sarah (sjaakafelix@icloud.com)

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Check out the stories of Canadian grandmothers on pp. 3-5 of the **Grassroots Fall 2025 Newsletter**. **Robin Scobie**, *One World Grannies*, shares her account of her Africa Trip experience. *“Each grandmothers group demonstrates the strength of community. Together we exercise, sipped tea and beaded bracelets, which is one of many income-generating initiatives grandmothers have built. We shared stories and hugs and lunch, all the while deepening our sense of solidarity. GAPA’s motto is “Together we are stronger!” This is true for grandmothers across Africa and Canada as well.”*

As I recently shared, on CBC’s *As It Happens*, “Diseases don’t know borders, we are one people.” Global health is a shared responsibility. Lasting progress is collective progress.

And while that progress may be under threat, we will not relent until the promise of ending AIDS becomes a reality.

**Meg French
Executive Director
Stephen Lewis Foundation**
As quoted in **Grassroots Fall 2025 - Letter from our Executive Director**



Order your holiday cards at theslf.org/holidaycards2025.

Tribute cards and e-cards year-round are a meaningful way to celebrate birthdays and other important milestones.

SLF and OWG Meeting with MP Nasir Yaqvi – November 16, 2025

A delegation of *Stephen Lewis Foundation* staff members, two members of *One World Grannies*, and two representatives from two partner organizations in Zimbabwe and South Africa met Ottawa Centre MP Yasir Naqvi. We all found Mr. Naqvi very respectful and interested in what we had to say. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State, *International Development*, we believe that Mr. Naqvi is in an excellent position to influence decisions about international development and assistance funding. He gave his undivided attention to Leslie Wells and Leah Odle-Benson of the *SLF*, Spiwe Chakawa and Mpumi Zondi of Zimbabwe and South Africa respectively, and Shailja Verma and Shelagh Jane Woods of *One World Grannies*.

Following introductions, Leslie spoke about the approach of the *SLF* to funding its partners, and noted that the purpose of their trip is to help MPs and others understand the importance of working at the community level.

Spiwe, whose organization's name means "light" talked about its *SLF*-supported work over the last 22 years, and how, as the *HIV/AIDS* pandemic has evolved, it has had to shift its focus. Over many years their work transitioned from a purely psycho-social support role at the onset, to dealing with the many layers of the pandemic, and the multi-generational impacts of *HIV* and *AIDS*. They currently focus mainly on children and youth, particularly school dropouts and those at risk of dropping out. Her organization also provides positive parenting classes, and supports for income generation. As simple a matter (to us) as getting a birth certificate can be very difficult in Zimbabwe, and that certificate is the key to gaining access to government-funded programming, so the organization helps people obtain the important certificates.

Posing the question of why Canada and others should continue to support their efforts, she noted that they can be responsive almost immediately to emerging needs, and they can provide easily accessible places - physically and emotionally accessible - for the receipt of services. She noted that it is cheaper and more efficient to support at the community level, and there is greater assurance that the monies will actually reach people on the ground.

Mpumi noted that her organization carries the name of a previously racially-mixed community of Johannesburg, which was forcibly broken up and separated by the then-*apartheid* government. Their work involves psycho-social supports for the many

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SLF and OWG Meeting with MP Nasir Naqvi – November 16, 2025

people suffering intergenerational trauma from the *apartheid* era and from *HIV* and *AIDS*. They work with individuals, families, and communities, and offer “collective healing”. They provide mental health supports where no other practitioners are available, and she lauded the *SLF* and other like-minded funders who enable her organization to “*take counselling to the people*”. She also emphasized that the *SLF*’s and others’ approach of enabling decisions at the community level lets them “respond with immediacy”, something that they learned with *Covid*. Her organization is also providing support to other partners in the field in the wake of the devastating *USAID* cuts. Mpumi also said that true healing only happens when social justice issues are addressed, which is difficult today as so many corruption scandals in the South African government are further weakening peoples’ trust in government institutions.

MP Naqvi asked about the *SLF* funding model, and Leslie noted it funds 98 partners in 14 sub-Saharan countries. From the beginning, the funds have been directed to organizations in communities with the least access to services, and where the money is likely to have the most direct impact. Only in the last five years has the *SLF* sought funds from the Canadian government, and staff have been working with *Global Affairs* to help it adjust its approach to international development assistance to make it easier to get into communities in need.

Mr. Naqvi was interested in hearing about how the *SLF* allows partner organizations to decide how best to use the funds, rather than setting out very specific activities and very specific achievables, as *Global Affairs* does. Leslie noted that this is a complex issue that would mean significant changes to *Global Affairs*’ processes and requirements.

Mr. Naqvi asked about the grandmother movement, and Shailja and I each spoke a little (glowingly) about what we found in the group and its cause. I also suggested to Leslie that she encourage *Global Affairs* to look at what the then *Department of Indian Affairs* and the *First Nations and Inuit Health Branch* have done to enable community recipients of government funds to make the decisions needed to meet emerging needs. A fundamental recognition that communities know best what is right for, and will work in, their communities is essential. Mr. Naqvi was completely in agreement.

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SLF and OWG Meeting with MP Nasir Yaqvi – November 16, 2025

Shailja noted that, as an immigrant, she has always admired Canada's ability to respond to international needs. Despite current challenges, and the intense scrutiny on spending, she urged that we learn from our past in this regard. She also spoke of the strength of grandmothers across the world in their families and in their communities, and the positive impacts they can have on succeeding generations. She noted that grandmothers nurture and provide emotional support, but also cautioned that that alone does not feed or cure people in need.

Mr. Naqvi closed the meeting by thanking everyone and promising that he would be having conversations with others in government. I promised (threatened?) to put him on our mailing list, and he responded without hesitation that he was very surprised we had not already done so!

(Submitted by Shelagh Jane Woods, *One World Grannies*)

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World AIDS Day Service in support of the Stephen Lewis Foundation, 10:30 a.m., Sunday, November 30th at First Unitarian 30 Cleary off Byron at Redwood

Sandi London and **Robin Scobie** will be speaking and showing slides about their recent travel to South Africa and Eswatini with Canadian Grannies and *Stephen Lewis Foundation* staff. All the collection will be donated to the *Stephen Lewis Foundation*. **Unitarian GoGos** will be present to welcome you. Members of Granny groups are encouraged to wear their t-shirts or form of identity and a name tag and to stay for Fellowship Hour after the Service. **Three Rivers Women's Choir** will be singing.

GRASSROOTS EVENTS CALENDAR

Editor's Note: Submissions for the monthly newsletter are due on the 23rd of the month.

DATE	GRANNY GROUP	EVENT	LOCATION/TIME/CONTACT
Nov. 30, 2025	<i>Unitarian Gogos</i>	WORLD AIDS DAY Service with Sandi and Robin Presentation of Sandi and Robin's trip to South Africa and Eswatini with Canadian grandmothers and SLF staff.	<i>First Unitarian Congregation</i> 30 Cleary Avenue, Ottawa ON In support of the <i>Stephen Lewis Foundation</i>
May 21, 2026	<i>Grandmothers Groups</i>	REGIONAL GRANNYFEST 2026	If you would like to participate on the Planning Committee, let Sandi and Sarah know
Sept. 22, 23 and 24, 2026	<i>Groups from Across Canada and Grandmothers from Africa</i>	20th Anniversary Gathering – Stephen Lewis Foundation Participation in celebration, march on Parliament Hill, host all our grandmother friends from across the country and Africa.	<i>Ottawa, Ontario</i> More details to come!

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