KINESIS

News About Women That's Not In The Dailies

Special Collections Serial

CMPA $2.25 BLACK BUTCH HERO...page 13 MAY 1999

INSIDE

KINESIS

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Kinesis welcomes volunteers to work on all aspects of the paper. Our next Story Meetings are on **Tues June 1** and **Tues Aug 3** at our office, 309-877 E. Hastings St. Production for our July/August 1999 issue is from **June 15-22**. All women welcome even if you don't have experience.

Kinesis is published ten times a year by the Vancouver Status of Women. Its objectives are to be a non-sectarian feminist voice for women and to work actively for social change, specifically combatting sexism, racism,classism, homophobia, ableism, imperialism and anti-Jewish oppression. Views expressed in Kinesis are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect VSW policy. All unsigned material is the responsibility of the Kinesis Editorial Board.

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FRONT COVER

Veenu Saini and Rubina on Redondo Beach, California November 1998
Photo by Fatima Jaffer

PRESS DATE

May 6, 1999

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Institutions/Groups: $45 per year (+$3.15 GST)
VSW Membership (includes 1 year Kinesis subscription): $30 per year (+$1.40 GST)

SUBMISSIONS

Women and girls are welcome to make submissions. We reserve the right to edit and submission does not guarantee publication. If possible, submissions should be typed, double spaced and must be signed and include an address, telephone number and SASE. Kinesis does not accept poetry or fiction. Editorial guidelines are available upon request.

DEADLINES

All submissions must be received in the month preceding publication. Note: Jul/Aug and Dec/Jan are double issues.
Features and reviews: 10th
News: 15th
Letters and Bulletin Board: 18th
Display advertising (camera ready): 18th
(design required): 16th

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Kinesis means movement

got some news for us?

Then, come to our
Story Meetings...
the first Tuesday of every month
at 7:00pm
at 309-877 E. Hastings St.

Next Meetings:
June 1
August 3

Or call us at (604) 255-5499

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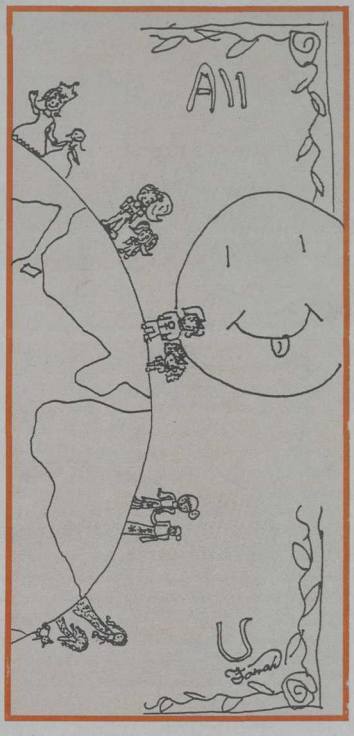

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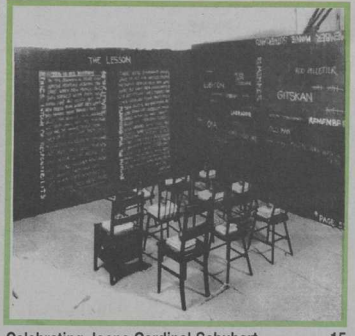

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INSIDE

Kinesis

The dog days of summer may not have yet officially begun, but the women of *Kinesis* have already started longing for mobile production rooms that can be set up at the closest beach!! With June around the corner, we've started preparing for all the usual summer activities: BBQs, beach parties and watching WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) games on TV.

However, amidst all this excitement and planning for June, we definitely haven't forgotten that May holds its own significant dates. Perhaps the most important of these is Mothers' Day (May 9th). Who better to talk about Mothers' Day than three mums? In this month's issue, we invite you to join Veenu Saini, Lynda Gray and Lissa Geller as they talk about motherhood and all its different facets *[starting on page 9.]* No discussion on motherhood would be complete without input from the kids, so we also invite you to take a peek at the cool drawings by Rubina, Boris, Adeebah, Farrah and Deva.

We would also like to welcome some amazing new writers: Michelle McGough, Nadine C. King, Annaliese Van Oers, Veenu Saini and Lynda Gray. And while we're at it, we want to thank the fabulous *Kinesis* volunteers who pored over proofreading material and bravely took on various tasks in order to bring you this month's issue. Welcome especially to our newest production volunteer, Ruth Sauder.

As usual, there has been a lot of exciting stuff happening within the mango-hued walls of *Kinesis*. Most importantly, we've hired leanne johnson as our new subscription drive coordinator. leanne has been hired on a two month contract and will be coordinating—amongst other things—a direct mail campaign to potential individual subscribers. She brings with her an enormous amount of experience as a copy writer and editor and has done promotional work with community and arts organizations.

Needless to say, we are ecastic that she has decided to join the *Kinesis* team! leanne is currently working with the *Kinesis* Marketing Gang in order to create a promotional package to be sent out to potential subscribers. The package will include different definitions of what "*Kinesis* means..." For example, *Kinesis* means movement. *Kinesis* means not having to read about Wayne Gretzky yet again! *Kinesis* means parties, BBQs and fun at the beach.... We could go on and on but *Kinesis* also means knowing when to stop!

Speaking of BBQs and fun, the resident partiers at *Kinesis* have decided that its time to start planning for the ultimate summer BBQ. So far, we've picked Saturday June 26th as a possible date, but we're still mulling over a location. If you have any ideas, give us a jingle.

While we're talking about dates, we also thought we'd slip in a gentle but persistent reminder about production. Production for the June issue will take place from May 18th to 25th. So if you need to cool off from the sun and stimulate your creative juices, come and join us in the production room. Who knows, we may finally have fulfilled our dream of working on the beach!!

All this talk of beaches and BBQs almost made us forget to remind all our subscribers out there to send us your email addresses and phone numbers even if you've sent them our way before. We want to make sure we can keep you updated as much as possible!

There's a couple of more "serious" things we wanted to mention this month inside *Kinesis*. First, we wanted to let our readers know that we have updated our stated objectives. If you look at our masthead on the table of contents, you'll notice that *Kinesis* "works actively for social change, specifically combatting sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, ableism and imperialism." We've now added "anti-Jewish oppression" to that list. In fact, this omission should have been corrected a long while ago and was an oversight on our part.

At the time our objectives were written, there was still discussion going on within the women's movement, and at Vancouver Status of Women (*Kinesis*' publisher) in particular, as to which was more appropriate and relevant: "anti-Semitism" or "anti-Jewish oppression," or some other term. This discussion was part of VSW's work in clarifying its own statement of principles. In the end, it was agreed that "anti-Jewish oppression" best reflected the reality of the discrimination faced by Jewish women. *Kinesis* are now in the process of updating all our written materials in which our objectives are stated.

We also want to put out to you that *Kinesis* is looking for an Aboriginal woman (or women) to guest edit an "Aboriginal Women's Supplement" to be published in our September 1999 issue. The plan is for an eight to 12 page supplement, which is written and produced by Aboriginal women with the support of the *Kinesis* Editorial board, staff and volunteers. An honorarium will be given to the guest editor. If you are interested or can recommend someone, call Agnes at (604) 255-5499 or email us at kinesis@web.net by May 30th. Thanks.

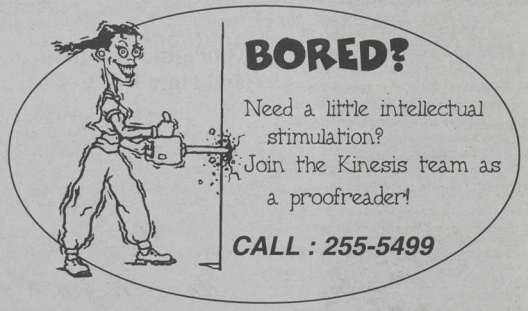
On another editor note, we want to let our readers know that *Kinesis*/Vancouver Status of Women will soon be posting for the position of *Kinesis* Editor/VSW Information Coordinator. The current editor/info coordinator plans to leave the position at the end of October. If all goes well, the new woman will be hired in early September and receive one-month of training in October. A full job description will be available in mid-May and will be published in the next two editions of *Kinesis*. In the meantime, if you want to know more about the position, please contact us.

Well that's it for this edition of inside *Kinesis*. Of course, any time you want more information about what we do here, you can always drop by and say hi!! We'd love to see you! In the meantime, lie back on your blanket in the summer sun, take a sip of ice cold lemondae and take a peek at our latest issue. And when you're done, pass it on to a friend or use it to shade yourself from the sun...

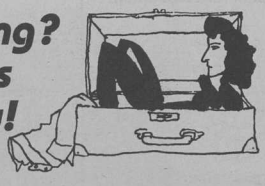
THANK YOU TO ALL THE SUPPORTERS OF RECOMMENDING WOMEN X FUNDRAISING GALA

Many thanks to the following women, organizations and businesses for supporting this year's tenth annual Recommending Women Fundraising gala through their ticket purchase, donations or sponsorship and to the women who volunteered their time to help make this year's RW a success:

Laura Anderson * Helen Babalos * Elizabeth Bell * Ray Boucher * Dionne Brand * Charlene Brisson * Yvonne Brown * Nalda Callender * Leslie Campbell * Hilda Ching * Jordanna Chtrynbaum * Sharon Clarke * Jo Coffey * Gillian Creese * Fiona Forbes * Chrystal Fowler * Tanya De Haan * Marion Hartley * Kelly Haydon * Kevin Hewitt * Hallie Hill * Agnes Huang * Tamara Girke * Nora Grove * Suzanne Jay * Alice Kendall * Karen Kilbride * Nahboobeh Khanbaghi * Louise LeClair * Cat L'Hirondelle * Andréa Mellalieu * Sedi Minachi * Sandra Moe * Patty Moore * Shona Moore * Leslie Muir * Shana Myara * Joanne Namsoo * Ema Oropeza * Prabhjot Parmar * Valarie Raoul * Roberta Rich * Josephine Rekart * Veenu Saini * Maggie Sherlock * Rebecca Shields * Linda Shuto * Jehn Starr * Susan Stout * Frances Suski * Edith Thomas * Penny Thompson * Jane Turner * Anne Tyler * Gale Tyler * Yvonne Young * Stephanie Wilson * Celeste Wincapaw * Ellen Woodsworth * *Anatoli Souvlaki Restaurant* * *The Bay* * *BC Federation of Labour* * *Burnaby Teachers Association* * *CEP Local 2000* * *The Coast Whistler Hotel* * *Coffey Miller & Company, Accountants* * *Davidson Muir & Sandor, Lawyers* * *Full Bloom Flowers* * *Marine Printers* * *Munro-Parfitt, Lawyers* * *Sooke Harbour House Inn* * *The Sutton Place Hotel* * *Stratosphere Hair Salon* * *Vancouver Fringe Festival* * *The Vancouver Pen Shop* * *VIA Rail*



Moving? Let us know!



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VANCOUVER STATUS OF WOMEN

Our appreciation to the following supporters who became members of VSW, renewed their memberships or subscriptions to *Kinesis*, or who made donations during the month of April

Paula Clancey * Kelly D'Aoust * Wendy Scholefield * Shelagh Wilson

A special thanks to our donors who give every month. Monthly donations assist VSW in establishing a reliable funding base to carry out our programs, services and *Kinesis* throughout the year. Thanks to

Helen Babalos * Merlin Beltain * Jody Gordon * Erin Graham * Tamara Knox * Barbara Lebrasseur * Valarie Raoul * Linda Shuto * Sheilah Thompson

What's News

compiled by Leanne Keltie, leanne johnson and Wei Yuen Fong

GM wraps *National Post*

More than 40,000 people in Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria were greeted with a parody edition of *The National Post* on the morning of May 5th. The four-page satire tackling Canada's high degree of media ownership concentration was produced by Vancouver's Guerrilla Media (GM). *The National Post* is owned by Conrad Black and his Chicago-based Hollinger Inc.

"Whether it's print, radio or TV, the extreme levels of ownership concentration in Canada is a serious problem," says GM spokesperson Beau Gus Monniker. "Guerrilla Media has created this parody of the *Post* to point out the downside of letting a special interest group of a few wealthy men—like Black or Power Corporation's Paul Desmarais—control the news we read."

More than 150 guerrillas and GM supporters handed out the bogus daily directly to commuters. In addition, they wrapped thousands more around the Wednesday edition of the *Post* and placed them back in the *Post's* newspaper boxes.

GM notes that Black is one of the few media barons bent on buying up print and broadcast outlets. "Obviously Conrad Black [who controls most dailies in Canada through his Southam newspaper chain] epitomizes everything wrong with the state of Canada's media ownership," says Monniker. "He doesn't hide the fact that he won't tolerate editors who oppose his views, and his down-sizing tactics have severely hampered local coverage in many small- and medium-sized Hollinger/Southam papers."

The bogus *National Post*, the first in a new series of media criticism parodies to be launched by GM, featured satire pages with articles by prominent *Post* columnists like Linda Frum, Barbara Amiel, Kenneth Whyte and David Frum. The back page advertised a new horror movie call *The ConBlob*, a "Megalomedia/TeleTubby/Cuts of Thousands co-production of a Conrad B. DeMillions film." Another page is devoted to a straight-up discussion of media concentration in Canada, examining its effects on editorial coverage and alternatives that exist in other countries.

"In Italy, France and Germany, Black and Desmarais would not be allowed to control the number of dailies they currently reign over in Canada--they would be breaking the law," says Monniker. "Canada needs to rethink its media policies. We need to take ownership away from greedy, ideologically-driven media barons. We need to make the media a public trust."

Guerrilla Media can be reached at 108-3495 Cambie St, Vancouver, BC, V5Z 4R3; tel: (604) 877-4721; email: gmedia@geocities.com. GM also has its own website at: http://members.tripod.com/~gmedia. For more dirt on media moguls, check out the website set up by "the friends of Conrad Black" at www.blackenvy.com

Reward for missing women

The City of Vancouver has finally shown a sign that it is concerned about the rash of disappearances of women from the Downtown Eastside area.

In April, Mayor Phillip Owen agreed to put up an award to find out if there is a serial killer targetting women in the Downtown Eastside. Owen recommended that the Vancouver police board approve a $100,000 reward toward solving the cases of 21 women who have disappeared from the area in the last four years.

Since 1995, 22 "street-involved" women have gone missing from the Downtown Eastside; only one has been found alive.

The announcement of a reward comes after the City received numerous calls from people about the approval of $100,000 rewards for both the spate of home invasion and garage robbery cases, but not for the missing women.

The City will contribute $30,000 with the province providing the larger sum of $70,000. Attorney General Ujjal Dosanjh has already stated that the BC government would support such a reward.

Families of the missing women are ecstatic at the news—finally some recognition that women in the Downtown Eastside do matter.

[information from various newspaper dailies.]

Aboriginal women challenge Bill C-49

Aboriginal women are stepping up their campaign to stop Bill C-49, the First Nation Land Management Act, from becoming law.

In March, Bill C-49 was passed by the House of Commons. It is expected to pass the Liberal-dominated Senate. Bill C-49 would remove reserve lands from the Indian Act and allow band councils to write their own land-use laws. At this point, only 14 bands across Canada have signed on, but more bands may opt in later.

Concern has been expressed about the bill putting more power in the hands of a select group who are predominantly male and who have already been accused of unfairness, poor financial management and a lack of accountability.

"No one will be safe on their land any more when Bill C-49 goes through, least of all Aboriginal women," says Teressa Nahanee, a lawyer from Merritt, BC and a member of the Squamish band.

Nahanee is also part of the BC Native Women's Society, which launched a court case in March 1997, claiming that the Indian Act discriminates against women in terms of the division of matrimonial property rights. In its suit, the Society called on the federal government to halt Bill C-49 until their case was resolved. *[see Kinesis April 1997.]* Obviously, the government didn't listen.

If Bill C-49 passes, decisions about matrimonial property division will be made by band councils. Aboriginal women's groups had called for the bill to require a 50-50 division split of common property, as most provincial laws do. Again, they were ignored.

Nahanee points out that women and children are often tossed out of their reserve homes when marriages fail. With band councils as the decision makers, she says many Aboriginal women fear that favouritism, abuse of power, and other factors will see husbands win more property more often.

[information from various newspaper dailies.]

Canada fails on gender persecution

On the international scene, Canada likes to parade itself as "humanitarian and compassionate" in its dealings with refugees. In fact, Canada has been lauded for drawing up guidelines for "women refugee claimants fearing gender-related persecution" in 1993.

However, since its inception, few women have applied for refugee status in Canada under these guidelines and even few women—a paltry 127—have been accepted into Canada on those grounds. A recent case makes it clear that Canada does not deserve such a positive reputation, particularly when it comes to women refugees.

"Mina" arrived at Peason airport in Toronto four years ago. She was severely traumatized by the ordeals she faced in her home in Iran. When she landed in Canada, she was well-dressed and looked dignified--not anything like a "persecuted" woman (read, "victim") should look. She also did not reveal to Immigration officials interrogating her at the airport the full details of the horrors she had just escaped from. Those "mistakes" would haunt her later.

Mina grew up in a non-religious household. As a teenager, she was whipped twice by Islamic fundamentalists for playing mixed badminton and for carrying a picture of Michael Jackson.

Fatefully, Mina and her family dismissed a marriage proposal from a distant relative, who was a member of the Hezbollah and a fundamentalist.

In her mid-20s, Mina was arrested. Thrown into an isolation cell, tied to a chair, beaten and kicked, she discovered the same distant relative was now in charge of the prison. He threatened Mina with execution unless she agreed to marry him. He arranged a "temporary concubinage."

He raped Mina repeatedly. Mina became pregnant, but she escaped and had a secret, illegal abortion. She then fled Iran.

At her Refugee Board hearing, she was advised by her intepreter to keep her answers "short," a misinterpretation of the Board's request that Mina be "direct." And so, the Board did not believe her story.

They seemed to have difficulty understanding the marriages can be "coerced," concluding that it was "highly improbable, and therefore implausible" that a marriage took place without either family being present, or that Mina wouldn't have altered her documents to reflect her proud new status as a married woman.

The gender-related persecution guidelines specifically cite forced marriage as grounds for awarding refugee status. They also stress that religion-based persecution might be deemed safe for men but should not be considered safe for women.

Mina's last chance to argue her case for refugee status in Canada will be on May 17th, when she will have a humanitarian and compassionate interview.

To support Mina in her case, send an urgent letter to the Refugee Processing Officers, Etobicoke Canada Immigration Centre, 5343 Dundas St. West, first floor, Etobicoke, Ontario, M9B 6K5. Be sure to cite Mina's file number: 3129-5254.

[information from a column written by Michele Landsberg, published in The Toronto Star, *May 2, 1999.]*

The Cotton Club

JAZZ BRUNCH at the COTTON CLUB

Come to the Cotton Club on Sunday, May 23rd for a delicious brunch and hear the sensational jazz sounds by local singer, Christine Duncan. Brunch will be served between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm for $21.95 per person. All proceeds go to the support of the Vancouver Status of Women. A great meal to groovy tunes for a great cause at the Cotton Club, located at 200 - 1833 Anderson Street (outside the entrance to Granville Island). For info, Call VSW at 255-6554.

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What's News

Japanese women protest Viagra

Women's groups in Japan are angered by the "fast-tracking" of Viagra. Purported to prevent impotency, it took the manufacturer of Viagra just six months to get the drug approved for sale in Japan.

Japanese women note that Viagra got its okay so fast while the birth-control pill still has not been approved for sale or use in Japan. Japanese women have been waiting for over nine years for the Pill to work its way through process.

Midori Ashida, a Tokyo-based grassroots spokeswoman, says, "When old guys want something they get it. But when women want something, nothing happens. Japan is still a male-dominated society." Women argue that the need for the Pill is of greater social importance and the risks of the Pill are fewer than those of unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

The Japanese government maintains they have not approved the Pill because of its possible side-effects and the risk of HIV transmission. (Condoms are used by 77 percent of women.) Japan is one of the few remaining industrialized countries that have not given women access to the Pill.

Legislator Akiko Domoto states, "The decision makers have no understanding of the issue. All they have is the simple mentality that women should keep on having babies."

[information from the Associated Press, published in off our backs, *April 1999.]*

Only in Denmark?

Danish day care has reached a new high. In Copenhagen, a day care facility was set up which provides new services for busy, working families. Not only will the staff provide care for children, they will also do the laundry, shop for groceries, and provide reasonably priced take-out meals.

Parents can bring in three bags of laundry per day and a list of groceries to buy. At the end of the day, they can pick-up their children, clean clothes and food. The centre also provides an online video camera where parents can tune into to watch their children during their day.

And to think, we can't even get safe and accessible day care here.

[information from the Aviva website (www.aviva.org), published in off our backs, *April 1999.]*

Jahangir targeted in "honour" killings

As Asma Jahangir, the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on Summary Executions, attended the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva this past April, members of the Peshawar Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan called for Jahangir to be arrested and hanged upon her return.

Jahangir is accused of taking the "small problems of Pakistan to international forums and creating a bad name for Pakistan."

The *Organisation Mondial Contre Torture* (OMCT, the World Organization Against Torture) has expressed concern for Jahangir and her sister, Hina Jilani, a lawyer and human rights advocate in Lahore. Both women were representing Saima Sarwar, who was murdered by her estranged husband in the office of Jahangir and Jilani.

Sarwar, who had lived in Peshawar with her parents for four years after leaving her husband, fled to Lahore after her family threatened to kill her if she tried to get a divorce. She was given shelter at Distak, an organization run by the legal aid team headed by Jahangir and Jilani.

Sarwar's family finally agreed to her divorce, and she was to meet her mother in Jilani's office to receive the necessary papers. However, her mother did not come alone as agreed... she brought a man—a driver in the government Education Directorate in Peshawar—who shot Sarwar in the head. She died instantly.

The man also fired a shot at Jilani but missed. He was then killed by a security guard.

The murder is another in the endless series of "honour" killings—murders of women by family members in the name of family "honour."

The OMCT is calling on people to write to the prime minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif sand demand full protection for Jahangir and Jilani; the prosecution of the murderers of Saima Sarwar without delay; immediate action against those inciting violence against women; and police protection of shelters for women.

Send letters to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif by fax: 92-51-920-8890 or email: primeminister@pak.gov.pk

[Source: OMCT email (omct@omct.org) published on the Internet on the Aviva website (www.aviva.org).]

Shelter fined for negligence

The Cumbee Center to Assist Abused Persons (CCAAP) in Aiken, South Carolina, has been sued by a woman's family for negligence as a result of her murder by her batterer. While the woman and her children were staying at the shelter, her ex-partner requested a meeting at a lawyer's office, a request made through the woman's mother.

The woman was accompanied by an advocate from CCAAP, but at the women's instigation, the advocate left her alone in a room with her batterer. He then shot and killed her and then himself.

Several experts on domestic violence testified to a jury that all women who come into a shelter are suffering from battered women's syndrome or post-traumatic stress disorder, and should not be allowed to make decisions for themselves for at least six months.

The shelter was charged with negligence in taking the woman to the meeting at the lawyer's office and has been ordered to pay the family $103,000, although they had asked for $3.5 million.

Concerns have been raised that the court ruling implies the public should expect shelters to guarantee safety for victims and that shelter staff should "think" for the residents.

[Source: FAV Net published on the Internet on the Aviva website (www.aviva.org).]

Norplant pulled in Britain

Norplant, the contraceptive implant that sparked mass legal action from women who claimed to have suffered ill effects, will be pulled off the market in Britain. More than 1,000 women complained of symptoms ranging from non-stop bleeding, hair loss and suicidal depression.

The decision by the implant's distributor, Hoechst Marion Roussell, took many by surprise, as it came just four months after legal aid to the women was withdrawn and the court case collapsed.

The pharmaceutical giant insisted the reasons were commercial, saying the controversy has destroyed Norplant's "reputation." Not enough women were prepared to switch to the five-year implants to make them viable, the company said, stressing it still had full confidence in the product. Norplant will be discontinued at the end of October.

Hoechst Marion Roussel denounced the "unholy alliance of bureaucrats, lawyers and media," which is says is responsible for Norplant's demise.

But Paul Balen, the solicitor who coordinated legal action on behalf of at least 250 women, said that blaming lawyers and bureaucrats did "a disservice to the doctors and women who were able to make their own judgments as to whether Norplant was a product they wished to use."

Thousands of women in the United States were still bringing class actions against Wyeth, the American distributors of the drug.

Norplant, a progesterone-only contraceptive contained in six silicone rods implanted into a woman's upper arm, was launched in 1993. It was marketed as an alternative to the Pill, but there is a major difference. Oral contraception can be stopped instantly, but removing the silicone rods turned out to be a difficult procedure that some doctors refused to undertake or could not manage.

[Source: The Guardian Weekly*]*

Women's daily in Iran banned

The only women's daily newspaper in Iran has been banned by the revolutionary court in Teheran. The daily *Zan* ("woman") was ordered to close after it published part of an Iranian New Year message by Iran's former queen, Farah Diba, and a cartoon about the law of *diya*, or "blood money."

The court objected to the cartoon's depiction of an article of Iran's penal code, which states that the sum paid by the murderer of a woman to the victim's family is half that of the sum paid for the murder of a man.

Zan, which is run by Faezeh Hashemi, a member of parliament and daughter of Iran's former president Hashemi Rafsanjani, was launched in 1998 to promote the role of women in political, social and cultural activities.

The paper is of political importance since the ongoing power battle between the conservative clerics and the people of Iran is often represented as a struggle over women's rights. Although Iran's press has enjoyed increased freedom since President Mohammad Khatami took office, the banning of *Zan* is seen as a clear signal that conservative forces are using their control to constrain women's political activities.

Urgent action is requested. Send letters to Hojjatoleslam Mohammed Khatami, Office of the President, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Teheran, The Islamic Republic of Iran. Letters can also be sent by fax to: 98-21-646-4443; or by email to: president@khatami.com.

[Source: Sisterhood is Global Institute (sigi@igc.apc.org) published on the Aviva website (www.aviva.org.)]

Timorese to vote on "autonomy"

People in East Timor will go to the polls on August 8th, to vote for "autonomy" or "independence." This follows a pact signed by the governments of Indonesia and Portugal at the United Nations headquarters to enable the 800,000 Timorese to decide if they want wide-ranging autonomy under continued Indonesian rule.

If the Timorese reject autonomy, the Indonesian government has promised to reverse its annexation of East Timor and allow it to become independent.

Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and incorporated the territory into Indonesia as its 27th province. During and since the invasion, the Indonesian military has killed hundreds of thousands of Timorese.

At the polls, the Timorese people will be asked: "Do your accept the proposed special autonomy for East Timor within the Unitary State of the republic of Indonesia? or "Do you reject the proposed special autonomy for East Timor, leading to East Timor's separation from Indonesia?"

It is expected that the majority will reject "autonomy" and vote for "independence."

[information from the Vancouver Sun.*]*

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MOVEMENT MATTERS

Summer institute scholarship

The BC Federation of Labour is offering a scholarship for a labour woman (a member of a union) to attend the Summer Institute for Union Women, to be held July 7 to 11 at the British Columbia Institute of Technology in Burnaby, BC. The scholarship covers tuition, accommodation and meals for the eighth annual Summer Institute titled, "Union Women: Take Action to Close the Gap."

The Summer Institute is sponsored by the BC Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress. It is an intensive week of learning where union women can learn skills as workers, activists and leaders in a supportive environment. The Institute is committed to building solidarity between workers and overcoming obstacles, especially those based on race, culture and sexual orientation.

Some of the topics this year include: Women in the Global Economy; Employment Equity; Young Women in Unions; News That's Fit to Print; and the sure-to-be-popular Snappy Comebacks.

Applicants for the Marianne Gilbert Scholarship must write a letter outlining their union activities, what they hope to learn at the school and how the experience will help in their work at their own union or with the labour movement in general. Applicants must also submit a recommendation letter from their union. The deadline for applications is May 21.

Send application to: Marianne Gilbert Scholarship, c/o the BC Federation of Labour, 200-5118 Joyce St, Vancouver, BC, V5R 4H1; fax (604) 430-5917.

HIV/AIDS and Aboriginal people

A recently released report makes recommendations on the issue of HIV and AIDS among British Columbia's Aboriginal peoples. The *Red Road: Pathways to Wholeness, An Aboriginal Strategy for HIV and AIDS in BC* is a project of the BC Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Task Force. It is a community-based move towards care and prevention around HIV/AIDS respecting positive Aboriginal tradition, history and values.

In recent years, a high percentage of people in BC newly diagnosed as HIV-positive are Aboriginal. Aboriginal women make up a much larger percentage of new cases as compared to non-Aboriginal women.

While a large number of people have contracted the virus through injection drug use or homosexual sex, Aboriginal women also identify sex trade work as a major risk factor, according to the report. Of even more concern for Aboriginal women and their families is the fact that, due to higher birth rates, HIV/AIDS is being passed on to Aboriginal children at a greater rate.

The report highlights the current challenges to preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS further in Aboriginal communities and providing adequate treatment for people with the disease.

Specifically, *The Red Road* points to the historical traumas of cultural genocide and the residential school system as underlying causes of the current epidemic. The legacy of this history means that Aboriginal people in BC experience lower levels of education, lower income and an increased reliance on social assistance, as well as higher levels of alcoholism, abuse, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

As the burden of AIDS has increased, there has also been a challenge in coordinating services for Aboriginal people with HIV/AIDS. Seventy percent of Aboriginal people in BC live off-reserve, many in urban areas. Outside of cities, people are spread out over large geographic areas. Coordinating on- and off-reserve prevention programs and treatment has been difficult, as has dealing with regionalization of the provinces health care system.

The report makes some strong recommendations or "pathways" to dealing with HIV/AIDS, such as the need for:

- A strong emphasis on prevention programs for children and youth is crucial (32 percent of Aboriginal people in BC are under 14 years of age).
- Prevention and intervention for adults that focus on those using or at risk of using injection drugs is needed.
- Programs that are culturally appropriate and take into account the lower level of education of both users and community health care providers. A wide range of materials is needed as well as standardized training for workers.
- A focus on HIV/AIDS transmittal in prisons, given that a disproportionate number of people in prison are Aboriginal.
- Changes to funding, training and service structure on reserves so that home-based care for those living with AIDS is possible.
- More physician training so doctors will provide appropriate, culturally-sensitive care.
- More research by trained Aboriginal researchers on the whole range of HIV/AIDS issues.

Throughout the report, the need for increased funding for prevention and treatment services is obvious. The next step for the Task Force is to develop an implemention guide and begin fulfilling the goals identified in the report. The Task Force is made up of on and off-reserve organizations and projects dealing with HIV/AIDS and other health issues and representatives of government.

To receive a copy of The Red Road, *contact Healing Our Spirit, 415 Esplanade, North Vancouver, BC, V7M 1A6; tel: (604) 983-8774; fax: (604) 983-2667.*

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Overseas Position

CUSO is currently recruiting Canadian volunteers with professional experience in women's organizing, social justice, social welfare and adult education for two year placements with local women's organizations in Ghana, Thailand and Chile. CUSO supplies health benefits, travel to posting, language training, and a basic living allowance. If you are interested, please check out our web page at www.cuso.org or email our office in Calgary: ehaug@web.net

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS/ADVANCE NOTICE
10th International Nursing Conference
Ending Violence Against Women:
Setting the Agenda for the Next Millenium
June 1-3, 2000
The Coast Plaza at Stanley Park Hotel, Vancouver, BC Canada

Conference Description: The purpose of this conference is to provide a forum in which the many disciplines who encounter abused women have an opportunity to meet each other, exchange ideas, and deepen alliances which encourage a coherent response to abused women. The conference will continue the Nursing Network on Violence Against Women International's (NNVAWI) emphasis on understanding the enormous implications of violence on women's health. The beginning of a new millenium provides a unique symbolic opportunity to take stock of previous advances and to promote a coordinated community response towards ending violence.

For further information contact: Elaine Liau, UBC, Tel: (604) 822-4965, Fax: (604) 822-4835, e-mail: elaine@cehs.ubc.ca

MOVEMENT MATTERS

listings information

Movement Matters is designed to be a network of news, updates and information of special interest to the women's movement.

Submissions to Movement Matters should be no more than 500 words, typed, double spaced and may be edited for length. Deadline is the 18th of the month preceding publication.

compiled by Robyn Hall

New resource for battered women

A new legal information booklet for women in or leaving abusive relationships was launched in Vancouver in April.

Speaking of Abuse: Violence Against Women in Relationships, a project of many community groups, Legal Services Society and the Victim Services Branch of the Ministry of the Attorney General, replaces an older brochure called *Assault: Violence Against Women in Relationships*.

The 46-page booklet is available in eight languages: Chinese, English, Farsi, French, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese, and on disk (in text only) and audio tape (in English only).

Speaking of Abuse contains up-to-date information on the changes to the laws that affect women in abusive relationships. The booklet is for any woman who needs legal information about her rights because she is being abused, assaulted or harassed by her husband, boyfriend or ex-partner, and for the advocates and victim service workers who assist them. It explains what a woman can do to protect her safety.

Topics covered in the newly revised booklet include: what violence against women in a relationship is; what you can do if your husband, boyfriend or ex-partner has assaulted you, threatened to assault you, or is criminally harassing you; what the police do when they are called [or rather, what they are supposed to do;] what the court process is; how to get a peace bond or a restraining order; what to do if you choose to end your relationship; and who can help with emotional support and legal advice.

The booklet also provides details about maintenance and support, custody, access, separation agreements and property if you want to end the relationship permanently.

The booklets are available free of charge. To place an order, write to: Distribution, Publishing Program, Legal Services Society, 1500-1140 West Pender St, Vancouver, BC, V6E 4G1; or fax (604)682-0965. Indicate your mailing address and the number of copies you would like and in what language(s) or formats.

Looking for pop ed projects

The World March of Women in the Year 2000 is calling for examples of successful women-led popular education initiatives from all regions of the world for a collection called, *Tribute to Women's Struggles Worldwide*. The collection will be distributed to all the groups who participate in the World March of Women, which will be launched March 8, 2000.

The collection of iniatives will illustrate important milestones in the fight against poverty and violence made by women's movements around the world. It aims to celebrate popular education initiatives that have led to transformations of attitudes and practices or major political, economic or social victories in the struggle against poverty and male violence.

The *Tribute to Women's Struggles Worldwide* also has a goal of supporting women in developing new strategies and popular education tools, in connection with the demands of the World March *[see* Kinesis *April 1999,]* by providing examples of successes from around the world.

Some examples of popular education initiatives are popular theatre, public forums, community kitchens and marches. This work raises awareness and encourages people to then take collective action for change.

The final collection will be distributed with the campaign to sign cards in support of the March's world demands.

The deadline for submissions is June 10. A few lines are needed, including information on: what motivated the women involved to act; how did they proceed; what were the gains in terms of social change around poverty and violence; and what kind of popular education do they intend to use in connection with the World March of Women in the year 2000.

Send examples to: Martine David, Popular Education Campaign Organizer, Marche mondiale des femmes en l'an 2000, World March of Women in the Year 2000, 110 rue Ste-Thérèse, #307, Montréal, Québec, H2Y 1E6; or email: marche2000@ffq.qc.ca. For more information about the World March, check out their website at: http://www.ffq.qc.ca.

Equality rights in the new century

West Coast LEAF (Women's Legal Education and Action Fund) is hosting a forum on the equality rights of women in the new century November 4th to 7th. *Transforming Women's Future* will serve as an historic occasion to reflect on the progress that women's equality-seeking groups have made over the last few decades and to look ahead to the future of employing such law-related strategies as litigation, law reform/advocacy, and public legal education to achieve equality.

The forum will bring together more than 500 community activists, front line workers, lawyers, paralegals, judges, educators, social workers, academics and others from across the country. The gathering will allow participants an opportunity to network; hear about leading-edge research; share practical skills and strategies; and strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones. The forum will be conducted in English and French and simultaneous translation will be available for the plenary sessions.

Five plenary sessions will be held on the topics: Defining moments in the struggle for women's equality and the unfinished agenda; Violence, abuse and misuse of power in gendered relationships; The intersection of race and gender; Social and economic rights for women; and A place at the table: legal strategies for ensuring full participation by women in decision-making.

The forum will also feature more than 40 workshops. The Program Planning Committee is currently inviting proposals for the 90-minute workshop sessions. Proposals should involve participatory discussions. Participation will be limited to 25-30 people per workshop. Workshop presenters will be required to prepare a short issues paper (10-15 pages) for circulation in advance of the forum.

Some suggested issues workshops could cover are: pay equity; family law issues; addressing bias in the justice system; reconceptualizing equality and citizenship in light of the Delgaamuukw decision; women in prison; how can CEDAW be used in the Canadian courts; working in coalition; or feminist leadership skills.

Anyone interested in presenting a workshop should submit the following information to the forum organizers: the title of the workshop; a 200-300 word abstract setting out the themes and issues to be addressed; name, address, fax and email of presenter; and whether the workshop will be offered in English or French. The deadline for submissions is May 28. Selection of workshops will be made by June 30.

For more information or to submit proposals, contact the Forum Program Planning Committee, West Coast LEAF, Suite 1517-409 Granville St, Vancouver, BC, V6C 1T2; tel: (604) 684-8772; fax: (604) 684-1543; email: wcleaf@dowco.com. (If you are submitting proposals by fax or mail, you are asked to provide a copy on disk saved in a Microsoft Word .)

Research project on IMEs

Fibromyalgia (FM) and Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) are chronic conditions with no cure. Both conditions are typically "invisible" disabilities, contributing to the myth that people with ME and FM are "malingerers." Insurance companies have gone to great lengths to prove that invisible illnesses are suspect and ineligible for coverage under their disability plans.

One of the hurdles disability applicants must overcome is the independent medical exam (IME), which is an evaluation by physicians hired by the insurance company. Case studies indicate that the "independence" element of IMEs is questionable.

The National ME/FM Action Network has established a registry to collect information about IMEs or functional ability evaluations (FAEs) required by insurance companies. People with ME and FM who have been requested to undergo an IME or FAE are asked to support this important research project.

The goal is to identify patterns in the way ME/FM people are treated by insurance companies and independent physicians with regard to the independent medical evaluations. Both favourable and unfavourable experiences are needed for a clear picture. Data will be compiled by province, area, insurance company, doctor, type of exam and results. Names will remain confidential.

To contribute to the IME Registry, please contact Mary Ellen, PO Box 66172, Town Centre Postal Outlet, 1355 Kingston Rd, Pickering, ON; L1V 6P7. For more information call (905) 831-4744. A registration form is also available at the ME/FM Action Network website at http://www3.sympatico.ca/me-fm.action/medexam.html. You can e-mail Mary Ellen at marye@pathcom.com.

[Information from an article written by Shelley Hourston published in transition *magazine, December 1998 issue.]*

Kinesis is looking for a guest editor...
for an 8-12 page **"Aboriginal Women's Supplement"**
which will be published in our September 1999 issue.

If you are interested, please contact Agnes by May 30th
at (604) 255-5499 or by email at kinesis@web.net.
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Speaking Out For Safe and Respectful Health Care for Women

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There are 10 Volunteer Advocates helping women in various communities of the Vancouver/Richmond Region.

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- Downtown Eastside Senior Centre
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FEATURE

Four-and-a-half- years with chronic illness:

Every day is different

by Annaliese Van Oers

I used to jump out of bed with little or not much, or any, thought towards health and well-being. Health was the norm. I took it for granted. In reality, it is a privilege and a tender gift. It needs to be celebrated.

I only realized this after my passport to good health expired. Only after I was brutally robbed of my strength did I acknowledge and come to fully realize the precious gift of health. Being ill is very much like being deported from trusted ground into a new and unknown terrain.

Suddenly, you are an outcast, rejected from the "normal" order; a refugee from your own body, prisoner of tiredness, robbed of all strength. Looking for asylum, full of hope and trust, I threw myself upon the healing professionals. As I waddle into their office, I am a constant reminder of their shortcomings.

Acknowledging Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) is acknowledging that as a healer one stands on shaky ground, face-to-face with a mystery of life, and the shortcomings of modern day science. While trying to cope during these ill times, I have had to deal, and continue to deal, with issues such as isolation, loss, responsibility and acceptance. The journey so far has been choppy and at times extremely tough; however, it has also been a time of tremendous growth and healing.

Living with ME

Life is onerous when you constantly feel like a used up, wet dish rag. It is difficult to experience simple pleasures and joys when your body resembles liquid cement, and your brain functions like mushy peas.

I don't sit comfortably. I don't stand comfortably. I don't lie comfortably. I don't fit right in my skin, and I cannot seem to clear my murky mind. My muscles ache, I don't remember my name, and I can't clearly remember yesterday. I don't remember my age. I feel old, very old.

Every morning I wake up with a huge hangover, and just as the doctor cannot find any organic evidence of my illness, I can never find the bottles to justify the hangover. I get up and throw up.

For breakfast, I wrench the muscles in my arm while attempting to open a peanut butter jar (two weeks later I still suffer from peanut butter elbow). I sit down and hope the fog will clear. I need some groceries. Chores are piled up, but, if, and when, the energy comes I want to do something fun, to take a joyful risk and create a happy memory that I might behold if I can remember it, when I hit that dreaded down cycle again.

Every day is different; there are no guidelines, no boundaries to how sick or well one gets. Every hour is different.

Untrustworthy improvements and unexplainable deterioration. It is difficult not to rate every twist and turn. With every sign of improvement, I go into this euphoric high that has me bound to come crashing down again.

If I am not busy trying to pull myself out of a relapse, I am most likely sliding into the next one. And so the days fill the years. Decline, build up, fall down.

I enter yet another stage of euphoria, energy rising up like sap through a tree in Spring. It's been a while since I last experienced this beautiful sensation, so it takes me some time before I name it. But as soon as I fully remember, I'm off. I want to do it all: go and meet all my friends, shop, tackle the chores that have been piling up around the house, go play a game of squash and finish the day with a cosy dinner party. I have unlimited energy, boundless get up and go. So off I go, no time for mundane things, I jump into action.

Every morning I wake up with a huge hangover, and just as the doctor cannot find any organic evidence of my illness, I can never find the bottles to justify the hangover.

The outer world seems unrecognizable, and with sheer exhilaration I look at all the new books in my favourite bookstore. I begin to drool but before I have time to further contemplate the joy of the printed word, I am hit. Frantically, I search for the nearest chair and wobble over. Why on earth did I go out? I should know better by now!

Bound and limited, I curse myself. I am like a dog on a leash, continuously being pulled back to heel. This sly illness, always allowing myself to be fooled. I am betrayed by my own body, but first and foremost, "How am I going to get home?"

Isolation

I find isolation very difficult to deal with. It occurs on many different levels, and, unless you have a certain amount of energy to spend, it is extremely difficult to break its powerful grip. I rely on those around me to come down to my level, to spend time in my low-energy zone.

Shortly after getting ill you start to break off bonds. You stop working on communal projects then soon you stop working altogether. Volunteer work is cut and you can no longer involve yourself in social gatherings. You're a drifter, endless days of nothingness. Damn this illness. The costs are very high. Unable to commit energy that isn't yours to commit.

Not only does chronic illness isolate you because of your limited ability to participate in society, you also find yourself on a totally different wave length from those beautiful souls still around you. My problems and pre-occupations are of a totally different nature than those of a healthy being, so much so that often I can't seem to find a common thread.

How can a healthy person have insight into the thoughts of a chronic sicky unless they've been there? Partly I am responsible. I don't wish to endlessly talk about the sorrows of living with ME. I don't get into the finer details much. It's depressing talk; there is too much loss involved. I deeply grieve not being able to actively participate in community.

Loss

There are so many things I want to commit to. I am invited to share lives, to participate, rejoice, suffer and celebrate with others. But my ability to participate is so severely limited that I rarely connect and bond deeply. I cannot express the grief this brings, the isolation this creates. I see so much potential for life, growth, compassion, but I do not have the amount of energy needed to bring this to realization.

Responsibility

Am I responsible for getting this illness? Am I somehow to blame? Is this a punishment for not looking after the precious gift of life? Both Western medicine and the holistic alternative seem to think so, but I could not disagree more strongly. How can I be responsible for something that I have so little control over?

The Western doctors have pricked me, scanned me, and tried hard to mend me, but so far they haven't found anything organically wrong with me. Instead of seeing this as a shortcoming in scientific knowledge, doctors will often ask me if I have "emotional problems," and will suggest a psychiatrist who can "cure" my ills. Five minutes later I find myself shown out with a referral, a prescription for anti-depressants, and a friendly pat on the back. Help it may, but heal it doesn't.

Holistics have another way of holding me responsible. They often believe that if we suppress our emotions they will manifest themselves in physical illness. Suppressed anger will lead to cancer, and guilt might lead to warts on your big toe. If we had somehow only done things differently or better, then we wouldn't have become sick in the first place.

What happens to those who stay chronically ill? Did we not "connect" with our healing power? Are we really as responsible as the healing professionals lead us to think? I've done enough inner work to last me a life time. I've taken the anti-depressants and throw myself into the alternative health circuit, much to my wallet's distress. I've met my chakras, cleared the channels, eaten the diets, taken the remedies, wore the crystal, looked at the card, had hands laid on me, got the pressure points needled, and met a counsellor.

Some of it was very helpful and I've certainly learned a lot. However, I am still as sick as ever. And time and time again, I am asked the question, "Have you maybe some uh... emotional problems?" Well if I didn't have them before I certainly have them now!

I am not disclaiming responsibility totally but the boundaries need to be clearly identified, especially when dealing with illnesses that are medical mysteries. It is not the first time that organic medical problems have been psychologized. Before finding the organism responsible for tuberculosis,

see ME next page

Understanding ME

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) can be a severely debilitating disease which seems to affect the brain and muscles. The hallmark symptom is severe muscle weakness where after a minor degree of physical effort, power is restored to the muscle only after a prolonged length of time (days or longer). Cerebral dysfunction is another marker of the disease. It can cause impaired memory, poor concentration and emotional instability. Dizziness, balance disorders, sleep disturbance, muscle twitching, fainting and seizures are also common symptoms. Constant, chronic pain may also be a problem—from severe headaches to joint and muscle pain. People with ME may also experience irritable bowels and diarrhea, low temperatures, hearing disorders, rashes, allergies, hair loss and de-sensitivity to odours, chemicals and medications.

Many people with ME are bedridden and some require tube feeding (particularly kids with ME). Others are in wheelchairs and scooters, while some have minimal symptoms and are able to carry on a near normal life. The illness is often constant but can follow a relapsing/remitting pattern. Long term prognosis is not good. Recent epideiological studies are finding recovery rates of six to 17 percent where recovery is defined as an ability to return to work (although not symptom free.)

ME is both endemic and epidemic. It has been documented in medical journals going back at least one hundred years. By 1986, up to 52 outbreaks (epidemic form) of this type of infection have been recorded from all over the world. For the last 50 years, it has been known as Myalgic Encephalomyelitis in most countries, and is referred to as Low Natural Killer Cell Disease (LNKD) in some Asian countries. An outbreak at Incline Valley, Nevada (US) during the late 1970s/early 1980s raised the interest of the Centre for Disease Control. After not being able to identify nor comprehend the outbreak, government officials named it Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) in an attempt to diminish/dismiss it. Patients were outraged at the demeaning name. It later got changed to Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS). Limiting the problem to a chronic fatigue issue takes a severely debilitating illness and diminishes/minimizes it. The US is currently the only country that uses "chronic fatigue." Even the World Health Organization uses ME.

- Kelly Haydon -

FEATURE

Social programs and people with ME:

Declassifying disabilities

by Eileen O'Brien

In recent months, more people with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) have been denied government benefits even with strong physician support. It's clear to me that people with ME are in this situation because there is political will for it to happen.

At the national Canada Pension Plan (CPP) consultations, it was stated clearly that one of the main reasons for wanting to separate disability benefits from other benefits was the dramatic increase in the number of claims from people with ME and Fibromyalgia. There was fear about the demand on the fund and the need to weed out "abusers" so that the fund could meet its commitments in the future. *[See sidebar.]*

The reality is that, just as with other social programs, cutbacks are a matter of government priorities rather than a real shortage of funds. We are just at the bottom of the priority list.

In the months following the consultations, there has been an increase in the number of CPP claims denied. Workers are doing what they have been asked to do: make it difficult for people with ME to qualify. The problem for us is the fight has no clear arena. The courts are only open to people who receive private insurance and many of these cases are settled out of court for inadequate sums, at least half of which go to lawyers and expenses. Those cases that go to court are often successful. However, the insurance companies are doing their best to challenge claimants at every level. Their latest strategy is to try to claim there is a psychological basis for these physical symptoms.

Meanwhile, dwindling healthcare budgets are not putting money into research and cutbacks are being made to diagnostic services.Other systems set in place to cover disability benefits cannot handle the load and have declared war on people with ME and other diseases, such as environmental illnesses, brain injury, soft tissue injury and many forms of mental illness.

Those of us with ME are most at risk in the disability "hierarchy." When services for people with disabilities are cut back, the "most disabled" are seen as most deserving of the dwindling benefit pie—they are the "deserving disabled."

With this undeniably physical disease, as with many others, people may experience depression and fear at the loss of their jobs and their inability to participate in family and social life. Mothers have lost their children when they were unable to care for them.

Experiencing the loss of control over a once-dependable body and mind, and faced with little improvement after a significant length of time, some may find their physicians refocussing treatment on psychological support. Some physicians, having exhausted their medical bag of tricks and hitting a brick wall in terms of diagnostic tools, begin to treat many patients as depressive instead of continuing the frustrating, time-consuming job of understanding more about the illness itself.

Although compassion, support and encouragement can help people deal with any serious illness and reinforce the healing actions and attitudes that will boost the immune system, there are some concerns for us in the disability community about the pyschological approach to ME treatment. Standard psychological tests, such as the MMPI (the Minnesota Multi-phasic Inventory, which is used to test for personality disorders,) are based on the assumption that the individual has no physical disease. These kinds of tests and skewed results could be, and we feel sure will be, used to determine what personality types are likely to acquire certain diseases and could be used against us in any battles for disability benefits.

You should also know that your medical or psychological records are not protected. Any test or session you participate in is not confidential if you are in a court battle for disability benefits. Recently, I was approached by a very well-meaning psychologist who was running a study to determine if cognitive therapy will improve the health of people with ME. This researcher believes that the disease has a significant psychological component.

Although he has helped people with ME through his therapy, we have serious concerns about the ways in which his research may be interpreted, especially because of the use of the MMPI. Our fear is that the study could be used by the insurance companies to hurt us—by strengthening the myth that ME is "all in our heads."

Who is funding this research and why? Where is the money to research the virus and its eradication? There is certainly an agenda on the part of the insurance companies and the government benefits programs to declassify or reclassify this disease in any way to cut costs.

The truth is people with ME are ill and tired. We cannot fight this battle without the support of our disability community and non-disabled allies. Many people suffering with this illness cannot think or speak clearly because the disease attacks the brain. Children experience mood swings and learning disabilities, often having difficulty in math, languages, reading and other subjects involving the use of short term memory.

It seems there are also more women who have this illness. At this point we don't know why. This reinforces and increase our risk of poverty. Women have hormonal difficulties and often have severe exacerbation of menstrual and menopausal symptoms. Irritable bowel and bladder, with or without pain, numbness of extremities, swollen lymph nodes, night sweats and sometimes low-grade fevers, arthritis and extreme muscle pain are only a few of the symptoms that find most people completely debilitated by this disease.

Children, especially adolescents, faced with absences from school, ostracization by peers and misunderstanding from physicians, teachers and often parents, are especially at risk for suicide. Some people with ME are just too sick to keep up the struggle. Noone is addressing the frightening reality that this devastating illness is reaching epidemic proportions and is having a destructive effect on an ever-increasing number of people.

There are times we feel like the "canaries in the mine"with no one paying attention to the fact that we are no longer singing. Rather than being "malingerers," maybe we are some of the first warning signs about the pathogens in our western, technological society.

Eileen O'Brien is a mother living with a disability whose child also lives with ME. Her volunteer work within the disabilty movement, yoga and meditation keep her sane and positive. [This piece was originally written as an editorial in Transition *magazine, January/February 1999, which featured several articles on ME.]*

No CPP for people with ME

The Advocacy Access Team (AAT) of the BC Coalition of People with Disabilties says it has noticed a disturbing trend when they have applied for Canada Pension Plan (CPP) disability benefits on behalf of clients with ME: it's become next to impossible to have benefits approved.

In the 1970's to the early 90's, CPP, like other long-term disability schemes, did not recognize ME as a compensable disability. Basically, this was because ME cannot be detected on an x-ray, biopsy or blood test et cetera. *This changed in 1993 when CPP accepted ME as an illness. Between 1993 and 1997 the AAT saw a 75 percent success rate for CPP disability claims. So why the drop back to almost zero?*

What has changed is that now CPP insists on "objective" medical evidence of a disability. This objective evidence is hard to come by as ME transcends pigeonholing. CPP disability adjudicators commonly dismiss evidence from an applicant's long-time physician as "subjective" and use a one-time, 15 minute to three hour evaluation by a CPP-chosen specialist as "objective." The sad result is that people with ME are denied CPP coverage.

[Source Transition *magazine, January / February 1999.]*

from ME previous page

it was thought there was a certain personality trait that allowed TB to fester. This same mentality occurred with AIDS, previously known as GRIDS (Gay Related Immune Deficiency Syndrome), and ME, previously known as Yuppie Flu. (Ouch.)

All too quickly, the medical community will point to psychological factors in explaining the cause of disease and lay the blame and responsibility firmly onto the sufferer. I will no longer buy into that story. How can I be responsible for something that I have very limited control over?

One of the least helpful questions when I hit the down cycle is: "Did I overdo it?" This kind of thinking is prevalent and dangerous. When dealing with ME, it is important to understand how little control you have over the consequences of your physical actions.

One day I will go swimming and experience only positive effects from it. The next week I might do a similar swim. However, for days and sometimes weeks after, I could be in bed with acute muscular soreness and exhaustion.There are no clear boundaries to what I can and cannot do. Every time I will have a different reaction. It's very unpredictable and makes coping with this illness all the harder. So it really isn't a question of overdoing it.

We need to be aware of our assumptions about responsibilities for illness that are hiding behind innocent questions. Next thing we may question whether the chronically ill should have a right to claim a disability pension *[see above.]* In The Netherlands, ME sufferers have great difficulty obtaining a disability pension, mainly because there is not yet any scientific "proof" of an organic cause to this illness.

This psychologizing attitude presented by our health care professionals may lead us to think that sick people are not our responsibility. [Ontario premier] Mike Harris may be capable of it, but are we?

Acceptance

How and why do I accept this illness? It might reside in me but it is not an invited or welcome guest. By accepting something, it will be internalized, it will become a part of my being. I don't want this to be a part of me! I do not wish to live my life in this dreadful way. I want to run and not feel weary, I want to fly on the wings of eagles. There is another voice within. It speaks of acceptance. It speaks of healing.

At times I have found that peace. Truly, I think healing will not come from the internal fight against acceptance of ME, nor will it come from healers and doctors. It is the gentle whisperings of love from within that will bring true healing.

My ideas about true healing are at times very different from those whispers in my heart. There is a growing group of ME sufferers that has not yet experienced physical healing after many long years. It is not certain that I will get better. However, I can try to take great joy in the knowledge that healing can, and has, occurred in many different ways.

Kathleen Norris, in her book *Dakota* wrote: "As I grow in acceptance, I am opened to experience healing. I am learning to rejoice in the gifts of deprivation. To learn from them, and to care less for amenities than for that which refreshes from a deeper source. Acceptance is a way of surrendering to my reduced circumstances in a manner that enhances my whole being."

Anneliese Van Oers lives in Ottawa.

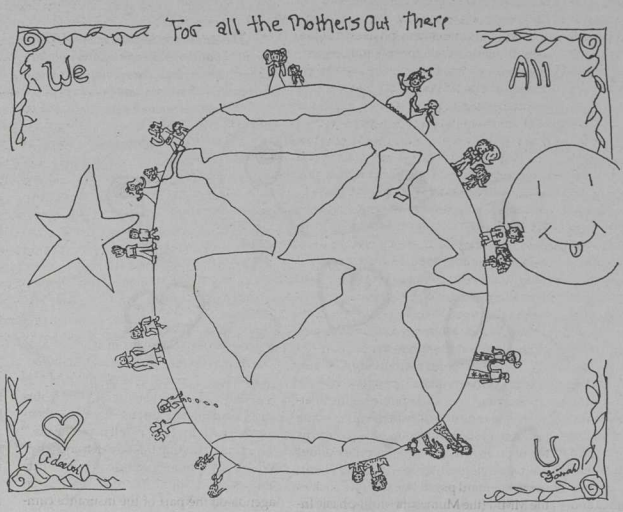
FEATURE

Moms meet and mingle to talk about...:

The woman behind 'Mom'

by Lynda Gray, Lissa Geller and Veenu Saini, as told to Fatima Jaffer

On a sunny Sunday in April, four women got together to talk about parenting for the "Mothers Day" issue of Kinesis. *Fatima Jaffer, a regular contributor to* Kinesis, *who is not a mom, facilitated and edited the conversation between the three mothers—Lissa Geller, a Jewish lesbian mom of two boys, pregnant with her third, and a middle management worker; Lynda Gray of the Tsimshian First Nation, a Native youth worker, newly graduated from the University of British Columbia, and a single mom with two teenaged children; and Veenu Saini, who works in the anti-violence movement and is a divorced, South Asian single mom of one nine-year old girl. All three are in their early-to-mid-30s. While all are known to Kinesis, they had not met each other before we had the following conversation.*



"For all the mothers out there," by Farrah, age 10, and Adeebah, age 7

Fatima Jaffer: Could you give us a very brief overview of your experiences becoming parents?

Lissa Geller: I have two boys—David, a 12-year-old; and Joseph, a two-year-old—and I'm having another baby next month, which my radiologist tells me has a 70-per-cent-chance of being girl. I've been waiting 13 years to parent a girl, but now I'm kind of terrified by the prospect.

I had my first son when I was married and lived in Saskatchewan, but I'd split up from my husband by the time David was born, so he's never actually been with his dad.

Then I moved to Vancouver, met Tracey, fell in love and we decided we wanted to have more kids. So we went to a clinic in Vancouver, found sperm, got pregnant, and had Joseph over two years ago. We then went back, found the same sperm and now we're having another one.

The donor is some American guy; we have a photograph of him. The clinic actually gives you quite a bit of information, all non-identifying of course, like how many siblings he had, what he does for a living and medical history, *et cetera.*

We were all over the place deciding how to pick sperm. Initially, we tried with a friend we knew but that was a bust. When the clinic opened up, it seemed considerably more scientific, which meant we had a better shot at getting pregnant. So we chose that route, and I'm not disappointed we did.

Lynda Gray: I have an 18-year-old daughter and a 16-year-old son. I was in a relationship with the father until they were seven and four. When we first broke up, they lived with me. My ex- and I made up a schedule and he had to come and see them every day. He plays pool semi-professionally, so if he had a tournament at seven o'clock, he'd come pick them up from school [in the afternoon] so it wouldn't be such a big deal for the kids.

Was I a single parent? Some people have said I did it all alone, but he was there to always back up my decisions—because they were always right. *[Laughter].*

My younger sisters lived with me and they've always been there for me. I didn't realize until last year how helpful they were, until I heard other people talking about extended families in the Native community. I thought, "You know I didn't really have that," but I guess I did. My sisters and I used to sit around the table and talk. Then one of my kids would come and ask me, "Where is whatever?" An hour-and-a-half later, they'd have heard this whole philosophical discussion and they'd go, "Can we leave now?!" *[Laughter].* They'd learn some big lesson from all of us.

Geller: That's kind of cool.

Gray: Yeah. And it always just kind of spontaneously happened.

Jaffer: When did you have your children?

Gray: I was 16 when I had my first. Their dad was about 24. I don't know if I should have been making the decision to have kids [at that age] but I've never regretted it.

Veenu Saini: I have one child—Rubina—and she's nine years old. I had her when I was almost 22 years old. I was married to her father at the time. It was an abusive marriage. I had just moved to this country after getting married to him.

He wanted a child, because it was his way of keeping me in the relationship, while I wasn't quite ready for a child, and in fact was quite opposed to having one. I was alone in the country at the time. I didn't have any family here, or any friends, so I was quite isolated.

Rubina was two-and-a-half when I left him. I decided I couldn't raise her with him because he was sexist and abusive. That was one of my best parenting decisions.

see MOM'S DAY next page

Birthing of Mother's Day

Kinesis *has not traditionally recognized Mother's Day in its pages in part because of Mother's Day's conservative, back-to-the-kitchen origins, and in part because of its deliberate, underlying impetus of celebrating women as "womb" while ignoring child-less women and women who do not fit traditional "motherhood" roles.*

In this issue though, Kinesis *celebrates Mother's Day and the bold, brash and bodacious moms out there who are raising children in defiance of a woman-hating, mother-blaming state and society that makes it damn difficult to raise our children.*

We do this in the context of a deeper understanding of the origins and symbolism of Mother's Day, brought to us courtesy of Vancouver academic/activist Karlene Faith, who gave us permission to summarize/extract from the introductory chapter of her newly released treatise on popular Western culture Madonna: Bawdy & Soul.

Under the subtitle, "Before Madonna: A Selective United-Statesian History," Faith explores state-sponsored woman-hating in aggressively conservative post-war USA in the 1950s–a time, Faith writes, when the "popular media and entertainment industries rarely posed a challenge to the patriotic, nuclear family-centred status quo."

Faith traces efforts to redomesticate white women and "transform the natural female monster into some model of desexed, defanged, passive, compliant, quiet perfection who can readily accept authority and not get in the way, of which Madonna, the mother of Jesus, is the Western prototype."

She then outlines a brief history of Mother's Day: "In the 1950s, Mother's Day cards came into their own as a major commercial industry...This internationally traditional holiday became official in the United States on May 8, 1914, when Congress jointly approved a bill declaring the second Sunday of every May as Mother's Day, signed by President Woodrow Wilson.

"The bill honours mothers as 'the greatest source of the country's strength and inspiration' and refers to 'the home' as 'the fountain head of the State.' Because women do so much for 'moral uplift and religion,' they directly benefit 'government and humanity.'

"The holiday was not always observed, but fervour for it was renewed in the 1950s in the context of a shifting economy and the need to get women back in the home. Commercial glorification of stay-at-home motherhood produced a moral imperative to give mom a card, and even a gift, but the deeper effect was ideological. Given the nature of the job, and the responsibility put on mothers for their children's success in life, mothers have *needed reassurance."*

Karlene Faith's *Madonna: Bawdy & Soul* is published by University of Toronto Press, 1999, and available at selective bookstores in Canada.

from MOM'S DAY previous page

I believe my parenting and my relationship with Rubina starts at the point I left. Before that, his mother was a big part of parenting her. He wasn't that involved because he worked out of town, and came home on weekends only.

Once I left, things got easier. It's been tough, at times, but it's been a breeze too.

Geller: Does your ex-husband see Rubina?

Saini: She's had no contact with him for the last six years. I went through the court system and got full custody. He fought to have access but once he got it, he didn't exercise it. He wanted to control what I did when I didn't have Rubina around. I guess he thought he could have access to her and keep an eye on me. When he realized he couldn't do that, he stopped seeing her.

He also stalked me for a year and a half after I left him. It was quite horrible, but at the same time, I was quite involved in building my new life, so it didn't really get to me.

I did a lot of parenting on my own because I didn't have family here. But I have had a lot of friends—a lot of women—who have been involved in Rubina's life.

My family is close to Rubina too, despite the distance—they live in New Delhi, India. We talk to them every week and she visits them every two years or so. They are very supportive of me and my decisions around parenting.

Geller: Does she see her father's extended family?

Saini: No, except for one cousin, once in a while.

Geller: I lived in the same community as my folks until David was about a year-and-a-half. Then my folks moved away. It was horrible. They just moved five hours away but all of a sudden, I did not have that support. So I was alone from the time David was born until he was four.

Like you say, friends came in and filled in, but I was 21 when I had David and none of my friends had kids. David grew up largely in the company of adults without any playmates. With Joey, we have friends who have kids who are his age, so when we go to see them, he plays with them, while David still always plays with adults.

As good as my friends were, when you don't have kids of your own, you do things like phone at six o'clock on Friday night and say, "Oh, let's go to a movie!" I mean, are you like high on crack? They just didn't get it. You lose friends like that. It's easier to be with people who have kids because they get it.

Saini: Pretty much all of my friends now are single with no kids, which is a good thing because they have one child to dote over. At the same time, it is hard because they always have plans. There were times when I felt, "Oh my god, now that I have a child, I have to stay home." But then I was doing other things that were far more fun that they couldn't do. Most of my friends are pretty close to Rubina and sometimes I wonder if they are in my life because of her.

Geller: My partner, Tracey always says she fell in love with David first and me later.

Saini: You're just what comes along with him...*[Laughter]*

Geller: Yeah, the baggage. *[Laughter].*

Gray: In the last three or four years as my kids got older, it's been different for me. I find myself with all this free time suddenly. All my friends are either having babies or are single and don't have kids. It's been very weird.

Jaffer: Does having all this freed-up time make you realize how much time you put into parenting?

Gray: Yeah. Now when I see my friends with kids, I feel sorry for them. But then I feel sorry for myself too because [my friends] are less in my life—they've got to be up at 5:00am and so they're in bed by 8:00pm.

Saini: I have some friends with kids, but the majority are raising them in two-parent families.

Gray: It's very different.

Saini: The children are different too. My child is used to hanging out with adults, so she finds these kids quite "young" and she doesn't know where they're coming from. Rubina actually talks about how you can't be a child in the same way when you are a single parent's kid. For example, when I'm sick, she takes care of me. She also tries to make sure as much as she can that she stays out of my way and gives me alone-time. There are pluses for her because she has all the attention from at least one person—me—and from all my friends.

Rubina and her mom Veenu, by Rubina age 9

Geller: I think single parents' kids are often more self-sufficient. I remember David learned to tie his shoelaces faster than the kids of my friends who were two-parent families, just because you have to. I just didn't have the energy and the time to do things. He had to learn to play by himself. Then again, David has essentially been in a two-parent family since he was four.

It was a very different experience having a baby alone and then having one with someone there. It was almost like not having a baby. It was so much less work. At first, when Joey needed his diaper changed, I'd get up to do it. Tracey would say, "I can do that." I was so used to doing everything by myself, it didn't occur to me somebody else could do those things too.

Jaffer: Would you say it's also because she's a woman?

Geller: I never raised a child with a man so I can't say. Michael, David's father, had a quasi-relationship with David until he was three. But he never really involved himself in what daycares David should go to, what schools, and other decisions.

Meanwhile, Tracey's expectation was: "Well, you've had one before, you know all about them." I said, "That was 10 years ago. It's a different child. I don't know any more than you know about this kid."

Jaffer: Was there ever any issue about who would bear Joseph or this third child?

Geller: Tracy didn't ever want to bear one. I tried to convince her by telling her you get cleavage. [Laughter.] It didn't work. I always thought I'd have four kids, but I think we'll stop at this one. I remember thinking, when I knew I was a lesbian, "I want to have more kids," and trying to figure out how that would work.

Jaffer: How do you deal with mainstream media and other right-wing elements telling you that you are not a "normal family"? And have there been advantages to raising these kids on your own?

Saini: For the first seven years of Rubina's life, she lived in a small town in BC, which is a very conservative place. The South Asian community was also far more conservative there than almost anywhere else in the world.

Rubina was the only child in the class who came from a single-parent family. Even the mainstream [white] kids all came from church-going families, with a mummy and daddy who were married for sure. But Rubina recognized at a very early age how her situation was much better. We had quite a stable household, where she would go to the childminder's after school, and when she came home after that, we would then be quite focussed on each other.

Often she heard things from other kids like, "Oh, you guys aren't really a family. It's just you and your mom." She didn't let people at school get away with saying things like that. She would say, "We're more of a family than what you guys tell me about."

What she has found really hard is not having siblings. She tells me a lot that "I wish you'd have another kid." It's not about having another parent in her life. I don't think she's ever mentioned wanting to have a second parent.

Gray: I don't think my kids faced any pressure about being single-parent kids. They grew up in Vancouver and a number of families around us were single-parent ones. [If there was an event at their school,] my sisters would go. Their dad often went too.

As far as decision-making went, it was easy because he agreed with me. I don't know if that was because he thought, "Let her do it. I'll just back her up," or whether he thought they were the right decisions. I never really had to deal with conflict around decisions.

The only thing that would come up is if he said something sexist. I would say, "Don't say that." I feel pretty safe about my kids now because *[laughter]* they're shaped in my image, so to speak.

Jaffer: So you like your kids?

Gray: Yeah. I think they're amazing. A totally unbiased view of course. They're probably in a "higher" place of understanding than I was when I was their age because they've had a stable life, they have culture and they're proud of who they are. They've always had pretty loving people in their lives.

Geller: At some point, Michael and I realized there was a time when we had actually liked each other and we just sort of needed to get back to that point. Things went along reasonably well for a while. Again, he just let me make the decisions. I'm not sure if he just abdicated responsibility to me, or if he would have parented the same way I did if it had just been him alone.

At the same time, Michael was never very good at seeing David on a regular basis. He started seeing him less and less. Then he met another woman and they have a couple of kids. I think he just kind of moved on.

I find the most difficult conversations I have with David are about his dad. I mean, I love his dad—he's a sweet man, and gentle but he's an idiot. He has no sense of responsibility. He's completely content to abdicate responsibility for parenting David.

It sure makes it easier for me not to have to deal with him, especially because I've never actually spoken to him about my being a lesbian, though I think he knows. We were living in a pretty small community *[in Saskatchewan]* where you couldn't have not known. I don't think he would be broadly homophobic, so much as specifically about me.

As for David, I worry that he thinks, "How much of a shithead am I as a kid that my own father won't spend time with me." I'm the only person who knows his dad, and he doesn't see any of Mike's family at all. So if he wants information about his dad, he has to come to me. I tell him, "Your dad loves you, but he's just really bad at responsibility."

But now that he's older and more informed, I wish Michael would come back in contact with David and make that connection. I think David would feel so much better if he had his dad in his life. Not that his dad is some great guy, but just that he's his dad.

Saini: Rubina and I have had that conversation about her dad. I am actually quite against her having any contact with her father because he is not just an idiot. It goes beyond not having any sense of responsibility. He's sexist and abusive, and I strongly believe she has nothing to gain from him being a part of her life.

Rubina says it would actually be strange if he did call her. He's since moved on and has another family now. She doesn't really have any strong memories of him because she was three when he stopped contacting us. I've talked to her about how it's not about her that he's not there, and she understands that quite well. I have also

talked about what my relationship with him was like.

But I'm sure she's going to have lots of questions about him as she gets older. I've told her she can choose to contact him then... not that we have his phone number. He got his phone number unlisted, so I wouldn't contact him. As if I would. *[Laughter].*

Gray: In case you were desperate.

Jaffer: ...and saw the error of your ways....*[Laughter.]*

Saini: Yeah. When I first left, he actually said to me, "You make up your mind right now whether you want to take care of this child or whether you want me to. Don't come back to me later on and say, 'I can't deal with her. Take her back'." I said, "What would you say? 'No?! I don't want this child'?"

For the longest time, I used to worry about what would happen to my child if I were to die. I worried about her ending up with him, even though I have done what I can legally to ensure she wouldn't. It's only been about a year or so that I stopped worrying, now that she's got other people in her life who understand. Plus she's older.

If she had to go live with him now, he wouldn't know how to deal with her because he doesn't know how to deal with women and girls with strong minds and strong wills. He'd probably say to my parents, "Here's the child. Take her."

Jaffer: Another thing I have heard Rubina say is that the kids from two-parent families tell her about having abusive fathers who don't really co-parent, and about how their moms are "single-parenting" within their marriages.

Saini: Rubina picks up stuff about abuse when kids are talking about things that are not appropriate, probably because she has been around you and me and other women in the anti-violence movement.

Gray: I see it as socialization that makes kids feel like they've got to have a father. I never missed a father because nobody ever said, "Where's your father?" I don't think it's natural to think, "I need one." It's an expectation others create in you.

Geller: Do you find your boy has different needs regarding a father than your girl?

Gray: They have different relationships with him, but my daughter is actually closer to him. I had thought my son would be the one to get that bonding thing happening.

Saini: We visited India after I left my abusive marriage. When Rubina saw my connection with my father, at first, she didn't believe he was my father because she didn't have a notion that fathers could be like that. My father is a very loving man and he's been very involved in our lives.

She was envious I had this relationship in my life and she didn't. I told her, "You don't need to be a father to be a parent. He's as much a part of your life and cares as much about you." So she now sees him as a father figure, and in fact, also calls him Daddy. He came to visit us in Canada for four months and she really got to know him. She has a strong bond with him now and doesn't have that sense of competition with me anymore.

photo courtesy of Lissa Geller

Family photo of Lissa Geller and Tracy Osborne and their sons Joseph and David, November 1997

Geller: I worry that I can count only on one hand the number of men who are involved in our daily, weekly or monthly lives. Tracey and I both have dads that are loving, caring and involved, but Tracey's dad is in Calgary, and mine is in Saskatchewan. The kids see them once a year, so as far as regular contact with men goes, they don't get a lot. I worry that, as they grow up into men in the company of women, they'll wonder where they fit, that they may see men and fathers as kind of also-rans.

We also get very picky about the kinds of men we spend time with because if they are the men who are going to role model for our kids, I want to make sure they're not boneheads.

Gray: I think one of the big myths out there is that you need a man to teach a boy to be a man. I think my sisters and I have taught my son more about how to be a man than his father did. But I also agree it's important to have good male role models around.

Geller: That's the thing. And if I had girls, I would still want them to be around men.

Jaffer: A lot of the messages boys get about being men are self-serving male myths about what being a man is—basically, how to be a jerk. How do you deal with that outside pressure as mothers of boys?

Geller: I think if you see needing men to raise men as a myth, then you also have to work really hard to remove gender as an equation in the behaviour you expect from your kids. So it's not about, "You're a boy, so you don't hit girls." It's about, "You're a human being and you don't hit other human beings."

I think the problem is that nearly everything they do is genderized for them. I work really hard to expect behaviour based on people living in a family or a community together, regardless.

I remember this one instance though when David was little. We had two women friends who were farmers up in Saskatchewan. They were the only farmers we knew at the time. One time David said, "Mummy, draw a picture of a tractor." So I drew a picture of a tractor. Then he said, "Draw a farmer on it." So I drew a picture of a woman sitting on the tractor. And he said, "No, not the farmer's wife, the farmer." *[Laughter from the others.]*

I was horrified. He was just three years old. He wasn't a kid who watched a lot of TV and he wasn't a kid who knew any farmers who were men. But you can't get away from that. Those sexist messages are a constant barrage.

Gray: I think *[raising a boy and a girl]* was always about naming that stuff. If my son said, "This is what a boy does and that's what a girl is," my sisters or I would say, "Hey, come back here," and he would have to answer to it. It's always like de-programming them.

Jaffer: I think these messages are deliberately being targetted at kids because they are expected to uphold and preserve the sexist, heterosexist order of the world.

Saini: My child believes being a boy means being silly or being a bonehead. For example, I went on this trip with her class and the boys couldn't even walk in a straight line. She rolled her eyes and said, "This is what boys are!" How do you tell her that's not really true when that's what she sees out there? The boys her age are really quite different from the girls. Even the few boy cousins she sees do things just to get on her nerves. She says, "That's because they're boys."

I think she partly gets this message from hanging out with me and people who work in the anti-violence movement. It's also a reality of her life. She's seen men behaving very badly.

Gray: It's all part of socialization. Once she starts to believe that's acceptable behaviour for men, it allows it to keep going. So even if it's true, she has to challenge that bad behaviour.

Saini: She is trying to fight it as much as she can. When the boys in her class make stupid comments about the girls, she challenges them.

Geller: I think when we say, "Oh, boys will be boys," in a way it allows boys to get away with it, and reinforces that behaviour. I appreciate strong girls who take boys on and say, "That behaviour is unacceptable." I think boys hear it more when their peers say it than when their moms tell them.

I worry for my own boys when they hear, "Oh it's just like a man to blah, blah." There's a double message there because it says, "you're stupid because you're a man," but also, "That's okay, we expect less from you. We don't expect you to change diapers, or read a map, or all those stereotypical things that men don't do."

Jaffer: Did you experience moral judgements or feel pressured by your kids or the outside world to live up to the myths of what a "good mom" is, versus a "bad" one?

Saini: When I was growing up, pretty much all the kids were raised by mum and dad and extended families. When I grew up in India, there were few single-parent kids. If there were, it was usually because one parent had died and rarely because one parent had left. Even then, the kids would be raised by extended families.

When I thought about leaving my abusive marriage, I believed in that way of raising kids. But once I decided to raise a child on my own, it really wasn't that hard. Soon as I was away from the people who had been hard on me during my marriage, I felt free to make mistakes and not be hard on myself for making them.

A lot of parenting for me is based on common sense and not on what I thought growing up in a family should be like. That came from making mistakes and deciding to do the things that worked rather than any fixed ideas of what I "should" be doing.

Perhaps it also helped that I was so far away from where I grew up. Now when I go back, I feel quite privileged that I have the space to do all of this my way. I get a lot of compliments about my parenting. It makes me realize, "Yeah, actually that was rather cool," and I think I'm quite a good parent. I really like my kid and she likes me.

see MOM'S DAY next page

deva and mama christina at play, by deva age 6

from MOM'S DAY previous page

Geller: I never felt like David ever judged me in a moral way, certainly not about being lesbian. If I were challenged on hypocrisy, it was more, "Why do you get potato chips, and I don't?"

It's odd for me to hear you say you think you're a good parent. I agonize about that and always have. Part of that comes from my own background. My mom had a lot of self-doubt about her own parenting. She was also young when she started to parent—about 20 or so, in the 1960s—and went on to raise five kids. I think she projected her worries onto us because all my siblings manifest that worry.

Although I like the person that David is turning out to be, I do worry whether I am doing the right things—things like, "Is it too soon to let David go out in the evenings? Is he old enough to do this or that?"

I don't feel particularly judged from outside. The things they would judge me about —like being a lesbian—I'm very secure about.

Jaffer: Do you think your self-doubt might also be the result of messages in society about how it's the mother's fault if the child doesn't turn out "good"?

Geller: Sometimes, although I think every mother has trouble remembering that their children are other people *[laughter from the three moms,]* especially when they do stupid things. You can't help but think it reflects on you.

Saini: At the same time, all the talk shows and the news tend to reinforce the message that if the child does something wrong, it's the mom's fault.

Geller: Much more so than they blame the father, which I think is part of misogynist women-loathing. I must just internalize a lot of that, because objectively, I know I love my kids and that they're interesting people, so why the self-doubt?

Gray: When my kids were really small, I would spank them. At the time, I didn't know any better. Where I learned that from I have no idea. Lucky for them, I learned it wasn't a great thing to do and stopped doing it. I had a lot of guilt then, but then realized I didn't know any better.

Jaffer: It's like you don't get the support from society that you need to allow you to parent as well as you can, and then people turn around and blame you for being the "bad" parent.

Gray: I just moved out of my kids' space into my own apartment, and my friend was asking me, "What does it feel like?" I said, "Well, it's a relief." What I mean is it's a relief that I didn't screw [my kids] up. I think that's because I didn't have that positive parenting when I was growing up, and I learned from watching other women parent.

Saini: I get a lot from women who tell me what they like about what I'm doing. You do something you've always done and somebody says to you, "Wow, that was really great. What you did there was really excellent parenting." Really? Okay. I hear that from Fatima, for instance, and from my other friends.

Jaffer: If I didn't affirm your parenting, you wouldn't want me in your life. *[Laughter.]*

Saini: I think I do only keep people around me who affirm my parenting.

Geller: We call them Moments of Great Motherhood—MGMs—in our household. *[laughter from all moms].* You talk/teach a great moral lesson, just like on a sitcom where the kid gets it in the end, and you go, "Like, wow!"

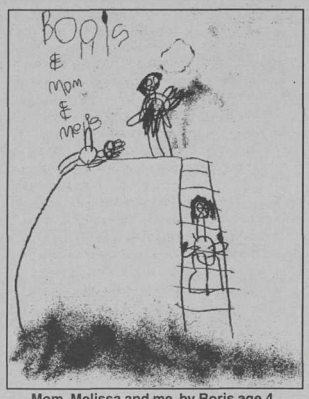
Saini: You should write those down in a book.

Geller: Maybe we should because I certainly seem to remember those Moments of Ungreat Motherhood more.

Jaffer: What role did your finances play in deciding to go ahead with having kids? Did you think, "Holy Smokes, what about shoes?"

Gray: I didn't think about it. When my kids were young, I moved into a co-op, so we never worried about rent to the point where we couldn't afford it. Their dad always paid child support. We weren't always comfortable, but not poor either.

Saini: When I left Rubina's father, I had about $70 in the bank, and I didn't even think about how I was going to manage. We had rough spots where we didn't know what to do from hereon, because I was self-employed, and had lost the business I had in partnership with my husband.



Mom, Melissa and me, by Boris age 4

Perhaps because I was young and naive, I didn't really think too much about how we were going to cope. I started working when Rubina was about eight months old, and worked really hard. I paid more for child care than in rent. I got child support from her dad, not because of his willingness to pay but because I went after him legally. It's a small amount but I believe it's her entitlement.

I grew up in a fairly middle-class way, so it was quite different never knowing how you were going to manage. Being a woman of colour made it especially hard to get jobs. It's been a mixed bag of rough spots and comfortable times.

Geller: I think there's a difference between money and class. I grew up in a white middle class suburban house with a mom and dad and I had the same middle-class expectations I think most kids had.

The year David was born, I distinctly remember my income tax return for the year was about $6,000. But even having almost no money, I was still a middle class kid and, if I needed to, I could always call my dad.

Initially, I didn't really make a decision to parent. I had had an abortion two years before I got pregnant with David and knew I would never go through that again. So it was almost like not having a choice.

It's different with Joey. We had to go down to the clinic and get out the Visa card. By that time, Tracey and I both had middle management jobs. We don't both have big student debts, we don't worry about where our next meal is coming from, and we can pay the bills. It's a very different circumstance. There were pressures when David was born that aren't there with Joey.

Money was more of an issue in our decision to have this third one, but we still have the same kind of middle class resources that I had 10 years ago.

Jaffer: Can we talk about the role race plays in bringing up kids? I mean you're all taking on stereotypes, both those of your own communities and of the mainstream white racist society.

Saini: Yeah. Rubina and my surnames are different, so when I cross the Canada-USA border, customs officers will say, "Well, aren't all you people supposed to have the same names?" or "Aren't you people supposed to have kids within marriages?" and stuff. There's been a lot of that sort of thing.

I think especially when we lived in a small town, there were a lot of stereotypes of us. Within the South Asian community, there were certain codes you had to live by. I made choices within that range of limited choices about who I was going to have as my peers and as my community.

Rubina is quite aware of what racism is because she is around a community of women who are talking about anti-racism and issues of sexuality. A while ago, she had some kid be really racist to her at school and she came to me and said, "Oh, I'm so sorry all that happened to you too." It's great we can talk about this, and that she knows there are people around her she can talk to about it. I don't want her thinking this kind of thing doesn't happen.

Gray: There are so many stereotypes around Native women. People are always surprised that I'm a good parent, and that my kids are such good kids. Kids in school used to say, "You're Native? I never knew you were Native?" People must have a stereotype of what a Native parent is like and I must not fit it.

At the same time, I've always said to the kids that, "You know, you're lucky to be in this house," and explained to them why a lot of Native families aren't doing really well, so just not letting them think it's normal. Then again, a lot of Native people I know are really good parents, but people don't see that. They only see what they want to on the streets.

Saini: But that comes from racism. You have to behave extra nice and extra proper to be okay, whereas if you fuck up in a small way, it reflects badly on your whole community.

Gray: Oh yeah, for sure.

Geller: David's father is Native, and Joey's donor is a white man. For me, the challenge is always to contextualize racism, so that racism is not just part of what one kid does to another kid but is part of the systemic structure of white privilege. I want to contextualize that with Joey even more because he will grow up to be a white man.

It's been a challenge to move away from David's community roots. In the city we grew up in, 30 to 40 per cent of the population was Aboriginal and many of them are part of David's extended family. When we lived there, David saw his dad's side of the family. When we moved here, we lost all that.

Jaffer: Could you talk about what supports you have found the most useful as women raising children?

Saini: A number of people in my life plan things in a way so I can bring my child. And they include her, they don't just see her as an extension of me. They see her in her own right and treat me as a person in my own right, which I sometimes forget I am. They keep reminding me of that by asking me some things and asking her some things.

People have also been good about how they give me criticism. They say, "When you did this, this wasn't great," and at the same time, given me some ideas about doing it differently. So it's not about implying, "You're a bad mother," it's about specific things that they thought were not okay. Not that that happens very often. *[Laughter.]*

Gray: ...since you're perfect. *[Laughter.]*

Saini: The people who gave me ideas and stuff were mostly not parents but they had stuff from their own childhoods about their mothers or fathers. That was always great.

Another thing that helps is just checking in when they see I'm losing it and stepping in to ask me what I need. And child minding would be great. I'm so glad Agnes *[the* Kinesis *editor]* volunteered to childmind so we could do this roundtable.

Gray: My mother died when I was 13, and eventually my sisters came to live with me. They were good at stepping in to do stuff with the kids and entertain them. They would rent videos to watch or play games. I didn't recognize that as support at the time.

I've also found support from watching other women, and learning from them.

Geller: There were times I've been so grateful when someone would come by and take David, and even now, when someone does that with Joseph. But most of the time, the support slips in, and you don't notice it, then a few months later you go, "Hey, that was good." There's the subtlety to it.

I've been lucky to be double parenting. That's the biggest support—Tracey. But we still need an outside structure. I was in hospital in February with this pregnancy. David is 12, he's old enough to take care of himself and of Joseph, but it wasn't fair to expect that of him. We had friends come by every day without being asked. Afterwards we realized that, even if these were extenuating circumstances where people step up to the plate, people do that other times too.

Jaffer: So how bad can it get? What's the hardest part to parenting?

Saini: The money part. There are some decisions I could have made differently, but all things come at a cost. I may want to go to school full-time but I can't just quit my job and do that without thinking what it's going to be like money-wise for us.

And my child has some standards around who I should have relationships with. *[Laughter.]* I've had relationships and friendships where she wasn't happy with the people, so I've had to either not go that way, or think, well, this can wait. It's not just your life anymore—you have to make decisions for that other person in your life.

Gray: I agree. *[Laughter.]* I didn't think about what was hard as I was going along, I just did it. I'm just finishing school now, but I didn't have aspirations about school before, so I didn't miss it. I think the hardest thing about parenting was that I had to grow as a person myself, especially when they were teenagers.

I think the hardest thing, but the best thing for me, is that I'm a way better person because of that—giving up that control and being humbled.

1999 Lambda Winner the bull-jean stories:

Get a copy for you *and* yer mama!

photo by K. Bradford

sharon bridgforth

by Nadine C. King

THE BULL-JEAN STORIES
by sharon bridgforth
RedBone Press, Austin, Texas, 1998

Some may call it poetry or historical fiction, but dear reader allow me to present a line or two so *the bull-jean stories* can speak for itself--*a collection of rhythms/kept-sounds/ body released variations of layers of syncopated memories from many times back.*

Split into two chapters with 13 stories in total, *the bull-jean stories* is a non-linear performance work in print. From start to finish the words bounce up from the black and white of the page to make colourful, dynamic sound-shapes in your mind.

The setting is the Black rural South and the time frame is the 1920s. Historical? Well, I think the characters are the lovers you know, the aunt-mommas you may be lucky to have right here in the present.

The author, sharon bridgforth, has made a complete cast of characters who are free to talk their talk and spread their broad, wide selves all over the pages and converse with the reader on a number of "thangs."

A favourite question of mine when asking someone to tell me about themselves is, "Who your people?" Well, bridgforth certainly introduces us to the folks that make community for our Black, butch lesbian hero, bull-jean. From the get-go, we learn that the kinds of women who raised bull-jean are real live wires—not the outside-your-mind kind. You think I'm kidding? Meet my favourite: Aunt Tilly.

"na/i shoot mafuckas/yessuh run through/ my yard crawlout./ shiit/ buttfullalead be fair warning to where my next aim jes might be...

thats tillecous loufina johnson...na/ole tilly can shoot a can off a squirrel's ass blindfolded/so i know she don't really want to hit them half-grown fools/hell she helped raise they mammas and daddys/ ...just lik to cuss up on the threat.../ til saturday night they gets to shortcutn from trouble/straight into ole tilly's barrel/

The daughter of such fierce women is our hero bull-jean who lets you know *.../ me/they call bull-jean i say/that's cause i works like somekinda ole dog trying to git a bone or two/they say it's cause i be sniffing after wy'myns/down-low/begging and thangs/ whatever.*

Yes, bull-jean is serious about her search for love. If you think she's all about begging, the scene where she makes an objection to a lover's marriage puts that notion straight. (No strange pun intended).

yessuh mr. reverend preacha man/ i take the right/ to make objection/ to this/ lie-befo God / SAFFIRA/ you my biscuits and gravy/ the amen at end of my prayers/ you my perfumed hallelujah/ sweet chariot stop and let me ride/you my southern comfort/ my gi-tar/ stroking/ all night/ cradling the scent of you/are my memories/ you are/all the wy'mn i have ever/ Lovved my / last-Life-Lovve / come back

She doesn't. Your loss saffira, honey. Girlfriends come and girlfriends go, but bull-jean's commitment to love won't quit.

From the porch to the streets and smoky nightclubs, *the bull-jean stories* is a lyrical journey of the central character with family and lovers across lifetimes.

Even variation in the Southern speech pattern is celebrated. Those of us from the Caribbean will be surprised to meet American cousins we never knew we had (until recent time), in the piece "bj and mina stay."

i from da swamp. my fo-matha/snap two man neck/run free ta swamp people/we long tim from here/da ship ova stop at island/trade fo-matha man fo wata fo fatha kill/oh six seven fin freedom too./since dat time we people go from island ta swamp be wid one da otha

Entwined with the laugh-lines, *the bull-jean stories* touches on some serious issues—cross-the-tracks racism, pressure of marriage on women, heart-ache and the truth of butch women having children. The most powerful story (for me) was "mama,"

which tells the truth
of lesbians who have been threatened with incarceration in the system—psych wards, jail, *et cetera*—if we did not give up our children or choice of family. The story is set in the '20s, but we know that this struggle continues today! The piece ends on a happy complete family circle note which some may say is wishful thinking—if that's the price for a good story of hope, then bill me!

Each story is an honour-ful reflection on family, Black lesbian life, loving in good and hard times. Their simplicity does not interfere with the poetic richness of the dialogue, characters and themes which are meant to be heard out loud.

I was lucky enough to get a taste of the CD recording of *the bull-jean stories*. Let me tell you, sharon bridgforth's voice calls the ear to come listen.

I say, book me a seat on the porch when the next set of stories come out...

Order the bull-jean stories *through your local independent bookstore if you can. For a copy of the CD, send US$16.19 (which includes shipping and handling) to RedBone Press. For information on sharon bridgforth's company, tours or workshops, visit her website at http://members.tripod.com/~rootwymn/*

Nadine C. King is a Femme Zami studying and sashaying in Vancouver.

REDBONE PRESS:
BLACK LESBIANS ON THE SHELVES, ONE BOOK AT A TIME

I first heard about RedBone Press when I came across *does your mama know?*, a Lambda award winning anthology of Black lesbian coming out stories. What was unusual about this anthology was that it presented a range of Black lesbian voices from different cultures. "Great!" I thought, filed RedBone Press in the back of my mind and hoped they'd make it to publish another book.

Lo and behold, I came across *the bull-jean stories*, RedBone's second book! I could not resist faxing off a letter of support to both sharon bridgforth, the book's author, and Lisa C. Moore, RedBone's publisher. Suddenly the fax machine rang back. Something said, "Pick it up!" It was Moore on the phone. We talked about many things in that call, so when I decided to review *the bull-jean stories* for *Kinesis*, I knew a spotlight on the press was a must as well.

Unfortunately, I was too busy to set up an interview with Mz RedBone herself, but her press kit was filled with information on her experience in the independent publishing world, and a step-by-step telling of how RedBone came into being. Seems it was quite natural really. Combine skills in accounting, publishing, a high regard for detail and the main ingredient: a commitment to publishing quality work by and for Black lesbians. Voilà, one small press rolling out of one woman's kitchen!

Of course, there was tons of advice and support along the way from other women, the two most recognized being Barbara Smith of Kitchen Table: Women of Colour Press and Makeda Silvera of Sister Vision Press.

Moore very deliberately directed all of her publicity efforts, beyond word of mouth, towards the non-mainstream media and developed a good rapport with the feminist/independent bookstore network to distribute the first run (3,000 copies) in 1997 of *does your mama know?* Much of the direct promotion and sales was done on an 18-city summer tour across the US. The first run sold out in eight months.

More exposure was gained by the two Lambdas—the annual lesbian and gay book awards—in the categories of "Lesbian Studies" and "Best Small Press Book," won June 1998. This has led to an additional 5,000 copies of *does your mama know?* being printed.

When the mega-chainstores such as Barnes & Noble and Border's requested books, Moore says she was hesitant to do business with them " ...because of how the chains are eating up the independents. But I also realized that not everyone has an independent where they live."

With a growing demand for its books, RedBone turned over its distribution to the LPC Group, which was recommended by Firebrand Press, a feminist press based in New York.

In an article about RedBone in the *Feminist Bookstore News*, Moore summed up her experience in the following quote: " What have I learned? That there is a market for Black lesbian writing, that a distributor does indeed help, that small print runs are good, that there's nothing like a well-publicized reading to sell books, that women's bookstores stick together..."

Currently, Moore and RedBone Press are planning a book on family and friends of Black lesbians and gays—*[see Bulletin Board page 18 for submissions information]*—promoting *the bull-jean stories* in print and on CD, and looking into marketing the Press in Academic circles.

Did I mention that Moore is a graduate student in the African Diaspora program at the University of Texas?

With four Lambda nominations for RedBone's publishing efforts since its birth in 1997, Moore simply states, "I'm very humbled by all the attention and awards... I'm just trying to publish the best quality work I can and get it out there."

Thank you Mz Redbone!

RedBone Press, PO Box 1805, Austin, Texas, 78767, USA; tel: (512) 498-4997 and *fax: (512) 451-0612.*
[Information gathered from Foresight *and* Feminist Bookstore News.*]*
- Nadine King -

The 30 Helens at the Firehall:

The H-Team

by Kelly Haydon

As the lights dimmed in Vancouver's Firehall Theatre, the audience was auditorially bombarded by the "humour" of Andrew Dice Clay, an American comedian well-known in the early 1990s for his women-hating drivel. Just when I thought it was time to permanently wax in my ear canals, in came The "H" Team—dressed in full hit-woman attire—to end all such misogyny.

What followed were 26 side splitting sketches by The 30 Helens, a very talented group of women comedic writers and performers.

In response to the lack of strong roles for women in the acting industry, Liisa Ingimundson brought all her "funny, cool, chick friends together and put on a show." From there, Girlparts was born. A year later, seven members of the group (Morgan Brayton, Farrell Spence, Brianna Mason, Madeline Kipling, Victoria Deschanel, Jennifer-Lee Koble and Ingimundson) broke off to form The 30 Helens. *[Haydon got a chance to talk to two of the 30 Helens. See page 16.]*

With great difficulty, I managed not to pee my pants during the Helens' first sketch, "It's Not Pee." I did, however, have tears streaming down my face as a pre-adolescent Lizzie (Morgan Brayton) shared her knowledge about the facts of (a woman's) life. The content was hilarious and Brayton's facial and body expressions sent the sketch even further up the warp factor scale of humour. Even her co-star Brianna Mason had a hard time not losing it.

Farrell Spence exhibited a considerable range of acting throughout the evening's program. She convincingly went from sultry singer in "FOAD," to five-year old hyper kid diving head first off the stage in "Helmet Girl."

While Mason began the evening a bit hesitantly, she hit her stride in "Heather and Paula," where she and Victoria Deschanel spoofed AC/DC head bangers. (The accuracy of their portrayal was confirmed by the three women I went with who grew up with "Heathers" and "Paulas.") Mason's rendition of a male pig in a bar was also outstanding. (I had flashbacks to the years I spent working in a bar in Ottawa. Yuck!)

In "Dance of the Dream Man," Deschanel was arresting. It is beyond me how a simple stroll across the stage could have an entire audience bent over laughing hysterically. I was in the middle of howling uncontrollably when the thought zipped through my head, "She's only walking across the stage." Then I started laughing again.

Another favourite sketch of mine was The 30 Helens' interpretative dance to the movie *The Titanic*. (I feel relieved that I now won't have to waste $8 to see the movie itself. The 30 Helens gave me enough of a synopsis to get me through until the sequel, or beyond.)

It is beyond me how a simple stroll across the stage could have an entire audience bent over laughing hysterically.

These are only a few of the highlights. Each member of the group is highly creative and their varying talents complement each other.

Given their awesome talents though, I was disappointed that the range of their content was quite limited. In my life, I am surrounded by awesome women writers, artists and thinkers—women who are wonderfully women-centered. This is what I am used to. So for me, the lack of women-centered material in an all-woman comedy troupe is glaringly apparent. Many of the sketches were constructed around the status quo male-female dynamic in our society.

For example, "Amateur Duo Night," featuring two "first-time" strippers in a nightclub, was funny but still revolved around the male gaze. Women stripping in a male strip club is not radical no matter how sharp the commentary on the situation. Are women's lives nothing more than our reactions to the male world?

None of the sketches went outside of—let alone questioned—the fundamental assumptions about women and men in our society that feminism constantly tries to challenge. Even the name, The 30 Helens, is taken from the male performance realm. Brayton explained that the group chose the name from a skit by Kids in the Hall, an all-male comedy ensemble which had a weekly show on CBC television. In their skit, Kids in the Hall were themselves spoofing a well-known consumer products company's commercial featuring "30 Helens."

I was also surprised by the lack of lesbian content in light of the fact that half the group is queer. Only one skit out of 27 had obvious dyke overtones. Weird.

One woman who attended the show with me queried, "With all their talent is that all they can come up with?" Indeed, going to a 30 Helens show is entertaining, but it is like a Twinkie. It tastes great but offers little nutritional value.

Kelly Haydon is still in search for more women-positive comedy troupes.

photo courtesy of 30 Helens

L-R clockwise: Farrell Spence, Morgan Brayton, Brianne Mason, Jennifer-Lee Koble (and baby), Victoria Deschanel, Liisa Ingimundson, Madeline Kipling

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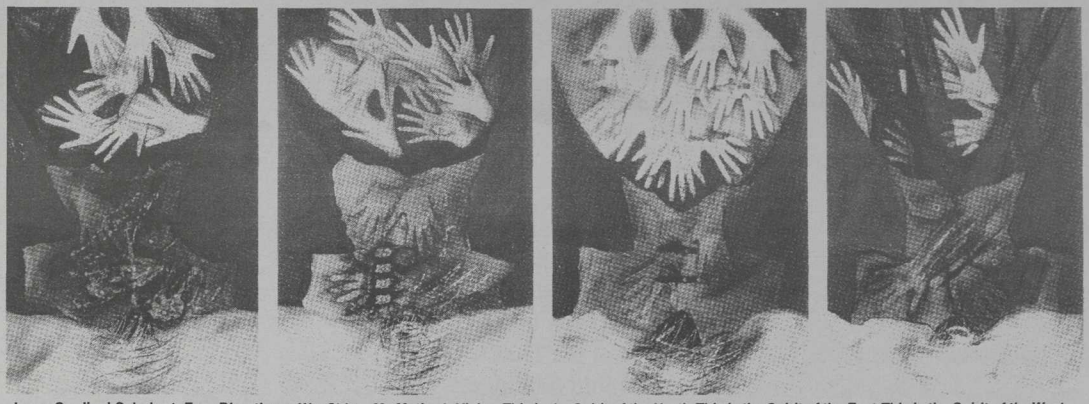
Joane Cardinal-Schubert: Two Decades *exhibit:*

Evoking familiar feelings



Joane Cardinal-Schubert, *Four Directions - War Shirts, My Mother's Vision, This is the Spirit of the North, This is the Spirit of the East, This is the Spirit of the West, This is the Spirit of the South,* 1986

by Michelle McGeough

JOANE CARDINAL-SCHUBERT: TWO DECADES
Surrey Art Gallery
until May 23rd

It all began simply enough, a conversation over coffee and apple pie. Did you see the article about Joanne Cardinal Schubert, the editor asks? She is doing a show at the Surrey Art Gallery. She knows my weaknesses, I say to myself, as the last crumb is washed down my throat with the last drop of coffee from my cup.

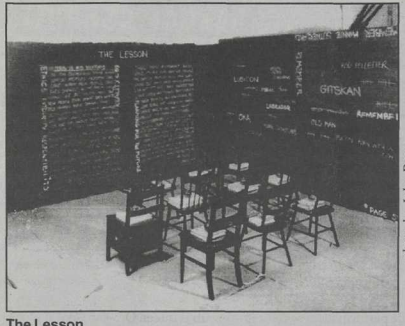


photo by John Dean

The Lesson

Are you going to go to the show? the editor continues. After I tell her that I attended Joanne Cardinal-Schubert's presentation at Emily Carr [Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver] during the First Nations Awareness Day two years ago, and that I admire both her and her work, I reply that I would like to actually see her work as I have only seen slides and pictures of it.

The editor looks at me, lowers her head a bit and says, "Well, if you are going would you consider doing a review for the newspaper?"

My response is slow as I consider the responsibility I feel about writing an article about the exhibition of someone I admire as an artist. I succumb.

My partner sitting beside me turns and says, "I would like to go too." Before not too long and after a few telephone conversations, the two of us quickly become four and baby. We are four women of colour, two of whom are lesbians, heading towards Surrey on a Saturday afternoon. I have heard about Surrey and wonder about the sanity of this journey for us. But the promise of what awaits us causes me to throw caution to the wind and overcome any of my misgivings.

The journey has become symbolic for me. My partner and I have had many discussions about our experiences of being women of colour. Our histories are different and our experiences are different. We talk and share with each other about what it means to be a woman of colour in this country, at this time in history.

I tell her stories of my mother's and grandmother's experiences. But, I want her to see how one person speaks of these things with more skill and eloquence than I ever could. It is this ability that lies at the foundation of my admiration of Cardinal-Schubert as both a person and as an artist.

Joane Cardinal-Schubert has always been a political activist. Her paintings, poetry and installations have always been strong and have never failed to evoke strong emotions from the viewer. I was first drawn to her work because I identify with her. She is of mixed heritage and from the Alberta plains. Our histories are similar, but she is from the south, the Kainaa people.

Walking into the Surrey Art Gallery, I felt both elation and dread. The gallery was awash in red, the walls filled with work that reflected two decades of an artist's seeing, feeling, experiencing.

How do I begin to relate to a reader what I saw and felt as I moved through this exhibition. I walked slowly, trying to take it all in—it was richer and more powerful than I had imagined it would be.

The show starts with works completed while Joane was a student at Art school. Reading the text accompanying this imagery, the viewer learns that she left art school when her work was compared to Gauguin. I see similarities in style. My admiration for her work intensifies as I think about a a young First Nations artist having the political awareness to understand how Gauguin's work objectified women of colour.

I understand why I have always been drawn to Cardinal-Schubert's work. It speaks of an awareness that is beyond ego and self. Even if the piece begins with the personal it always moves beyond its creator.

Standing among the desks in the installation, "The Lesson," I felt muted and small, a reflection of much of my own experience within the education system. Reading the comments written on the blackboard by others that had viewed the installation, I saw how it evoked similar feelings in them.

In Cardinal-Schubert's paintings, I see symbols and animals that are familiar to me—there are war shirts, not out of animal skin and pigment, but paper and paint speaking to the artist's vision of dreams, of protection and of the wars that are going on now around us and inside of us.

Her work is a reflection of her belief that "...We are grounded visionaries, children of the earth, on a pathway of concern not only to our generation but our children's and their children." What is so important about Cardinal-Schubert's work is that it speaks not only of a personal history but also of a collective history. It is this side of Canada's story that is rarely given the opportunity to be shared.

The retrospective show illustrates why Schubert's work is found in collections all over the world and why she is invited to lecture both nationally and internationally.

Joanne Cardinal-Schubert's work is not only grounded in the past but also in our future on this planet. I watched Kenji, a small baby who is just beginning to experience this world, as we walked through the retrospective. What struck me was his reaction to Cardinal-Schubert's work. It was a lesson for me about the power of art to communicate a message, not using a spoken language. I perceived Kenji understanding, participating and sharing this experience.

The Surrey Art Gallery is located at 13750-88 Ave, Surrey, BC. For gallery hours, call (604) 501-5581 or visit the gallery's website at: www.city.surrey.bc.ca/artgallery.

Michelle McGeough is usually a photographer but made an exception for Agnes and apple pie.

Two 30 Helens on the art of sketch comedy:

The three-pile system

Kelly Haydon had an opportunity to talk to two of the 30 Helens: Morgan Brayton and Liisa Ingimundson. [See review page 14.]

Kelly Haydon: How do you come up with your material? Do you write your sketches together or individually?

Morgan Brayton: Both. Everybody does things differently. We sometimes do brainstorming sessions although they seem to be falling by the wayside and more is happening in smaller groups. We still come to each other with ideas and say, "I want to do a sketch about this," or "I have this idea for a section of a sketch but I don't know what to do with it," or "I have this character," and so on. Then someone will say, "You know what would be funny? If you did this..." or whatever.

I prefer to write by myself; that works best for me. Some people write better together. I need someone there to hash it out with, but when it comes down to actually writing it, I take the notes away and do it. Brie and Liisa write really well together—they do "Fry Guys." Everybody has a part of the process they like to do by themselves [and a part] they like to do with other people. There aren't very many sketches written by all of us. That would be like a seven-year sketch in the making.

Liisa Ingimundson: It's kind of impossible because the skit has to have direction. One person will come up with the vision and then get input. If you've got seven different people saying [either], "Let's make the sketch go this way" or "No, let's make it go this way," [it's impossible.] Someone has to make the decision of which way the sketch will go. Unless for some crazy reason all seven of us see it the exact same way *[laughter.]*

Haydon: How do you decide what sketches will go in each show?

Ingimundson: We have a...

Brayton: ...very elaborate process.

Ingimundon: ...which we stole from *Monty Python*. It's the "three pile" system. First we have a script deadline, then we have a script reading where everybody pitches their sketches to the group in whatever way they want. Some will read it out loud; some will act it out. After we've pitched every sketch and Jennifer Lee has written them all on the board, we vote. We put them into three different piles: 100 percent, 75 percent, and zero percent. Because we're doing a monthly show at Jupiter (where 75% is new material), we cast two shows at a time. We take the 100 percent pile and break it in half and then we fill it up with the 75 percenters, which means they need a bit of tightening up. The zero percenters just means [the writer] needs to re-submit a whole new sketch. However, we could still like the idea.

For the Firehall, we did *The Best of 30 Helens*. We went through all the sketches we've ever written and voted for the strongest ones. We cast the whole show from the 100 percent pile.

Brayton: There's a lot of discussion that goes along with it.

Ingimundson: Oh yeah. We have huge discussions over whether a sketch is a 75 or a 100.

Haydon: It must be so hard to rate them. Right after the Firehall show, five of us went out and started writing down our comments. Everyone picked a different favourite one.

Ingimundson: Exactly. Sense of humour is totally individual. There'll be one I think is a 100 percent but Morgan will insist it's 75. When we vote, we have to reach a consensus. All seven of us have to agree it's a 100 percent, or we have to convince the person who's holding out. It's pretty rare that one person has hated something so much that they would block it.

Haydon: Do you ever get one that the group doesn't think is 100 percent but the audience loves? Or vice-versa?

Ingimundson: Definitely vice-versa. There's definitely ones we think are awesome and the audience doesn't love it. We stand behind it and say, "We still think it's a 100 percent."

There aren't very many sketches written by all of us. That would be like a seven-year sketch in the making.

Brayton: Every audience is different. For example, "Dance of the Dream Man"—Victoria's little *Twin Peaks* dance—we think is one of the most hilarious things on the planet. It's the strangest thing. [Sometimes the audience will react with] dead silence; sometimes people laugh hysterically. You can do a sketch one night and nothing. You can do it the next night, and people are rolling in the aisles. You just never can tell.

Haydon: How much time do you spend rehearsing?

Ingimundson: Every day.

Brayton: The whole group meets twice a week three to four hours a time for rehearsals and meetings. The production team meets at least once a week in addition to that, and then we all meet seperately for individual rehearsals outside those times.

Ingimundson: There's probably one, maybe two days a week we don't see each other. But there are many phone calls that happen on those two days.

Brayton: The monthly shows are good for us, as far as keeping us writing and performing. As an actor, going to auditions is a breeze now because I have to get up on stage not knowing my lines once a month.

Ingimundson: That's why the Firehall show was so successful. That's because those sketches are the ones we've done the most. We know exactly when to pause for laughs, and we know exactly when to hold, and push, and all that kind of stuff, just from exercising them.

Brayton: It's the opposite story at Jupiter because we're putting stuff on it's feet for the first time. For the most part, we're all thinking, "Let's hope this flies." We're always pushing ourselves, and we're building up a fan base just through them being able to find us somewhere once a month.

Ingimundson: We learn from the last show every time.

Brayton: And you can fail. We're a little hesitant to put brand new stuff on the stage at the Firehall or on the tape we're sending to *Just for Laughs*, but at Jupiter we're a little more willing to take risks because that's what it's all about. We've got no choice because we've got to write new stuff all the time.

Haydon: It's great you have that avenue. So what are you planning for the rest of your lives?

Brayton: My life has been irreparably changed by The 30 Helens, and I can't see beyond it right now. This is it for me. Everything in the future I see includes this group. So, more performing, more shows. And I'll tell you one thing, I know I won't go back to who I was before. I did some stuff this year television-wise, and before when that was the be-all and end-all. I would say, "I'm hoping for that *X-Files* audition." That's so irrelevant now. That is all about getting the bill collectors off my ass. Now we're so used to doing everything ourselves. We handle all aspects of our group and our careers. So for us not to have creative control... I'm not saying I'd turn down big film stuff, but it's not what I'm working towards anymore.

Ingimundson: Even if somebody offered me to be on their sketch comedy show, I wouldn't want to. I would want The 30 Helens to be on their sketch comedy show.

Haydon: What's next for The 30 Helens?

Brayton: May 15th, we're doing *Grrlapalooza* at the Cultch (the Vancouver East Cultural Centre.) Then we're doing the Victoria *Fringe Festival* August 26th through September 6th, and then we go straight to San Francisco from September 9th to 19th.

Haydon: Are there any new directions you're developing in your material? For example, I noticed in one sketch you make a reference to racism but you don't focus on it. Do you have plans to do more in that area?

Brayton: I don't think we ever have plans, period. [We write about] stuff that we feel strongly about or that we think is funny. We very rarely say, "OK, I'm going to write a sketch about this issue," mostly because then it ends up not so funny. It just so happens there are issues that are important to one person and they write something about it. I don't really think we have any agenda to write things, aside from the sketches always being from from women's perspective, and always in your face and pushing the envelope.

Ingimundson: We just write about what we find funny, and we happen to be political women. A lot of the stuff that we laugh at in our daily lives are political ironies. That's just the type of people we are. A lot of [our sketches] are feminist because that's what we have to deal with. If I was Black, I'm sure a lot more of my writing would be about that because I would be dealing with that. But, I don't deal with racism. I'm white. I'm middle class. It's not in my face. Who knows, my nephew is half Black now. Maybe that will be more of an issue in my life. Just like when you first come out and people say negative things and yell at you from their cars. All of a sudden you have to deal with an issue you never had to before. Maybe now something will be in my life that I'll have to see it more in front of me. But part of me sometimes goes, "Maybe we should be more aware. Maybe we should try and write from a voice that isn't just our own, so that we are being more politically correct." Then I have a fear that we won't be as funny because it will be forced, not natural. This is just who we are, and it might be pompous if we try and speak from a voice that isn't ours.

Brayton: That's the key; it's always about our perspective. There's a *Much Music* sketch with a band that sings, "Sky-Train Cop," and an interview with them. From my perspective, it is a comment on young white boys who take on mannerisms and language of Black rappers, and completely appropriate culture that is not relevant to them in any way whatsoever, going on and on about the oppression they experience. It's ridiculous and offensive to me. My perspective is the only place I can write from and the only place I feel I should write from. [Our material] comes out of what we think and the things that do make us want to say something.

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read this

Bulletin Board listings have a maximum of 50 words. Groups, organizations and individuals eligible for free space in the Bulletin Board must be, or have, non-profit objectives.

Other free notices will be items of general public interest and will appear at the discretion of *Kinesis*.

Classifieds are $8 (+$0.56 GST) for the first 50 words or portion thereof, $4 (+$0.28 GST) for each additional 25 words or portion thereof and must be prepaid.

Deadline for all submissions is the 18th of the month preceding publication. Note: *Kinesis* is published ten times a year. Jul/Aug and Dec/Jan are double issues.

All submissions should include a contact name and telephone number for any clarification that may be required.

Listings will not be accepted over the telephone.

***Kinesis* encourages readers to research the goods and services advertised in Bulletin Board. *Kinesis* cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or the safety and effectiveness of the services and products listed.**

Send submissions to *Kinesis*, #309-877 E. Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC, V6A 3Y1, fax: (604) 255-7508, or email: kinesis@web.net. For more information call (604) 255-5499.

INVOLVEMENT

WANNA GET INVOLVED?

With *Kinesis*? We want to get involved with you too. Help plan our next issue. All women interested in what goes into *Kinesis*—whether it's news, features or arts—are invited to our Story Meetings held on the **first Tuesday** of every month at 7pm at our office, 309-877 E. Hastings St. The next meetings are on **May 4** and **June 8.** For more information or if you can't make the meeting but still want to find out how to contribute to the content of *Kinesis*, give Agnes a call at (604) 255-5499. New and experienced writers welcome. Childcare and travel subsidies available.

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW!

Do you ever wonder how the pages of text in the newspaper you're holding get lined up so neatly? Want to know what the fastest way to get wax off your hands? How about all the cool things you can do with a scanner? Does thinking about the right dot pattern keep you up at night? Or do visions of rubylith enter into your dreams? If so, then you definitely need to come down and help put *Kinesis* together. Just drop by during our next production dates and help us design and lay out Canada's national feminist newspaper, and all your questions will be answered. We'll be in production for our **June 1999** issue from May 18-25. Come and join us. No experience is necessary. Training and support will be provided. If this notice intrigues you, call us at (604) 255-5499. Childcare and travel subsidies available.

FEMINIST FUNDRAISERS WANTED

VSW is seeking enthusiastic, energetic and creative women to join the Finance and Fundraising Committee. If you enjoy raising money for a great cause, organizing events, or just want to have fun, call Audrey at (604) 255-6554 today!

INVOLVEMENT

VSW IS LOOKING FOR YOU!

If you want to learn to do referral and peer counselling work, at VSW we are offering a great opportunity to women interested in volunteer work during the day. Come answer the phone lines, talk to women who drop in, and help connect them with the community resources they need. For more information call Shana at (604) 255-6554. Childcare and travel subsidies available.

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

Are you a volunteer at VSW or *Kinesis*? If yes, please feel free to make contributions to our new monthly "Volunteer Newsletter." The newsletter is for us—for all VSW/*Kinesis* volunteers—and will be a place for updates on committee work, gossip, recipes, things for sale/barter, a calendar of events, and whatever else volunteers want to put in. There's a box at #309-877 E. Hastings St just waiting for your submissions. If you want more info contact Amal Rana (*Kinesis* production coordinator) at 255-5499 or Rita Dhamoon of the VSW Volunteer Development Committee at (604) 255-6554.

KINESIS MARKETING GANG

Are you interested in being on the hottest new committee at VSW? Then check out the *Kinesis* Marketing Gang. We're looking for women who have experience or are interested in advertising and marketing. The Marketing Gang works as a collective to strategize on innovative ways to promote and raise the profile of *Kinesis*. The gang meets monthly. Training and support will be provided by *Kinesis* marketing coordinator Jenn Lo. Call her at (604) 255-5499.

EVENTS

MIDDLE EAST PEACE QUILT

You still have a chance to make a square expressing your vision of peace in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Elizabeth Shefrin is offering quilt square workshops on **Sat May 15** from 9:30am-12:30pm and **Mon May 31** from 6:30-9:30pm at the Roundhouse Community Centre. No sewing involved! All materials are provided, but bring sharp scissors. Workshops are free but call (604) 713-1800 to pre-register.

JOANE CARDINAL-SCHUBERT

Two Decades, a retrospective exhibit of works by Joane Cardinal-Schubert will be at the Surrey Art Gallery until **May 23**. One of Canada's foremost contemporary First Nations artists, Cardinal-Schubert's multimedia exhibit includes pieces from her 1970s drawing series, "The Great Canadiana Dream," which portrays the unsung First Nations heroes of Canada, particularly those from southern Alberta. The gallery is located in the Surrey Arts Centre, 13750-88th Ave, Surrey, BC. For gallery hours, call (604) 501-5566.

TAKING ACTION FORUM

Taking Action: Building Unity Across Colours and Cultures, a one-day education and mobilization forum, will be held on **Fri May 7** from 11am-4pm at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, 1607 E. Hastings St. The forum will feature panels and discussions including, "Immigration and Colonization: Common Bonds and Histories," and "Issues that Divide: Oppressions in Our Communities." The event is hosted by the Urban Youth Alliance, Redwire Magazine, and the Racism Free Neighbourhood Network. For childcare, registration and info call Angela at (604) 879-7104.

EVENTS

TRANS/GENDER CONFERENCE

TransAction is a group of transfolks, allies and friends. The group is organizing a conference for **Sun Jun 6** to talk about issues affecting the trans communities including: the law, identity, feminism, anti-racism, political strategy and, of course, the washrooms. Share your ideas, time, experience and skills. Everyone welcome. For more info call Beth at (604) 215-4585.

LAIWAN'S MACHINATIONS

Machinate: a projection in two movements by Laiwan will be exhibited at the Video In Studios, 1965 Main St, Vancouver until **May 15**. Using 16mm film, video, audio, sculptural assemblage and the internet, this installation poetically explores our consciousness of "body" in relation to analogue and digital mechanisms. Born in Harare, Zimbabwe of Chinese parents, Laiwan is an interdisciplinary artist and writer currently living in Vancouver. Laiwan's first video work, *Remotely in Touch*, (1998) signaled her departure from still to moving image and into researching the signification of digital media. *Machinate* will be her first installed collection of investigations into technologized consciousness, phenomena and presumptions. For more info call (604) 872-8337.

PIONEERS PAVING THE WAY

Pioneers Paving the Way: Celebrating Achievements in the Disability Community, a fundraiser for *Transition Magazine* will be held on **Mon May 17** from 6-9pm. The event is at the Top Gun Chinese Seafood Restaurant, 1316 W. Broadway, Vancouver. The evening will feature live entertainment, a silent auction, door prizes, a huge banquet, special guests and fun. Tickets are $45. Wheelchair accessible and sign language interpretation. For more info call the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities at (604) 875-0188. Anyone interested in being a sponsor for the event or donating raffle prizes or silent auction items please call.

KOSOVO BENEFIT CONCERT

World renowned Gospel, Jazz and Blues vocalist Dee Daniels will be giving a benefit concert for Kosovar Refugees on **Sun May 16** at the Ryerson United Church, W. 45th Ave, Vancouver. Also appearing will be Jane Trojan on piano and Jerry Wennes playing the clarinet. Doors open at 7:30pm. Admission by donation. Proceeds will be sent to refugees via The United Church World Development and Emergency Relief Fund. For more info call (604) 266-5377.

WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY CONFERENCE

The Sudbury Sexual Assault Crisis Centre is hosting a women's spirituality gathering on **May 18-19** in Sudbury, Ontario. The guest facilitator at the gathering, *Making it Real: Grounding Spirit in Action*, will be Starhawk. For more info, contact Violet Lanthier at violetl@vianet.on.ca.

MAYDAY SOUL SURVIVAL

Mayday Soul Survival, an evening of hip-hop, rap and more, will be held **Fri May 7** starting at 8pm at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, 1607 E. Hastings, Vancouver. Come out for an evening featuring Forth World Occupants, 3rd eye tribe, Cascade and profound. With MC Ebony, MC Black Rose, Alchemy and others. Brought to you by Redwire Magazine, Abstract Elements, Supreme Entertainment, and the Urban Youth Alliance. For more info call Redwire at (604) 602-7226. Tickets are $5 in advance, $8 at the door.

EVENTS

MICHIGAN WOMYN'S FEST

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival will be held **Aug 10-15**. The annual event attracts 5-8,000 women for a week-long event that includes 40 performances, 200 workshops, a Film Festival and Crafts Fair, and 650 secluded acres for camping. For the full week tickets are $260-310 sliding scale (before Jul 17) and $290-340 (after Jul 17). Includes all activities, meals, concerts, dances, workshops, film festival, camping and childcare. For more info call (616) 757ss-4766; fax (616) 757-3414; or write WWTMC, Box 22 Walhalla, MI, 49458. Or visit their website at: www.michfest.com.

HOWLETT & WYATT

On **Tues May 4** at 7:30pm, Women in Print bookstore will feature Debbie Howlett and Rachel Wyatt. Howlett will read from her new book *We Could Stay Here All Night*, a collection of 12 linked stories in which Diane Wilkinson quietly chooses sides in her own domestic battles. Rachel Wyatt will read from *Mona Lisa Smiled a Little*, which carries on with Almeida from her previous book of short stories, *The Day Marlene Dietrich Died*. Women in Print is located at 3566 W. 4th Ave in Vancouver. Admission is free. For more info call (604) 732-4128.

DESH PARDESH

The 10th annual *Desh Pardesh* festival celebrating South Asian culture, politics and arts will be held in Toronto from **June 9-13**. For more information or if you are interested in volunteering contact Amie at 401 Richmond St. West, Suite 450, Toronto, ON, M5V 3A8; tel: (416) 340-0485 or fax: (416) 340-1418. Or check out Desh's website at http://home.ican.net/desh.

POPULAR EDUCATION

Vancouver Status of Women is holding its popular education program "Gaining my Voice, Taking our Strength" for five evenings starting in **June**. Issues that will be addressed are determined by the participants. Among the goals are identifying skills, enhancing self-esteem, recognizing our common struggles, and taking collective action. The program is free. Preference will be given to women living on limited income. The venue is partially accessible to women with disabilities. Childcare and transportation subsidies are available. Space is limited. To register call Ema at (604) 255-6554.

SINGLE MOTHER'S DAY IN THE PARK

The Vancouver Status of Women and the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre are hosting the 9th annual Single Mother's Day Celebration on Sunday May 9th. Single moms and their children are invited to come and enjoy an afternoon full of entertainment and fun. There will be wilderness walks for children, refreshments, performances, and relaxing time in the countryside. This event will take place from 1:00pm to 5:00pm at a park near Vancouver. Transportation will be provided. The event is free for single moms and their kids, however it is necessary to register in advance at VSW (255-6554) or the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre (681-8480).

BULLETIN BOARD

EVENTS

SCWIST

The Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology will hold its Annual General Meeting on **Thurs May 20** at the YWCA. Anyone interested in attending or becoming a volunteer for SCWIST and joining the Board, please contact Nikki Skuce at the Resource Centre at (604) 895-5814.

POWER OF UNITY

Power of Unity: A Gathering of Grassroots Resistance will be held in Victoria, BC **May 12-16**. This gathering is organized by a network of activists from different communities, dedicated to radical social change, an opportunity to network, reclaim the streets, build coalitions, realize common goals, have fun and celebrate community. The focus will be on art, education, and action. There will be a huge range of workshops and forums in the daytime, and films, music, performances and more in the evening. For more info call (604) 682-3269 ext. 9035, or e-mail powerofunityt@tao.ca.

CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses is hosting an *International Conference on Children Exposed to Domestic Violence* in Vancouver **Oct 27-29.** The focus of the conference is on integrating research, policy, and practice. Among the conference presenters will be Helen Dempster of the Society and local counsellor Val Oglov, with other presenters from across Canada and the US. To register, or for more info, call (604) 669-6943 or email.hdempst @istar.ca.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WORKSHOP

The Japanese Canadian Citizens Association's Human Rights Committee is holding a bilingual (English and Japanese) information workshop on domestic violence in Vancouver **Sat May 8**, 9:30am-4pm at the JCAA Centre at 511 E. Broadway. The fee is $10 including lunch. For pre-registration, call Mariko at (604) 451-4122, David at (604) 871-9472 or Judy at (604) 876-9858.

GAIL SCOTT

Gail Scott will read from her most recent novel, *My Paris*, on **Tues May 11** at 7:30pm at Women in Print, 3566 W. 4th Ave, Vancouver. *My Paris* is a hypnotic, evocative novel about a woman who falls obsessively and fatefully in love with the city of Paris—its sights and sounds, and its contradictions. Admission is free. For more info, call (604) 732-4128.

DOGLESS DYKE CAMPOUT

This year's May Longweekend Campout, organized by Queer Art Guild in Victoria, will take place **May 21 - 24** at Ruckle Park. Only half as many sites as prior years due to changes at the park. The cost is $12 per person before May 15, and $15 after May 15. Children are free. Space is limited. Sliding scale and subsidized ferry may be available. To pre-register or for info call (250) 920-0275.

BREAST SELF-EXAM

The North Shore Women's Centre will be hosting a workshop on breast cancer, "Much More Than a Breast Self-exam," on **Fri May 21** from 10:30am-12:30pm. A representative from the Canadian Breast Cancer Society will be presenting on many issues relating to breast cancer, such as "How common is breast cancer," "What causes breast cancer," and "How does breast cancer spread." A doctor will be available to direct questions and conduct private breast exams. The workshop will be held at the Women's Centre at 944 West 16th St, North Vancouver. For info call (604) 984-6009.

EVENTS

FEMINIST NETWORKING GROUP

The Lower Mainland Feminist Networking Group invites you to a discussion session, "Abortion issues: access in BC and current struggles and ways of supporting our abortion rights," **Wed May 19**, 7-9pm at Vancouver Status of Women, 309-877 E. Hastings St. Skye Stuart of the Pro-Choice Action Network will be making a presentation. For more info please call Ema at (604) 255-6554.

GAY MUSLIMS CONFERENCE

Al-Fatiha Foundation, an international organization dedicated to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (LGBTQ) Muslims, will host its first North American Conference from **May 28-31** at the New York University in New York City. The conference will feature workshops, panel discussions, regional US and Canadian meetings, and a reception with SALGA (South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association) and GLAS (Gay and Lesbian Arab Society). For more info contact the Al-Fatiha Foundation, Inc, PO Box 300, Astor Station, Boston, MA, 02123; tel: (617) 685-4175; email: gaymuslims@yahoo.com; website: www.al-fatiha.org.

MAKING ART WITH WORDS

Betsy Warland will facilitate a workshop on "Making Art with Words" at the Surrey Art Gallery on **Sat May 15**. Warland trained as a visual artist and is an art catalogue editor, writer and reviewer. She has published nine books of prose and poetry and has taught writing-based workshops across Canada for 18 years. For this workshop, Warland will discuss: What makes a piece of art require words as material? How does an artist determine which words, whose words and how many words are most effective? And, what are some of the visual possibilities of rendering words? The cost of the workshop is $25. The gallery is located at 13750-88th Ave, Surrey, BC. For more information call (604) 501-5100.

CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

This year's *Vancouver International Children's Festival* will take place from **May 31-June 6** at Vanier Park, 1100 Chestnut Street. Among the artists performing this year are Heather Bishop tickling the funny bone with her fun and quirky stories and sing-along songs, and Theatre Kazenoko presenting enchanting stories, games and songs. For more info visit the festival's website at: www.youngarts.ca, or call (604) 708-5655.

MENOPAUSE

Marion Smith will talk about menopause from her personal experience on **Sat Jun 5** from 11am-1pm. She will also present info she gathered in creating the new and improved *Menopause Kit*, now available. The talk will take place at the Women's Health Information Centre, 219-1675 West 8th Ave, Vancouver. For info leave a message for Tamara Flick-Parker at (604) 736-4234.

MISSING WOMEN MEMORIAL

A memorial will be held on **Wed May 12** starting at 2:00pm at the First United Church, 320 East Hastings St, (at Gore) to remember women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside community who are missing. There will be a march to Crab Park (at the north end of Main St) for a gathering and bench dedication. Refreshments will follow. The venues are wheelchair accessible, and rides are available from the church to the park for seniors and people with disabilities. For more info call Maggie deVries at (604) 669-9047, or visit their website at www.missingpeople.net.

EVENTS

LEGIT CELEBRATION

Celebrate the 7th anniversary of Vancouver's own Lesbian and Gay Immigration Task Force, **May 29.** Featuring a showing of Muckup Productions' *Borders Across The Heart*, a silent auction (great weekends away), and guest speaker Svend Robinson. Light refreshments, cash bar. Come out and learn, support LEGIT and have lots of fun. BCIT Downtown, 555 Seymour St, doors open at 7pm. Entry by donation ($5-$50), tickets available from Little Sisters (limited tickets available at the door).

GROUPS

ENTREPRENEURS WITH DISABILITIES

The first meeting of a recently formed group for women entrepreneurs with disabilities will be held on **Sat May 8** at 10:30am at 456 W. Broadway. Topics to be discussed include advantages of self-employment, future direction of the group, community resources, workshop training, networking, cooperative office space and business ventures.Women interested in attending should pre-register by contacting Shelley Hourston at (604) 623-2313, fax 730-9608 or e-mail shourst@istar.ca.

SATRANG

If you are into drama, theatre sports, etc. and feel strongly about issues affecting South Asian women, come and check out the South Asian Theatre and Networking Group. Satrang is about enthusiasm and having fun with your creativity in a positive scene. Meetings are every **Monday** from 3:30 to 5:00pm at the South Asian Women's Centre at 8163 Main Street, Vancouver. For more info call Anu at (604) 592-0013 or Sonia at (604) 325-6637.

CUSTODY AND ACCESS SUPPORT

Battered Women's Support Services in Vancouver offers a free once a week drop-in support group to share information, problem solve, strategize and provide support on custody issues for women who are involved in custody and access issues as a result of separating from an abusive relationship. Call (604) 687-1867 for more info.

MENOPAUSE AWARENESS GROUP

The Surrey Women's Centre is sponsoring a Menopause Awareness Group which meets the **4th Monday** of each month for informal discussions around menopause issues. The group starts at 7:30pm and will be held at the centre. For location or more info call Janet or Sharon at (604) 589-1868.

GROUPS

BUILDING BLOCKS

Building Blocks Vancouver offers information and support for Spanish-speaking, Vietnamese and Aboriginal women living in the Grandview Woodland area expecting their first baby or with newborns under three-months old. The program has a great team of Home Visitors to assist women. For more info call Mosaic at (604) 254-9626 or the Vancouver Aboriginal Family and Child Services at (604) 251-4844, local 311.

WOMEN ABUSE SUPPORT GROUP

A support group in Vancouver for women abused by women is available for lesbians, dykes and bisexual women through Battered Women's Support Services. Emotional support, legal information and advocacy, safety planning, and referrals are offered. The group is free and confidential and onsite childcare is available. For more info call Sarah or Stacia at (604) 687-1867.

GODDESS ART SHOW

Calling all Goddess Artists. If you are interested in being involved either as an organizer or participating artist, or know someone who might be, in a huge show of Goddess Art for the year 2000. The plan is to organize a major show in Vancouver, combined with multiple bus tours of 3-5 days throughout different parts of BC. For more info contact Mary Billy, Box 2047, Squamish BC, V0N 3G0; tel: (604) 892-5723; or email: mbilly@sea-to-sky.net. Donations to help with postage and phone calls are appreciated.

BWSS DROP-IN GROUPS

Battered Women's Support Services in Vancouver is offering support groups for women who are in or who have been in an abusive relationship. Women can drop-in to just one session or come to as many as they like. Offered two times a week. In these groups, women meet to talk about issues related to abuse and healing that are relevant to them. Pre-registration is not needed. For more info call (604) 687-1867.

COMPULSIVE EATING SUPPORT

A drop-in support group for women with issues of compulsive eating is held twice a month at the Eating Disorder Resource Centre of BC, St. Paul's Hospital, Room 2C-213, 1081 Burrard St., Vancouver. Drop-in times are 7:30pm to 9pm every **1st and 3rd Wednesday** of the month. Facilitated by Colleen Hyland and Cynthia Johnston. For more info call (604) 631-5313.

The Ruth Wynn Woodward Chair in Women's Studies
and the
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present

Summer Institute 1999
TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN:
THE UGLY FACE OF GLOBALIZATION
with Farida Akhter
acclaimed activist for women's rights in Bangladesh

June 8-11, 9:30 a.m. - 1.30 p.m.
Harbour Centre Campus
515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver

Registration Fee: $200
SFU Students: $100

for further information, call 291-3333, or visit our website http://sfu.ca/womens-studies/

BULLETIN BOARD

GROUPS

RAPE RELIEF VOLUNTEERS

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter needs women who are interested in volunteering for their 24-hour crisis line and transition house for women and children. Volunteer training sessions are held **Tuesday** evenings. For more info and a training interview call (604) 872-8212.

MIDDLE EAST DISCUSSION GROUP

The Vancouver Middle East Discussion Group meets once a month to discuss issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The group's focus is to be part of the struggle for equality and freedom in the Middle East. Some issues of discussion include Zionist exploitation of Nazi genocide, and settler colonialism in Palestine and North America. In the coming months, the group hopes to discuss the experiences of women in the Middle East, different types of Palestinian feminism, and the role of the United States in the region. To participate or for more information, call (604) 253-4047.

SHAKTI

Shakti (meaning "strength") is a self-help group in Vancouver for South Asian women who have experienced the psychiatric system. The group meets every **1st and 3rd Saturday** of the month 1-3pm at South Vancouver Neighbourhood House, 6470 Victoria Dr. Join the group for outings, discoveries, peer support and relaxing massage. Participation is free. For more info call Helen (604) 733-5570 (for English) or (604) 682-3269 box 8144 (for Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu). Sponsored by the Vancouver/Richmond Mental Health Network.

SUBMISSIONS

HEALTH NETWORK

The Canadian Women's Health Network invites submissions for its quarterly newsletter, *Network*. If you'd like to contribute or want to suggest a topic we should cover, please contact the editor at news@cwhn.ca. Or contact her at CWHN Network, 203-419 Graham Ave, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 0M3, call (204) 942-5500; or visit their CWHN website at www.cwhn.ca.

PRIDE IN ART

The Pride in Art Society in Vancouver invites submissions of art and short stories for this year's queer art exhibition, which will take place from Jul 29-Aug 15 at the Roundhouse Community Centre, 181 Roundhouse Mews. Submissions will be accepted from **May 29-Jun 6**. Send entries to Pride Art Exhibition 1999, c/o Robert L. Hong, 103-1065 Burnaby St, Vancouver, BC, V6E 1N9. For more info contact by email: robbieh@direct.ca or tel: (604) 683-3884.

TALES OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

Anvil Press Publishers wants your real-life stories (3,000 words max) about heading out, heading back, and everything that happened in between—whether the trip was across the country or just across town. Selected submissions will be published in the anthology *Exact Fare Only: Good, Bad and Ugly Rides on Public Transit*. Publication date is Sept 2000. Payment will be an honorarium plus complimentary copies of the anthology. Only submissions accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope will be returned. Email entries will not be considered. Send submissions to: *Exact Fare Only*, Anvil Press Publishers, 204A-175 E. Broadway, Vancouver, BC, V5T 1W2. For more info call (604) 876-8710. Deadline is **Dec 1**.

SUBMISSIONS

BLACK LESBIANS & FAMILY

Lamba award winner Redbone Press is seeking interviews with friends and family of lesbians and gays for their take on having a lesbian and/or gay man in their life. Redbone hopes to collect stories reflecting the full range of emotions and experiences (the good and not so good). For more information contact Lisa Moore at Redbone Press, PO Box 1805, Austin, Texas, 78767; tel: (512) 498-4997; fax: (512) 451-0612.

ART SHOW SPACE

The Vancouver Women's Health Collective has opened its space to women artists. Shows will run for 4-6 weeks under contract guidelines. The Collective will host an opening, and provide some advertising as well as hanging materials. For details, leave a message for Christine Campbell or Tamara Flick-Parker at (604) 736-4234.

API WIMMIN AND GIRLS

Are you a wimmin or girl of full, mixed or partial Asian or Pacific Islander origin? Have you always wanted to see your work—be it poetry, art, recipes, rants, fiction or non-fiction—in print? Fire Moon! Asian and Pacific Islander Wimmin's Alliance, wants to print your stuff for its zine. All submissions can be handed into the Simon Fraser University Women's Centre, c/o Janet. Submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis. For more info call (604) 291-3670 or email: boun@sfu.ca.

WORK & COMPUTERIZATION

This is a first call for papers to be presented at the 7th International Federation of Information Processing (IFIP) Conference on "Women, Work and Computerization." The conference will be held in Vancouver **Jun 8-11, 2000**. For further info call Ellen Balka, School of Communication, SFU by email: ebalka@sfu.ca.

WOMEN AND WELLNESS

Submissions for presentations at the 4th *BC Conference on Aboriginal Women and Wellness*, taking place Jan 8-11, 2000 in Vancouver, are currently being accepted. *The Legacies We Leave Our Children* is a conference for indigenous women, health care providers, researchers, community health planners, Native leaders, Elders and youth. The focus of the conference is on traditional ways of birthing, parenting, health, language, dance, value system, plant medicines, storytelling, governance, cultural and political movements, oral traditions and spirituality. Send submissions to Continuing Education in the Health Sciences, The University of British Columbia, Room 105-2194 Health Sciences Mall, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z3. For more info contact Elaine Liau at (604) 822-2626 or by email at: elaine@cehs.ubc.ca. Deadline for submissions is **Jun 1.**

BISEXUAL CONFERENCE

The BC Bisexual Network (BiNET) is seeking workshop submissions for its 4th annual conference to be held **Sept 11-12** at a location to be announced. Conference organizers are interested in a variety of subject matter exploring experiences and identities of those in and "around" the bisexual community. The official language is English but workshops in other languages are welcome. Send submissions to BiNet BC, PO Box 53515, 984 W. Broadway, Vancouver, BC, V5Z 1K0. For more info email binet@hotmail.com or call (604) 875-6336. Deadline is **Jun 30**.

CURAGGIA: WRITINGS BY WOMEN OF ITALIAN DESCENT

The first Canadian collection of writings by women of Italian descent will be launched in Vancouver at the Public Library Central Branch 350 West Georgia St, on Saturday May 15 at 7:30pm. *Curaggia*, a dynamic collection of multimedia work, features the creativity of more than 50 women writers. Edited by Nzula Angelina Ciatu, Domenica Dileo and Gabriella Micallef, *Curaggia* provides a forum for critical discourse about location and identity within Italian cultures. Examining the roles of religion, language, class, race, gender, ability and sexuality, *Curaggia* celebrates the rich diversity of Italian women's lives and documents how Italian women are transforming their communities. Following a tradition of preseverance forged by mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters, *Curaggia's* reflections launch the processes of shedding myth, stereotype, and distortion of self and other; and they move toward exploring dreams and building a stronger coalition politic. The Vancouver launch will feature readings by *Curaggia's* three editors as well as Francesca Gesualdi and Anna Nobile. The launch is sponsored by Women's Press, the anthology's publisher, and the Italian Cultural Centre in Vancouver. Admission is free. For more information about the launch, contact the library's events line at (604) 331-3602.

CLASSIFIEDS

ROOMMATE WANTED

Hey there women! I need you and you may need me! I'm looking for a roommate for either June or July 1st. I live in a sunny breezy top floor, two-bedroom suite in an East Vancouver co-op close to the Drive. Underground parking and laundry facilities on site. I am looking for a non-smoker, gay-friendly, tidy, responsible, easygoing woman to share my plant-iful apartment. No pets please, I'm allergic. You would pay $348 per month plus share deposit. Call me, Lisa, at (604) 253-1827.

WOMEN'S SELF-DEFENSE

Women Educating in Self-defense Training (WEST) teaches Wenlido. In Basic classes, you learn how to make the most of mental, physical and verbal skills to get away from assault situations. Continuing training builds on basic techniques to improve physical and mental strength. By women, for women. For info, call 876-6390.

CITYVIEW CO-OP

Cityview Housing Co-op is accepting applications for its waitlist for one, two and three bedroom suites ($565, $696, $795 per month and refundable share purchase). Carpets, blinds, appliances, parking and laundry room. Children and small pets welcome. Participation required. Please send a business size SASE to Membership Committee, Cityview Housing Co-op, 108-1885 E. Pender St, Vancouver, BC, V5L 1W6.

CLASSIFIEDS

GAIA ADVENTURES

GAIA (Mother Earth) Adventures presents Outdoor Adventures for Women. Hike Squamish Valley High Falls Creek on **Sat May 15** and discover exciting trails leading up to spectacular views of the falls and Coast Mountains. Hike easy but beautiful nature hikes in Lynn Valley **Sat May 22** or Squamish Estuary **Sun June 27** with our experienced guides. You can also discover the adventure of rock climbing with us on **Sat June 26** (no experience required) or Backpack Vancouver Island's Carmanah Pacific old growth forest in early July. Call 875-0066 today or check out our website at www.vancouver-bc.com/Gaia

OCEANFRONT CABIN

Charming, secluded, oceanfront cabin, Roberts Creek, Sunshine Coast. Two bedrooms, full bath, kitchen with all amenities. Relax in picturesque setting. Ideal for cycling, hiking, swimming, kayaking. Children welcome. Friendly, trained outdoor felines OK. Smoke free indoors. Weekly $350. Group retreat rates. Weekend rates. Available from May 99. (250) 352-3609 or hgh@netidea.com

SPINSTERVALE

Work exchanger(s) wanted at Spinstervale, on Vancouver Island. Three hours a day for cabin and food. Opportunity exists in salad business for local farmer's market. Apprentice also needed to care for goats. Or, rent cosy cabins for $7.50 night/person. Contact Box 429, Coombs, BC. V0R 1M0; call (250) 248-8809 or e-mail: sunshine@macn.bc.ca

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