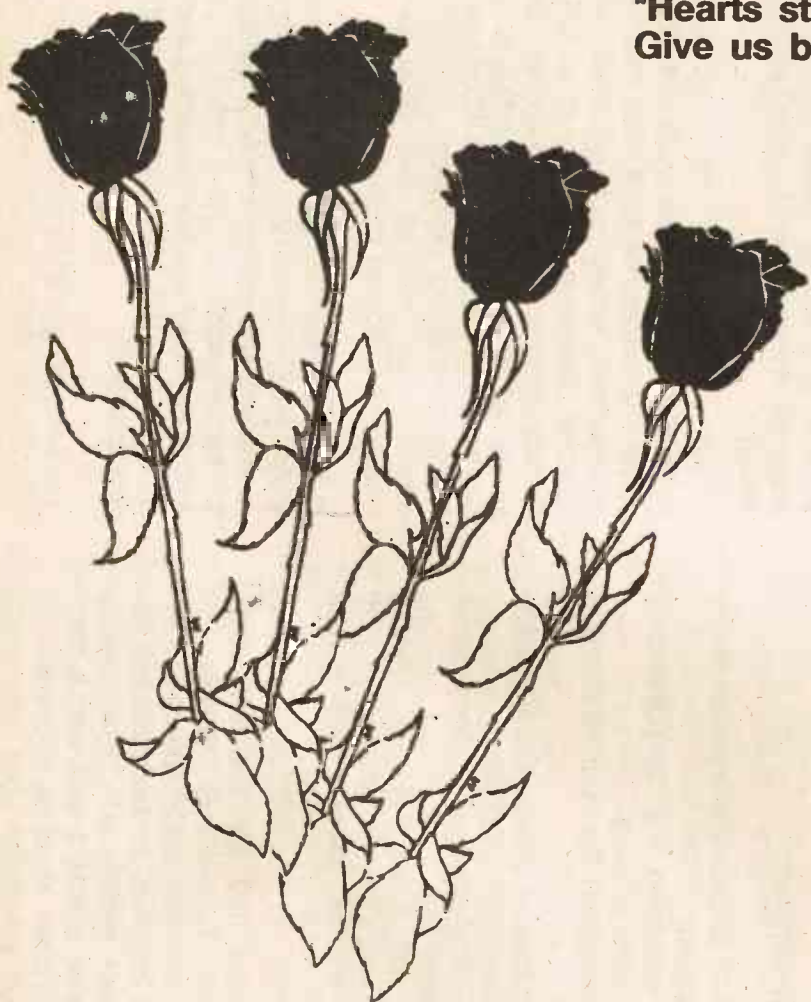


CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 1992

"Hearts starve as well as bodies
Give us bread, but give us roses, too."



\$2.00



**MARCH 1992
VOLUME 14 No 1
THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO**

.....TWO STEPS BACK

Women are expendable. This is the message of the federal Conservative government.

In the past weeks we have had a budget speech, and a series of announcements and proposals that will have a dramatic, negative impact on women. These measures will ensure a reversal of the minute progress that women have made in our quest for economic and social equality.

The federal government:

- *plans to abolish the universal family allowance program
- *has scrapped the long-promised national child care strategy
- *has cancelled the court challenges program
- *plans drastic cuts to the Canadian Job Strategy (training) program
- *has eliminated its cooperative housing program
- *will not obey Human Rights Commission orders for retroactive pay equity adjustments for its lowest paid female employees.

The government has also made an ugly intrusion into Canadians' privacy by declaring the "common law" relationships will be treated as "married" for tax purposes (ie. a single parent mother will be financially penalized if she shares a roof with a man. It's only a few years since we succeeded in stopping the provincial and municipal governments snopping into FBA recipients bedrooms - now the feds will do it.)

The interconnectedness of all these measures must be viewed as a strategy to enforce women's dependence on men, and to ensure an accelerated feminization of poverty.

A rationale provided for eliminating universal family allowances is that the dollars thus saved, along with the child tax credit, will be directed into a new child benefit package "targeted" for disadvantaged families. While reform of the family benefits system is long overdue, the heralding of this announced reform as a move to eliminate child poverty, and a fairer system is seriously deceptive. While some low-income families will receive increased benefits, anti-poverty advocates make it clear that the program will do little to address child poverty. The program is also discriminatory - it gives the additional benefits to working families - thus further ghettoizing women and children on family benefits who will receive no more than at present. At the same time as the government penalizes single mothers who are not in the paid labour force, it further restricts these women's ability to seek employment by refusing to address the day care crisis.

But it is the issue of universality that's the most troubling and has the most wide-ranging consequences. Scrapping universal family allowances sets us back almost fifty years. When the program was introduced in 1945, it gave recognition of a societal responsibility to Canadian families. By directing the family allowances to mothers, it also recognized (however modestly) the importance of a woman's mothering role. It must also be remembered that for thousands of women the family allowance is the only disposable income they will ever see until they turn 65 and receive old age security. (Government and malestream media palaver about high income families

not requiring family allowance appear to operate on the assumption that family income is shared within marriage. They must be reminded that no such law exists in Canada. Family law reform should precede any tampering with family allowance universality.

Abandonment of universality has long been an (hidden) agenda of the Tories. Failure to protect the universality of family allowances will be a stepping stone to eliminating universal medicare and universal old age security.

Following quickly on the heels of the budget came the announcement that the federal government would not proceed with a national child care strategy. In an ultimate display of crassness, Health Minister Benoit Bouchard announced the day care plan was dead, and instead dollars would be spent on "a big advertising campaign" against child abuse - as well as the child poverty measures indicated in the budget.

Does the Health Minister not realize that the child care movement, the anti-violence movement and anti-poverty advocates share the same goals? And that we will not be dissuaded from our advocacy by this attempt to pit us against one another?

The scrapping of the national child care plan has much more to do with the current constitution debate than it does with federal funding plans, as development of national standards for programs (which would benefit all Canadians) does not mesh with the Tories desire for devolution of responsibility to the provinces.

In contrast to the government's continued institutional woman-battering, the Supreme Court has again provided a ray of hope for women with its February 27, 1992 ruling on pornography (see p. 15). However, this is a classic case of one step forward...two steps back, as the women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) - an intervenor in the case - is one of the groups affected by the elimination of the Court Challenges Program funding. The Court Challenges Program, which was initiated several years ago to help disadvantaged groups...women, minorities, disabled, etc..has financed groups in test cases and legal challenges. Cancelling this innovative and important program will silence the voices of poor people. Critics of the cuts believe that the program "offended the powerful", thus the cuts should be seen for their political implications, as the financial savings realized are minimal.

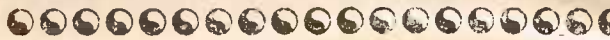
In addition to the day care dilemma, women's entry into the paid work force is further restricted by funding cuts to the Canadian Job Strategy program. This program, which provides training for unemployed workers not on UIC has been of particular help to women, immigrants and young people. It is estimated that up to 10,000 people could be affected.

Low-paid women in the federal public service have been waiting for pay equity adjustments since 1984. The Tories have decided that they will make no further payments owing for the period before November 1990. Further, they will take "legislative action" to overrule any decision of the Canadian Human Rights Commission tribunal dealing with this issue. The Public Service Alliance of Canada estimates that

20,000 nurses, clerks and secretaries are owed \$1 billion. So much for the federal government's rhetoric about equality.

Women and women's groups have suffered disproportionately from federal budget restraints since the Tories took office. But somehow, we must find the energy to mobilize against this latest outrage.

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MORE CHEERS FOR DECADE.....

Since the last Northern Woman Journal issue when we featured Decade's herstory, Decade Council has organized two significant - amazing - events. The **Women Uniting for Change Conference** held in November was an exciting energizing consciousness raising weekend for the 300 plus women who participated. Inspiring speeches, informative and healing workshops, and an action-packed resolutions session empowered women to renew our efforts for economic, social and political change. This Journal issue features excerpts from keynote addresses given by Glenda Simms and Lorraine Sinclair, as well as Teresa Trainer's study that was reported at the Immigrant and Visible Minority Women's Workshop.

The final conference session provided over 40 action resolutions covering economic and political concerns including health, education, housing, transportation, violence issues, child care, safety, Native issues, concerns of women with disabilities, sexism, racism, homophobia, gender equality, the justice system, taxation, and UIC. The most significant recommendation has already been achieved with the holding of the **Ontario Cabinet Forum** on February 24 which provided the opportunity for Northwestern Ontario women to directly discuss our issues with Cabinet Ministers and their senior political and bureaucratic staff. (The next NWJ issue will provide greater detail on this Forum.)

Congratulations to Decade Council for their splendid work in organizing these important events.

Excerpts from an address to the Women
Uniting for Change Conference

Lorraine Sinclair is the Coordinator of Mother
Earth Healing Society.

This has been a really good conference - it
feels good:

If I'm walking around and feeling a good
energy from people then that's good and
that's all I've been feeling in the last few
days. It gives me a lot of hope that we can
unite, we can listen to one another and we
can walk the good road together because
that's what's needed across this country.
And it is the women who are going to do
that. This is what all of our prophecies say.
When the women pick up their medicine and
begin to move forward with that the healing
process begins.

I'm encouraged to listen to what the Decade
Council is about and the great work that
you're doing. Get the political voice of the
women heard. We need to also be involved
politically, because the personal is political.
You understand the social issues that we're
faced with today, you understand the
violence, you understand the pain that the
children have gone through and are going
through, and that our sisters are going
through, and yes, even our men that are in
jail and the men that don't understand
healing yet. We can't just go forward
without keeping in mind the men - that it's
them who need to learn to get to that place
of healing. It's through women that they will
understand, by watching us and seeing us
and feeling that energy force - that beautiful
energy that comes with healing and how it
does indeed extend itself from me to family
to community to nation to Mother Earth.

There's a little thing I wrote about culture.

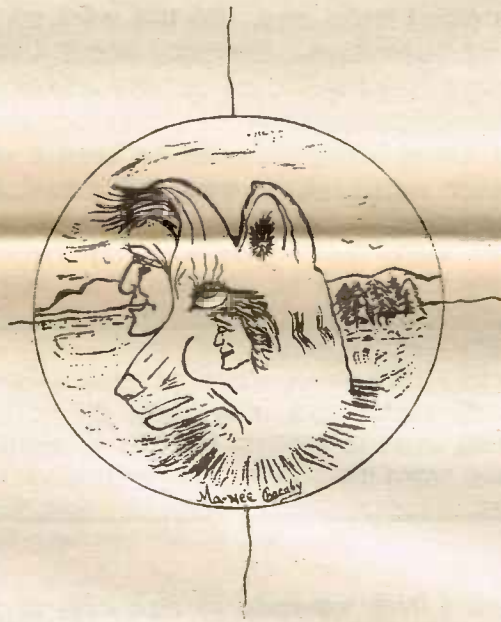
" In looking at different cultures around the
world it's helpful to see the pattern of human
behaviour as a whole. Each individual
culture has a place in the pattern, and each
has some gift to contribute towards the
betterment of human kind. In European
cultures, great strides have been made in
science and technology. Generally to
achieve these goals, individualism,
competition and conspicuous consumption
of material wealth have been seen as
positive qualities for a person to acquire.
Such personality traits can create an attitude
toward life that is very one sided and out of
balance, which can lead to selfishness,
racism and a lack of respect for the world in
which we live. We need only to look at the
state of our environment to know that the
unrestrained raping of Mother Earth for
resources has caused more harm than
good. Among Native people, there have not
been great strides made in science and
technology from the western perspective. In
the traditional ways, our areas of growth
have been more in the area of interpersonal
relationship with one another and all life.
The characteristics most valued within the
traditional Native community are
cooperation, sensitivity to one's feelings and
those of others, and sharing of material
wealth. It is within this holistic view and
understanding of our interconnectedness
with Mother Earth and one another that has
enabled the red race to live in harmony with
our environment for thousands of years prior
to the European coming to the shores. With

WOMEN UNITING . . .

the coming of the European to the
Americas, it's no wonder there was great
conflict between such different cultures.
There was no respect given to Native people
who were able to survive the harshness of
the seasons as well as live together in close
quarters and still respect one another. It is
said by our elders that Turtle Island, North
America, will be a great gathering place of
all tribes and something very special will
take place here. It is also said that one day
the white people will turn back to the red
people so that they can understand."

We are in these times. We must also
understand that each race with their gifts of
vision, communication, reasoning and
movement need to listen, learn and share
with one another so that we can move within
the sacred wheel of life to gain strength and
wisdom. Perhaps as white people learn how
to slow down and listen, Native people can
then communicate that gift of vision.

This is what I found in the last few days
here, ... when we share, that people are
learning how to listen. They're learning that
we are given two eyes to look twice as hard,
two ears to listen twice as much and one
mouth to speak only once.



There's a lot of issues in Canada today that
we can't ignore. Of course, foremost in a lot
of people's minds is the constitution, and
what we can do as women, as humankind,
as Canadians to make this a good effort. I
have a little bit of cynicism in me. I grew up
in a very political family. I understand
politics, and the negativity that comes with
politics. It never fails, every political meeting
that I have gone to, there's just a different
kind of energy in the air. It's a crackling and
can be a very negative energy. To me the
most important and the best moving energy
that I have ever felt is healing, healing
energy. When we sit together and we listen
to one another and we allow our hearts to
speak, that's when you feel the power.
With this constitution, where they're giving
us six months to put together what we as
Canadians think. It's impossible. It's just
like what they did with Meech Lake. They
come up with an artificial deadline and
expect us to meet that deadline. Well let's
look at the realities in the Native community.
We have across this country with the Native
people, a split, just like white people. You
have P.C.'s, you have N.D.P.'s, you have
liberals and a couple other little stranger
parties. You have a lot of different parties
out there to speak your political feelings and
your political issues and bring them forward.

Yet Canadians expect Aboriginal people to
speak with one voice. Why is that? We
have left wingers, we have right wingers, we
have middle of the road too, just like you
do. Don't expect us all to speak with one
voice.

I will never, ever, go to this government and
say, please give me self government, never.
Because me, as an individual, as a woman,
as a Native person, nobody has ever taken
away my right as a woman, nobody has
ever taken away my power. I recognize it
within myself. The more that Native people
can empower themselves at the local level
and work through that healing process, the
more you will see the results of that
empowerment. They will go back to their
traditional ways. You hear about the
Lubicon people, you hear about the Teme-
Augama Anishnabai protecting the forests.
You hear about the James Bay people,
you've heard about the Haida people
protecting Mile Island. All of those places
are Aboriginal people standing up and
saying no, that's enough; you cannot come
in anymore and destroy our Mother Earth.
Those are the indications to you that our
people are going back to the traditional
ways, to our responsibility as Aboriginal
people placed here upon Turtle Island with
the responsibility of being caretakers of
Mother Earth. This is our homeland.

I don't care how long the English and
French fight amongst themselves as to who
are the founding nations. They are fighting
on top of the heads of many Aboriginal
nations who are the first people. Many of
you have been here for several generations,
your ancestors came to these shores, and
maybe they worked the land and maybe
they suffered too as my ancestors did and
this has become your homeland, then you
should understand how it feels for us.
Because our ancestors, we believe, never
leave. They are still here in spirit. They're
here in this room with us right now.

When I went to New Zealand in 1990, I went
to nuclear free and independent Pacific
peoples conference and there was only
three of us in Canada from the Aboriginal
people who were chosen to go and because
I'd worked on environmental issues for more
than 10 years I was asked to attend. And it
was very difficult for me, because again I
saw, it didn't matter that these men were
indigenous men, they had adopted western
ways and they were still controlling the
process. So we have those kinds of things
in our communities as well. We have chiefs
who look good in public, but they go home
and they beat their wives or they go home
and they drink or they go home and they
abuse their kids. So we have a lot of
cleaning up to do in our communities as
well, as do you. And this is something that
you can learn from us, it's healing.
Because this society is an addicted society.
You look at Native people and you say, look
at all those statistics, they've got the highest
suicide rate, they've got the most people
that are in prison, they've got the worst
health statistics in Native communities, the
violence that occurs. All of those things,
that's what separates us from the rest of
Canada, those appalling statistics that tell
us, something has gone wrong here.

But you are no different. Your society is addicted as well. It's addicted to resources, it's addicted to material wealth. When you look at addictions and how they move in a cycle. It's like violence. There comes a point when you have to say that's enough. This is what we have to say collectively, as human beings with this society who is addicted to material wealth, addicted to looking at all of Mother Earth's gifts as resources. We have to say, that's enough. We as women, who are the bringers of life to life, the ones who are the continuity between the generations. Be like my ancestors. When they made a decision they said, how is this decision going to affect the next seven generations. Now if this constitutional dog and pony show would ask that one question, just answer that one question to every article and everything that they look at, we would have a very different constitution. We have nothing in there, of any substance, that talks about Mother Earth, that talks about our right as human beings to clean air, clean water, clean land and good health as people. Why can't we put that in the constitution? Don't we have that right as human beings. And shouldn't that be entrenched in the constitution above all else?

When I began in the environmental movement I felt very, very insecure. It's very difficult for Native people, even to come into places like this and sit with our white sisters when we are just venturing out and trying to empower ourselves, it's very hard. So you need to understand that. Because a lot of us aren't at your meetings, it doesn't mean that we don't care. It may mean that we're just afraid or very shy. I know what that's like. I went to my first national conference in Ottawa in 1982. And I walked into the room and I kept looking at myself through other peoples eyes. I saw all these environmentalists with no make up and very skinny and kind of hippies, and I thought, what am I doing here. That was a major culture shock for me. I looked at myself and I thought, god, you're overweight, you're smoking, you're Native, you wear makeup. Everything seemed to separate me from them except my heart knew that when I saw Chief Small Boy in 1981, he was the one that began me on my journey of speaking out for Mother Earth. I went to him to get some nice elder comments so I could say it on his behalf at the Energy Resources Conservation Board where we were trying to stop seven coal mines in Hinton. I presented him with some tobacco and said I'd like some words of wisdom. I was very green then and had just begun to learn about my culture. He said you must go and tell these people that they are tearing out the guts of Mother Earth. That everything that's in the earth is there for a reason, the oil, the gas, the uranium. All of those things, she needs for life. And I got really embarrassed. I thought I can't go in front of all these white people and tell them that - they are going to think I'm nuts. But I did it anyway because in my heart, I knew he was right. That's where I began my journey of speaking out for Mother Earth.

So I go to this conference. We were staying at the YWCA and were assigned to rooms. I was the only Native person there and I was so shy and so scared and nervous and I was smoking. And this one woman came up to me and said, get out of here, go put that cigarette out somewhere. So I kind of folded into myself and backed out of the

room and went and put my cigarette out. Then I went back into the room where I was assigned with these four women and I became like the little shy Indian I can become sometimes. I went back into myself and I just watched these women. These women, as soon as they would come into the room, they would take all their clothes off, they just liked being naked, I guess. Now I had difficulty with that because I was brought up to be very modest as many Native people are. Your body is a gift from The creator but you don't have to go flashing it around to everybody. Even though that insulted me, I didn't say anything. I thought, they're white and they must be right. So I just sort of left it at that.

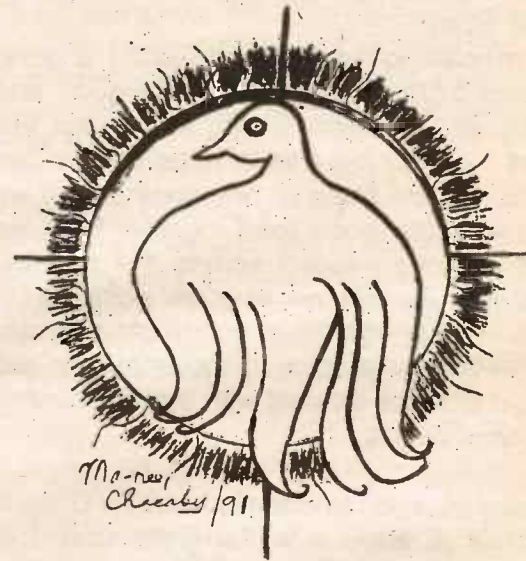
The conference went on and every day I would sit in this room with many people, mostly men, from across Canada and they would talk in this very high technical language that I couldn't understand. They would talk about acid rain, and uranium mining and all of these issues and I just felt like the whole world was on my shoulders. So I began to go outside every day and I began to sit by a tree because to us the trees are the grandmothers, the teachers and we can receive energy from a tree. So I would sit by this tree and I would bury tobacco and I would say a prayer, like, why am I here? I knew I needed to be there. I just didn't know why. So this went on for about three days. Everyday about 4 or 5 times a day I would go outside and sit by this tree and finally on about the third day I had the courage to speak because it was just too much. And I think that's basically what I said.

So this little group traveled back with me to my room and they were all sort of sitting around waiting for this wisdom to come from me.

I said I think we need to also look at our spiritual selves - you talk from the head all the time, but what about the heart, which is really what brings us together as people that are speaking out for Mother Earth, it's our hearts that are telling us that this is what is right. I don't remember all what I said but all of a sudden there was a little crowd of people gathered around me when I finished speaking, and quite a few of them were men, and they wanted more words of wisdom. So this little group traveled back with me to my room and they were all sort of sitting around waiting for this wisdom to come from me. And the women too, that I was rooming with, were sitting there gazing up at me for all of a sudden, I was an Indian, I was traditional, I was spiritual and I knew something. I wasn't anymore this overweight, halfbreed woman who smoked.

So at one point, I thought, I'm going to test them out here. I was going to pull out my speech about tobacco is sacred to our people, but that wouldn't have been altogether true. So in the middle of one of the teachings I had been given,... very genuinely, I was sharing it, I all of a sudden looked at these women and I automatically picked up a cigarette then I remembered how they had jumped all over me. So I held

up my cigarette and I said does anybody mind if I smoke? And all of them came running over with a match, oh no, go right ahead. To me that said everything. I am still the same person. I'm still overweight, I'm still Metis and all of the rest of it. But all they saw was the surface. They didn't take the time to see my spirit and to see my heart.



And that's very important, for all of us. This is what I have been experiencing while I have been here, as I spoke and shared with you the teachings of the sweetgrass, mind being who we think we are, body being who everybody else thinks we are, and spirit being who we actually are. Those are important things to remember, because as we go through life with our images of professor, of doctor, of all these images that we carry of ourselves, those are just more walls for people to break through to who we really are. And it's not so hard, Our people, Native people, when you go into our places, when you go into our homes, come into our community, you see that we still have the ability to trust, we still have the ability to share, we still have the ability to be honest and we still have the ability to laugh at ourselves. That is what has gotten a lot of us through, it's the ability to look at ourselves and laugh. Not to humiliate ourselves so much as just laugh and be humble. Know that we are here for a reason. That you are no better than me, and I'm no better than you. That each of us has a gift. I call this the journey of the heart and living and walking this way. Many of our people call it the sweetgrass path, or the good red road when you make that commitment to honesty and kindness and you walk with faith and you live with sharing. When you demonstrate those qualities you are on that good red road. I have made that commitment a long time ago and I'll continue with that.

When I was in New Zealand, I had to get up and make a presentation on behalf of our delegation and I was so scared and my voice was shaking so bad and I was almost in tears and when I finished this Maori woman came up to me and she said, that was really beautiful and I started apologizing, I said well I'm really sorry but, my tears just started and I don't know what's wrong with me, I'm a big crybaby. And she said, no, because the Maori people look for that in people when they speak. Because we know that that's the heart speaking. And we know that your spirit is there, that your spirit is speaking.

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BANFF . . . A YEAR LATER

WOMEN AND MENTAL HEALTH/WOMEN IN A VIOLENT SOCIETY

by GLORIA HARRIS

Let me begin by telling you that the experience of this conference was a turning point in my life. It moved me from one stage to another. I will highlight the strongest memories...

Thursday, May 9/91....

Anyone who sees the Rockies for the first time knows the awestruck wonder!

5pm.....While dining alone at a table window with a magnificent view, I spotted a deer walking through a residential backyard, nibbling along the way, on any foliage it could find. I seemed to be the only one aware of its presence. As I followed it with my eyes, I imagined that this was how my grandfather must have felt while hunting or guiding, and suddenly spots his game. I was totally captivated and speechless at how bold this deer was, seemingly unaware of his vulnerable location. I waited for the waitress to meet my eyes, so I could share with her my great discovery. When she approached my table I was about to burst, pointing towards the deer, in a manner much like a 3 year old at the zoo for the first time, when she quietly stated, "It's very common for them to wander into town and sometimes they get their antlers tangled in the fences and trees". I continued to marvel at this 4 legged creature, who for my own private dinner show, ended his performance and found his way down the lane and disappeared.

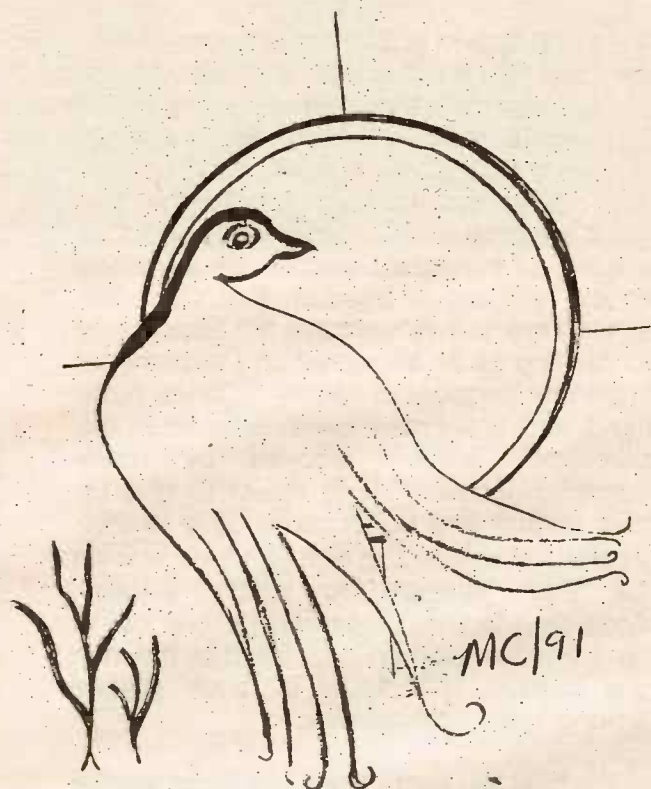
7pm.....Andrea Dworkin's keynote brought me back to reality. What a welcome she got. After she began to talk, I knew why she was so wildly applauded. Her volume and passion spoke for everyone as she reminded us of the situation of emergency we are in and no further ahead that when we first started.

I cried when she relived the New Bedford rape on the pool table and how Hustler magazine had run a spread three months before of a woman on a pool table, and how Hustler ran another spread after the rape, of a greeting card, of a woman on a pool table with the caption "Welcome to New Bedford". I hung my head further when Andrea wailed of the police report of her "suicide" death a year after the trial. She told us we survive by amnesia. Her statement of porn being the Pentagon, the War Room, the training grounds for men, telling them to go out get them, do it to them! She said the serial killers will tell you they get their ideas from porn. She asked us to address pornography! To organize political support for women who kill men who hurt them. I returned to my room, exhausted but once again reminded of why I am involved in the Movement.

Friday, May 10...9am Sandra Butler takes the podium, another exciting and extremely warm reception. Sandra said it was not necessary to educate the women present. She reminded us of our work and the isolation and tiring effects, she spoke of healings, journeys and memories and feminist therapy and get the focus on what we set out to do, ending the violence. Again there were too many inspiring thoughts to percolate, such as what does empowering mean in a world where women still have no power.

10:30am Workshop on Journalling for Healing and Empowerment. This was a wealth of information on groups. I mulled over the topics of screening, resource building, goal setting, safe places, containers, inner child. After I picked up the handouts I left the room, unknowingly without my purse. When I discovered this I realized my purse contained everything I needed sustain me. I began to retrace my steps in a silent panic, till I was directed to where announcements are made. As I started toward the podium, I felt a gentle tap, turned to face this petite, beautiful Native woman. She quietly asked if I had any sweetgrass. She wanted to cleanse the room where her workshop would be held after lunch. She went on to explain there had been crying and strong emotions there. She introduced herself as Maggie Hodgson and I gasped, unable to contain myself and reached for her hand and blubbered my excitement at this meeting. I reassured her I would find someone who had some sweetgrass and bring it to the room as I was in her workshop. Before I left the room, a jolt ran through me...what about your purse...As I was about to ask I noticed it was sitting on the stage. Deep, deep relief and I thanked the woman. Now Maggie needed sweetgrass. I met a lady from NWT and she gave me a piece.

I headed to Maggie's workshop on "Native Community Response to Sexual Abuse". Maggie told us one woman's journey as chief of her reserve, Alkai Lake and of the struggles and victories in healing her community with help of workshops, healing through traditional means, sweat lodges and pipe ceremonies for example. She told us of the incredible courage it took to charge the perpetrators and support them through community support and recovery, including the elders. Maggie told a wonderful story of the wolf who lost his eyes and the experience of being lent the eye of a mouse, which enabled to see only one to one and later a buffalo gave him an eye which helped him see the world. She said we must use our buffalo eye. Her talk ended with the prophesy of the "eagle landing on the moon." In the 1850s a Hopi Indian said that "our Native people are in midnight and we will come out of our midnight and into our day to be world leaders. This change will happen when the eagle lands on the moon". The meaning is, the midnight is the destruction that has happened to Native people such as alcoholism, residential schools, treaties, etc. Into our day is the



process and recovery. Eagle landing is the year 1969, when the first space ship landed and its first message sent back to earth, the eagle has landed. That same week was the opening of the first alcohol treatment centre for Natives and since then it has been the catalyst for recovery for the Native nation. Maggie then closed with her healing song and sang Hai, Hai, while she shook her rattle. I hugged her and she thanked me for my support and said she felt my spirit...Wow! What more could I ask for.

I moved on to the next session on "Empowerment for Change". Three women shared their experiences of North End Womens Centre in Winnipeg. It was obvious the dedication and innovative approaches helped them create a centre which truly met the needs of the women accessing them. What was their secret? They asked the women!

Saturday, May 11... Women's Healing Circle...Lorraine Sinclair and Andrinne Leduc shared the teachings of the Native ways. Her words and teachings enveloped me and swirled till a spirit inside was awakened from a long slumber. A lifetime of teachings flooded my mind as she spoke of my Mother-the Earth, my Grandmother - the Moon, Father Sun, Grandfather Rock. Her explanations of sweetgrass and the strength of grass...one strand alone can easily break, but braid it and it is unbreakable...much like Native people...the grass can be cut, pulled up and stamped on but it still survives and it is like the lives of Native women. She told us of the mind, body and spirit...The mind is who you think you are. The body is what people think you are and the spirit is who you are. I will never forget the soothing voice of Lorraine and the Native spirit of Andrinne, very sure of her chosen sweetgrass path. I left this workshop in a fashion much like a butterfly leaving her cocoon, fluttering and free.

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CONFLICTING VALUES OF

by Maria Teresa Trainer

It is a well known fact that most women from the Third World suffer from a greater degree of subjugation than women from the Developed World. When some of these women immigrate to Canada and face the growing tendency towards gender equality, great conflicts arise within their family. The majority of immigrant women are surprised by the amount of freedom that Canadian women enjoy; they welcome the opportunity to develop as an individual and become an important member of society. On the other hand, immigrant men feel threatened by the perceived "power" enjoyed by many Canadian women. They refuse to give up their control and domination, cling to their patriarchal values and penalize their women for their struggle to reach equality. According to most researchers, one out of ten Canadian women is battered by the man she loves. This figure is much greater among immigrant families.

In the past ten years there has been a great influx of Latin American immigrants and refugees into Canada because of political problems, poverty, war and persecution in several Central and South American countries. Following are excerpts of a study conducted in Thunder Bay, dealing with the conflicting values of Canadians and Central American immigrants.

Participant observations and ethnographic interviews were conducted to examine cultural views of traditional Central American families immigrating to Thunder Bay, and how these views conflict with those of mainstream Canadian society.

The study showed marked differences in views and familial values which function as barriers to adaption of both immigrants and the receiving society.

RESPONDENTS

A questionnaire was given to twenty Canadians (ten men and ten women) and twenty Central Americans (ten men and ten women). The questions were directed to outline the differences in family values between Canadians and Central Americans. All the Central American respondents were between the ages of twenty and fifty years old. They had different levels of education (from illiterate to B. A. equivalent), came from different socio-economic backgrounds and have been in Canada between four months and two years. The Canadians were between the ages of twenty and fifty-five and have been living in Canada most of their lives, had various levels of education and also came from various socio-economic backgrounds.



VIEW ABOUT EACH OTHER

Question to Central Americans:

What do you think about Canadian men and women?

The Central American women said the following: Canadian women are liberal, careless in their appearance, independent and fun loving. They smoke in public, are integrated in the economic development, can get ahead and the laws protect them. Canadian men are good, well educated, responsible, independent and liberal. They like having fun and they know how to do housework.

The Central American men said the following: Canadian women are liberal, open minded, they do not like to stay home, and are Protestant. Canadian men are ice cold, rude, hard working, like to stay home and allow their women to be independent.

Question to Canadians:

What do you think of Central Americans?

Fifty percent of the respondents had never met a Central American and had no opinion. The Canadian women who answered said: Central American women are devoted to their family, care about clothing and children, are vivacious and industrious and are victims by choice. Central American men are the head of the family. They are sexy, good dancers, have dark complexions and have an inferiority complex.

The Canadian men who answered said: Central American women are beautiful, friendly but not sexy, take a lot of abuse and are more forward than the men. Central American men are wife stealers, condescending, sexy, quiet, paranoid and think they are superior.

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WHAT'S NEW AT THE BOOKSTORE

NO BURDEN TO CARRY: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario 1920s to 1950s, by Dionne Brand, Women's Press. "NO BURDEN TO CARRY exquisitely weaves the threads of autobiography and history into a flexible and meaningful relationship. Never again will I be lost for names of Black women who have stood at the junctions of Canadian history." (Angela Davis)

PIECE OF MY HEART: A Lesbian of Colour anthology, by Makeda Silvera, Sister Vision Press.

"PIECE OF MY HEART stands as a testimony to the ongoing process of breaking our silences, being mute no longer. The voices are loud, honest, angry, passionate and full of love..... Throughout the anthology, a thread of humour is ever present, even in the stories, journals, essays that are painful. This book is about us. These are our stories. Coming full circle we acknowledge and celebrate our differences, and there is power in our similarities." (from the introduction).

DESPITE THE ODDS: Essays on Canadian Women and Science, edited by Marianne Gosztonyi Ainley, Vehicule Press. "The essays in DESPITE THE ODDS illustrate the wide range of activities engaged in by Canadian women scientists and underline the difficulties encountered by female science graduates...."

THE UNFINISHED REVOLUTION: The Status of Women in Twelve Countries, by Doris Anderson, Doubleday. Anderson, past president of NAC and CACSW, documents the situation of women in Canada, the U.S., Britain, and nine European countries "(providing) a sweeping look at social conditions over the last 25 years."

INVERSIONS: Writing by Dykes, Queers and Lesbians, edited by Betsy Warland, Press Gang Publishers "is a bold and diverse collection by twenty-four contemporary North American women writers exploring questions of sexual identity and politics, creativity, cultural community and literary theory. ... INVERSIONS is a remarkably honest, complex and impassioned gathering of voices that acknowledges the vital importance of difference".

Maude Barlow, chair of the Council of Canadians, has just published, with Bruce Campbell **TAKE BACK THE NATION**, K & Porter Books. "TAKE BACK THE NATION" is a citizen's call to political action, an eloquent plea for the continuing existence of Canada. Barlow's earlier book **A PARCEL OF ROGUES** is now available in paperback.

MORE THAN A ROSE: Prime Minister's Wives and Other Women, by Heather Robertson, McClelland and Stewart. "MORE THAN A ROSE offers an exciting and provocative portrait of the trappings - a the trap - that political power and position present - a fast paced, behind-the-scenes glimpse into Canada's history."

The NFB's film *The Company of Strangers* has enchanted all who have seen it. So will the book **IN THE COMPANY OF STRANGERS**, by Mary Meigs, one of the eight women who portray themselves in the film. (The book) "begins as her story being in the film and unfolds into a gentle, intricate meditation on the experience of time, old age, magic and building".

CANADIAN AND CENTRAL AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY:

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THE NOTION OF MALE SUPERIORITY AND THE HIERARCHY IN MARRIAGE

The results of the comparison between Central American and Canadian values are consistent with the popular notion of machismo in Latin America. The survey showed that forty-five percent of the Central American respondents feel that men are superior to women and eighty percent declared that men are not supposed to cry. In contrast, 100% of the Canadians felt that being the head of the household should be a shared responsibility between husband and wife. The Central American respondents who came from rural areas were particularly reluctant to allow their wives to work outside the home, an unrealistic expectation considering the present economic situation in Canada. In addition, some even prevent their wives from going to school and learning English, thus forcing them to be completely dependent. Regardless of whether the husband works or collects welfare the Central American male controls every facet of the family life. Most Canadians feel the opposite and encourage their wives to work outside the home. Statistics show that most Canadian women are employed.

Latin American women, as well as other immigrant women, lack social support, feel isolated and are usually controlled by their male companions or fathers. These factors instill low self esteem and confusion about the available options and social services. As the years go by, they are expected to serve and nurture others. They sacrifice their wishes in order for others to have theirs. They never learn to fend for themselves; the only skills they learn are homemaking skills. The only place where they feel happy and secure is inside the home. Being a dependent shut-in contributes to stress, emotional problems and physical illness.

SEXUAL FIDELITY

Canadians turned out to be more trusting than Central Americans; 85% of the Canadians believe that women are faithful to their husbands versus 55% of the Central Americans. Fifty percent of the Canadians believe that men are faithful to their wives versus 25 per cent of the Central Americans. The Central American results seem low, considering the high expectations of control and obedience of the macho head of the household.

ABORTION

The openness in which this subject is discussed has shocked some of the Central American people and has triggered wife battering and abuse in cases where women have wanted to take advantage of the freedom of choice offered in this country. Ninety-five per cent of the Central Americans feel that abortion should be incorporated into the criminal code and 70% of the Canadians feel that it shouldn't. These results go in accord with the degree of religiosity and superstition of both cultures.

Only 5% of the Canadians feel that they will go to hell if they do not follow the teachings of the church versus 45% of the Latin Americans.

PREMARITAL COHABITATION AND SEXUAL FREEDOM

The double standard between Central American men and women and the growing tendency towards gender equality which faces Canadian couples today is very obvious by the answers on this subject. Fifty percent of the Central American men said that it would be a good idea to live with a woman before marriage but that they would not marry her and would not condone such behaviour from their daughters. Ninety percent of these men said that women should not have the same sexual freedom as men because "they would taint and cheapen themselves". Eighty percent of the Central American women went along with this opinion, "because no one will ever marry her", "because she would lose respect", "because we were not brought up that way", and 70% of the women said that they would not live in common-law relationships for the same reasons. It is curious to notice that some of the people answering in this manner were living in common-law relationships, but obviously were not happy with this arrangement. The overwhelming majority of Canadians believe in sexual equality and common-law marriage. This corresponds with other findings that state unmarried cohabitation has increased dramatically among Canadian couples and it is an accepted modus vivendi.

CHILDREN

The majority of Central American and Canadian women agree that the ideal family should have two children. Canadian men think that they should have three, and Latin men think four is the ideal number. The custom of having family control over the children, no matter what age they are, is obvious by the Central American responses; the overwhelming majority said that it was a good idea for young men and women to live at home with their parents until they got married. Some of the reasons given were: "My son needs his mother to take care of him until he can find a wife who can do the same", "Young people need advice and guidance", "Single women put themselves in danger when they live alone". The great majority of the Canadians thought the opposite; most of them answered, "Single people should live away from their families to gain experience and independence".

It is hard to socialize Latin children in an Anglo society. Children are taught individualism in school and the curriculum usually does not promote respect for tradition. The values learned from their peers and the values that are learned at home often cause a great deal of conflict within the family. This conflict affects their mental health and this is an important issue to consider when developing programs to assist immigrants.

EDUCATION

One hundred percent of both Central Americans and Canadians agree that a higher education should be offered equally to both boys and girls. This is a sign that Central Americans are asking for a change in their way of life. If they encourage a higher education for women, they must be prepared to accept the consequences. Educated women compete in the work force, demand equal opportunities, freedom of choice, a fair division of labour at home, an active participation in making family decisions and become active participants in the mainstream society.

Unless Latin men change their attitude, higher education for Central American women will create further family tensions as a consequence of the demanded decline of the patriarchal domination that rules the lives of Latin Americans.

Maria Teresa Trainer is a member of the Thunder Bay Immigrant and Visible Minority Women's Organization and a cultural interpreter and translator for the Thunder Bay Multi-Cultural Association.



... FOR CHANGE

Excerpts from an address to the Women Uniting for Change Conference, Thunder Bay, November 1991

Glenda Simms is Chairperson of Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

I wish to concentrate on that which we share as women of Canada and at the same time I wish to acknowledge our differences and stress that significant numbers of Canadian women are doubly and triply oppressed and within these multi levels of oppression we can come to an understanding of effects that such devastating barriers, such as violence and poverty have on the lives of women especially women from aboriginal communities, refuge women, immigrant women, racial minority women, disabled women and poor women of all colours and all castes. All of us, no matter how we define ourselves within the Canadian society, have the responsibility to get involved in the forces that influence our lives. We must take the necessary steps to make our voices heard, in our families, in our communities, and by our political leaders.

At the federal level a number of initiatives are underway, and I urge all of you to get involved. For instance, the constitution of this country is being reformulated. Women and other marginalized groups must get involved in the process. This document which has been produced will become the blueprint that determines our place in Canada in the future. We must educate ourselves and our daughters to look at the present proposals with a critical eye and under the implications that the proposals have for all women of Canada.

We must recognize that at the time of Confederation women were not even considered persons. This therefore, is the first time in our history that Canadian women will have the chance to influence the making of a constitution and we must not allow this opportunity to pass us by.

The second federal initiative is the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technology. Reproduction is an issue that supremely affects all women and it is an aspect of our lives that has for too long been under the control of men and the medical profession. The implications of the new reproductive technologies are very complex. But they have great bearing on how our sisters, our daughters, and those of us who are still at the child-rearing stage are going to confront these issues in the future. We must make our positions clear on issues such as surrogate motherhood, sperm banks and other issues surrounding these technologies.



Sometimes when I travel across the country and I hear panels discussing these issues and I do not see visible minority women and aboriginal women at the discussion I know that something is missing. Because we must never forget that surrogate motherhood has great implications for the most disadvantaged women in our society. The ideological question is "whose wombs will be rented to produce the children for those women who chose not to have children when they were young"? I am saying that if we are not careful, it will be poor women, aboriginal women and visible minority women whose wombs again will become the breeding stocks for the labour force in this country, just as the wombs of my slave ancestors were used to produce the breeding stocks for the slave plantation. We must be vigilant. We must make sure that we do not take these things lightly. They have grave implications, especially for those of us who are poor.

Another initiative that we must really get involved in is the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women. Much is known about the level of violence in our society. We know that one in ten women is beaten in the privacy of their homes. We know that one in four girls are sexually assaulted in this country. We know that violence is at epidemic proportions. We know that we are afraid to walk the streets of our cities. But we still do not have a clear cut idea of how violence impinges on aboriginal women, on racial minorities and above all on disabled women. We do not know the unique perspective from the voices of these women. So there is still a lot yet to learn about violence and its impact on women's lives. The government has promised a zero tolerance position on violence. This is our opportunity to inform the panel of the remarkable work that is being done by women in their communities. We need to tell them about the unpaid labour that we are putting out in communities and in safe houses and in transition houses. We need to articulate our needs. We need to point out that we will no longer tolerate violence in Canadian society.

The dilemma that we face today lies in the complex interrelationship between violence and myriad other social conditions. For instance, violence and poverty continue to be interwoven as two of the most devastating influences on women's lives and together in insidious ways, poverty and violence block our true participation in the Canadian society. In an affluent society such as Canada is, we can clearly state that poverty is a form of economic violence.

Women are poor because they are denied economic power. The reality of women's poverty in Canada is that in 1987 there were over 1.5 million women living in poverty. Between 1971 and 1986, the number of women living in poverty increased by 110%, compared to 24% for men. Today, the average woman in the work force still earns 65.9 cents for every dollar that a man earns. The average minority woman makes 10% less than that. And the majority of aboriginal women have never even been offered the job! 70% of women are segregated in low paying jobs with little or no opportunity for

self development. Unemployment rates are traditionally higher for women than for men. But they are still higher for aboriginal women, for minority women and for disabled women.

And most disturbing of all is the fact that there are over one million children living in poverty in Canada. This is a country that says it loves children. The poverty of children is directly linked to the poverty of their mothers. We will never solve child poverty until we solve the poverty of women. Poverty exacerbates the danger of physical attack.

Violence and poverty are further exacerbated by the issue of racism within Canadian society. In our initiatives to combat physical and economic violence against women we must not deny the unique situations of visible minorities and aboriginal women. Some women chose to endure the violence because they know that the justice system does not offer rehabilitation for the men who abuse them. They know their menfolk face horrific levels of violence in the very system that was designed to protect all persons in this society.

And herein lies their dilemma. Black women and other racial minorities have long perceived elements in the police force and other social service agencies as dangerous to their communities. They know that by calling these agencies that are set up to protect all Canadians, they risk getting their men maimed, psychologically humiliated, and often times, killed. And so, these women have to choose between saving their sons and their lovers from death and saving themselves from violence.



Can you understand the crucial dilemma of a woman who cannot turn in her batterer because she does not know if he will be killed by the police to whom he is turned over? That, my sisters, is perhaps one of the most harrowing aspects of violence in our society. We as women must endure the violence of men in our community because we know the society is so very violent toward our sons, our husbands, and our lovers.

I urge you to see the recent N.F.B. film, called "Sisters in Struggle". This issue has been raised very vividly in that film. In Canada, the systemic racism in all institutions place these women between a rock and a hard place. We have forced these women to choose between their loyalty to community and their loyalty to personal safety. They will continue to choose silence as long as our social and justice institutions do not deal with anti-aboriginality, racism and sexism.

If we do not fight racism, we cannot fight sexism. Racism and sexism are the flip side of the same coin. As women we must unite around these issues. We have been socialized to assume dependent roles and these dependent roles limit our capacities to make it in this society. As women we have to take responsibility for the lives of all our sisters and as feminists we must acknowledge that we too, are part of the oppression of some other women. Mainstream feminists have knowingly and unknowingly spouted rhetoric that continues from the heart of a Eurocentric perspective. As women in the struggle we must rid the psyches of the historic stereotypes and the precepts on which we have built this movement which we call the women's movement. We need a truly inclusive women's movement so that we can better address all the issues that affect us.

Fear, for example, is an emotion to which all of us can relate. It doesn't matter what our race, our class, our linguistic background is. We know what fear is. A recent Gallup poll showed that 56% of Canadian women are afraid to go out at night. Therefore, we limit our activities. We are not able to go out at night to enjoy the parks and the streets, and to stare at the stars and the galaxies above. Why shouldn't we have the right to do that? We have the right to walk the streets in any city in this country because we pay taxes. That's our right. And that is what we must say. But that right has been taken away from us and we now live in fear. So our lives, as women, are limited. Some of us fear the streets. Some of us fear the courts. And some of us fear the men who share our homes.

And yet, as we continue to struggle against this fear, we can take hope because we know that our strength lies in our solidarity, a solidarity which you have displayed here tonight. When we come together at conferences such as this one, we must begin to build sturdy bridges across all the barriers of all groups of women in Canada. If we are to overcome patriarchal values, then we as women must create a new climate in this country. We must make sure that the oppressive forces are identified and that we fight against these oppressive forces. We cannot have a truly united women's movement until we recognize that all women have a perspective on different issues. We must pursue the kind of dialogue that will help us discuss what the development is going to be in the next century. We must identify the appropriate ideological tools that will move us forward.

And if you believe that feminism is the ideology that will lead us to justice, to equity, and to humanity as it truly should be, then we have no choice, as women of Canada, but to join hands and say we will develop a feminism that is anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic, anti-classist in its approach. We will reject hierarchical rating of women's issues and we will move towards developing a strategy that will enhance all our lives in a social, economic, cultural and political context at the state and the community level.

I believe that this feminism of which I speak and this women's movement of which I dream, has been distorted. I have travelled across this country and I have heard young women say that they do not want to be feminists. I've heard aboriginal women saying that they do not want to be feminists, black women who do not want to be feminists, older women who do not want to be feminists. This is because, I believe, these women have for so long, been marginalized.

And so I am saying to you, my sisters, that we must reclaim that which our foremothers gave to us. They gave to us a legacy of survival, a legacy of struggle. We must never forget that it was the women's movement that facilitated whatever change we have made in this country. Let us not kid ourselves. Do you think that men sat around and decided that they were going to open up the law schools, the medical schools, the engineering schools and that they were going to allow us to get jobs. Did they decide that? NO! We fought for that! They did not give it to us. And I can assure you that they will not move another inch until you fight to push them over. They will never give up, because that is the nature of power. Power feeds on itself. But we, as Canadian women, will never aspire to the kind of power that has reduced us to where we are. We will change this country and we will change it for the better.



We know that for 400 years, patriarchy has distorted human development on this continent. Next year will be 500 years since Christopher Columbus landed on that shore and that began the distortion of human development. What are we going to say to our aboriginal sisters next year? Are we going to celebrate the 500 years of oppression of aboriginal people? Are we going to canonize Columbus and say that he was a hero? Or are we going to mourn with our aboriginal sisters and say the oppression was not just about them. It was about all of us as women - because we all have been oppressed over these 500 years.

That is the level of understanding that we must develop. We must come to a redefinition of what feminism is. Feminism is a positive force in our life. Rebecca West in 1913 said, "I myself have never been able to define precisely what feminism is. I only know that people call me a feminist when I express sentiment that differentiates me from a doormat!"

We all must recognize that feminism has had a bad name because there has been a backlash against the development and the gains that we have made. The media has been very responsible for distorting what we have done. The media often highlights our conflicts and they minimize our trials. For instance the Banff Conference in June/91. The media focused on the conflict. But what they missed was the circle formed by the

aboriginal women joining hands with white women and black women. They missed the healing circle that was formed. They missed it - or refused to report it because that would have been much too powerful and positive a message.

I think we can take a lesson from that, because in the final analysis as we struggle to redefine feminism we must look towards our aboriginal sisters for perhaps we missed that opportunity to recognize that in their culture and in their worldview there still exists the possibility for healing and maybe that's what we as Canadian women must consider as we move into the next century. We need to consider that we have a lot in common and that we need to develop strategies that will enrich our lives. We want to encourage each other along the path. Others who have gone before us have left us some very important words that we must never forget. West Indian pianist, Hazel Scott asks, "Whoever walked behind anyone to freedom"?

If feminism is going to make a difference, if the women's movement is going to be revitalized, all of us must go hand in hand. I think we must continue to struggle so that young women will see that they are valuable. There are too many forces telling them that they are not. We must continue to struggle so that older women can learn to grow old with dignity. Older women should never be made to feel incapable and unwanted and useless. We live in a culture that does not value anyone who grows old. In fact the only cultures in Canada that value the old are the aboriginal people and cultures like the Chinese. These people value and respect their elders and the extended family. We do not and perhaps that is why we are losing out.

We have to work for a time when immigrant women do not have to apologize for being immigrants. This country was built on successive waves of immigrant people. In fact the only people who were not immigrants were the aboriginal people. We must realize that the immigrants are not taking away our jobs - it was the immigrants over time, who gave us the prosperity that we have. And they continue to give us prosperity. We must make sure that we recognize that there are refugee women amongst us and that they are running away from oppression just as our ancestor ran from the oppression in Europe. So why is it that we cannot understand them, when we all have the same history.

We must look forward to a time when women with disabilities in this country will be given dignity. When they will have access to all facilities and they will be given jobs according to their levels of capability.

We must come to a point where we recognize that we are largely a homophobic society and that our lesbian sisters are living in real solitude. I went recently to see the movie, Sisters in Struggle. After the movie a young black woman stood up and said "I do not know where I belong - I am a black woman who is a lesbian, I cannot belong to the group of white lesbians because they are too racist, and I cannot belong to the group of black women because they are too homophobic. So where do I belong?" These are fundamental questions that all groups of women must ask, including aboriginal women. We must widen the circle and we must be compassionate and all inclusive and make sure that we reach out across our barriers to all our sisters, and daughters. There must be no one left behind. That is our major challenge.

1:30pm.... Shirley Turcotte... Begins her presentation and recognizes and honours women she works with. She said their four names and stories in a very painful and emotional talk. Shirley's message was strong and will never leave me as I hear her words of "when you can't hear the unbearable or the unspeakable, when you can't believe what seems unbelievable, I'm once again alone". I don't believe for a moment that anyone would forget her words of "The hardest part is to think of all the other children. I know I survived, it is unbearable to know that others didn't." I will never forget her!

As I write this I can relive the intensity at the point of the conference. I opted out of the study group and explored the hot springs with two beautiful new friends, Allysn and Tina.

6:00pm supper in ballroom...Sat with Maggie, Allysn and Tina. We were high on Banff and the people of the conference. Dinner was served by trails of men-servants balancing humongous trays. I shared with my dinner friends my images of this being in days of old and in a castle for a feast and the food being brought out in hoards and we would throw the bones over our shoulders. While we ate they announced a poetry reading. It was next to impossible to hear the poet as there was so much clatter and chatter. It was only a matter of time before individuals began expressing strong feelings and reactions to the lack of respect and attention the reader had. The opinions changed from mildly upset to rage and remarks were flying all over. One woman at our table loudly spoke to anyone who would listen. Women then began to try and analyze and feel comfortable where they were at. Next to us in another group, remarks like "It's a matter of economics that there isn't a big representation of minority women here". This triggered an angry response from another women, "who paid for you to come, yourself or your workplace?" As women of colour took the podium to try to state their point, one was told to "forget" it and get on with the party.

Around us were feelings of anxiety and fear of what was erupting. I felt a tap on my shoulder and was asked to follow her. Tina and Maggie were signalling as well. We had not a clue till we reached the front and it was explained that Lorraine Sinclair was asked to speak and she wanted all the Native women there with her for unity and strength. We joined hands and formed a circle as Lorraine began her message. She started by saying "when Native people pray they pray for all races, red, yellow, black and white. She said that the red race understands discrimination and pain. We are gathered here to talk about violence against women and violence in our society. We are the indigenous delegates here and she invited any more Native women in the crowd to join and added even if you are white and have a Indian heart, you are welcome to join us up here. She stated that it is not the colour of your skin, it's your heart that matters. She then offered a healing song. Maggie had joined her then as Lorraine offered the hope that the song would touch hearts. She ended by saying that we needed each others hearts in order to continue. Maggie once again shook her rattle and offered Hai, Hai.

The strength and healing powers could be felt within and some cried, some trembled and others stood tall and straight as the trees that represent honesty. The room had all joined hands and for a few moments experienced the unity that Lorraine spoke of. We then left together and held a healing circle. Some of stayed on and we talked for hours in one of the rooms, as we familiarized each other with our stories. I could not believe the Native women I connected with from B.C. to the Maritimes. Before the morning keynote we agreed to meet for a morning circle. What more can I say about Saturday!

Gloria Harris is the Coordinator of the Northshore Family Resource Centre soon to be renamed Marjorie House.

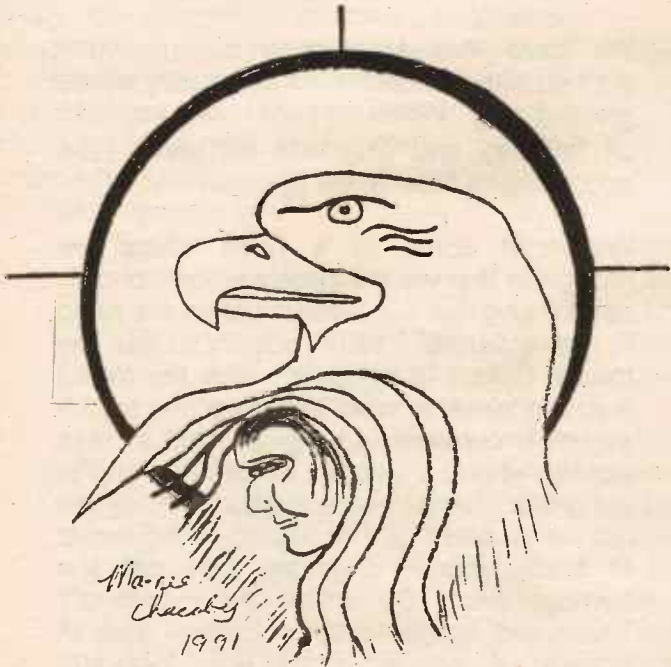
Sunday, May 12...as planned, some Native women from the previous evening started gathering and we found a place under the tree and began our circle. We shared, prayed, thanked and cried some more. Andrinne shared a poem she had written about the supper hour on Saturday. We closed with the hugging circle and headed over to the centre for the closing keynote.

9:00am Rosemary Brown...was truly a wonderful closing to a most powerful emotional and impacting conference. Her address of attacking violence at its roots by beginning with a clear analysis and the conference being a good place to start.

For me, she made the global connection with all women.....her comparison of other countries and violence are all the same. In recognition of the events of the supper hour previous evening she said there can be no feminism where there is racism. Her words to continue to look deeper and include everything when addressing violence sounded like a large order, but never the less it was an important closing to ask us to address the harms done.

I could not sit through the plenary as I felt some of the lingering rage from some of the women and made my way back to the hotel.

Monday.....As I boarded the plane the overwhelming joy of discovering my new journey beginning the sweetgrass path, was unbearable. As I reflected back on the conference while in flight to Winnipeg, I shed tears the entire trip. I reviewed all my encounters and information gained and shared. I thank my family for the guilt free time away, I thank my co-workers for their continued frontline work, I thank my employers for granting me the time and resources to attend. In all my journeys, I will share and give away what was given to me at Banff.



It is very fitting that we, the indigenous women stood up, as scared and insecure as all of us were. We found the strength within us to walk forward with our hearts, extremely vulnerable. I can't explain how scared we were, but we were scared. To find the strength within us to go forward in front of all these white women, and the anger in the room, to go forward and to give. When you can do that, you've done something good. I don't say this to brag about it, because I still feel the fear of that day. All I know is, I was given the name Mountain Woman for a reason, I guess, and it's supposed to be about strength because that's what the rock teaches us, it's faith, to have faith in yourself, your own heart, and to walk forward with it.

Lorraine Sinclair



WEAVING MATtER(s)

"Each weaving speaks such unique and important words"

"What a wonderful journey.. very different at times but such beautiful results"

"Heartbreaking, potent, intensely sensual, dramatic, wise and demanding"

"What stayed with me was the life and the forcefulness of the colours that turned serious messages into celebrations"

"A beautiful blending of art and politics"



Sister/s 1991

These are just some of the heartfelt comments recorded in the guestbook accompanying WEAVING MATtER(s) - an exhibit of thirteen tapestries by Thunder Bay's Sasha McInnes (exhibiting now at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery).

Many who view WEAVING MATtER(s) will first be overwhelmed.. the scope, the size, the colours, the magnitude of the work. Just to think of the amount of time spent weaving is amazing, then to realize that the artist "creates the canvas as well as the images", spinning raw wool into yarn, then, thoughtfully, magically, creating the strong, vivid colours in the dye pot. The tapestries are very large. The colours rich and vibrant.. predominantly purples, reds, pinks. The energy emanates. The power overwhelms.

It takes time to absorb this work. To contemplate the images. To analyze the emotions it evokes.

For these tapestries are very political work.

McInnes' weaving transforms silence into language. It is vital that we hear this language, that we break our silence, that we speak our truths. We are reminded of the words of Audre Lorde "My silence had not protected me"...

In an earlier NWJ interview (Nov. 1986) McInnes said "I resonate deeply with the fundamental belief in the power of symbols to enhance and transform reality which is what real power is all about, and, as a feminist, I believe that our movement must integrate the cultural work of our sisters into feminist analysis and practice. Images tell us who we most profoundly are and can be and it is folly to ignore or diminish their importance to our work."

Valerie Oosterveld, in an analysis of the tapestry "NO", says "McInnes uses weaving as Lorde uses poetry, to communicate in a feminist language the changes that must be made in our world in order to save it. The expression of the spider language through a medium such as weaving is important, for it allows the weavers and the audience (the woven) to identify their connections within the tapestry. It is one step towards eliminating the subject/object duality that has plagued those cast as Others for so long. If the makings of a new mythology can be identified in this McInnes weaving by the people who view the tapestry, that is another step towards connectivity.... McInnes' tapestry gives us courage to take the paths that lead away from a dead planet, and to help others do the same."

Each viewer will have a unique experience. Each viewing will be a new experience. It is important to absorb this work many times.

Weaving matters. Carole Farber, curator of the exhibit when it showed at the London Regional Art and Historical Museum (September 1991) says "... the connecting

thread running through all (the tapestries) is that "weaving matters" (doing it makes a difference), that "weaving matters' are those intimately bound with creating and recreating, resisting and asserting, and that "weaving matters is weaving mater(s)"the attachment of women, mothers and the Goddess. Sasha McInnes says that "weaving is a birth - as a woman does in the womb".

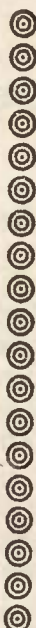
"Weaving matters" are also the experiences of vulnerability, victimization, and violence that women live with every day. Each of these tapestries means on many levels synchronously. They have been informed by such seemingly different circumstances in the artist's past and present as the wanton murder of fourteen women in Montreal and the painful backlash against feminists that followed it, the horrors of sexual abuse, rape and pornography, the gratifications and redemptions of erotica, the comforts and betrayals of women's friendships, and the healing of women's conferences and workshops - there are both hard realities and luscious allure in these works of art.

As a viewer, you are challenged to find the affinities and meanings that matter for you, to find in the space between your eyes and the tapestries a meaning that makes sense(ual) of the messages."

WEAVING MATtER(s) exhibits at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery until March 22nd. Don't miss it.

Glancing again at the guest book we find Jason's entry (in handwriting that suggests Jason is a very young person). He says:

"If more people were to come and look at this exhibit, it might help everyone to realize that their bodies are sacred and deserve respect."



In the company of many others, I turned out on the evening of February 14 to view the work of Sasha McInnes. Naive, I had no sense of what I was about to experience. Mention weaving to me and all I could think of was Jan Korteweg placemats. Green ones at that.

I was in awe as I entered the room where Sasha's pieces were hung. Every wall was cloaked in these magnificent creations - powerful visions - brilliant in colour and design. The room pulsated with energy and emotion. Enthralled, it was a struggle moving from one piece to the next, each like a magnet, drawing one back. Something very special happened to me that night. My spirit was lifted. Touched to the core, I left feeling I could get on with life again. I'm still shaking my head thinking about it...



- Fima.

REPORT ON THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO SURVEY OF THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF GIRLS

In the winter of 1990, 1416 girls in Northwestern Ontario participated in a survey to identify their health-related attitudes and behaviours. Liz Diem and Linda McKay, nurse researchers, conducted the survey on girls in grades seven to ten in the City of Thunder Bay and the Districts of Kenora and Rainy River. The nonrandom sample was 25% of the number of girls attending the specified grades in the city and districts at that time. The survey was initiated because an earlier study on infant death rates in the northwest revealed a poorer health status and higher pregnancy rates for adolescent females than those in the remainder of the province.

As expected, risk behaviours such as smoking and drinking were consistently reported by a much higher proportion of girls in the higher grades. Concern arises, however, from the extent and degree of the risk behaviour. Alcohol consumption emerged as the behaviour showing the greatest risk: 35% of the 12 to 16 year old girls in this study reported drinking at least monthly compared to 14% of 11 to 17 year old males and females nationally; 37% of the girls in grade ten in this survey reported having five or more drinks at one sitting six times or more compared to 21% of girls in grade eleven nationally reporting regularly having five or more drinks at one time. Alcohol is an even greater problem because very few of the girls who drank felt that their drinking would cause them health problems.

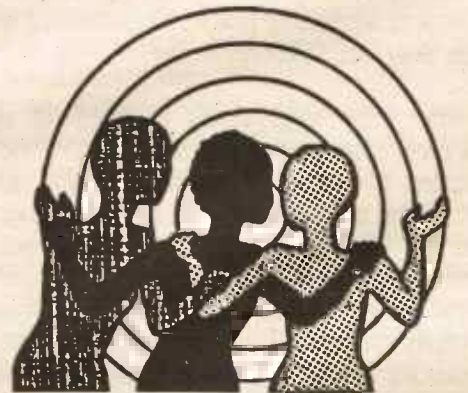
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Virtually every behaviour and attitude associated with health and well-being declined as the grade increased. The girls in high school exercised less and ate fewer meals than younger girls, and compared to girls the same age nationally, had lower self-esteem, poorer mental health and more problems with parents.

Some of these behaviours apply to a greater extent to the girls living in the Districts of Kenora and Rainy River and the rural areas around the City of Thunder Bay. For example, there was a higher consumption of alcohol and marijuana, less compliance with vehicle safety practices, and more problems with parents reported by the girls in the district group.

A number of questions were asked to determine the health-related concerns of the girls. Level of concern indicates the amount of interest in an area, and thereby might provide some clues to levers for initiating change. The 'future' ranked as the overall number one concern, with aspects of appearance (skin, weight, figure, teeth, hair) accounting for five of the top ten concerns. Relationships with family and friends accounted for two of the top ten concerns. The sexuality-related issues of AIDS and STDs rounded out the top concerns. Interestingly, concern about alcohol and drugs were not priorities, despite the high level of alcohol use which emerged in the study. Further investigation to determine the particular aspects of the future which are concerning the girls is warranted.

On the positive side, the study obtained information that could improve the timing, content and delivery methods of specific health programmes such as drug awareness, sexuality and physical activity. The findings also indicate that a community approach would likely be the most effective in reducing the risk behaviour of these girls. Hopefully this study will provide direction and incentive for the institutions and residents of Northwestern Ontario to work together to improve the health-related behaviour and attitude of some of our most vulnerable residents, adolescent girls.



The report is available from the Centre for Northern Studies, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7B 5E1 for \$10.00

Liz Diem
Linda McKay
School of Nursing
Lakehead University

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Update on the Women's Studies Program at Lakehead University

1991-92 has been an interesting and challenging year for Women's Studies at LU. While the program is only in its second year of operation, interest in Women's Studies has grown tremendously among students and faculty. Enrollment in the first year course, "Introduction to Women's Studies" rose from 20 to 110, and high increases were noted in several of the cross-listed courses as well. The broad cross section of students in the courses bring a wide range of life experiences to the classroom making for some stimulating and challenging sessions!

#####

With program budgeting very tight, most of our energies this year have been devoted to "creative" program planning. We have worked with a variety of other departments to expand the number of cross-listed course offerings. Three additional courses will be cross-listed for 1992-93 - "Canadian Women in Historical Perspective", "Sociology of Women", and "Women and Sociological Theory". In addition, two new courses are being developed for the spring and summer session this year. Dr. Margaret Johnston from Geography and Northern Studies will teach "Exploring Feminist Geography" during evenings in the spring session and Lisa Richardson from Classics will offer "Women in Classical Antiquity" in the summer session.

Recent events associated with Women's Studies were:

a performance of "The Body Image Project" on March 3rd

and

a public lecture by Dr. Lois Wilson, Chancellor, LU - Thursday, March 5

For further information on the Women's Studies program or upcoming events please call Pam Wakewich at 343-8937.

#####

by Josie Wallenius

I met Lilian and Ofelia at the International Women's Conference on Women and the Environment, held in Miami, November 1991. My going to the conference was something of an act of willfulness because I had decided that I wouldn't go to conferences any more. I couldn't see the point. Any international conference I had been to in the past had named world capitalism and imperialism as the enemy of the planet, and despite our knowing this fact our impotence to confront it in the West had become a harrowing grief to me and many other women I know.

I finally decided to go because I heard that women I respected were going, and because it is warm in Miami in November.

There were at this conference about 1500 women from all over the world, and some really good speakers.

Marilyn Waring told us about how the boys didn't think it was very cost effective to have so many people on the planet. Vandana Shiva said capital was going where it had never been before - ie control of human reproduction and seed re-generation. Rosalie Bertell said the military was the wolf in sheeps clothing and we shouldn't be surprised that all the chemicals were killing everything and beginning to kill everybody because chemicals are all spin-offs from the military and made to kill anyhow.

So of course, most of the women were very angry and fed-up women, with some of them more frightened than others, a phenomenon that has always interested me.

The ones who seem to be most frightened are the women who don't seem to want to explore everything down to its root, as though they are frightened of where the root will lead them. The ones who are not frightened seem to be the women from other countries who are at the bottom of the heap, and also the women from the West who know exactly why some women are further down the heap than others and that indeed, the imbalance of the heap is going to be the death of us all, and are therefore trying to do something about it.

On the second day of the conference I got up early and walked out of the posh hotel where we were staying. I passed by some black men sleeping by the side of the road, curled around their shopping carts full of old coke cans that they sold for a living. I entered a small diner a few blocks away. There was a woman sitting by herself, and I sat down and ordered coffee and we began to talk. This woman's name was Ofelia, and she was from Venezuela. Ofelia was very angry. She had come to this conference to tell the women there about her visions of "what had to be done" and she didn't see any outlets appearing for her to speak. She seemed to me to have some interesting ideas, especially about racism and capitalism, so I said I would help her to get a workshop organized and advertised.

I spent all of that day with Ofelia, pushing around at the organisers' desk, getting flyers made up, going around the hotel looking for a suitable space for a workshop, and generally talking up her workshop as much as I could that we had scheduled for the next day.

I spoke to my friends. "Look, you must come to this workshop. This Venezuelan woman has something important to say, do come."

LILIAN, OFELIA, AND

HOPE

The next day at 2 p.m. we met at the end of a corridor which was the only space we could get, and sat the chairs in a circle. There were only about eight of us, including two of my radical friends. I had persuaded these two friends to come because they were angry at some of the liberal junk flying around and I had promised them that this workshop would be different.

Ofelia started off in halting English to explain something about circles and webs. One of my friends, a native woman, said "Look, I'm sorry, but I'm feeling very angry and I know I won't be able to stand this, I really can't stand any more, so I'm leaving."

Ofelia called after her to no avail. The angry woman, who knew much about circles but was more worried about land and indigenous genocide walked away. Ofelia, looking very sad, continued. She asked if we would pick a partner and talk to this partner for 5 minutes so we could get to know each other. My other radical friend who was sitting by my side gave me a nudge in the ribs that nearly knocked me off my chair.

"I'm exiting via the bathroom" she said, which she then did, casting a baleful look back towards me as she went.

As my friend walked away she passed another woman who was walking towards us. I had not seen this woman before and she did not look like a 'conference woman.' She was dressed in brown corduroy trousers and a plain yellow jumper and she carried a sensible jacket. She had short straight silver hair and wore no jewelry or makeup. I would say she was about 50 years old and she had bright friendly eyes. Because there were spaces now on both sides of me she sat down by my side and became this partner I was supposed to talk to for 5 minutes.

I thought "In for a penny, in for a pound," and gave myself up to a process I have become sickened with because it usually evades any communication of real consequence.

"Hello," said this woman, "My name is Lilian."

Lilian told me that she lived in Miami, and worked as a school secretary. Although she was active in her union she had never been to a big conference before. She had read about this International Women's Conference in the Miami newspapers, and had thought it might be 'interesting' so she just took an afternoon off work. She said she just walked in the door of the hotel and walked up the stairs, saw us sitting on the floor and decided to join us. She then asked me with great friendliness who I was.

I will never forget Lilian's face as she asked me this question. Her face made me feel as though I was sitting in a kitchen with the smell of bread baking, and that everything was alright in the world, and I stuttered, "Well, I'm a sort of, well, a sort of Peace activist I guess."

Lilian smiled, and we went through the due process, introducing our partners to the other women, and I began to get fidgety.

I spoke up. "Ofelia, what are we here for?"

Ofelia looked harassed, she looked at her watch, then began talking quickly, showing us charts of circles and words that was supposed to describe some kind of process. She was obviously leading up to something. She then suddenly flung the charts to the floor and looked at us beseechingly.

"I haven't got time. I am trying to explain what happened to us in Venezuela, but they haven't given me any overhead projections or a slide projector, and I can't show you what I want to show you. Its the slides that would really explain it. I have been working for seven years with the poor street women of Venezuela, and what we did was collect the empty coke cans from the streets and sell them to the Mafia, and we bought seeds, and we took over some of the waste land they couldn't use any more because it was so filthy, and we cleaned it all up and we planted vegetables and flowers to sell in the markets, and if you could have seen the pictures of the vegetables and flowers, they are so beautiful, you would see why we are so proud of what we have done."

Ofelia sat on the ground and she was gazing into space, looking at her memories, and seeing the transformed wasteland of Venezuela that the women had created. As I looked at her transformed I could see it too, and I realised what the other women had missed.

They had missed a glimpse into our own future. They had thought that Ofelia was not radical enough for them, and I realised I had thought that as well and would have missed it like them if I hadn't bumped into Ofelia for coffee, or had Lilian walk out of nowhere to sit in the space by my side.

Lilian was busy taking notes. She asked me who had been the best speakers because she wanted to get tapes of their speeches. I walked around the conference halls with her while she collected the tapes of Waring, Shiva, Bertell and others.

We went from table to table where she unerringly picked up the most riveting, dangerous and powerful information from each table. Her bag was stuffed full to overflowing, and she carried this bag as though she was carrying precious stones. She listened to conversations of the women who had been to many conferences.

Lilian, I noticed in fascination, was extremely, "quick".

We got into a conversation with a big conference woman who thought Jimmy Carter was a good man. I said that Jimmy Carter worked for the National Endowment of Democracy and that anybody who worked for that organisation had to stink. The big conference woman seemed to doubt what I was saying, and that really depressed me. As Gillian Hunt has written, ... "those that understandeth not Ned understand nowt" but Lilian's eyes lit up. Lilian wanted to know all about the National Endowment of Democracy and she asked me to send her all the information I had on N.E.D. to her when I got home.

Lilian took us in her car for a tour around the Miami that we were not supposed to know about, like the places where the homeless live in shacks under the bridges.

Us big conference women were sitting in the back of Lilian's car talking about the big conference coming up in Brazil in 1992, where the people who were killing the world were going to pretend they were saving it. Us big conference women said we were simply too worn out to go to the counter-conference being held at the same place and time, and which was being organised by the real people who knew only justice could save the planet. I guess I was feeling sad when we admitted to this dreadful tiredness.

There were a few moments of silence. I said from the back of the car, "What do you think Lilian."

"Oh" said Lilian, "I have already decided to go."

I bet Lilian will bump into Ofelia in Brazil.



On Leaving

Well I said happily to the mistress of the house as she lightly gathered her skirt about her knobbly knees, well I mean how does one cope in these changing times?

Her face turned ashen and she spoke of broken hearts, broken families, the harsh competitive nature of survival, feeling only quicksand when left completely adrift like that.

The she collected all of her finest china, the stuff she never let loose from its round glassed-in cabinet, and she showered it against the nearest wall.

Being composed of plaster the wall began to dent, over and over again, until the quiet ivory reflections became marred and chipped. But the wall remained.

Taking a coffee spoon she proceeded to dig, slowly at first, into the plaster, going round and round, her tongue tracing out the hole she had gouged.

She remained in her fear, frantically labouring on the small, miniscule hole. No one told her the door had always been open.

And then she slumped sweating onto the divan. Her skirts covered in plaster dust settled about her once more.

Grimacing politely she referred to others as if they were dead, and continued to sip, sip her tea.

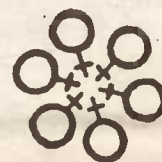
Barbara Lysnes
July 1983

CHILD CARE REFORM

Child care workers, parents and community activists are encouraged to participate in the Ontario government's consultations on child care reform. The government's consultation paper "Setting the Stage: Child Care Reform in Ontario" is a comprehensive document that clearly portrays the issues that have led to the present day care crisis; outlines the principles upon which the NDP government will base reform; and seeks public input on questions regarding quality, affordability, accessibility and management of a reformed child care system.

Public meetings to discuss child care reform will be held in **Kenora, May 12** and in **Thunder Bay, May 13**. Contact your local day care centre or the Ministry of Community and Social Services office in your area to obtain a copy of the consultation paper.

If you would like more information about Northwestern Ontario day care concerns, contact the **Northwestern Ontario Regional Day Care Committee, PO Box 144, Thunder Bay, Ontario** or phone 807-345-8803.



Welcome back, HERIZONS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The Northern Woman Journal and thousands of Canadian women are delighted to know that Herizons has reached their 3,000 subscribers pre-publication target and that the first new issue of this revitalized national feminist magazine will be published by the end of March.

The new Herizons will pick up where the old left off, offering national news and features on women's issues from a feminist perspective. As a subscriber-driven publication, over 90% of Herizons' revenue will come from subscriptions. No more long-term reliance on short-lived government grants!

In keeping with Herizons' tradition, the magazine will reflect a style that's dynamic, challenging and creative. Each issue will deliver in-depth features, interviews, news, film and book reviews, regular columns and great illustrations!

Financial co-ordinator Patricia Rawson is convinced that a financially independent Herizons will mean the magazine will be stronger than ever.

"Herizons will be accountable only to its readers and that's an important feminist statement. I think feminists are ready to make a commitment to support a national magazine like Herizons that's easy to read and relevant to their lives."

You can send your subscription cheque for \$21.40 (\$20 plus GST) to: Herizons, PO Box 128, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 2G1. For more information call (204) 774-6225.



GRANTS INFORMATION

SEXUAL ASSAULT PUBLIC EDUCATION GRANTS - MAY 1992

The Sexual Assault Initiative is in Year Three of a five year mandate. This year, in consultation with a community advisory committee, May has been designated as Sexual Assault Month. \$210,000 will be awarded to groups to assist them in promoting increased awareness and to emphasize prevention in their communities.

OWD's Public Education Campaign will consist of television advertising aimed at adults 18-49 and will be supplemented by public service announcements. The PSAs will be available to groups to air at their local stations. Radio ads will be aimed at teens and will be aired on stations that reach the largest numbers of teens.

Against our will is against the law newspaper ads will be run again this year and the Directorate will mail information packages to Ontario judges, crown attorneys, district and public health units, VON branch offices, gynecologists and psychiatrists offices, etc.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

At the January Community Grants Review Committee meeting the following grant applications received from Northern women's groups were approved:

- o **Kapuskasing Area Council and Action Centre** to begin coordination in the community as a follow-up to the Northern Voices Conference
- o **Northwestern Ontario Women's Decade Council** to coordinate and facilitate a Cabinet Forum for regional women to present their concerns to government.
- o **Northwestern Ontario Women in Trades and Technology** to create a newsletter and hold a workshop for networking of women in trades & technology.

Submission deadline for community grants is April 1, 1992.



RESOURCE

CENTRE

Some of the recent additions to the Northern Office Resource Centre include:

Dating Violence, Young women in danger, edited by Barrie Levy. This book focuses on the plight of teenage women who are particularly vulnerable to relationship violence. Dating Violence brings together professionals, activists, researchers and young people to provide a comprehensive, cross-cultural view of the problem.

Allies In Healing, by Laura Davis. Author of "The Courage to Heal Workbook" and coauthor of "The Courage to Heal". Based on in-depth interviews and workshops, Laura Davis offers practical advice and encouragement to all partners--girlfriends, boyfriends, spouses, and lovers--trying to support the survivors in their lives while tending to their own needs along the way.

Sexual Harassment of Working Women, by Catharine A. MacKinnon. A study of sexual harassment in the workplace makes a unique contribution at several levels...Mackinnon moves into the economic, social, and political considerations that underlie the legal problem. [She] offers us important information about a dark side of our society, a sensitive insight into the plight of those on the receiving end of sexual harassment, and an eloquent statement of her vision of equality between the sexes. It quickly becomes therefore, a book for everyone.

La reconnaissance des acquis, Marthe Sansregret, PH.D.. Son ouvrage sera utile à plusieurs administrateurs, conseillers et évaluateurs pour implanter de nouveaux programmes et améliorer ceux déjà offerts.

La féminisation des titres et du discours au gouvernement de l'Ontario. Publication de la direction de la condition féminine en Ontario. Ce document propose une orientation qui, reflétant les plus récentes tendances observées au Canada, s'inscrit dans la foulée des initiatives fédérales et québécoises. Ainsi on vise à rendre les femmes plus visibles dans les communications au gouvernement de l'Ontario.

Seules en grand nombre, dossier socio-économique sur la situation des ontarioises chefs de famille monoparentale. Publication de la fédération des femmes canadiennes françaises. Ce dossier socio-économique représente un outil pour sensibiliser le milieu et informer les femmes chefs de famille monoparentale.

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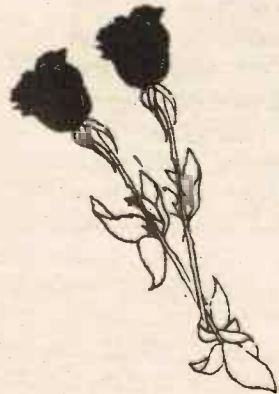
BREAD AND ROSES

Words: James Oppenheim Music: Caroline Kohlsat

As we come march-ing, march-ing in the beau-ty of the day,
 For they are women's children, and we mother them again,
 Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes;
 Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses!

As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men,
 Go crying through our singing their ancient cry for bread.
 Smart art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew,
 Yes, it is bread we fight for - but we fight for roses too!

As we come marching, marching, we bring the greater days,
 The rising of the women means the rising of the race.
 No more the drudge and idler - ten that toil where one reposes,
 But a sharing of life's glories; Bread and roses! Bread and roses!



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