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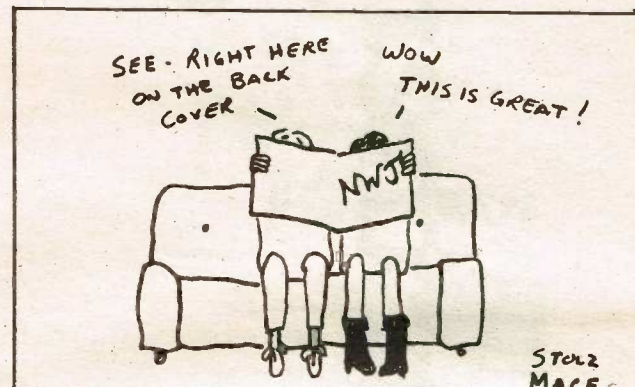
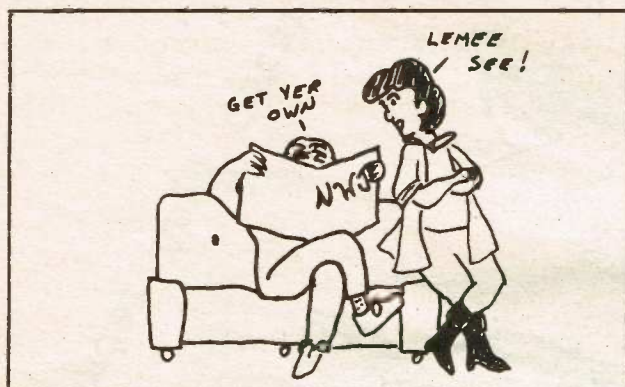
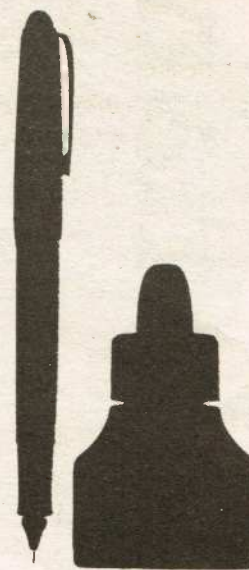
April 1994
1995

This issue of the NORTHERN WOMAN JOURNAL explores the lives of women. You may recognize these women, though you may not know them. Their lives and experiences are varied.

Our feature article is a commentary on the changes happening in the Canadian legal system and their impact on the efforts of Native people working for change within the traditional legal framework. This analysis is provided for us by Brenda Small, a native woman lawyer (and a Journal member). Other women who have shared their lives and their work with us for this issue include mothers and daughters, educators, lovers and friends.

The NORTHERN WOMEN JOURNAL Collective would like to thank our many readers who have recently made donations, renewed their subscriptions, and sent letters of support. From a regional Journal reader:

Thank you for all your continued effort on behalf of N.W.O. women. You are very important in sustaining our hope and faith that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.



REFORMING the CANADIAN LEGAL SYSTEM A NATIVE VIEWPOINT

Recently, I was asked to write an introductory article about Aboriginal Alternative Dispute Resolution initiatives which have been undertaken in various Aboriginal communities throughout the north. I was told that these alternative approaches were a reflection of the "customary" practices among Aboriginal Peoples in the north.

In reviewing reports on these efforts, I was disappointed at how consistent with mainstream euro-Canadian approaches to conflict resolution these proposed alternatives really were. In short, these initiatives reflected european concepts of patriarchy and the implicit power structure: these projects reflected exclusionary and arbitrary definitions of power.

I was dismayed to learn that these projects were not substantially different from the retributive model of the Canadian justice system.

The intrusiveness of the euro-Canadian legal system has always wreaked havoc in the lives of Aboriginal Peoples. Since contact with europeans Aboriginal Peoples have become acutely aware of the application of foreign law in our lives.

Part of the reason for our familiarity with the justice system is that we have had a long-standing historical and political relationship with the Canadian state, premised largely on legal concepts that originate in the depths of european history and imagination.

As Aboriginal Peoples our interaction with successive european settler governments has always been framed within a legal construct. Although our earliest interaction recognized that we had our own roots of sovereignty (as reflected in our respective independent nationhood status) we have become part of the dominant structure.

Referred to as "nation to nation" agreements and treaties these long-standing legal relationships placed Aboriginal Peoples and the europeans in an interdependent relationship with one another. The interdependence came with our mutual recognition of one another, our inhabiting the same lands and making commitments to coexist with one another in a peaceful manner.



To some extent this early recognition now informs the way we relate to one another. In spite of the fact that historical accounts and cultural perspectives differ we once enjoyed a mutually respectful relationship.

This relationship we share with one another has created a context for all of us in the present. As descendents of those who inhabited these lands and made promises to respect one another we are compelled to learn what we can about our legal relationship with one another in a contemporary context.

As Aboriginal Peoples living in Canada today, our familiarity with law is predetermined by this particular political and legal history. In many ways, in addition to being made subject to foreign law, we have acquiesced and accepted the imposition of this legal system.

We have become part of the euro-Canadian legal system to the extent that it can be argued that we have taken on this system and the ideologies implicit within. In effect, our internalization of european law is the ultimate result of imperialism and subsequent colonization. We now behave in prescribed ways.

A NATIVE VIEWPOINT

For many Aboriginal Peoples the legal framework presently applied in Canada prescribes identity and culture.

While some Aboriginal Peoples might take offence at this statement it cannot be disputed that we have learned to define ourselves on the basis of European law and that without it, some of us would be unable to describe ourselves in other terms.

To illustrate this point one need only look to those Peoples who define themselves according to rigidly defined legal relationships with the Euro-Canadian state.

In my community for example, there are people who declare that those whose families can be traced to the signatories of Treaty # 9, signed in 1905, are the only true beneficiaries of this agreement. That if you are not a direct descendent of these families, you are not entitled to comment on or participate in the treaty rights discourse presently taking place.



The conclusion that has been drawn is that if you are not descendent of these signatories you are to be excluded from participating in treaty rights discussions and even from being resident in the territory enumerated by the treaty.

In other words, you don't belong in the territory and finally, you are to be denied access and opportunity to continue your historic, traditional and "customary" relationship to the land.

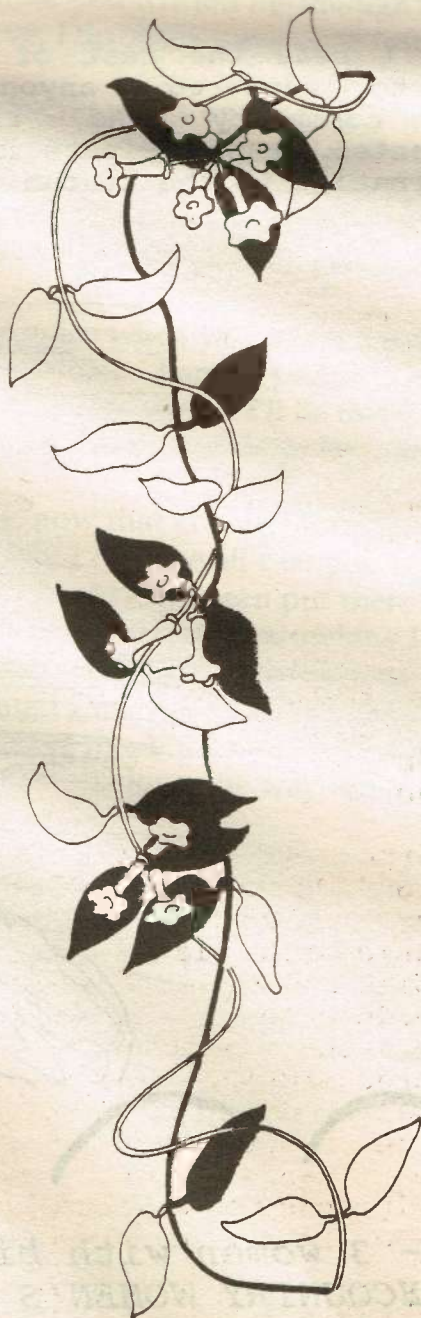
The result of this "treaty" understanding of the world is that the relationship to land that all of our ancestors enjoyed has become restricted in definition. A specific treaty has become the framework for the discussion of our traditional social organization. Treaty rights discourse in a contemporary setting belongs to those who either buy-in or believe in the foreign legal construction of human relationships.

For those who cannot trace and in fact, disagree that it is necessary to trace their ancestors to this (or any) specific agreement, are effectively denied the opportunity to participate in the discourse. The presumption is there that in order to participate in the discussion one must have a particular interest (or be party to this relationship).

It has been made clear that persons who do not share this understanding are not welcome, simply because they do not possess a treaty right to be at the table. Ultimately they are excluded.

Unfortunately, this reliance on a narrow legal argument has become the galvanizing force in my community: some think that keeping the "non-treaty" people away from the current political and legal debate will lead to a clarification, if not an affirmation of their legally-privileged position.

What has happened is that some people are silenced and oppressed further by their own community's reluctance to accept them on terms other than the treaty definition. I am always tempted to ask the proponents of this Treaty constraint: were they only realized as a group of "Peoples" in 1905 when a European settler government entered into a treaty with them? When the civil servant representing the government of the day asked them to sign their "x" on the dotted line did they look upon their kinship group and declare an exclusive or individual interest from that moment on?



I want to ask: Did the tribal kinship ties disintegrate on treaty day?

If Aboriginal Peoples can only qualify to participate in the present discourse on issues of governance on the basis of being descendent from an individual signatory does that mean we are relying on private agreements created by family dynasties and not Nations?

The ways in which we have begun to subscribe to notions of hierarchy and patriarchal authorities are found in many Aboriginal communities today.

What has happened is that power has become a part of our social order at a community level as reflected in family dynasties. One finds that certain families dominate contemporary politics within Aboriginal communities and that this is manifested in formalized male authority and leadership. Aboriginal communities have learned something of European patriarchy and learned how to apply this exclusionary form of authority in several ways. If one were to venture into a national or regional meeting of organized Aboriginal leadership in this country one would be hardpressed to find a large number of women involved in a formalized leadership role. (I want to be clear that this is not due to lack of effort or commitment on the part of Aboriginal women leaders).

At closer examination, specifically at a community level family dynasties are intact, where some family members are found thriving in key positions of political representation and employment. In noting the surname of an individual leader one can surmise that one or two particular families (sometimes interchangeably) enjoy power and are indeed dominant in the life of that community. Not unlike the dominant families of Canadian and American politics, we know that certain family names allude to power.



A NATIVE VIEWPOINT

The implications of this are such that we know that where there is dominance, there is sexism and classism.

In addition, there is internalized racism.

We know that where conditions in which power is exercised with the same arbitrariness that we have grown accustomed to given our collective histories of colonialism we have oppression.

The continuities that exist in our communities are such that we recognize and know intimately the nature of absolute power.

In the example of my community generations of people are being kept out of important discussions because they do not fit within the constraints of a treaty.

The example of the specific alternatives to the justice system mentioned in the introduction of this piece reveals the same exclusionary practise.

In reflecting on all of the examples that I could think of relating to arbitrariness at a community level I wondered: has it become "customary" practise that we now exercise power so callously.

In one anecdote I read in the alternative justice reports a woman was admonished by the Chief and the village minister for laughing at another man's joke, in the presence her husband. This was an issue that was deemed fit to be addressed in the context of this woman's reconciliation with her husband through an alternative community conflict resolution option.

This woman's life was subject to the scrutiny of the Chief and the local Council (under the federal legislation known as the Indian Act) and the local christian minister who presided over the alternative model.

In the course of her reconciliation with her husband she was instructed to "forgive" her husband for his display of male privilege and power in the context of their marriage. She was told that she had to learn to forget the pain and negative experience that had brought them to the conflict resolution model.

When I read this report I couldn't imagine what was customary about this woman accepting all the responsibility for her husband's behaviour in addition to her own.

I had assumed that by virtue of her participation in this pilot project she was accepting her community's initiative to address conflict in a culturally appropriate or customary way. However, I wondered if she truly wanted to rely on the local hierarchy established by the men in the community... for culturally appropriate conflict resolution.

When I read the rest of the reports I wondered if anyone in the community had truly consented to participate in an alternative to the status quo.

The alternatives proposed or discussed in these various reports reflected christianity, patriarchy and internalized colonialism. Has it become customary for us as Aboriginal Peoples to continue behaving in prescribed ways rooted in our experience of colonization and call this our tradition?

Are we prepared to accept so-called alternative forms of conflict resolution in our communities given the present oppressiveness of our own behaviour?

Will my community recognize me even if I do not trace my family back to a signatory of a given treaty?

If I cannot recite a band number granted by the federal government of Canada shall I be denied a place in the Aboriginal community?

As a woman, can I assume my place in my community or in the conference hall without fear of being silenced or ridiculed?

Like the woman in the remote northwestern Ontario community can I laugh at a man's joke?

By: S. Brenda Small



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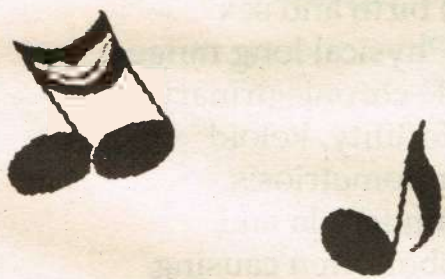
"The Hers" - 3 women with big voices
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OUTSIDE THE LINES Finds Success

One of the more pleasureable aspects of booking entertainment for the Superior Women's Coffeehouse is sitting back and being a part of the audience during the actual performance. The anticipation of the crowd's reaction to the performer(s) is exciting - being in the crowd when the reaction is a positive one is both a relief and a joy.

I have yet to be disappointed by the performers or the crowd's reaction to them at the Superior Women's Coffeehouse since its inception in the summer of 1993. I believe that the performers and the crowd have provided eachother with complimentary pleasure and comfort, which in itself fulfils one of my dreams of the whole concept of this event.

The Superior Women's Coffeehouse has been home to many local women musicians, including Joyce Michalchuk, Betsy Martin, Sue Paskoski and Nancy St.Jarre (now called "That's It, That's All"), and Sheila Barry. We have also been entertained by "bigger" names such as recording artists Amy Brunn and one of Canada's premiere singer/songwriters, Heather Bishop. More recently we have been treated to a much welcomed dose of local, grassroots, very "listener friendly" womyn's music in the form of **OUTSIDE the LINES**.



Jennifer Metcalfe and Lena Gray, both Lakehead University students from Southern Ontario have been together as a performing duo for three years. They have performed twice at the Coffeehouse and will undoubtedly be asked back many times. What is it about these two that makes them so entertaining? Quite simply, it is the combination of musical elements which creates a "quality performance." There are five elements that we can isolate which, in combination, create a memorable and meaningful performance for the audience (and for the performer, I suspect). With an analysis of these five elements, one can easily see why it is so wonderful to be in the audience when Jen and Lena perform.

The first and most basic element of a quality performance is **TIMBRE**, or quality of musical sound. Vocally, Jen and Lena have their own unique timbre. Although this is natural, one can improve their voice by simply using it (or by taking singing lessons). Both Jen and Lena have very natural sounding, naturally strong voices, with a full, round timbre. In short, they sound good.

The second element to a quality performance is slightly more ethereal, that of **EXPRESSIVENESS**. Musical performances which are expressive show that the performers have developed control over various styles of music and vocal production (eg. what type of singing is required for a song that is folk style?). As well, expressive performances feature emotion, not always the heart on the sleeve type, but emotion of some form **IN THE MUSIC**. Jen and Lena show a great range of emotion in their music, from the sweetness of love to the anger of betrayal to the celebration of life. It is all **there** - the listener must simply let it wash over them in the sound.

A quality musical performance is not all emotion but also must involve musical **TECHNIQUE**. Over the past number of years, I have enjoyed watching the development of Jen and Lena's techniques, particularly in their vocal sound. Not only are they both solo singers, but their voices in combination blend well and show complimentary timbre. Sometimes, two people can both be good singers but not sound as good when singing together. Jen and Lena have worked hard on their technique **AS A DUO** and the results are great!

The final two elements to a quality musical performance are **PRESENTATION** and **IMPACT**. It is in these areas where we, as listeners, most "appreciate" a performance. Presentation includes everything from the performers' "look" to how they interact with the audience. For me, this is the area where Jen and Lena really hook you in. Their rapport is easy-going and real. They say things about the songs they have written which the audience immediately relates to. Their woman-centered, lesbian affirming content is perfectly suited to the living room in which they practice, the Coffeehouse space and to the various rallies, workshops and celebrations at which they have performed.

Does the audience feel the **IMPACT** of their performance? I have never forgotten one and occasionally find one of their songs floating around in my head. When you hear **OUTSIDE the LINES**, you not only feel the impact at the time, but it stays with you. For me, this is the most important element of a quality performance. Jen and Lena's songs are both memorable and meaningful. Their songs explore relationships, people, politics and life. The audience enjoys the sound, the meaning and the lasting feeling.



OUTSIDE the LINES has recently performed at the NorthCountry Women's Coffeehouse in Duluth and keep your fingers crossed for the Northern Lights Women's Music Festival in Duluth (early September). I'm really happy for Jen and Lena that they are getting and taking these performance opportunities. It's great to hear them anytime or anywhere - at L.U. or in their living room. We are looking forward to hearing them again soon at the Superior Women's Coffeehouse.



A Must See: "Our Daughters Pain" Female Genital Mutilation

by Debb Hurlock.

Filmmaker Kim Harris combined her artistic talent and courage to create a film that graphically depicts the horrific reality of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

In her documentary, "Our Daughter's Pain" that aired on CBC April 1, 1995, Harris noted that it is "impossible to ignore our daughter's pain." This violent and tortuous procedure is widely practised in Ethiopia, Somalia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Latin America. Although FGM is illegal in Canada, there have been reported cases of it being performed privately in homes.

In her film Harris taped an actual mutilation procedure that occurred in April 1994 in Ethiopia. The girl, appeared to be 7 or 8 years of age and was surrounded by three elder women. For this, there was no anaesthetic and I really wonder if such a spirit could be strong enough to will away the pain induced by this procedure. This procedure was difficult to watch, yet turning away from it will only perpetuate the silent taboo surrounding FGM. The visual impact of something of this magnitude exceeded the vision often accompanied by written and factual material. Perhaps it is impossible to imagine such evil.

Perhaps, one could never imagine that it is as severely horrific as it is. Following this film, I can personally attest that the silence has been replaced with the chilling cries of a terrified girl.

The documentary consists of small groups of women from teens to middle age who had all been affected by FGM. These women all shared their stories, the most simple tasks became unbearable for them such as being unable to sleep, to use the washroom, even walking was a task that needed to be relearned to adjust to their pain.

Female genital mutilation...the most simple tasks became unbearable for them such as being unable to sleep to use the washroom, even walking was

a task that needed to be relearned to adjust to their pain...the power of this documentary could very well be a fundamental step towards

stopping our daughter's pain.

There are three principle forms of FGM performed on women in different cultures. The procedure happens between infancy and marriage and its purpose is to prepare women for marriage. FGM has become a rite of passage for women as they are *able* to be married. This patriarchal socialization essentially needs to be redefined.

The first form is the partial or complete removal of clitoris which causes severe sexual, psychological and physical complications.

The second is the *Intermediate* form in which parts of the clitoris, the labium minora and labium majora are removed. This causes haemorrhage, shock, tetanus and septicemia.

The most severe form is *Infibulation*. Two sides of the vulva are removed, the labium minora and labium majora are removed and the flesh is sewn together. What remains is a pea-size hole left for urination and menstruation making child birth and sex impossible. Physical long range effects include chronic urinary retention, infertility, keloid formation, endometriosis, menstrual pain fistula and obstructed labor often causing death.

Infibulation is the most predominant form performed in Somalia and throughout East Africa. 100 million women around the world are living with FGM. Thousands are mutilated everyday. The world has always been aware of this procedure, yet nothing is being done about it. One woman in the film questioned why people do not save women when humanity can channel extensive energy into creating weapons, they have the power to destroy, they have the power to save and "if we all stand against mutilation" perhaps we can start healing our daughter's pain.

Female Genital Mutilation

Women are victims to a cultural and religious patriarchy. The elder women are not doing it to torture their daughters, they do it, believing it is in their daughter's best interest in order to ensure them marriage. The pain of not getting married is a greater pain than mutilation. In order for women to be eligible for marriage they must undergo infibulation. Another woman from Somalia stated that "a man likes getting a woman, who has never been touched before, he likes to get a new locked box so that he can open it with his own key."

In Canada it is very difficult to get women to speak out about a tradition that is so deeply rooted. Hence, there is a dire need to shatter the apparition of patriarchy, for FGM is being masked with a patriarchal culture. Women are performing FGM for the men as men refuse to marry women who are virgins.

This film is a must see for every person. I applaud Harris' courage to give a voice and a face to an issue that has been masked in cultural and religious silence. The power of this documentary could very well be a fundamental step towards stopping our daughter's pain.



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

HIGHLIGHTS

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

OF WOMEN

Worldwide human rights organization Amnesty International began an international campaign on March 6 to highlight the human rights abuses of women.

Women and children comprise most of the world's war casualties, refugees, poor, and displaced persons they report.

Their campaign includes a 135 page report with a 15 point plan aimed at placing the issue on public and government agendas. The campaign precedes the September 1995 United Nations Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing.

"Few countries treat their women as well as their men...the discrimination against and vulnerability of women is exploited..While women are under-represented in national and international decision-making structures, they are over-represented among the victims of rights abuses," reports Amnesty.

The track record is bleak: "So far governments have more or less ignored human rights violations against women - and sometimes effectively given a green light to torture or rape by their police or soldiers," they said.

Women are often the targets of reprisal killings during wars. They are raped, sexually assaulted, and must provide "sexual favours" to security and border personnel.

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Many Thanks to the
NORTHERN WOMAN JOURNAL COLLECTIVE
for helping organize this year's
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY DINNER and DANCE
Your participation was much enjoyed and appreciated!

from the IWD Committee of the
Northern Women's Center

Drama's value unrecognized

By Barbara Mitchell Pollock

This article was difficult for me to write. Facing the dragon, and accepting that my being a teacher of Dramatic Arts is not valued by the school system where I work, has been a real struggle for me.

I teach high school in Northwestern Ontario. It is a demanding job, one which I have to work at continuously to make the drama live.

Three years ago, I consciously chose to teach in the secondary system. Previously, I had been teaching adult education at the college level. My plan was to work on my doctorate, and then to teach at the university level. However, several professors advised me not to teach in a system that as Adrienne Rich stated: *that nothing could more effectively seal a woman's sense of her secondary value in a man-centered world than her experience as a 'privileged' woman in the university-if she knows how to interpret she lives daily* On Lies Secrets and Silence (1974).

My hope was to teach in the secondary system, which could value my experience as a teacher, and as a woman. I chose to specialise in Dramatic Arts, as it would allow me to bring my experience from theatre arts, social work, and a strong feminist background into my classroom. I wanted a classroom where the students' experience would be valued, and the curricula would be relevant to the students' lives. Very recently I have discovered that the teachers' knowledge and experience must at the same be valued. I accepted the contradictions, acknowledging that in the patriarchal system women's experience and knowledge are routinely not respected or recorded. My image of myself to a large extent has been strengthened by acquiring various degrees. This past summer, I received my specialist qualifications in Dramatic Arts. Now I would be valued. Right.

The Dramatic Arts Consultants Association of Ontario has tried to prove itself by creating Dramatic Arts Standards based on the Common Curriculum. But let's confront the crux. Dramatic Arts is seen as a soft subject.



There is a lack of respect not only in the content, but also in the way the subject is taught. Science courses are seen to deal with objectivity; dramatic arts lacks standards. Dramatic Arts is viewed as time away from the subjects that will prepare a student to earn a living. A safer route for a student who wants and needs high marks to enter university would be to take the Ontario Academic Credits needed to enter university in sciences or languages, rather than in Dramatic Arts. There is less of a risk in taking those subjects, where both marks and content seem to be more standardized. In mainstream society, and to many in the secondary system, Dramatic Arts is seen as an "easy" course, of little value.

In our board, most teachers of Dramatic Arts are women. Like most boards in Ontario, there is no separate department for Dramatic Arts. Almost all the programs fall under the English, or Art Department. Therefore, it is almost impossible for a Dramatic Arts teacher to rise through the ranks from department head to principal. This rise is also financially rewarding.



Many people who teach Dramatic Arts are left with a classroom that is inadequate to teach the subject. Presently, the high school image is largely dependent on competition focusing upon high academic achievement and sports teams. Working collaboratively is important, but it doesn't have the recognition or financial backing that it should have.

In the 60's, when I attended high school, there were no courses in drama. Some schools performed plays. Mine didn't. I was involved with drama outside of school: the Toronto School of Drama, and street and radio theatre with the various groups that I belonged to that were concerned with ending the war in Vietnam. I knew that drama could have a positive effect on a teenager, especially one who was failing in the school system. I know from my teaching experience that Dramatic Arts can develop a student's awareness and self-confidence. It is in the Dramatic Arts classroom where students have the opportunity to develop theatre skills, and more importantly, their communication skills.



In the 70's, Theatre Arts was taught. In the 80's, and presently in the 90's, it has developed into Dramatic Arts. The state curricula includes: the student identifying action for self-improvement and improvement for others, empathizing with the feelings of others, and respecting the ideas and values of others. These are qualities that I feel need to be taught in our violent and racist society. In the Dramatic Arts classroom, students can deepen their understanding of society, realize implications for their actions and discover new depths of language. These can all be achieved in the drama classroom, contained in the drama, giving the safe distance that students need.

Dramatic Arts students have the opportunity to support and learn from each other. Learning outcomes are important in Dramatic Arts: gaining self-expression, developing self-awareness and self-confidence and working collaboratively with peers. These are the skills that employers want their employees to have.

In my classroom, I am able for most of the time to stimulate, excite, and watch the students develop their skills and self-images. It is a demanding teaching job, but one that I enjoy immensely, even without the recognition that we all seek. I value that I teach. I believe that Dramatic Arts classes are demonstrably important and can enrich the lives of everyone concerned.

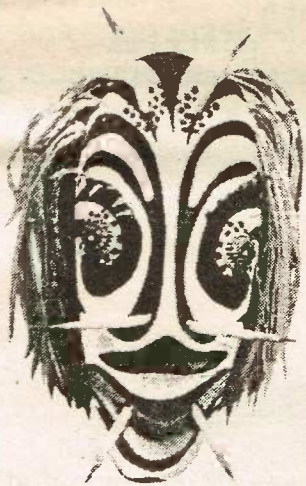
While writing this article I spoke to some people who had taken Dramatic Arts classes in high school. All the people who had taken classes valued the subject. Kim Erickson, an artist in Thunder Bay, said that it saved life. "Dramatic Arts classes were the only courses that I took that were intellectually challenging. The skills that I learned in class I continue to use in my life, and in my work as a performer and a composer. Richard Burton, a police officer said, "If dramatic arts was a compulsory course in the high school, I believe we would see less conflict in our society. Students would be given opportunities to understand and act out their emotions in a safe environment." He credits his Dramatic Arts courses with increasing his ability to communicate with individuals and large audiences.

DRAMA...

Rene Morrill, a student, talked about how her Dramatic Arts course helped her become more outgoing, and gave her the freedom to be herself. Although still a teenager, she has the self confidence to express herself without worrying about what other people think of her. Arliegh Hood, also a student, felt that her courses have allowed her to learn and expand herself. "Dramatic Arts courses are fun, and provide me with the opportunity of opening up my mind to different viewpoints."

Dramatic Arts classes are highly regarded by many, but not in our society, or in our school systems. As a woman, and a teacher of Dramatic Arts I believe we all need to recognize the value and importance.

This article was first printed in "Remote Control" a publication of the Definitely Superior Art Gallery



NATIVE WOMEN IN THE ARTS

PREMIERE ISSUE 1995

In this first issue of Native Women in the Arts, the lives and creativity of Aboriginal women are reflected in their short stories, poetry, excerpts of plays, biographies, songs, and visual art work. This issue, "in a vast dreaming" celebrates the creative work of well-known and emerging Aboriginal women artists. The opportunity to express and share created by this journal inspired some women to put pen to paper for the very first time.

In this special issue, you will be introduced to 46 Aboriginal women from various nations. These women will inspire you.

\$7 PER ISSUE

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Please send \$7 + \$2 postage & handling

Edited by Beth Brant
in a vast dreaming

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FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN IMPROVES CLIENT SERVICE

TORONTO -- Ontario's Family Support Plan is taking another step to improve client service.

The program, which ensures children's rights to financial support from parents, is enhancing its central inquiry telephone information system. A new "mailbox" feature will allow clients to request brochures and information by recording their name and address on an automated telephone line. The mailbox will be available seven-days-a-week, 24 hours a day.

Parental responsibility for family support payments is a major social issue in Ontario affecting over 120,000 recipients. The establishment of automatic wage deduction in March of 1992 has dramatically increased support payment collections: \$33.5 million was processed in June of this year compared to \$14 million in February of 1992. Presently, Ontario is the only province that has automatic wage deduction legislation. Last year the program collected and dispersed \$297.5 million in support payments. Ms. Vidal-Ribas adds, "The Family Support Plan is dedicated to making payment of support in a non-adversarial environment a priority."

To access the automated telephone line, 419/905 area code residents can call (416) 326-1818. All other Ontario residents can call 1-800-267-7263.

POETRY

Kathy

I burnt the ridges of my fingerprints smooth
when I touched the sun of your face
sulphuric acid of the Kray brothers
my kneecaps nailed to the floorboards of life
bending forward I peered through
a knot hole down to the cellar
to see your beautifully shaped shaved head
hiding from the husband who raped you
broom handle, broken wine bottle
caught wearing your dresses
you suggested he shaved his armpits
tasted the sharpness of your own blood
back of hand contacts smart mouth
I bought you a green felt hat
to keep your skull warm in winter
protect you from his frigidaire gaze
frail body gave softly under my thumbs
I wanted to heal you
I tried everything, gave you the love you craved
wrapped my body around yours wracked with sobs
held you against my breast
alone in the cellar you hug your knees tight
my old grey dress strains over them
we are forced apart
I am unable to free my knees

Jill Battson

Asking for Answers

playing with Pandora's Box
Hot Potato, will it drop?
eyes on hands and hands on it,
maybe we'll just peek a bit.
Engine, Engine Number Nine
who'll be next to cross that line?
Eenie-Meenie-Miny-Mo,
leave things be, or let it go?

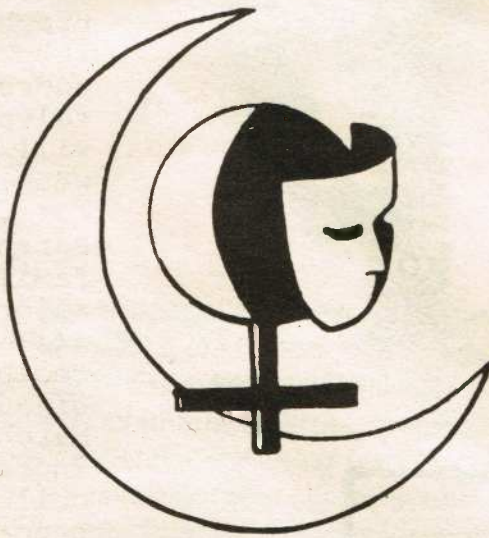
loving lust and lusting love,
dancing women fluid move
through dreams or darker night,
dreams whose faces bear no light.
kisses, hands and swimming eyes,
Hell-bent wives or Heaven's Brides?
dancing women, faces veil'd
tell us, Sisters, have we failed?

who knows what Pandora saw?
women under no man's law?
Sappho, Mary, Joan of Arc
women bearing no man's mark?
solitary women, lonely.
strength beyond but women only.
arms outstretched with upturned palms
i wait for answers, wait for calm.
by tina

Ashes of a Loved One

The fire consumes my body
as you did when I lived
my moisture
my flesh
even my soul
and you will devour me again
after the heavy weight
crushes my smoking bones
honeycombed dry by heat
thighs and skull
too thick to reduce to velvet ash
mistake of blackened catfish
delicacy of creoles
home born slave
I will be your delicacy
melting over your tongue
as in life
when you licked length of lips
you will sprinkle me over cornflakes
the singed wheatgerm of my fingers
mix my body grainy and reduced
like rubbed in pastry
with flour and butter in equal parts
bake me again
to freeze in foil packages
celebrate this anniversary
year after year
defrost me
ice me
dress me up
in chocolate sprinkles
glace cherries
savour my body again
remember me
in your mouth
through your nostrils
consume the ashes of your loved one

Jill Battson



Choosing Labels

Sleeping with their heads on fire,
Three women in an oft-fuelled pyre.
Fury,

Siren,

Salome:

The Mother--Temptress--Daughter three
Comprise the woman's trinity.
Look Sister, but in choice beware
Which name you choose,
Whose mask you wear.

The Femme Fatale without her veil
Is but a child--
a frightened girl.

by tina

Passage

Something is happening to me.

At night I fall asleep
exhausted from the day
fevers down lunches made
dishes clothes children put away.

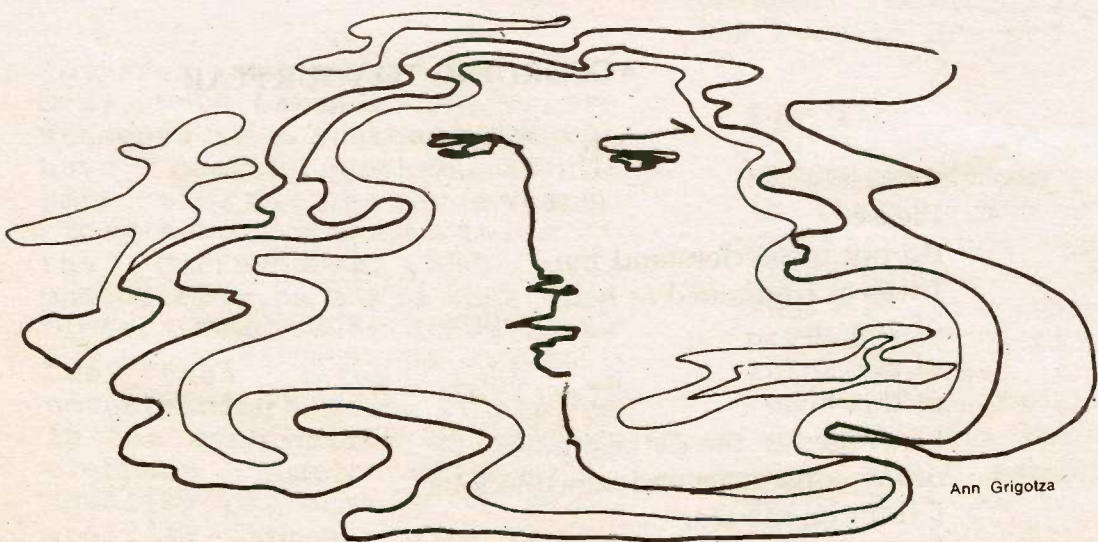
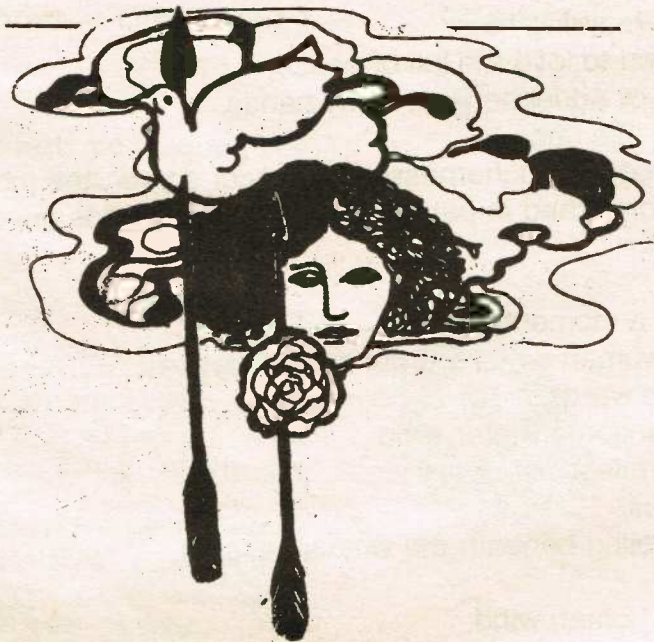
But always wake
memories playing through my head
past reels of people places feelings words
rewind play
rewind play
I cannot get the tape to stop
rewinding back through twenty-odd years
of almost-was and could-have-been
and if--

I had one more drink I'd--
wanted to kill you when I read--
look at the reaction you got there--
they really noticed you he said--
I know you wanted that too as much as--
you mean the grow old together love.

And I am writing this alone
have quietly stolen out of bed in tears
so the scratch of the pencil
cannot be heard
by anyone but me
and stops the videotape
of the past
from fast forwarding my years.

Renee
Norman

P O E T R Y



Tell Dear Fran

"The woman that moved in next door,
Have you seen her? Did you know?
She's sweet and kind, she lives alone,
She works two jobs, she's seldom home.
Casual dress and slight make-up
Gives her that distinguished look.
Perhaps we'll have her in for tea,
Welcome her to the neighbourhood you and me."

"Count me out! I heard from Fran!
She told me she's a lesbian!
I don't see how you couldn't tell
The way she dresses, the way she smells!
I told Mary and she told Sue,
We're getting together to discuss what to do.
Imagine if you really can,
Our neighbour...well just ask Fran!
We need not be exposed to this,
And what about our neighbours kids.
This really is a bad disgrace,
I think I'll tell her to her face!
I'll speak to her, she'll move I guess,
If not there'll be an awful mess!"

"I can't believe what I'm hearing,
A hate wagon and you're steering.
You should stop this unkind quest,
And look at friends that you know best,
Take a good look all around,
There's nothing wrong with what you've found,
I too am a lesbian!
Please take note and tell dear Fran!"

Poetry

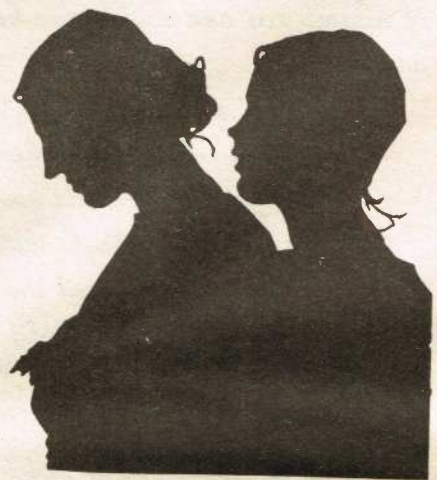
Inspiration

There's not enough days
for mornings
wrapped in a green duvet
stunned with early morning haze,
just enough sedation to love the lull of peace,
I clutch the poems of Adrienne Rich in my hands,
I can't believe how she finds
the words to articulate the unharnessed beauty of a river, the mountain laurel at night,
the lesbian lovers drenched in patriarchy's pain, the friends needing death to discover
their love.

I close my eyes for a moment,
wondering with a woman writer's urgency and desire
if I too will find such words,
listening to the intentional winter wind
hammering with formless fist
against the windows,
their thinness trembling beneath the wind's passion.

I can feel her own human wind,
blowing seamlessly across my bare shoulders,
my body, thin and trembling, beneath her breaths
I can feel her sleeping body,
light in dream
heavy in warmth and reason beside me,
I turn
watching your childlike need for rest,
your pulse throbs subtly beneath the concavity of your neck
your delicate lip, curved and still,
half bright from the winter morning sun.

I turn again to the *Twenty One Love Poems* of Adrienne Rich
and I realize with calm and belong...yes,
with her human body warm against my side
I understand now Adrienne,
how you write the words.



ACCORDING TO YOUR FEAR

Please
do not misunderstand me
I was as frightened as hell
of you
of me
of this love,
I travelled to the darkest mires
of my conscience and subconscious
I vomited my fear
I masked my fear
but when I actually pulled it out of me
and looked within its eyes
I realized the love I feared
was stronger than any fear made.

AMNESTY

At the same time, female activists are often subjected to other "vile" abuses such as torture, they said, because they are viewed as politically threatening to the government in question.

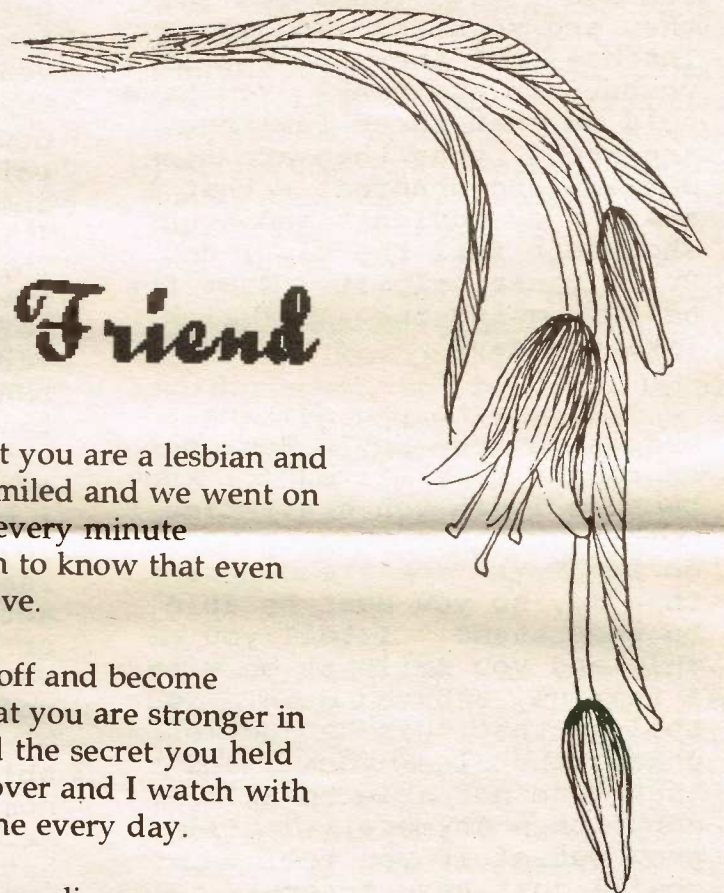
Amnesty also worries that the UN conference may mirror this suppression: "Governments are now sending worrying signals that they want to limit - rather than promote - women's civil and political rights at the UN conference."

Among the AI agenda, aimed therefore at government and armed organizations, is a call for government recognition of its role in the prevention of women's human rights violations. These include rape, sexual abuse torture, "disappearances", and unlawful executions.

Also condemned in the report are other issues such as domestic violence, genital mutilation, and forced prostitution committed by organizations and individuals.

While there have been laws introduced to improve women's equality, Amnesty International reports that gender discrimination remains an international problem.

Rewritten by Joyce Michalchuk for the *NWJ*. Original Reuters article published in the March 7, 1995 *Chronicle-Journal*, Thunder Bay.



Open Letter To a Friend

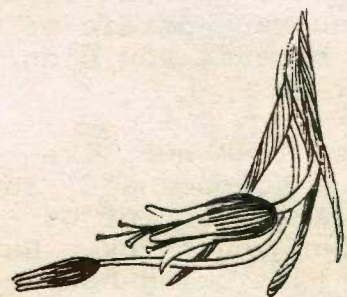
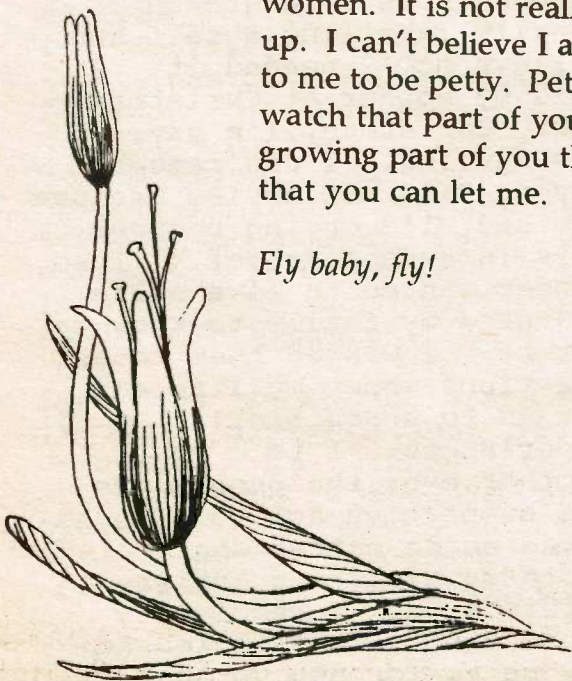
So recently you told me what I already knew. You told me that you are a lesbian and I held my breath for the briefest of seconds and let it out and smiled and we went on with our friendship. I loved you more that very minute and every minute afterwards. I loved you more, because you trusted me enough to know that even though I don't share your type of love, I do share capacity to love.

And so here I am, watching your butterfly wings open up, dry off and become strengthened by your own self assurance. I know every day that you are stronger in your own mind and the trepidation with which you whispered the secret you held is disappearing. The strength of the woman you are is taking over and I watch with love as your signature smile becomes brighter and more genuine every day.

I love to hear the excitement in your voice when you relate a new discovery, a new place, a new book, a new voice, a new friend. I am so proud to be a part of your birth. I thought all the right thoughts for my sake. "I'll be there, I'll support you, I'll go to the events and be your security blanket in those late night phone calls."

What is so strange to me, is that now, now that you are stronger and happier and better every minute, I am so jealous that I can't be all that you need. I am so jealous that I can't put the sparkle in your eye that I have seen put there by other wonderful women. It is not really my place to do it anyway, but somehow I still feel all twisted up. I can't believe I am jealous, but I am, and I am sorry because to be jealous seems to me to be petty. Petty is the last thing I want to be. So, I'll stop. I'll sit back and watch that part of you head off and leave me, but I will relish and savour each growing part of you that is left for me to still love, the way that I can, and the way that you can let me.

Fly baby, fly!



Through MY Eyes

by Brenda Daugherty

I stand before you, looking at you through my brown, or blue, or maybe even green or grey eyes. I look at you and know that I am different than you. Who am I you ask? I am your sister, your brother, your mother or father, your cousin, best friend, niece or nephew, your son or daughter, your colleague or possibly even your wife, husband, girlfriend or boyfriend. But you say that I look just like you, so I must be just like you. But I know that I am not.

You see what I know is that I laugh, learn, teach and love. But it is different. You see I have these feelings, they are so strong and so intense, but they are not like yours. Or are they? You have told me that these feelings are wrong, that they are sick, deviant and abnormal - that I mustn't or couldn't and even shouldn't feel the way I do. But I can't help it. What the hell is going on? Am I sick like you say?

I come to you seeking understanding. Why? Because there are more of you. I know because I see you every time I walk down the street, or turn on the T.V. You are older than me, so you must be able to understand. I tell you this and you smile at me with a fearful, ashamed grin. You tell me that this is just a phase, that I am young, and that I am not able to talk about this anymore. You'll grow out of it you tell me, you'll just have to try.

So I tried. I tried very hard. I tried on my first date, at my high school prom and I even tried at my wedding. But you know, you were wrong. Those feelings never did go away.

I am older now and now I must be honest. Honest you ask? Yes, honest - honest with myself and honest with you. I only hope that you can truly be honest with me. Can you tell that I was not sick, but that you were afraid of me and for me because you didn't understand?

You see I am not like you. I am a homosexual. You know there are a lot of us - a lot more than you think. But right now, I am being honest and there is something that I want you to know. I want you to know that I am not sick, that I am not abnormal. I do not hate men or women. I do not molest children and I am not sexually deviant or a pervert and I do not want or

desire you in any way and I do not convert heterosexuals. I pay taxes, I work, I am educated. You know, if you cut me I bleed. I have dreams. I want to be financially stable. I want a house, a new car. I want to travel. You know, I want to commit myself to a loving, learning, giving relationship and yes, I even want a family. Funny, the more I talk the more I sound just like you. But wait, I am different - or am I?

I also want to tell you not to feel sorry for me, or pity me, or tokenize me, or rationalize me, or cure me, or discourage me, or tolerate me, or accept me or understand me. I want you to understand yourself. I want you to know that I want to walk proudly down the street holding my partner's hand and meet smiles instead of shock and disgust. I want you to know that I think about your reaction and feelings towards my behaviour before you think of mine. I want my family to not be ashamed of me and to stop telling me that a partner of the opposite sex will make everything better and easier. I want to be able to discuss love and relationships with my family and friends instead of acting as if they don't exist, or that they aren't real. I want to stand here and not be nervous about who I am because of who I love. I want to be able to say lesbian, gay and homosexual in public in reference to myself and not have the room go quiet. And most of all I want to be me, just me. Me, the one standing before you, looking at you through my brown, blue, green or grey eyes. And I want you to know that I am different and the same as you in many ways.



I was raised in a white, middle class Presbyterian family. My mother - a medical secretary; my father - a factory worker. I am the youngest by ten years in a family of four children. I had my first homosexual experience at age 18, although I had questioned my sexuality much earlier. I spent much of my young adulthood in silence as to who or what I really was. I was afraid, ashamed, remorseful, anxious, excited and scared. I could not talk to anyone and was quite aware of that in my younger days. I found it hard to admit to myself what was going on.

After my first heartbreak, I told my mother. At this time I was told not to worry, it was just a phase and not to let it happen again. Ok, that was a relief. So off I went to university. I went as far away as I could so as not to experience the same situation. I even looked in Linda Frum's guide to universities and read "don't go to Lakehead if you're a homosexual." I was safe. Well, it's pretty hard to run from yourself. By the end of my first semester I was involved with a woman. It was basically pretty detrimental. She, just like everyone else, was homophobic. We didn't know what we were doing but we knew it felt right.

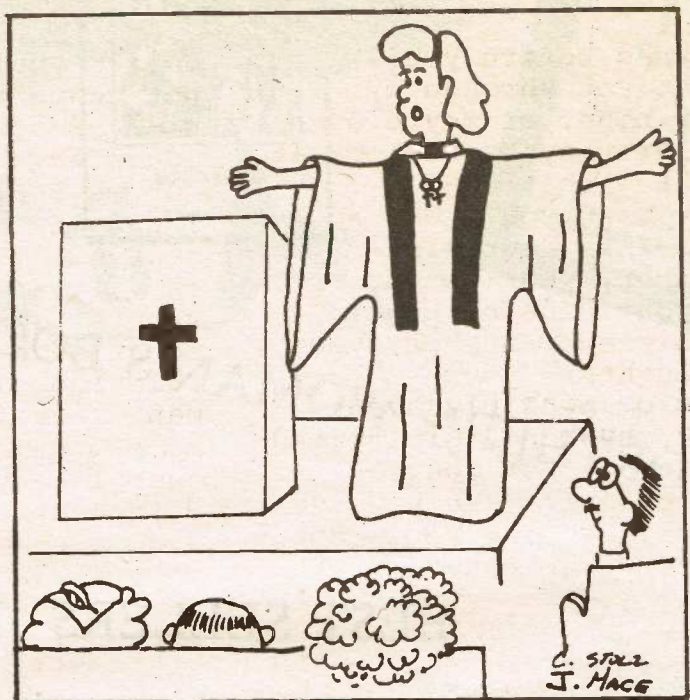
By year four, after much soul searching, I was finally able to say that I was a lesbian. God, how I hated to say that word. I was so much not me. I don't look like a man and I don't want to be a man and I don't hate men. So how can I be a lesbian? I am a lesbian because I love women. So now I had to tell my family. Well, through all this confusion I must say that I found some strength in finally labelling myself and believe me, I needed it. I told my mother at Christmas. Merry Christmas, I'm gay. I was bawling. I can remember saying "I'm not crying because I'm sad, I'm crying because this is such a relief." I no longer wanted to live a lie. I wanted my family to know me for me. I wanted them to ask questions about my life and for us to share similar experiences. I told my brother over the phone. He was supportive and told me he loved me no matter what. I wrote my sisters a letter and within a week I received a phone call. They wanted to fly me to Toronto so that we could seek counselling. Did I know what I was doing with my

see top pg. 15

life? Believe me, after a lifetime of secrecy and contemplation, I know what I am doing with my life!

Today, I am out of the closet. I still go home and visit my family with much deliberation and try to discuss my life to closed ears. I meet my partner's parents and wonder if I will be involved in Christmas next year or is it just too hard to explain why this girl is in our house for Christmas and not with her own family. Or even if I am sick, will my partner be allowed to be at my side, comforting me or will she be excused, cast off as just a friend?

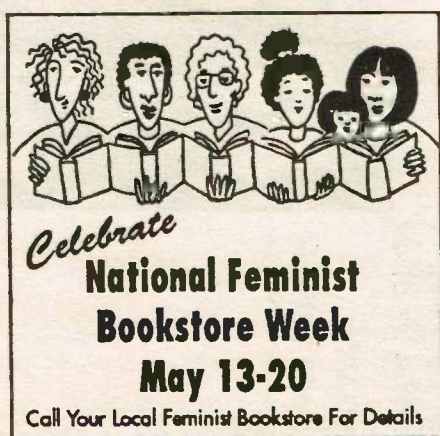
Who am I you ask. I am your sister, your brother, your mother or father, your cousin, your best friend, your niece or nephew, your son or daughter, your colleague or possibly even your wife, husband, girlfriend or boyfriend. What I want from you is to be allowed to be me. I stand before you, looking into your eyes of brown or blue, or maybe even green or grey and wonder. Are you able to see out?



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NOTICE RE:
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
of the NORTHERN WOMEN'S CENTER
Tuesday, June 6, 7:00 pm
184 Camelot St.
Speaker to be announced

Call 345-7802 for more details or
to nominate someone for a Board Position



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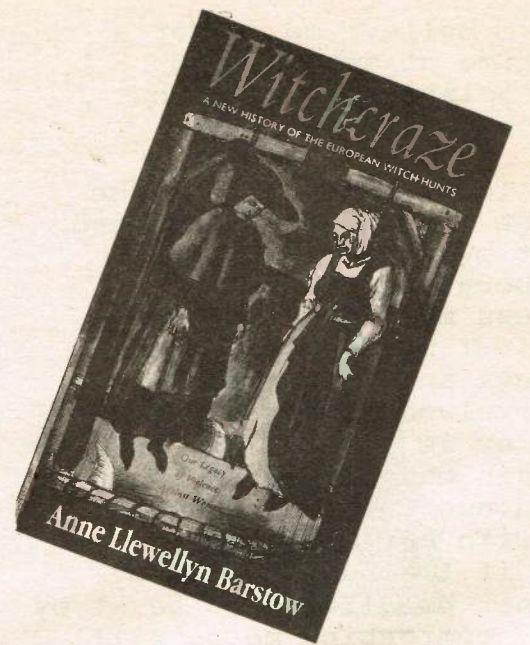
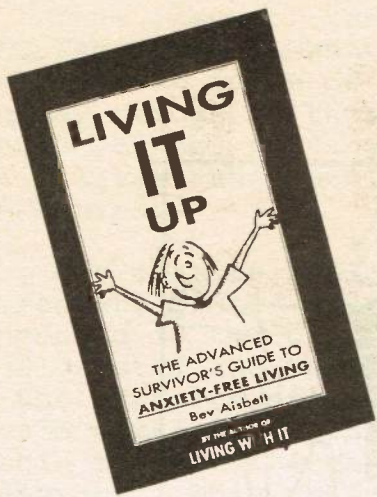
Saturday, June 3rd

9 pm - 1 am

Multicultural Center
17. N. Court St. (by Keskus)

\$5.00 at the door

food, fun, dance



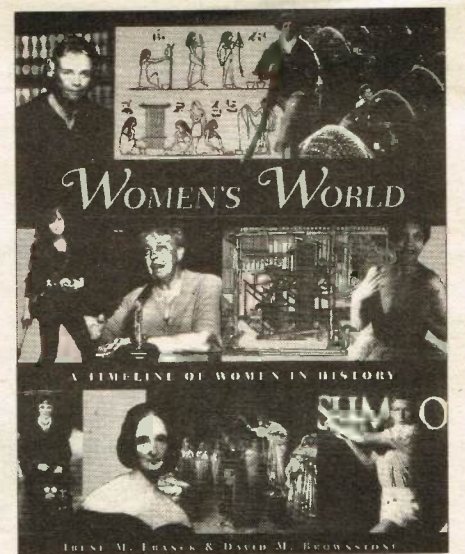
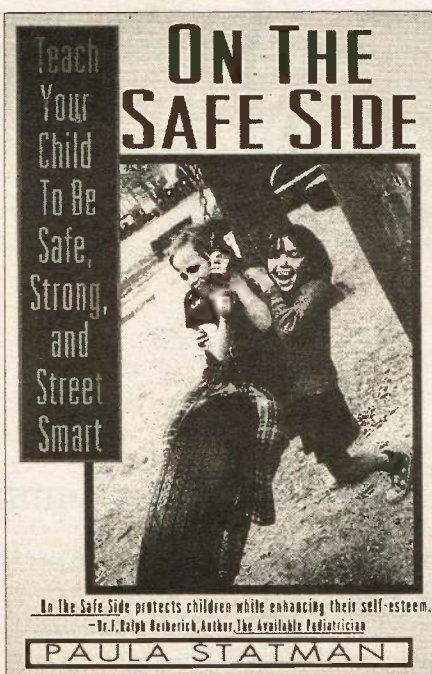
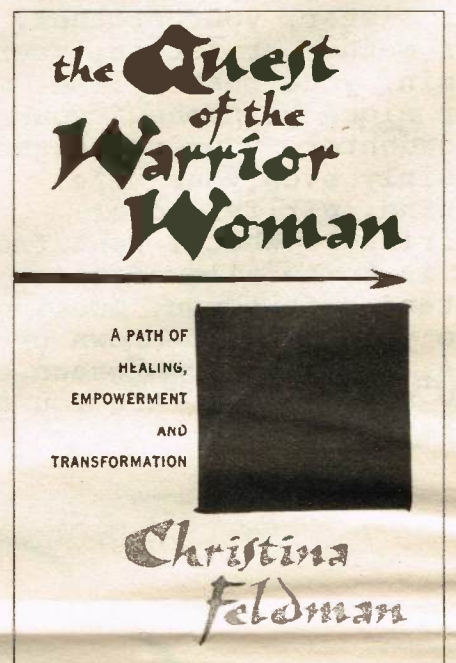
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BEST SELLERS 1994

FICTION

Dreamspeaker
 Fifth Sacred Thing
 Away
 When I'm an Old Woman
 Venus Envy
 Stone Diaries
 A Whole Brass Band
 Sarah Jane of Silver Islet
 The Robber Bride
 Slash
 Swann

Anne Cameron
 Starhawk
 Jane Urquhart
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 Rita Mae Brown
 Carol Shields
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 Elizabeth Kouhi
 Margaret Atwood
 Jeanette Armstrong
 Carol Shields



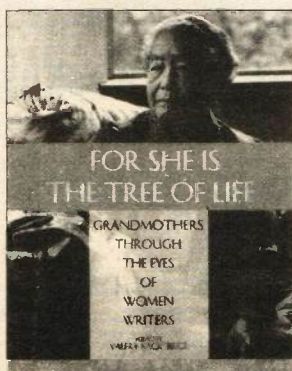
NON-FICTION

You Can Be Free
 Courage to Heal Workbook
 Courage to Heal
 Women and Social Work
 Women's Caring: Feminist
 Perspective on Social Welfare

Ginny Nicarchy
 Laura Davis
 Ellen Bass & Laura Davis
 Jalna Hanmer & Daphne Statham

Woman's Comfort Book
 Mother Wit
 Beginning to Heal
 On the Path
 Getting Free
 Through the Kitchen Window
 Trauma and Recovery

Carol Baines, Patricia Evans
 & Sheila Neysmith
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