

# Pandora

Lifting the lid off...

Volume Seven, Number Two

September, 1992

Halifax, Nova Scotia

## INSIDE



**We Won!**  
**And the answer is YES**  
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**Pandora's still making waves!**



# Pandora's Human Rights Inquiry:

articles by D. Mathers

The Human Rights Inquiry has consumed so much of Pandora's time, energy and interest that it's sometimes easy to forget that all our readers may not know everything that happened during the course of it. Some of the problems that occurred have been discussed in previous issues of Pandora, while others are known, so far, only to members and friends of the collective. This article by no means covers everything that happened — we have pages and pages of testimony and written briefs,



In March of 1990, Pandora received a phone message from a man who was upset about an article we had published in a previous issue.

He wanted us to print a letter to the editor he was planning on writing. He told us he had contacted some of our advertisers, telling them they shouldn't advertise with us. We explained that we were a women-only paper and would not print his letter, when and if we received it.

He then contacted the Human Rights Commission and the next month filed a formal complaint of sex-discrimination against us.

The Human Rights Commission investigated his complaint by interviewing him and us, and looking at our paper. They agreed with him that discrimination appeared to have happened. Both parties attended a conciliation meeting and, at that time, the man gave us a copy of the letter he wanted printed. Because an agreement couldn't be reached, the Human Rights Commission called a tribunal to hear the case.

Their decision to call a tribunal initiated many discussions among the Pandora collective. Most important, we had to decide how to deal with it. Should we ignore it completely? Could we ignore it? (We felt it was important for women's and other disadvantaged groups to fight the case. Otherwise any disgruntled male could do the same thing to any other women's group.) Should we get a lawyer to represent us? (Yes.) Was it important to maintain our woman-only policy and use a female lawyer? (Yes.) Who? (Anne Derrick.) How could we pay for it? (We didn't know and hoped our supporters would help out with it.) How could we support each other? (Being constantly in touch; never doing things alone; understanding that each of us was acting with the best of intentions, even if we did screw up.) How would we continue to produce Pandora if our time and energy were taken up by the Inquiry?

One of the decisions we made was to not print the name of the man who made the complaint. We felt that a big part of

his agenda was to publicize himself and his cause, and we did not want to feed into his strategy. Throughout we have called him Mr. K.

In November 1991, when the mainstream media publicized the complaint, Pandora received death threats.

This Tribunal was a somewhat-judicial hearing with attorney David Miller acting as the "judge". Pandora was represented by lawyers Anne Derrick and Jackie Mullenger. The Human Rights Commission was represented by Randal Duplak. The man who filed the complaint (the complainant) did not have a lawyer. He could have hired one had he wanted to. Nonetheless, Mr. Duplak, the lawyer for the Human Rights Commission, acted (more-or-less) on his behalf. They both had the same purpose: to prove that Pandora was guilty of sex discrimination.

The hearings were held from January 13-17, 1992, but before the hearings actually started, lawyers met a number of times to set up ground rules for the hearing: what the hearing was about (sex discrimination by Pandora), what evidence would be admissible without question during the hearing, how long the hearing would take (five days), and other housekeeping matters.

Because of the death threats Pandora received,

a number of the Pandora collective who were to testify wanted to remain anonymous. In addition, since the

hearing was public and media would be there, some of the witnesses (particularly lesbians) needed to remain anonymous. At first the lawyer for the Human Rights Commission would not consent to the witnesses to testify using only their first names, even though all parties involved would know the full name. He felt that all witnesses should be fully identifiable. After a bit of wrangling, he agreed to anonymity for most of the witnesses who requested it.

Nonetheless, he was still refusing anonymity to one witness. This particular witness had previously made a complaint to the Human Rights Commission: The Pandora collective was very distressed to find this out. Was she being punished for complaining? Was she being persecuted for publicizing her complaint? We considered a number of options, including walking out of the hearing altogether and letting it go on without us. However, he finally withdrew his objection.

Because of the necessity for anonymity for some of the witnesses, Pandora was unable to speak to the media. However a coalition of women's groups volunteered to hold a press conference supporting Pandora. We were very grateful for their participation.

## THE HEARING

Pandora agreed from the beginning that she/we would not print a letter (or article) from a man. We believe that men (as a group) are advantaged, and women (as a group) are disadvantaged solely because of their/our sex. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms allows disadvantaged groups to band together providing their purpose is to remedy, or alleviate, their disadvantage. We based our defense on those principles.

On the first day, Mr. K testified and

brought forward his witnesses. This day was notable for the number of objections raised by Pandora's counsel. One of his witnesses continually talked about his experience of child-custody — which had nothing to do with sex discrimination in general and Pandora's activities in particular — and our lawyer continually had to object to his evidence as being irrelevant.

The Human Rights Commission lawyer and the complainant (who usually agreed with each other) also tried to put forward a view that fathers who do not have custody of their kids are a disadvantaged sub-group of men. Their argument was that even if Pandora exists to advantage women, it cannot disadvantage this sub-group of men.

For the rest of the week, Pandora tried to prove a number of things: that historically women have been disadvantaged; that women are still disadvantaged; that women are involved in Pandora and how they are involved; that Pandora helps women in various ways; and that women do not have the same access to mainstream media that men have. We brought forth witness after witness to give evidence that these were so. (To find out how the witnesses felt about their experiences, see the many stories in this paper.)

## CROSS EXAMINATION

Pandora works as a collective. For us, this means that the group, rather than individuals, are responsible for the paper and its policies. We cannot make decisions individually, but instead discuss the issues with the group until we come to a consensus decision. While we could answer questions about what happened in the past, we could not answer theoretical questions without discussing them with the others.

The lawyer for the Human Rights Commission could not understand this type of decision-making. He complained that the "collective mentality" was not there when he cross-examined a Pandora collective member. For example, he asked one witness what we would do if, for example, a woman who was to take copies of the paper to the valley for distribution suddenly fell ill. Would we allow her male partner to take them? He worried that

question like a dog with a bone, not comprehending that we needed to discuss it as a group to find out the implications of such a move.

The complainant and the lawyer for the Human Rights Commission believed that printing "one small letter" from a man would not cause any problems for Pandora.

Several witnesses who used the word "safe" in describing Pandora were cross-examined extensively over the meaning of the word. The male participants seemed unable to comprehend the fear many women feel in so many aspects of their lives. They seemed even less able to understand how important it was to have this "safe" space to read, work in, and write for.

There were a number of humorous moments in the Inquiry, too, although much of the humour was of the "I don't understand you women" variety. Witnesses were asked: "And are you a woman?" "Do you think I'm a misogynist?" "Do you believe men have any rights?" "I submit you have a phobia against seeing men in Pandora." Much of the laughter was reminiscent of the laughing at the end of the movie, *A Question of Silence*.

## WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Seven weeks after the hearing, each side presented its written submission to the Tribunal. In its brief, the Human Rights Commission agreed that as a generalization, women may be classified as a disadvantaged group compared to men, but that this is not applicable to all cases. "One can think of many instances where women are advantaged over men and for example, the situation of the nursing profession." [sic] The stand of the Human Rights Commission was that Pandora won't publish material from men. This is against the Human Rights Act. Therefore Pandora is discriminating. Period.

The complainant wrote much the same thing. "Pandora is not only violating the Human Rights Act, but flouting it." He complained that Pandora "abused the complaint procedure by co-opting 4/5 of the hearing to stage a

prolonged seminar on feminism... Pandora has additionally flouted the Human Rights Act by encouraging a coalition of feminist groups to disparage the Human Rights Commission..."

Interesting, isn't it, that women get condemned for defending themselves?

A

week or so later each party presented a rebuttal brief. Anne

## "[Pandora] is not about men or men's issues."

Derrick responded to the "nurses" remark by saying "the reference to the nursing profession implies that the mere presence of women in greater numbers over men is indicative of advantage. The fatuous assertion fails to address the fact that nurses are paid very substantially less than doctors (who are predominantly men) with greatly reduced benefits. The 'many other instances' that the Commission regards as examples of women's advantage over men undoubtedly refers to the ghettoization of women as secretaries, homemakers, bank tellers, etc."

However, the rebuttal brief from Mr. Duplak reveals his anger. On the very first page of the rebuttal brief he said "The Commission in this part will respond to the arguments raised by Pandora keeping in mind to temper its comments so as not to participate in the hysteria of extremism."

Extremism was mentioned six times in the first 11 1/2 pages of his rebuttal. On page eight of his brief, Mr D talked about one of the analogies presented by Pandora reflecting the nature of the paper as "...so ludicrous that it far outreaches the outermost boundaries of reason and sanity." In these passages, women were associated with the language of emotional and psychological instability. The fact of being called hysterical and crazy is not new, but it makes it no less offensive.

Generalizations were described as "existing in their minds". He said "Pandora, however, either does not understand affirmative action, or if it does, wishes to deliberately twist and contort the concept to a degree beyond recognition but which suits their point of view," and Pandora's evidence was "twisted and tortured until it takes on a feature not resembling reality but which provides the means to the desired end."

Throughout the rebuttal brief, feminists and feminism were derided, and it was suggested that Pandora is a paper for lesbians and feminists, not for women. This somehow suggests that lesbians and feminists aren't women. He implied that feminists have a phobia of men.

He also mentioned the fact that not one witness for Pandora took an oath on the Old Testament, the New Testament the Koran or any other holy scripture, but were confirmed, as proving that Pandora does not represent women of religion. He said, "They cannot cloak themselves with the mantle of disadvantaged women in order to promote and pursue their own specialized interest, which interest not only conflicts with interests of other women but actively operates to promote and discriminate against individual women whose views do not coincide with their own."

[Please see THE FALLOUT sidebar for more information]

## THE FALLOUT

This ranting by a lawyer for the Human Rights Commission startled and offended individual women as well as women's groups. Many wrote letters of complaint to the Human Rights Commission and to the Attorney-General. Some of the complaints also addressed the issue of the Human Rights Commission taking up the complaint in the first place and, in the process, causing such financial hardship to a group of volunteer women. The Coalition to Support Pandora also held a press conference to address the issues.

The Human Rights Commission responded with a news release, saying "since an important human rights issue was at stake, namely a gender issue dealing with access to the press, the only way the issue could be decided thoroughly was through an independent and public inquiry." They said they do not review the contents of all legal submissions before they are

made and had no prior knowledge of the contents of the final written submission to the Board. Further, they stated, "The Human Rights Commission regrets that remarks in the written submission have been construed as stereotyping women or Pandora Publishing and its collective."

In other words, if we saw it as stereotyping, our perception is at fault.

They end by saying, "the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission wishes to take this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to continue to uphold the mandate entrusted to it by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. In this regard, it has a duty and a responsibility to serve all Nova Scotians. Criticisms of the Commission suggesting otherwise are not grounded in facts. For every Board of Inquiry which receives public attention, there are hundreds of cases which are resolved satisfactorily."



# the whole story

## THE DECISION

The decision, which came on March 17, almost two years after the whole thing started, was a complete and utter vindication for Pandora. Mr. Miller ruled that it was not appropriate to hear evidence on whether non-custodial men are a disadvantaged subgroup of men. He said that Pandora did not refuse the letter because Mr. K was a divorced father but because he was a man. "It is implicit in the Act and in the right of the disadvantaged group to prefer its members over the advantaged group." He also said "The evidence...satisfied me that historically and to the present day women as a group in our society have suffered substantially inequality and disadvantage in all aspects of public and private life. I am also satisfied that this inequality continues to the present day to a sufficient degree that it is reason-

able that women's groups may decide to form women-only organizations, such as Pandora, for the promotion of women's equality and that such organizations may advantage women over men.... I am further satisfied that the purposes and aims of Pandora in promoting equality would be substantially disrupted by permitting men to participate in Pandora, even to the limited extent of writing letters to the editor..."

"I am satisfied that in law women may form single sex organizations for the purpose of promoting equality. I am further satisfied as a general statement, of the law, that such organizations may prefer or advantage women even if the effect of that is to discriminate against men (as a group or individually) on the basis of sex, without violating the anti-discrimination provisions of the Act."

"Such a policy [women-only] is

reasonable in the circumstances. Pandora is by, for, and about women. It is a women only publication designed to promote women's equality and to remedy disadvantage based on sex. It is not about men or men's issues. It deals with issues and opinions and points of view not expected to be addressed in the mainstream media. Many of the writers in Pandora would not participate fully if it were not a woman only publication."

"It is important to note that Pandora does not pretend to be part of the mainstream media — it is said not to be objective but to present views on issues from a point of view. Pandora does not even pretend to express the views of all women. Rather, Pandora projects a feminist point of view taking the view that the mainstream media, although purporting to be objective, projects an other-than-feminist view."



Women gass about their lives at the Pandora victory gala. (photo by Amani Wassef)

# What the witnesses said

Throughout this article I use the words "talk," "discuss," "mentioned." Unfortunately those neutral words imply a different scene than what really happened. As in any trial, Pandora's witnesses were asked questions by Anne Derrick. These questions were usually friendly in tone and used to get information from the witness. When she was finished, the other lawyers got their chance to ask questions in cross-examination. These questions were often insulting in tone and adversarial in meaning.

Professor Marguerite Cassin testified about the social organization of knowledge and how women are excluded from some of the knowledge. She said that knowledge is the key to life — how it's organized, governed, administered. Most knowledge comes to us second-hand and is filtered through someone else's (men's) experiences, although it is presented as "fact". Women have been left out of that experience — they don't have access to it, and they are excluded from "making" it (writing, publishing, drawing, etc.) The image of women in media is passive. The women's movement exists to create another reality for women. Pandora creates a space where women can converse and connect with each other.

Professor Margaret Conrad discussed the history of women in Nova Scotia. She reminded us that as late as the 1960s, women were still ineligible to serve on juries, were excluded from provincial medical and law schools by gender quotas and were legally paid less than men for doing the same work. Women were/are subordinated and silenced by use of ridicule, exclusion, anger and violence. Women are not accustomed to being authoritative outside the home, and when they are, men and women react badly. She mentioned how the men in her classrooms dominate discussion periods and put down their female peers with ribald humour.

Both Marie Paturel and Anne Bishop were going to testify about how their experiences as lesbians writing for Pandora differed from their experiences of being written about as lesbians

in the mainstream media. However, Mr. Miller did not want to hear about this. It appears that, since the Human Rights Act now prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, the sexual orientation of a witness and experiences as a lesbian are not relevant. I guess women cannot suffer from compound disadvantage.

Writer and professor Sharon Fraser testified about her experiences as an editor and a writer for the mainstream media, while Debi Forsyth-Smith testified about being in the broadcast media. Both women agreed that opportunities were limited for women in the media. They felt mainstream media are controlled by men and focus on issues that concern men, marginalizing issues of interest and concern to women. They both experienced rejection of stories relevant to women.

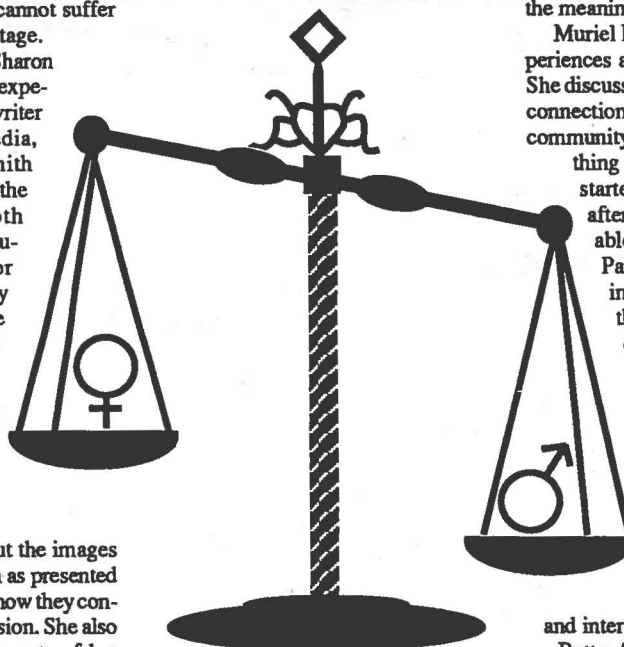
Ms. Fraser talked about the images and stereotypes of women as presented in mainstream media, and how they contribute to women's oppression. She also reported that the feminist parts of her articles were often cut and about the lack of respect she received as a feminist writer. She talked about how alternative newspapers are important because they give the "other" view of events.

Ms. Forsyth-Smith felt that affirmative action initiatives are necessary and saw a role for women-only organizations in the advancement of women. She also talked about violence against women and the number of women who are murdered by men.

Professor Blye Frank discussed the social construction of gender. He said gender roles are artificially defined and may be quite different in different societies. Men usually do not speak out against typical male attitudes, even if they do not agree with them. For many men, speaking out against things like violence against women or support for lesbians is "demasculinizing." Men fear losing masculine privilege. He said Pan-

dora is one way women have resisted the patriarchal structures. Men can create spaces for women to speak and act by not always speaking and acting and taking up all the space. Men can provide economic support for women's spaces.

Brenda Thompson testified about



her experience writing and publishing her book "Survival Guide for Single Mothers" and the way support and publicity were handled in Pandora as compared to the mainstream media. She felt Pandora boosted her self-esteem and helped her to discover what she wanted to do in the future. The women at Pandora encouraged her to go on with her education.

Rebecca West\* talked about how she was feeling isolated and alone at home with a small child when she encountered Pandora. She gained skills working with Pandora that she is now using in her own business.

DD testified about clipping newspapers in her job and how most of the articles about women were negative responses by men to women's efforts to change their lives. She talked about Pandora and how it was a place where

she was glad she didn't have to read that kind of thing. She felt it was a positive opportunity for women to read about women's issues and a chance to learn about lesbian issues. She said when she picks up Pandora she feels "safe". She was cross-examined extensively about the meaning of "safe".

Muriel Dixon\* talked about her experiences as an employee of Pandora. She discussed how she worked to make connections with women in the Black community. She had never written anything for publication before she started working at Pandora and after the experience had been able to get a writing job. She felt Pandora was important in helping her learn some of the things she needed for subsequent jobs. She also talked about the Black Families Group, a group formed after the racial disturbances in Halifax. She mentioned how the Black Families Group decided to become a black-only group in order to deal adequately with their needs and interests.

Betty-Ann Lloyd talked about her experience in the mainstream media and how she became aware of the gap between the mainstream media and other communities and how only certain members of these communities are represented. She talked about the expectations of men and women in mixed-sex groups; that women will take care of the men in the group. She also talked about how Pandora came to exist and how the policies first developed. She believes Pandora wouldn't exist if men were involved in it and commented on how women became skilled in their work through Pandora and how they were changed by their participation in Pandora. She felt that Pandora's women-only philosophy is central to that building of skills and opportunity to change.

Counsellor Leah Norm testified about her experience as a feminist counsellor, working extensively with

women with eating disorders, depression and anxiety and well as issues of addiction and abuse. She felt that so much energy is spent in the mainstream literature and media on explaining men's (offenders') conduct that women are pushed to the side. Women get used to being the "other," but in Pandora they are the first. She uses Pandora as a therapeutic tool. Silence is one of the biggest factors in the perpetuation of abuse and the damage it causes the individual. It is therapeutic to see other women's and their own writing; it's important for an abused woman to see she's not the only one. It's beneficial for women to see positive images of their reality, such as single parenting and lesbianism. Allowing letters or articles by men in Pandora will invade the safety created by that space. Men overtake institutions, interrupt, assume positions of authority, talk louder and faster than women. If men are permitted in, much time and energy will be spent dealing with their issues.

Professor Donna Smyth talked about teaching at West Words Retreat for Women Writers in Vancouver and being struck by how essential it is for many women to have special nurturing and circumstances where they can attend to themselves and their work. Women feel public expression is dangerous, especially if they are otherwise discriminated against. Pandora is important as a preliminary step for women getting used to having a public voice.

Current Pandora collective members also had their time on the witness stand. Beverly Stone\* was the first to take the stand. She talked about her experiences as a Pandora member, how Pandora was organized and put together.

Mary Jones\* talked about Pandora's policies and how they were used to help women and women's groups in the community. She felt Pandora is a unique and positive space for the development of women. No men define any part of the paper. It was a space free from the usual negative messages we receive from male culture.

N.B. In this article pseudonyms are noted with an \*.

# Pandora

Pandora is published four times a year by Pandora Publishing Association, a non-profit organization of women in Nova Scotia.

Pandora is a newspaper produced by, for, and about women. We seek participation on any level from women who do not have access to mainstream media. We welcome submissions — written and photographic. We cannot accept material that is oppressive or intolerant. We are, however, committed to working with women to help them express their experience in a non-oppressive way. We encourage women to tell us when we do not meet our own standards. Not everything submitted can be included and we reserve the right to edit, especially for length. However, we will let you know if we make substantial changes. Please write to us.

Articles in Pandora do not necessarily reflect the views of the advertisers.

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Thank you, one and all!

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## NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS:

Pandora is distributed to various locations throughout the province and the country. The editorial committee felt this distribution would allow us to make the paper available in outlets such as libraries, health clinics, etc. (If any of you women out there would be willing to do distribution in your areas, please let us know.) This is in no way a statement that Pandora has so much money that it no longer needs to charge for the paper. We are, in fact, hoping to get more subscribers this way. If you want the paper mailed to you, subscriptions are \$5.00 for four issues. There is a sliding scale. Women on limited income, send what you can. We ask women who can afford more to provide a contributing or sustaining subscription to help send copies to other women and women's groups.

Cover photo: Andrea Ward

Balance scale graphic: Debbie Mathers

Presswork by Webb Atlantic

# Pandora Potpourri

To our readers: We have used the graphic of unequal balance scales to indicate any stories which reflect on our Human Rights Case. If it seems we are obsessing on our Human Rights Case, it's because we are! We feel it is important to share our experiences of being involuntary participants in a male-dominated tribunal process which tried to silence our voices as feminist and lesbian women. We are proud of our accomplishments and want to share this with you. This has been one of the most important things to happen to us since Pandora was first started eight years ago.

Yes, believe it or not, Pandora is now eight years old. One year in a dog's life is equivalent to seven human years. We believe that a year in a volunteer, feminist newspaper's life is equivalent to 10 ordinary years, making us 80 years old. It seems to take more and more time and energy to put out another issue, and it takes longer to recover between issues.

Maybe some day we can pay off all our bills and buy our own equipment! Meanwhile, thanks to the Dalhousie Gazette for the use of their newspaper office to produce this issue. We appreciate the co-operation.

into some space of ours that we have made  
a truly plaintive plaintiff sends  
ripples growing into shock waves

gathering rocks, newspaper reporters, television cameras  
joe and joette public watch and read and throw the stones  
and we collect each other from the inside of locked boxes

expert witness after expert witness after  
somebody witness speak  
and are played alive for it,  
drowned, burned at the witness stand

witness this,  
you world of pain:  
these men have not won,  
yet  
we played by their rules

—Dian



Betty Peterson

*(The following is a personal statement, written and read by Betty Peterson at a press conference held by Pandora on the first day of testimony. We are pleased to reprint it here.)*

As someone who has worked for freedom and human rights all my life, I have often written for Pandora over the last seven years.

I have felt very happy for that opportunity for self-expression as a woman, sharing directly with other women readers throughout this province and beyond.

I believe that Pandora, in a modest but powerful way, has provided a unique service to women as no other publication in this area has.

It has offered a safe space, or so we thought, free from censure, attack, ridicule, condemnation, and put-down.

It has encouraged self-affirmation and freedom of expression among women and I am grateful to the little band of women volunteers who have worked so hard and faithfully to keep Pandora going. This is what the women's struggle is all about and I am confident that the official forces of society at this Inquiry will ensure that women's voices speaking out will continue to be protected and encouraged.

We have come too far to be silenced now.

## The Myth of Pandora

Earth-Mother had given the mortals life. This puzzled them greatly. They would stare curiously at one another, then turn away to forage for food. Slowly they found that hunger has many forms.

One morning the humans followed an unusually plump bear cub to a hillside covered with bushes that hung with red berries. They began to feast at once, hardly aware of the tremors beginning beneath their feet. As the quaking increased, a chasm gaped at the crest of the hill. From it arose Pandora with Her earthen pithos. The mortals were paralyzed with fear but the Goddess drew them into Her aura.

I am Pandora, Giver of All Gifts. She lifted the lid from the large jar. From it She took a pomegranate, which became an apple, which became a pear. I bring you flowering trees that bear fruit, gnarled trees hung with olives and, this, the grapevine that will sustain you. She reached into the jar for a handful of seeds and sprinkled them over the hillside. I bring you plants for hunger and illness, for weaving and dyeing. Hidden beneath My surface you will find minerals, ore, and clay of endless form. She took from the jar two flat stones. Attend with care My plainest gift: I bring you flint.

Then Pandora turned the jar on its side, inundating the hillside with Her flowering grace. The mortals were bathed in the changing colors of her aura. I bring you wonder, curiosity, memory. I bring you justice with mercy. I bring you caring and communal bonds. I bring you courage, strength, endurance. I bring you loving kindness for all beings. I bring you the seeds of peace.

From Lost Goddesses of Early Greece by Charlene Spretnak (editor of The Politics of Women's Spirituality)

Spretnak quotes Jane Ellen Harrison who wrote in 1903:

"Pandora is, in ritual and matriarchal theology the earth as Kore,

but in the patriarchal mythology of [the Greek writer] Hesiod her great figure is strangely changed and diminished.... Zeus the Father will have no great Earth-goddess, Mother and Maid in one, in his man-fashioned Olympus, but her figure is from the beginning, so he remakes it; woman, who was the inspirer, becomes the temptress; she who made all things, gods and mortals alike, is become their plaything, their slave, dowered only with physical beauty, and with a slave's tricks and blandishments. To Zeus, the arch-patriarchal bourgeois, the birth of the first woman is but a huge Olympian jest."

## Awards

Recent months have been good to Pandora in more ways than one. We have been the recipients of two journalism awards. In December we won the Robertine Barry Prize. This prize is awarded by The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women.

The prize is named for a pioneering Quebec journalist (1863-1910) who worked for the advancement of women. It is awarded to a feminist article or column in the popular print media which promotes the advancement of women and for the excellence of its analysis and literary style.

In May we discovered that we had won the MacDonald Citation from the Douglas-Coldwell Foundation for our outstanding achievement in protecting our women only space. The Foundation provides awards to the alternative media.



# LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

**Pandora:**

Keep up the struggle! Enclosed is \$\$ for a one-year subscription and the remainder to help defray legal costs for the sex-discrimination dispute.

Grace Gannett,  
Weston, Ontario

**Pandora:**

I'm happy you are publishing as you are. I wish to hear women's news.

Mary Ellen Morrissey,  
Dartmouth

**Pandora:**

Greetings from Vancouver! Thanks for participating in our presentation of your Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission case on our co-op radio's Lesbian Show. Please use part of the enclosed cheque to cover the costs of the phone call to Renée Sauv   of the show.

Hopefully, the show made our listeners more aware and informed about the issue. I know that up until helping produce the story, I was unclear of the details. Working on the story reminded me of how much I relied on Pandora to keep me informed when I lived in Halifax. So, in answer to your ad, "Free — or better yet, subscribe!" I'd like to get a subscription now.

Please use whatever's left after the cost of the phone bill and the subscription as a donation to Pandora for use as you see fit. The donation is from Ren  e and myself. I wish you lots of luck, and I'm really looking forward to the next issue of Pandora.

Darlene Boyle, Vancouver

**Pandora:**

I am writing on behalf of the Queen's Women's Centre to offer our support, as well as a small donation, in order to assist you in deferring the legal costs of the case you are now involved in.

We at the Centre were dismayed to hear the nature of the lawsuit which has been brought up against you, and we hope that it will not interfere greatly with the future publication of your newspaper, which we have always enjoyed in the past. This whole event must be extremely frustrating for you, and we offer our deepest sympathies. Events of a similar nature at our university campus have caused a great deal of anger and frustration among women, but hopefully we will all find enough strength and support to persevere!

If we can be of any help in the future, please do not hesitate to contact us. We wish you the best of luck and success in the future.

In sisterhood,  
Margaret Thompson, Queen's  
Women's Centre, Kingston, Ontario

**Pandora:**

I just learned about the absurd situation that geezer has put you in. How ridiculous! Here's a small contribution, the best I can do at the moment toward the legal expenses.

Good luck. Be strong in the knowledge you have lots of support. Please put my name on your mailing list for future fundraising efforts.

Julie Deans,  
Seattle, Washington



**Pandora:**

I send this card because it reminds me of the unyielding strength, courage and fortitude you have and are showing at this time. The Human Rights appeal is extremely important to women's rights and having a respected place for our voices. Unfortunately this task is on the shoulders of a few of you.

Please continue your/our/my struggle.

In sisterhood,  
Nancy Hay, Halifax

**Pandora:**

Just sick to hear you're having to put your energy into this crazy case — but maybe it'll be a great decision for women's publishing.

Good luck. Love and lots of psychic energy.

Barbara Cottrell, Halifax

**Pandora:**

My small share to keep "hell from freezing over."

Noella Richard, Moncton, NB

**Pandora:**

What better use for the HATED GST but to give it to Pandora with LOVE.

Betty Peterson, Halifax

**Pandora:**

Many thanks for fighting the good fight! Enclosed is a donation. If I (or my friends) can do anything, please let us know. We're thinking of you.

Bev Agar, Toronto

**Pandora:**

Please accept my small donation. The alleged sex-discrimination case against Pandora is an insult to every woman in this country.

Best wishes,  
Gunilla Barnett, Oakville, Ont.

**Pandora:**

Enclosed is our donation towards your legal costs.

You have our wholehearted support in your legal battle. It's our fight as well. Keep us posted, and we may be able to make another donation a little later.

Yours in solidarity,  
Images, West Kootenay  
Women's Paper, Nelson, BC

**Pandora:**

I think this sex-discrimination action against you is outrageous — please keep me posted on what happens if you are able to. I'm also very interested in his custody/access actions and am familiar with the case.

Susan Boyd, Ottawa

**Pandora:**

Sorry I can't send more. Stay-at-home mothers are an endangered species, as are breastfeeding ones!

Carol Buchanan, Vancouver

**Pandora:**

I have heard the controversy surrounding your publication and caught the interview on "This Country in the Morning" with Peter Gzowski.

My curiosity was piqued by the reaction to your decision not to print a letter from a male. Therefore, I would be interested in receiving your publication. I hope many others are affected the same way and your membership list will swell.

I wish you a successful outcome.  
Jennifer Woolston,  
Winnipeg, MB

**Pandora:**

Very best wishes and love and heartfelt thanks to all the Pandora Publishing Associates!

"My heart is moved by all I cannot save.

So much has been destroyed  
I have to cast my lot with those who,

Age after age, perversely,  
With no extraordinary power,  
Reconstitute the world."

—Adrienne Rich from *The Dream of a Common Language*, her 1977 volume of poetry

Your friend and admirer,  
Muriel Duckworth, Halifax

**Pandora:**

Please enter a subscription in my name for one year. Would you also please send a gift subscription to xxx. I'm enclosing a cheque to cover the subscriptions and to contribute to your legal expenses.

I wish you all courage through this difficult time and rest afterwards!

Barbara Markovits,  
Lake Charlotte, NS

**Pandora:**

Here is some bucks for the inquiry hearing. Keep on fighting that \*\*!

Wish I had more.  
In solidarity,  
K. Leman, Vancouver

**Pandora:**

Read about the problems re: the Human Rights case in Atlantic Voice Of Women peace newsletter, and want to express my support. Unfortunately I'm unemployed currently, and I'm relocating. But when I get settled in Halifax I will try to support you a little better.

Sincere and best wishes.  
Marie Hammond, Halifax

**Pandora:**

In support of your woman-only editorial policy, I am donating \$\$ to Pandora to support your case. Good luck.

Louise Allen, Vancouver, BC

**Pandora:**

I read of your plight in Kinesis. The way that you are being targeted really makes me angry. Enclosed is a cheque to help you with your case. Keep your spirits up and keep on fighting for women's voices everywhere.

Marlene Coulthard,  
Richmond, BC

**Pandora:**

Here's a teeny donation to help with your legal costs. I hope you get enough of these teeny donations to pay for your big lawyer's bill.

Katherine Reed,  
Antigonish, NS

**Pandora:**

Best of luck and thank you for fighting on behalf of all women, whether or not they recognize or appreciate our efforts. I heard Elizabeth Cusack Walsh on CBC. Bravo!

Barbara Buchanan,  
Fredericton

**Pandora:**

Sorry it's not more \$\$\$ but as I only work 1/3 time and spend the rest trying to make art, I don't have a lot of extra. What about organizing an art auction? Best of luck.

Rose Adams, Paradise, NS

**Pandora:**

Please accept this donation towards your court costs for your current sex-discrimination case. Take heart.

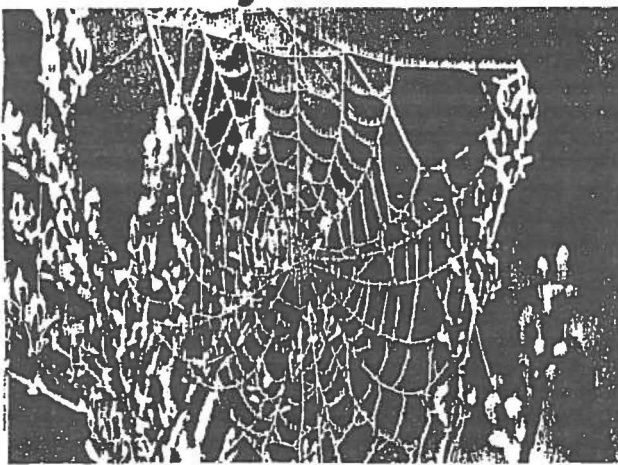
Leslie Klenck,  
Head Jeddore, NS

**Pandora:**

Greetings from London. Thank you for such a wonderful last night in Halifax. I can't think of many ways I'd rather spend my time. I enjoyed the good company, humour, rituals, and stories from the front. I'll do what I can in terms of \$ out this way. I wish you all well and hope to see you again.

Louise Karch, London, ON

## Get entangled! Buy a sub.



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Outside Canada - Individual (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_  
Outside Canada - Institution (\$25) \_\_\_\_\_

Is this a renewal? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I have sent more than \$5. I wish the extra to be used to pay for subscriptions to women who cannot afford them, women's centres, women's shelters, and other women's groups. \_\_\_\_\_

Please send to: Pandora Publishing, Box 8418 Station A,  
Halifax, N.S. B3K 5M1



## Victory difficult for some women to accept

Pandora's note: Some women wrote to us and expressed concern over the Pandora victory. We discussed some of these issues with our lawyer, Anne Derrick. This discussion can be found on the centrespread. We welcome and encourage your comments on our Human Rights Case or anything else. Please keep on writing.

## Disagrees with decision of Human Rights Tribunal

**Pandora:**

I disagree most strongly with the decision of the Halifax Human Rights Commission.

With all the hue and cry raised by women's groups against male-only clubs, organizations, groups, etc., how is it right that a paper serving the public is allowed to say that a member of that general public cannot have a letter published which expresses a concern over the bias and injustice suffered by non-custodial fathers and (I might add) grandparents? I speak from experience as my husband and I are in that category.

I also speak from personal experience that many men do not have advocacy groups that take up their causes against discrimination and injustice in the court system and in the workplace.

There are indeed two sides to every story, but often only one side is heard and in the court system dealing with separation and divorce the non-custodial father is given short shrift in spite of paying child support.

Constance McEwan,  
Calgary, AB

(Pandora's note: A copy of this letter was sent to us by the NS Human Rights Commission along with a copy of their response. It is interesting to note that the Commission clearly distances itself from the decision when it says, "The ruling you refer to is that of this independent adjudicator [Mr. David Miller] and not that of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission.")

Your letter was not the only one we received questioning the decision. For more information, see the question and answer article in this issue. Meanwhile we will try to address some of your concerns.

Pandora is not really a paper that serves the public, although that is not what we based our legal arguments on. We are, however, based on voicing the experiences of women.

The decision by the NS Human Rights Tribunal had absolutely nothing to do with the rights or privileges of parents, custodial or not. It was purely a decision supporting a disadvantaged (oppressed) group's legal right to allow only constituents of that disadvantaged group to partake of that group's services.

Pandora did not have any advocacy group taking up our case. We hired our own lawyer and fund-raised to pay for her services. If anything, the

opposition had public help. The complainant had the Human Rights Commission to take up his cause, using their lawyer at public expense. Thankfully, however, we did have help

from many individual women and women's groups to help pay the legal fees, although we still a long way to go before we will be able to completely pay off the debt we incurred.)

## Pandora similar to "No boys allowed club"

**Pandora:**

I am not a lawyer, university graduate, or women of the world by any means. I am an artist and single mother of which I am proud. I am also sick to the back teeth of radical groups that insist on speaking out on everyone's behalf. I am bored beyond belief with some members of my sex who continuously lament their lot in life.

Pandora, I want you to know I feel your attitudes especially in this particular instance are seemingly no more progressive than a bunch of little school girls thumbing their noses at the boys or hanging a "NO BOYS ALLOWED" sign over your club house door.

It worries me to think there are members of my community who feel in order to support one group they must exclude another. If this is progress, Lord help us all! I personally have been witness to what the Family Court calls fairness and because of this feel there certainly could be reason for Mr. K's frustration! How do you know, Pandora, that some of your readers do not want to hear his own side of things?

In my opinion episodes like what is occurring here, can only serve to harbour jealousy and resentment between the sexes. In a society that is determined to come to the root of problems existing between man and woman, your attitude is both regressive and dangerous.

Please let us work together with one another, not against each other, so discrimination of all kinds eliminated.

S.C. Sonntag, Dartmouth, NS

## Doesn't want to be included in Pandora's "victory"

**Pandora:**

I am writing to comment on today's decision by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission in favour of Pandora Publishing. I, personally, do not want to be included in the "all women" for whom this ruling was "a victory." As a female, I was disappointed to hear the Commission defend equal rights by denying access to voice; an opinion based solely on the fact that the writer was a male. If that's not blatant sexual discrimination, I don't know what is!

How can Pandora promote equality for females without recognizing the same rights for men, particularly the right to refute an opinion or address a concern of the writer. Have you forgotten the men-only clubs and the indignity suffered by females who were refused the right to darken the door of such organizations? Have we come so far as to rejoice in a decision which is obvious in its unbalanced bias?

I would no more expect that special consideration be given me simply for the physical fact of my gender than I would hope it would not exclude me from the same consideration extended to others.

I hope you have the courage to print this dissenting female opinion. In any case, I am sending a copy of this letter to a newspaper who will print letters from women and men to ensure that the other half of the population has the opportunity to read this.

Pearl Elaine Akers, Musquodoboit Harbour, NS

## First reading of Pandora sparks concerned response

**Pandora:**

I just received a copy of your paper from my employment counselor. This is the first copy I have read. Your recent battle with the Human Rights Commission was the first I had heard of Pandora. What I have read so far I have found very interesting although some articles and opinions expressed I don't agree with. For this reason, I have decided to write this letter in several parts. Some I think you might consider for publication and some, I'm quite sure, will go no further than this letter. If nothing else, I hope you find my letter interesting.

This first part is the part you will certainly disagree with. But please, don't stop reading. The rest, I'm certain, you will agree with and find worthwhile.

I was raised with certain morals and ideals. I never had any of them force-fed to me. I was free to accept or reject them as I chose. I don't feel the woman's place is in the home. I do feel, however, that children should be raised by their parents, not paid babysitters. Whether it's the husband or wife should be decided on between them and according to circumstances. Obviously the non-working spouse should raise the child(ren). If both are working, then they should decide between them who will quit or take reduced hours to be there for their children. I also think they should both have a say in the morals and ideals taught.

I do have a problem with your paper. You want feminine equality. You want "a place for women." Years ago there were clubs for men only. These were places a man could go to get away from women to talk with other men about their particular concerns and ideas. Also they were places where they could be themselves without, for a time, having to live up to the standards set for them by, yes, women. When the women's rights movement started, one of the first places these pioneering women attacked was the men's clubs. They invaded them and made "men only" clubs impossible. Yet today, you are setting down a double standard. Women are allowed to have their "women only" space, yet men aren't. Why? Is the only way to get women's equality to put down all men and place them in the position women are in today? Why can't we just try for HUMAN equality instead of equality for a certain group of people?

Now, I'm not just writing to criticize your ideals. I found you brought up quite a few good points and many interesting facts. In reference to how women are portrayed in advertising, I found you hit straight on. I think it's abominable how women are treated in ads. Quite a few men I know happen to share my opinions, not just my women friends. I think ads should show the product they're trying to sell. Also I think ads should be aimed at

who's buying the product. In other words, advertisers should update their thinking. Some of these ads for household items should not just portray a woman with her children, working in the house. There are many bachelors and single women and fathers buying these products. The ads should be aimed towards ALL buyers. The only ads that should have scantily-clad models (female or male) are bikini ads. If they're selling soap, shampoo or other body products, there are ways of selling them without using nudity and sexuality. Any other products? Simple! Sell the product, not the model!

In your March issue, you published a letter and two poems by Kay Tudor. One of the poems dealt with not wearing makeup or certain types of clothes, etc. I don't think a woman should have to stop dressing up. If she feels this way, she should examine why she dressed up. Myself, I dress for me. If I'm in a good mood, I'll dress right up, makeup and all. It boosts my confidence and pleases me. I'm not concerned with whether other people like the way I look or not. What matters is if I like the way I look. I've tried dressing for others but I found it difficult, expensive, uncomfortable at times and also rather painful in regards to my pride and dignity.

Aside from dress, body image is important to both sexes. Many people go overboard and damage their bodies and spirits in quest of these unrealistic goals set by the media. I'm in favour of a healthy, not necessarily attractive, weight. A reasonable goal to reach for is one you can attain healthily, that you personally feel comfortable with and that you can live with. After all, it's not the critics out there who have to live with you, it's you who has to live with you. Don't look at the models. That's fine for them and critical to their careers. Figure out what's best for you, mentally as well as physically.

The last point I have to make is my belief that everyone has a right to voice an opinion. Everyone may not agree, but that's understandable. What's important is that we learn from them, whether we agree or not. Instead of fighting amongst ourselves, we should start working together, co-operating and making friends. It's a lot easier to talk to, work with and start making changes with a friend than with an enemy. A friend is willing to listen, understand and make concessions. An enemy will oppose you at every step and try to undermine your every action whether or not they agree.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. In case you're wondering, I'm not an older woman who was raised with out-dated ideals. I'm in my early 20s and was raised with and exposed to old and new ideals. I've chosen a combination of the two that seemed reasonable, logical, and well-balanced. Thank you again.

Denise Garrett, Jeddore, NS



# and more letters...

**Pandora:**

Enclosed please find the subscription cost and a small donation. Good luck!

Leslie Shaw, Halifax

**Pandora:**

Wish I could be sending much more to assist in your struggle not to be silenced. Kind personal regards to those of you I know.

In solidarity,  
Eleanor O'Donnell, Vancouver

**Pandora:**

I was reading the latest issue of Pandora and, as always, I am thrilled to find such insightful articles. I've shown many articles to friends and foes to raise awareness and start discussions on important matters. I have also used some articles as information when teaching Wen Do, Women's Self-Defence, and always have copies available for women to read at breaks or lunchtimes.

I understand your frustration and anger in your battle for survival regarding the discrimination charge presently before the HRC. We are facing the same problem and have been dealing with it for a few years now. Don't give up the fight. It is vital to the survival of women's voices everywhere.

I would like more women in Ottawa to be aware of Pandora, and so I'd like to give some of my friends a gift of a subscription to your newsletter. Please send the latest issue, (if possible) to these women.

Thanks.

Louise Houle, Gloucester, ON

**Pandora:**

Keep truckin!! This whole lawsuit controversy about the letter from "the man" has been hard to believe. Support all "families" of consenting non-terrorized people as deserving of medals and incentives of all sorts. If just women woke up and we supported each other, the whole world would be transformed to sanity. In the meanwhile with so many women still asleep, it's good that some men are waking up too. It's scary how far we have to go, and yet I think of the yeast in the bread and how small is seems — yet it is equal to its task, and women are more than half the human race!

In her dance,  
Tamara Rasmussen,  
Dingwall, NS

**Pandora:**

I've enclosed a cheque for a year's subscription to Pandora. I'm a freelance writer living in Toronto and interested in women's issues. I read about your recent troubles with the discrimination complaint launched against you. It's outrageous, I think. I'm interested in helping in any way I can. I look forward to receiving my first issue of Pandora, and please let me know if there is anything else I can do.

Frances Misutka, Toronto

**Pandora:**

On behalf of the National Women's Committee of the Canadian Union of Educational Workers, I would like to express our strong support during a difficult period. We understand and respect your position and admire your courage in pursuing a

valuable precedent for the women of Canada.

Please accept this donation as a symbolic token of our support. We look forward to hearing of your victory in the near future.

In solidarity,  
Janice Allen, Chairperson,  
Toronto

**Pandora:**

Thank you for fighting in the behalf of all women. The letters you receive are wonderful and they show tremendous support.

Erica Garrett,  
Port Williams, ON

**Pandora:**

It has been some time since my subscription to this very brave newspaper (publication) expired, and I didn't realize how much I missed it until I heard reports of the threats you were receiving over the letters to the editor issue.

While I inherently understand the position Pandora is taking, I always find it hard to argue the case, or others like it, when women's groups deny men access but insist on access to man's groups. Can you help me find a simple way to justify this argument, which on the surface would appear to be a contradiction?

Please renew my subscription. I would also like to purchase a subscription for my friend. Please use the balance of the cheque as a donation wherever you see fit. Keep up the struggle. Voices like yours need to be heard.

Sincerely,  
Marg Milan, Ottawa

**Pandora's note:** Unfortunately, it can be very difficult to argue the case for women-only spaces, especially to those who may not want to hear it. It took us four days of witnesses and another day of final arguments to put forward the need for women-only space. But overly simplified, the argument is: Women are a disadvantaged group in this society. Men are not. Therefore women need to have groups, spaces, etc. in which to help to remedy this disadvantage. Treating unequal groups equally, does

## What are P's guidelines?

**Pandora:**

I would like a subscription to your newspaper, Pandora, and have heard a lot of wonderful things about it and would appreciate having one! I'd like the latest copy sent right away, please.

I have a question concerning submissions. Since I have never read Pandora before, I want to know: Do you publish letters, opinions, poems, and info on environment from your members? I hope so.

Thanks for your time. I'll send a monetary contribution as soon as I can.  
Cheryl Nicol, Sydney, NS

**Pandora's note:** We accept articles by women about any issue of interest to women, particularly from a feminist viewpoint. We prefer it to be personal material about women's issues, or how issues affect women in particular, or how women can help solve a problem. We do not usually print articles with information that can be easily obtained from the mainstream press. We also do not usually publish fiction, either poetry or prose.

For example, we would probably not print an article about the fact that Halifax's (or Sydney's) harbour is chock full of sewage, but we would consider a story about a mother's experience of thinking about herself or her children swimming near the polluted area, how a woman changed her personal habits to help keep contaminants from going into the harbour, how a woman worked to help clean the harbour up, how a woman felt and what she did when she saw others contaminating it purposefully or accidentally. We would be interested in finding out what this issue means in terms of power — who benefits and who doesn't from this pollution and is it different if you're a woman. In other words, personal experiences about a woman's life.

not produce similar results.

There are, of course, a lot of other arguments that go along with this, like the fact that men try to (tend to/often succeed in) taking over groups with their own agendas and ways of doing things, many women feel safer in the company of other women, there are lots of other available means for men to get their voices heard (in fact, most media are mostly men's voices and issues).

Men are not disadvantaged by being excluded from women's groups since women don't have the power in this society, whereas women are further disadvantaged by being excluded from men's groups. See the centrespread of this issue for a more detailed explanation. Hope that will help.

**Pandora:**

I'm here at work today and just finished reading "Northern Woman Journal", the Thunder Bay publication put together by a five-woman collective. Within, I read again of your story and received a gentle reminder that your legal bills are astronomical. My good old summer job here at the women's centre in Sudbury means that I have some \$ to spare and donate.

I'm quite familiar with your story, having spend September to April in Halifax at Dalhousie Law School. I sat in on a few days of the hearings and witnessed the attempt to justify the complaint. I read the entire decision. I cringed when I heard Commission Counsel's misogynist comments. I saw my sister's, (Marie Paturel) distress at having to testify following threats to your collective.

I gritted my teeth and prayed to the Goddess that all would be well, all the time angered that I would have to do so in the first place.

I commend you all for your perseverance. Many of us will be continuing the fight for woman-positive space.

The Sudbury Women's Centre is sponsoring a Wen-Do course this weekend which I have organized. No hassles so far, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

I will be back at school in the fall. See you (in print at least) then!

In solidarity,  
Daphne Loukidellis,  
Sudbury, ON

## Congratulations from our readers

**Pandora:**

Congratulations! Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women-NS members hope you are all recuperating after such a long haul, and send a big thanks to you for struggling and winning on behalf of all women.

We're in the process of composing a letter to the Commission telling them why we think they are responsible for your legal fees and complaining about the lawyer's remarks.

Enclosed is a cheque to put towards your expenses. Our hearts are with you.

Barbara Cottrell, CRIAW-NS

**Pandora:**

Just heard you won! Congratulations and thanks for your work.

Lynn Gaudet,  
Whitehorse, Yukon

**Pandora:**

I was joyed to hear you won your case before the Human Rights Commission. However, I read in Kinesis that you have to raise money to pay costs. It is unjust that you are stuck with that kind of expense.

I'm going to benefit from your

strong stand on women's right to publish only women material. Therefore, I owe you and enclose a small donation to help you through this tough period.

This incident will, no doubt, change your life. You may even want a rest from publishing. I hope that isn't so, but I wish even more that you all take care of yourselves. Isabel Andrews and I published "Voices" after eight years. I know a bit about the kind of energy it takes even at the best of times. And these are hard times we are living.

Wishing you well,  
Doreen Worden,  
Kenora, Ontario

**Pandora:**

Congratulations on your recent victory in court. Keep the faith.  
Wanda Woodcock and family,  
Sydney, NS

**Pandora:**

Congratulations! Good work, well done! Shouldn't have needed doing in the first place, but you did a terrific job. Here's a victory cheque. Part for a 1-year subscription, the rest as donation.

Way to go!  
Brenda Beagan, Halifax

## Gender communications interests student

**Pandora:**

I am a young woman who would like to thank Pandora for just existing. Your publication is a breath of fresh air for me. I learn more each issue and I appreciate the interesting articles.

I'd like to share a brief story with you. It was on International Women's Day this year that I discovered I knew very little about gender communications. I learned there is no real language for women.

I attend an all-girl school, and on this day we celebrated by having a

guest speaker, Dr. J. Rolls (University College of Cape Breton), inform us about how men and women communicate. She passed out a quiz, and I failed it. However I learned a great deal and will never forget it, indeed!

If the readers would like to obtain "Communications Gender Gap" please write to: The Centre, 5010 Wisconsin Ave., MW, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20016. When you take the quiz, I do hope you have better luck!

Hopefully yours,  
Cheryl Tatjana Nicol,  
Sydney, NS

## What happened to the bios?

**Pandora:**

Once upon a time you used to print little biographies of the women who wrote for you, along with their articles. I really liked that. But you've stopped doing it. Why? It matters to me who a woman is when I read her story. E.g. if there's a story about child care, it makes a difference to me whether the writer is a mother, a child care worker, a daycare operator, a woman with no kids, a grandmother, or any combination of the above. Besides, the bios were interesting!

Brenda Beagan

**Pandora's note:** We have stopped putting the bios after the stories because so many women didn't send any. When we called them to ask for one, we were frequently told, "Oh, I don't know, just put what you want." This seemed to be unfair to our readers, as well as a lot of work, so we stopped asking. (It's amazing how reluctant women are to talk about themselves.) However, we're willing to try again.

So, next time you write an article for Pandora, please include a short description of yourself. We really do enjoy reading them!



# To get back to what we were saying...

Anne S. Derrick

During the past few weeks, in anticipation of moving our offices, I have been sorting through and packing all the material that I have collected over the years. In doing so I came across a collection of Pandoras that I had squirreled away. This discovery held special meaning for me, and I glanced through the papers with a new understanding and appreciation.

It was ironic that I had written an article about feminist lawyering in the first edition of the paper and about joint custody in the second. Seeing these articles again reminded me that I had felt very honoured by the request for a contribution, and other than articles printed in a university newspaper, it was the first time I had written for a publication.

What I did not realize at the time, or really at all until much later, was the vision and commitment behind the idea of a women's paper. I knew the significance of its place in our struggle to speak and be heard. It seemed very natural and necessary, this paper by, for and about women and, as testimony at the recent Inquiry reminded me, it never occurred to me then that men might have anything to do with Pandora at all. It just had nothing to do with men.

Preparing and presenting the case in defense of the Human Rights complaint caused me to experience Pandora in a new way. Powerful articulate voices were unleashed and the richness and intensity of Pandora's vision was revealed: What had been a conversation amongst women became a struggle to preserve the right to that conversation. In the face of such adversity there was passion and



Anne Derrick at the Nova Scotia Human Rights Inquiry.  
(Photo by Bev Rach)

courage. Throughout the Inquiry process, I kept thinking about women at a table, talking amongst ourselves, (not always in agreement) and being overheard, and then interrupted, by a man at a neighbouring table.

There are other, real images from the case that will endure: being in a room where men are at the front, (except for the isolated witness) and the women are at the back. At times during the process, women laugh, speak directly and with conviction, using anecdotes sometimes, and examples, as illustrations. In doing so, their warmth and humour seems to make the front of the room uncomfortable while the back of the room hums with a spirit of connectedness and appreciation.

As I am talking, I keep getting tangled up in my mind with saying "we" and "they" when I am referring to women and our/their struggle for equality (read justice): The "they" reference is the lawyer's reference, the what-I-am-talking-about-is-what-is-happening-to-my-clients-not-me

distancing that occurs in lawyering — only in this case, what is happening is happening to me too.

Pandora is a case about principle, from the origins of the issue being adjudicated to the articulation of the case. It took the courage and vision of Pandora women to construct the case exclusively in terms of women's equality interests without reliance on arguments such as freedom of expression which are often advanced, as in the debate about pornography, to promote the voices of men to the exclusion of women. Winning at any cost was not the strategy — winning a real victory for women was.

It has been a great honour to work for Pandora and all the women who are connected to her one way or the other, historically and in the present. Pandora women spoke, and have been heard. As we might now say, to the other women at the table, after being interrupted by the eavesdropping man, "Now, where was I...?" or "To get back to what you were saying..."

# Testimonies inspire witness

Rebecca West (pseudonym)

*"I am an old fashioned feminist. I believe in the sex war. When those of our army whose voices are likely to coo tell us that the day of sex antagonism is over and that henceforth we only have to advance hand in hand with the male, I do not believe it."* — Rebecca West

I read this quote from Rebecca West the night before I was to testify at the Pandora inquiry. West was 21 when she wrote these words in 1913. That West is most known as a writer who was also the long-time paramour of H.G Wells is a testament to the skill with which men have denied and hidden our history.

We know so little of women like West, of the feminist movement of the early part of this century and of the many feminist journals and writers then. Rebecca West wrote for *The Freewoman* and used its pages not only to argue for votes for women, but also to put forth a feminist agenda that many would find radical even today.

*Pandora* is in fine company, I thought, as I mulled over what I had read about Rebecca West and the feminist journals of yesteryear. But we struggle still to have our little bit of space, and men still want to deny us even that.

Will we too be forgotten as our radical sisters of 1913 were forgotten? Will the women who come later think again that they are the first to be saying,

"Hang on — we haven't got a fair piece of the pie."

I met with Anne Derrick and we discussed a pseudonym — death threats had many women considering keeping their real identity out of the mainstream press. Yes, I'll be Rebecca West, a small tribute to an uncompromising and courageous foremother.

I guess I was nervous ahead of time — speaking in public is never easy and this was a very male domain. The inquiry was conducted very much like a trial, the atmosphere was hushed, women were threatened with removal for giggling at the craziness (but really, how could we help it at times? Who would have thought that this would turn out to be a comedy — logical when you think about it, but still a surprise).

I did some sitting-in before my turn. How inspiring to hear the other witnesses speak, always from the heart, always with soul-twisting honesty.

Oh my sisters, you do us proud. I wished I had been able to take the whole week off. I wished

I had been able to hear every last second. The lay witnesses spoke of what *Pandora* has meant for them — a place to speak their stories, self-esteem, safety, writing and computer skills, comradeship, and more. The expert witnesses told the inquiry so much about women's oppression, the lack of space for women and their concerns, the real need for a space of our own.

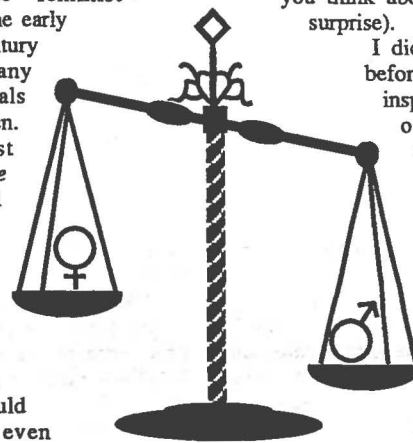
At the same time I felt anger — how can it be necessary in this day and age to prove that women are an oppressed group? Why do we have to put so much energy and money, which we don't have, into this inquiry?

I'm next. I know that my bit is relatively small in the overall scheme of things and I don't expect to be up there long. What a surprise to find that my nervousness has left me completely. I look down and see rows of supporters, women who love me, women who believe in *Pandora* and what she stands for, women who laugh at the absurdity and carry on. I am bathed in positive energy.

The men who conduct this farce and make the rules and ask the crazy questions and try to prove that we are evil-minded nut-cases can't touch me. They don't exist. I answer their questions which try to twist the truth into lies, but I am unconcerned by them.

I didn't know what the outcome of this whole business would be, but I know what the truth is for me and for the women who were there and for the women and men who sent us loving and positive energy, and in some ways, I felt that this was all that mattered.

But when I got the message that we had won, and won big, that our struggles were vindicated, I can tell you, I thanked the Goddess for Anne and for Miller too, and I was some damned happy.



## Volunteers

The basic upgrading (literacy) programs at the North End Library, Spry Centre, Thomas Raddall Library (Tuesday and Thursday mornings)

and at the Gorsebrook School (at the corner of South & Robie) (Monday and Wednesday evenings)

are in need of volunteer tutors. Workshop training will be provided.

Inquiries from potential volunteers are welcome

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Some blind and visually impaired women say that they do not have access to materials on women's issues, or even to the women's movement at all. They cannot read about the latest issues, meetings or projects. They rely on sighted women to tell them. Some blind women have written about the joy and richness that access to the women's community has given them.



The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women has begun to expand its resource collection to include materials for blind women. We have some talking books on women's health, disabled women, violence against women, sexuality and lesbians.

If you know someone who might be interested in this resource, please pass this information along. We can be reached at 424-8662 (Metro), or 1-800-565-8662, (toll free in Nova Scotia). Both numbers are TDD accessible.



# Experienced writer not suprised by response

Sharon Fraser

I've recently written an account of Pandora's Human Rights Commission hearing for The Canadian Forum. Here's part of what I wrote:

...The Human Rights Commission hearing against Pandora was held on five days in January of 1992. The adjudicator, David Miller, was male. The Commission's lawyer, Randall Duplak, was male. GK, representing himself, was male. And the system was, most certainly and unmistakably, male.

It was an adversarial situation of cross-examinations and rebuttals. There was always the feeling that if a witness slipped up and said the wrong thing, fingers would be pointed, heads would roll.

There was something surreal about seeing this little feminist newspaper forced onto the defensive by a hierarchical, authoritarian system that she had no part in making...

Over the years, I have so often

been challenged when I've shared my feminist knowledge, experience and opinions. I've handled it in different ways; when I was younger, I would get furious. I'd rage and rail and generally make a nuisance of myself. As I grew older and felt more confident in my ability to defend a feminist position, I became calmer and able to deal with the hostility on (probably) more effective ways — maybe with humour or maybe by turning the question back on the challenger: "What are you saying? Women are already equal? Or women shouldn't want to be equal? Or you don't mind if women are equal as long as it doesn't affect you?"

(Okay, I confess. Sometimes still, I lose my patience and I yell at people.)

The reason it was so exhausting for me to be questioned by the Human Rights Commission lawyer is that none of the ways I've taught myself to deal with hostility were appropriate or acceptable in this confrontational setting.

Believe me, I wanted to ridicule his impertinent questions. There were times when I wanted to say, "I think you know the answer to that question, Mr. D." That would never do, though, would it?

I suppose what I'm describing here is my own lack of control in the situation. Under normal circumstances, if I'm sitting in front of people answering questions, it's because I've been invited to share information — not to keep on my toes to avoid being tricked by someone who is not seeking information but is trying to discredit me and discredit whatever I say.

So my overwhelming memory of what it was like to testify is how tired it made me. And, of course, there was always a nagging anxiety that he had, in

fact, succeeded in tangling me up and getting me to say something that would harm the case rather than help it.

There's something else that bothers me too. Weeks later, when the final written arguments had been made public, there were many women who expressed concern for me — who hugged me and held me and hoped I wasn't feeling too hurt by what that lawyer had written about me. I keep thinking that I didn't show enough appreciation for that concern.

Over the years that I've written a feminist column in newspapers, I have, after all, received hate-filled mail and crank phone calls. I've been called names that I won't even repeat. I've been told that I'm too ugly to catch a man. I've had my column clipped out and mailed back to me

with obscenities scribbled on it. I've been skewered — more than once — by Frank.

So really, being called an extremist, a radical, even a hypocrite honestly didn't bother me very much. That doesn't mean, however, that I didn't appreciate the concern that was felt for me or that I didn't take that verbal abuse seriously. I wrote a strong letter to the Human Rights Commission, objecting strenuously to the language used by Mr. D — not only about me, but about others. I wanted the Commission to address the fact that certain testimony I'd given had been taken out of context and used in the final argument to make me sound racist.

Predictably, I got a very ineffective response from the Commission — saying nothing much.

I continue to be astounded by the very fact that this Human Rights Commission hearing was ever held. I wonder — along with many others — whether any of them, except for the adjudicator, really "got it."

On the other hand, I'm not too surprised that the mainstream media has failed to understand the significance of the case and that, because of that, the general public has perceived it all as somewhat trivial. In one way, this suits the Human Rights Commission very well. They would just like this case to go away.

Meanwhile, Pandora can get back to being for, by, and about women — this time, with no arguments. And there's something to be said for that, isn't there?

## While sitting on the witness stand one day, some thoughts crossed through my mind...

Brenda Thompson

When I first read the contentious article which angered GK, I wasn't sure that I agreed with it. But as I thought of all the single mothers I had gone through Family Court with, all the child custody battles in which I watched single mothers struggle with emotionally and financially, all the child support payments that went unpaid by the fathers, and all the children who were affected by this, well, I could certainly understand the root of the anger and rage expressed by the authors...

So here it is, the Inquisition. No, no... I mean the Inquiry. Ah, what's the diff? So there's Anne and Jackie and there's the reps for the HRC and there's GK, the guy who was written up in Susan Crean's book, *In the Name of the Fathers*. I wonder how long it will be before I'm called up? I brought Megan along because I thought it would be educational for her to see this. She looks bored.

So there's only one reporter here. At least CBC didn't send Paul Withers to do a story on this. I think he should get the All-Time Manipulator Reporter Award for that piece he did on GK a few months ago when he had G. fluff up some stuffed animals to put on the kids' beds. The kids are teenagers, for heavens sake!

Okay, it's my turn to go up and take the stand. No, no, get that Book of Patriarchy away from me! I give you my word I'll tell the truth.

Okay, Anne, fire away. Ask me some good questions! Let's blow them out of the water. Okay, handled that one... and that one... and that one. These are getting boring! Come on, Anne, ask me about the Women's Studies classes where the only two men present dominated the whole class! Okay, let's talk about my book about single mothers which Pandora helped me to publish. What?! Where does Duplak get off saying I'm not an expert?! I am most certainly an expert on single mothers! What does he think it takes to make an expert — a pinstripe suit and a penis? Calm down, Brenda. Calm down.

All right, it's Duplak's turn to question me. Why do I get the urge to brush my teeth every time I hear that man's name? I'm ready for you, Randall.

Don't think you can tear me apart on the stand 'cause I've been torn apart by shorter and fatter men than you!

Okay, that's over relatively quickly. Fairly harmless and mundane questioning. So, it's time for the Great Defender of the Rights of Pater Units Everywhere to question me. What?! You like me?! You admire me?! Yuuuuuuck! Eeeewww! Why does this keep happening? Fathers' rights activists always like me! What am I doing wrong? The last time a fathers' rights activist told me how much he admired me, he was

running his hand up my thigh!

Now calm down, Brenda. Watch your temper. Don't hurl here. Now look calm. Lower your eyelids. Smile sweetly. Men love that shit. And baby, this is a system that is definitely being run by men. I mean, do they really expect us to take this seriously? A government run by privileged white men; an inquiry headed by a man; the so-called Human Rights Commission represented by a man; and a man who started the whole thing by claiming Pandora had violated his rights as a

man. And we're supposed to believe this will be unbiased?! They must think the public is sooo stupid.

Don't laugh now, Brenda. Get that smile off your face! Oh no. How to stop from laughing out loud... lips down, pout, look serious... Oh shit, don't look at Debbie, she's cracking up, too! Look at the ceiling, look at all the pictures of generals and colonels and admirals of male aggression on the walls. Okay. Now I'm serious. Questioning finished? All right, get me out of here. I think I need to go have a Bloody Mary.

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# Why we do what we do...Pandora's won



If you are a feminist living in Halifax, you've probably had conversations about Pandora's women-only policy. It's a difficult policy to explain to somebody who disagrees with it, even if you understand and support it. The following conversation between Pandora and our lawyer, Anne Derrick, grew out of our need to explain to some of our readers and disbelievers the importance and significance of such a policy.

**Pandora:** Some of our readers have suggested that the Human Rights decision gives special treatment to women based exclusively on gender. One reader wrote, "It worries me to think there are members of my community who feel that in order to support one group they must exclude another." Is it necessary to exclude men in order to advance women's rights, and if so, is this "special treatment?"

**Anne Derrick:** Different women might have different views of this question. I'm sure there are women who don't feel it is necessary to exclude men in order to advance women's rights, and it's open to those women to involve themselves in mixed-sex groups. I'm sure there are men and women working together for the betterment of women and for the betterment of other groups. But not all women feel that way.

Some women feel, and I'm one of them, that it is necessary to have women-only spaces. For these women, women-only spaces are necessary and useful, and provide an opportunity for genuine equality and change to occur. For these women, it's important, both socially and legally, that this right be acknowledged.

Is this special treatment? No! Not at all. This doesn't involve creating a special category that places women in a superior or advantaged position over men. Not at all. It is the law finally recognizing the reality of society: that everything isn't neutral, that everything isn't balanced, that everything isn't equal, that there are very grave disparities.

When you're talking about justice, those disparities are based, among other things, on sex. Those disparities have to be rebalanced.

It's like talking about justice. The world is unjust. Men have advantages over women based purely on sex. That's unjust. How do we redress that imbalance? We create a world where women have an ability to strengthen and advance ourselves in a way that, for some women, is going to mean excluding men.

We have seen what happens when we don't exclude men — men take over. It is a world where women's culture and women's skills and women's strengths and women's history have been eclipsed, and it's time women are trying to reclaim that and preserve it and expand it to its rightful place, and it's going to take creating women-only spaces to do it.

It certainly isn't promoting women to a disproportionate balance in

relation to men. It's starting to rebalance things. And it's not that women are just simply wanting to have what men have. It's women wanting to have a place in society that is a just and fair place for us to be. We want to be able to explore and express our own culture, our own experiences, all those things that are denied to us. That's why it's so significant to have a place like Pandora where that can be done.

This question of special treatment concerns me because we should understand that it's men who have been receiving special treatment all along. It really takes examining one's own experience and looking at it critically to appreciate that even if you've

been a privileged woman, you've experienced this special treatment that men enjoy. It's not women who are getting special treatment; women have to fight for every single bit of ground. And it's ground that we're taking back.

When you think about women-only space, there are historical examples of women having their own spaces and having those spaces taken away from us by men. It's not that women are claiming something they're not entitled to. These were activities and spaces in which women's culture, women's music, women's language and women's experience has flourished. They have been attacked and dismantled and stolen away from us.

Pandora and places like Pandora take back some of that space. That's what we should appreciate: we've been robbed of a lot, and we're not going to stand for it anymore.

I think saying this is special treatment, that we're doing this at the expense of men, is really not appreciating how much has been done at our expense and how much there is still to do. This is just one small part of it, but we absolutely must not feel apologetic or defensive. This is our due.

What it ultimately means is a more just world that's not only better for women but also better for everyone. If people are concerned about the effect of women-only spaces on others, I think we should understand that the enhancement and enrichment of women's culture and the contribution of women's experience to the world as a whole, make it a better world. It adds, it doesn't take away.

**Pandora:** Some of our readers have questioned whether excluding men from Pandora is reverse discrimination. Can you explain to these readers why excluding men is not a double standard?

**Anne:** What we're talking about here in the Pandora case is more a question of power than a question of gender. There is a very extreme difference in the power than men wield and the power that women wield.

Discrimination has a legal meaning. It's incorrect, in law, to say that excluding men from Pandora is discrimination. This case has shown that, because of this difference in power, creating spaces for women to work or talk or develop ideas is necessary to advance women, because we are currently so unequal to men.

So it advances women, not by taking power away from men, but by simply giving women greater opportunity than we have now. In no way does it deny men the power they already have. Men have enormous power, enormous access to media, enormous opportunities to develop their ideas, and women don't. It is not simply a matter of the flip side of what men do to women. It is what is necessary to try to redress the imbalance.

**Pandora:** How does this decision affect women wanting access or entry



Anne Derrick and Jackie Mullenger wait for a ruling from the Chair of the Human Rights Tribunal. (Photo by Beverley Rach)



To help celebrate the victory, and as a fund-raiser, Sharon Fraser hosted a luncheon for Pandora supporters at her home. Some of the women involved relax on the deck outside her home. From left to right are Debbie, Anne, Amani (peeking out the window), and Bev. (Photo by Sandra Lanz)



Anita Martinez, cake baker and decorator extraordinaire, shows off the cake she made to celebrate Pandora's victory. Needless to say, this cake, as well as three others, disappeared before the night was over. (Photo by Amani Wassef)



# men-only policy

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to men's groups and why is this different from men seeking access to women's groups?

Anne: Again this all relates to this issue of power. Men's groups have historically meant the exclusion of women from decision-making about power or about money or about advantage. Therefore men have been able to consolidate and maintain that unequal power they have over women. Preventing women from getting access to that power enables men to continue to keep that imbalance of power between men and women.

Women's groups are not operating from a power base that puts them at an advantage to men. Women aren't meeting to decide who gets promotions, or what financially advantageous decisions could be made, or what contacts could be made that could politically or financially benefit them.

Men being excluded from women's groups merely enables women to work in a women-only space to benefit the women who are members of those groups.

There is a real difference between exclusive men's groups and women's exclusive space, and this is understood in law. Men excluding women is discrimination in law, but women saying we need this space to develop and consolidate our own ideas, our own activities, our own agenda, is not discrimination in law.

**Pandora:** Would it make a difference if the men-only space was a social organization rather than a business or economic group?

Anne: No, I don't think it does make a difference because men simply cannot argue that they are disadvantaged on the basis of sex. For example, men may be disadvantaged to other men on the basis of, say, sexual orientation or physical ability. You may have a man with a disability who is clearly at a disadvantage to men who do not have a physical or other disability. Or you might have a gay man at a disadvantage in relation to men who are not gay. But men are not able to say "We are at a disadvantage to women and therefore we need to have a space that excludes women."

What sets the women's groups apart is that it is important for the women's groups to operate as exclusive



Dalna Kulnys and son Nicolas arrive to listen to the testimony at the Pandora Human Rights Inquiry. (Photo by Bev Rach)

space; that they have an equality-seeking or ameliorative aspect and that's something Pandora was able to demonstrate. That was Pandora's reason for existence. That was Pandora's function.

**Pandora:** So this win doesn't set a precedent that would allow women to be excluded from men's groups for the same reasons that men have been excluded from Pandora?

Anne: No! Men cannot argue that they need to group together to struggle for equality with women.

**Pandora:** So legally this decision cannot be used in reverse?

Anne: No. This decision cannot be used to say to women, "Look, we men need to get together to put together our own newspaper because we've got to develop our culture of men and our male ideas." That is the world: male-defined and identified.

What Pandora has done is carve out a space and say, "This is a women-only space and we wish to operate it as a women-only space so that we can benefit and advantage women who have historically been so terribly disadvantaged in relation to men."

What's so important here is the feature that relates to equality. Surely nobody has any difficulty understand-

ing that the world is sex-unequal. I think anybody who examines her own experience as a woman would quickly realize that the world is unequal based on sex, and that's what this decision is about. It has to do with the reality of speaking to women's lives. All women — even though some of us are not as disadvantaged as others, some of us have greater privilege than others — all women are disadvantaged, as women, in relation to men.

**Pandora:** Can this decision be appealed?

Anne: The time for appeal has passed. Nothing can change it.

**Pandora:** What's the significance of this decision to other women-only and disadvantaged groups?

Anne: I think the decision has application to other disadvantaged groups, not just women who are disadvantaged on the basis of sex, but also groups who are disadvantaged on the basis of sexual orientation or disadvantaged on the basis of disability or disadvantaged on the basis of race; for example, a black group or a lesbian-only conference. This decision doesn't occur in isolation from all these other equality-promoting activities. It's not, "This is OK for Pandora but it wouldn't be OK for these other activities or these other spaces that women or other disadvantaged groups are trying to create or trying to maintain so that disadvantaged groups can improve their conditions." We know very well that nobody else is going to do this for us; we have to do it for ourselves, and it's very important to have a decision like this in our hip pockets.

**Pandora:** Do you feel that this charge of sex-discrimination is part of the backlash against women and feminism?

Anne: Yes, I do. That's a personal opinion, but I think it's no accident that Pandora had to be five years into her life before this happened. I think once women are perceived as not knowing their place, talking back, claiming ground, that this kind of reaction is inevitable.

It's unfortunate, obviously, to have to fight these kinds of battles, but I think it flushes out the real resistance there is to women creating their/our own place in the world. The fact of the case occurring certainly didn't surprise me, and we can point to many similar kinds of responses. If it doesn't come, maybe we're not doing something right.



A group of Interested women's groups and individuals held a press conference at the beginning of the hearing to support Pandora's woman-only policy. Shown here are some of the Interested observers. (Photo by Bev Rach)

## To be or not to be...

During the inquiry the women of Pandora wrote down why we felt our women-only policy was so important. Here is what we came up with.

- Pandora wants to maintain control of the agenda: we want to maintain and ensure women's creativity, priorities, needs and ideas create the agenda from which Pandora works.
- It is mostly men who write, make music, publish and take photographs. Pandora exists as a way to counter this androcentric (male-centered) reality in the media and society. There is an overwhelming presence of men in the mainstream media.
- Working in a women-only space gives women time alone to gain strength from each other through sharing and discussing ideas.
- Pandora is a conversation between women. It joins women from different areas in a network by creating a space for women to write, read and respond to each other.
- Pandora is about women's experiences, and men don't have these.
- Pandora is a forum which promotes political activism by helping to reverse the disadvantaged situation of women. To be able to achieve this level of understanding of women's oppression, you need the experience of being a woman.
- Pandora has limited space, money and energy as a volunteer organization. As a volunteer collective we have decided to put these resources toward advancing the equality of women.
- Printing work of any kind (article, letter, photo/graphic) by men creates a snowball effect whereby women's energies must be utilized to produce men's work; women then read the material, respond to it, and then Pandora must then respond to these responses. This creates a continuous circle

in which women's energy then becomes responsible for responding to, and discussing, men's ideas and opinions.

- Safety. Pandora is one safe space where women can freely express themselves without the threat of male reaction. This has been an important factor since the inception of Pandora seven years ago. An example of the necessity for this is the Human Rights Inquiry itself: the man who filed the complaint became the actor and Pandora the reactor. Pandora had no choice about whether or not to become involved in this case. In the one instance when Pandora women spoke to the mainstream media, death threats were received within 12 hours. The man who initiated the complaint received no such threats. When women express themselves in the mainstream media, they face threatening male retaliation.
- To work with men or include works by men we would then have to educate men to the politics of women's oppression, experiences and disadvantages. We don't want to use our energies to educate men.
- We don't want men to define and solve our problems. We want the autonomy to control and operate Pandora as a women's newspaper.
- Pandora's volunteers, readers, writers and subscribers expect the newspaper to be women-only. There is the expectation that Pandora is, and will continue to be, women-only. Our readers do not expect to read or see material from men. Our volunteers are committed to providing a newspaper by, for and about women. Our subscribers pay for a newspaper which reflects the views, experiences, voices and creativity of women.

To change any of this would be to change the underlying principles which makes Pandora so special and unique.



Case reflects gender oppression faced by lesbians

# The day I tried to testify for Pandora

Anne Bishop

The day I tried to testify for Pandora, I was deeply disappointed. I guess that's an understatement; what I felt was rage. I was completely silenced, denied my testimony as a woman because I am a lesbian. The adjudicator ruled that since I am now covered under the sexual orientation provision of the Human Rights Act, and this case was being contested under the sex provision, my testimony was not relevant.

As I listened to the legal discussion going around me, my heart dropped slowly into my shoes. I spent almost all of my voluntary time for several years lobbying to get sexual orientation added to the Human Rights Act. I also took considerable personal risk. In fact, that is what my testimony was to have been about. I was going to talk about the negative and threatening

responses I experienced as a lesbian speaking out in the public media, contrasting it to the positive, interesting discussion that resulted from writing about the issue in Pandora. Now, the legislative change I fought hard for was being used against me. Because I have protection as a lesbian, I apparently can't speak as a woman.

"How can they separate oppression of lesbians from oppression of women?" I remember thinking. The only reason for suppression of lesbians is our independence from male control. Women who love other women are not a problem in gender-equal societies. Inside women's and feminist organizations there are all kinds of differences and tensions between straight women and lesbians. However, most members of "the public" can't figure out the difference between feminists and lesbi-

ans, and from the point of view of patriarchal society, they are right. For the "fathers" an independent woman is an independent woman is an independent woman — and we're all scary and bad!

What the public, the adjudicator and the Human Rights Commission lawyer don't grasp is the gendered nature of sexual orientation. Because the social role of homophobia and heterosexism (oppression of gay and lesbian people) is to enforce gender roles, they function differently for men and women. Patriarchy doesn't care if women love women; the problem is our resistance to male control.

Gay men, on the other hand, are a problem precisely because they love each other. Patriarchy is organized around conquest, and men don't make good warriors if they love each other as individuals, in a tender, caring, mutually responsible way. As soldiers (or fraternity men, or brothers of religious orders, or management of corporations) men are expected to bond with each other and their cause as an ideal, an abstraction, loyal to the company, the fraternity, the church, the corporation.

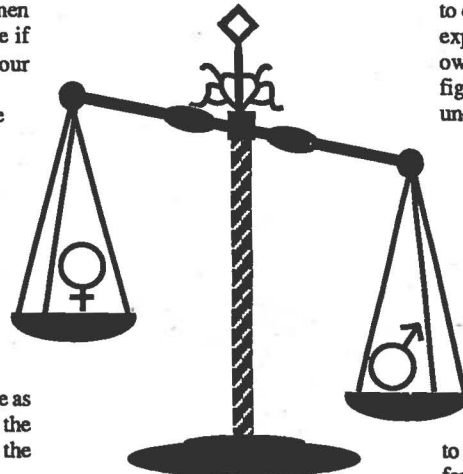
Also, patriarchy revolves around "conquest by penis." A man who willingly accepts another man's penis is a possession, a slave, no better than a woman, certainly a gross challenge to male superiority.

These differences in the reasons for suppression of gay men and lesbians mean that the history of each is different and the current experience of oppression is different. In the mind of most of "the public," however, along with Mr. D and Mr. M., "gay" means only "gay men." Lesbians are doubly invisible — when the issue is women, we are invisible as lesbians; when the issue is sexual orientation, we are invisible as women.

Another frightening thing about my experience in the witness chair is the extent to which the legal human rights system puts each "grounds of discrimination" in its own separate box. This is a problem for me, living as I do

on the crossroads of "sex" and "sexual orientation." How much more it must be a problem for anyone who experiences three or more forms of oppression. If a Black, disabled lesbian immigrant were refused an apartment, is her pursuit of justice dependent on proving whether she was refused because she is Black, lesbian, disabled, or an immigrant? None of us can or should be split up into fragments for simplicity of legal argument.

The legal human rights system's



desire to clearly separate "grounds of discrimination" is an excellent divide and conquer strategy. As long as all of us who suffer from one or more forms of oppression believe that we are in competition with one another for justice, we will spend all our energy putting each other down instead of building the unity which could actually move us towards a social system based on justice. No form of oppression is, after all, independent.

If racism came to an end tomorrow, so would sexism, heterosexism, discrimination against people with disabilities, and all other forms of oppression. This is true because in order to see the end of racism, rather than just have a switching around of the racial group in power, we would have to have succeeded in creating a social system based on co-operation and the equal value of all human beings, a system

where no one can own, use or control another's energy, talents, resources or reproductive ability. When this day dawns, all other forms of exploitation will have ended too, including exploitation of other species and the earth.

All forms of oppression depend on the possibility of exploitation; all will end when that possibility no longer exists. No form of oppression can end without all ending. Very few oppressed people seem to understand that we are all tied together in this way, that efforts to end our own oppression at another's expense will, in the end, perpetuate our own oppression. If we are forced to fight legal battles with a fragmented understanding of oppression, these destructive competitions will be encouraged.

These thoughts all swirled through my mind on the witness stand at the Pandora Tribunal. I have since discovered that the problems the two openly lesbian witnesses encountered there are not unique. Other lesbians, both in Canada and the U.S., are discovering that courts are interpreting sexual orientation according to gay male experience and putting different forms of oppression into separate boxes. These interpretations cut lesbians out of the picture.

We need to do some thinking here. We need to evaluate legal strategies — Do we pursue them? Can we avoid pursuing them? Will they pursue us? If we pursue them, how? Using what arguments? How can we advance our own cause without jeopardizing that of any other group?

We also need to keep in touch with other lesbians all over the continent. Several patriarchal strategies that emerged during the Pandora Tribunal are emerging in other places at the same time. We need to know what's going to hit us next. We need to know what others have tried to counteract the right and how well or poorly it worked. We do need to get our act together, not just as women, not just as members of the gay/lesbian community, but as lesbians.

## Commission denounces lesbian voices as invalid

Marie Paturel

During the Pandora Inquiry, I had agreed to testify as a lesbian who had previously worked for Pandora about how Pandora had helped to connect me with the lesbian community and provide a safe space to think about and explore various lesbian and feminist issues. I was excited about testifying and figured it was my way of giving back to Pandora what they had given me. I saw it as a chance to give voice to the positive role Pandora, as a collective and as a newspaper, played in my "coming out".

I remember dressing for the day I was to testify. I tried to look my "Dykest", Labrys earring, sword necklace, pink triangle on my jacket, short hair, braided rat tail, and my red high-cut sneakers. I had seen previous

women testify and had mentally and emotionally prepared myself for what was, in my opinion, the abusive treatment women had been receiving from the Commission's lawyer, Mr. Duplak.

Unfortunately, I was not at all prepared for what did transpire during my testimony. It's rather difficult to describe what happened. All I really know was that I wasn't allowed to say what I wanted to say. Instead of having the chance to give voice to my experiences as a lesbian, I felt strangely silenced and disjointed. The reason for this became clearer the next day when I found out that another lesbian's testimony was disallowed. I was infuriated by the treatment she received, and I began to understand more why I felt silenced after my testimony.

I realized that the "lesbian" voice was not going to be heard at this inquiry. Neither Mr. Duplak, lawyer for the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, nor David Miller, Chair of the Inquiry, believed that lesbian experience was valid in an inquiry about gender equality. Lesbians belonged to the Human Rights category of "sexual orientation" and not to the category of "sex equality." It is a convenient way of making lesbians invisible: using my

making lesbians invisible: using my sexual identity to degender my existence and to negate that I am first and foremost a woman.

I was confused by all of this. I wondered how, after working so hard to get sexual orientation included in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, could this "protection" then be used against us? I asked myself the question: "In such an important case dealing with the issue of gender equality, how could it so easily exclude women with a lesbian identity?"

The most simplistic and obvious answer would be misogyny and lesbophobia. But this reflects more the motivation for this silencing and not the reason for its success. But to leave it at that would be too simple.

Many factors played in my silencing. One of them was the failure of the feminist movement to address and voice the concerns of women who have a lesbian identity. This is especially so in mainstream feminist organization and among feminist lawyers and legal organizations. Instead, the rights of women who have a lesbian identity are incorporated under the category of "sexual orientation". The oppression we face is lumped together with that of gay men, separating our lesbian identities from gender. Although we may face similar oppression and struggles with gay men, lesbians do face unique experiences because of our gender and our sexual identity. It appeared that neither Duplak nor Miller could see this.

The Pandora decision was a victory for us as women. It was also a learning experience for me, as a law student, on how lesbians are seen in the Human Rights context.

The whole process was important in that both Pandora and its lawyer Anne Derrick did attempt to address lesbian concerns in a gender context. Only through attempts such as this, when lesbian experience is connected to gender concerns, will the degendering and invisibility of lesbian voices be stopped.

**"I realized that the lesbian voice was not going to be heard at this inquiry."**

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# Truth of feminism wins Pandora case

Brenda Beagan

I couldn't go to the whole of the Pandora hearings last January, but I went to whatever I could, on my lunch breaks, after work, and so on. I wrote notes to myself as I sat there listening and watching. These are some of those random notes and reflections.

This is such a farce! Why are we doing this?! This is not our space. This is not our legal system. These are not our rules. This is not our language.

Can women ever take over space! Here we are in this imposing formal room, with the adjudicator at the front, and the witness stand, and the lawyers' tables, and the microphones and the clerk recording everything, and the rows of chairs for the audience. Pretty intimidating! Yet before very long, there's a feeling in the room. A sense of support. Connection. Sisterliness? Subversiveness. Women's glances meeting. Eyes rolling at the shared sense of ridiculousness about some of the things being said. Stifled laughter (in spite of warnings from the adjudicator). Children crying. Women whispering. Nods of understanding and agreement at points made by witnesses. Angry muttering. Women coming and going, as lunch-breaks end or kids get out of school. Whispered greetings, waves and nods as new women arrive. Clumps of women gathering during the breaks excitedly going over what has just been said. Short of ditching the tables and putting the chairs in a circle, we're doing a great job of making this our space!

They have just decided a woman's story is not admissible as evidence. No wonder they can't grasp the idea of collective process, and consensus decision-making! I have grown so familiar with the feminist "go-round", where each woman is given a turn to speak her piece without interruption, where each woman's contribution (her "evidence") is valued. No wonder this process feels so hostile!

It is incredibly moving to sit here listening to this testimony to Pandora. These witnesses are the women of my community, of the Pandora community. My peers and my elders. Strong women, all. It is very moving to hear them talk of what Pandora means to us, how important Pandora is. We are eloquent in defense of our loved ones. And Pandora is clearly cherished. Women who would never call themselves articulate are speaking their truth, speaking what they have lived and what they know, so clearly and strongly and beautifully. I am often choked up. I feel like crying.

I like that Anne Derrick's argument is not based on some obscure point of law. It is basic feminism. Very sophisticated, but straightforward feminist logic nonetheless. These are the sorts of things we discuss among ourselves, over coffee. If we win this case, it will be because of the reality, the logic, the truth of feminism.

They are arguing about who qualifies as an "expert" witness. It is



**Celebrators enjoy the festivities at Pandora's victory party with champagne and cake for everyone. The party was an opportunity to express our appreciation**

**to our supporters, witnesses and especially to our lawyers Anne Derrick and Jackie Mullenger. (Photo by Amani Wassef)**

very odd. They are judging women's lives on criteria that they have set up, standards that are totally inappropriate.

It seems so clear to me that every woman here is an expert. An expert on her own life. Isn't that what Pandora is about? Pandora is a place where women (ALL women) are finally experts, because the subject is women's lives. (In a way it even seems kind of arbitrary who gets to be a witness. Surely every woman in this audience should also be permitted to

have experienced what it is to be a woman). are invited to write letters or articles."

There are women in this audience who are clearly against Pandora. They are muttering and whispering and glaring. Not many, but a handful. Mostly young women. That makes me feel so sad. So despairing. If this hearing doesn't convince them how much we still need feminism, how much we need women-only space, I don't know what could.

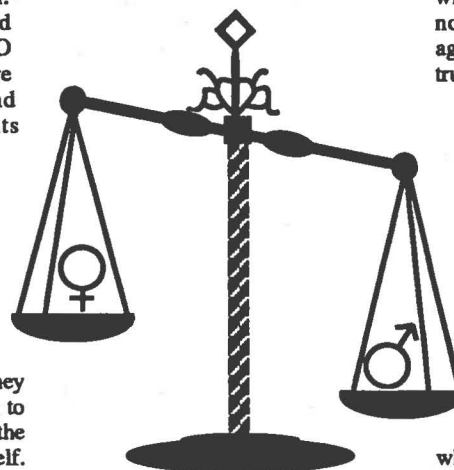
This is a classic example of women having to be twice as good as men! Anne Derrick is doing such a good job. Compared to the others, she is SO much better prepared, so much more articulate, clear, respectful, and attentive. The Human Rights Commission's lawyer sits there, slouched in his chair, mumbling, while Anne stands up to speak clearly, addressing everyone with respect. He didn't even have copies of the cases he cited, or even of the Human Rights Act! Anne had to lend him her copies! He didn't call any witnesses; he produced no evidence. If they win this case, they will have had to do almost nothing to win. Not even be prepared. I guess the status quo doesn't have to defend itself.

Mr. K and Mr. D say: "How could publishing the occasional letter from a man hurt anything? Are you really saying the whole collective would quit?" Well, possibly. Probably. But they really don't understand how Pandora is all of ours. They don't understand the "Pandora community." They don't understand the ownership women feel about our Pandora.

I've never been on the Pandora collective, or even helped with distribution. But I read it faithfully. I subscribe. I sometimes write articles, or letters. I go to meetings of women's groups where the timing of our event/rally/dance/whatever is determined by when Pandora comes out next, so we can be assured of wide publicity. I am part of the Pandora community. Just because I read it. Just because it is

written for me.

And yes, Mr. K and Mr. D, it would make a big difference if there was the "occasional letter from a man". I have no desire to hear men's reactions or contributions to the debates that go on within our communities. And it's not just the energy Pandora would expend printing men's opinions. I'm not interested in expending any energy reading them. I read Pandora knowing I will not have to do so. Printing letters from men would destroy the Pandora community - at least for me.



It just occurred to me... in a way, Mr. K. is right. He is using the language of equality, the language we have given him. He talks of disadvantage, how men are disadvantaged on certain grounds. When we as feminists talk about women as "disadvantaged," what we mean is OPPRESSED. But by using the language of "disadvantage," we open ourselves up for comparisons of women's and men's disadvantages. If we talk about women's oppression, which is specific and systematic, we can see the difference. Men may be disadvantaged, but they sure as hell are not oppressed. Not on the basis of their sex, anyway. Who would be their oppressor? Who would benefit from their oppression?

In trying to make our point palatable

(to those in whom it will inevitably evoke a bad taste!) we water it down to the point where it is so non-specific that it can be used against us. As Mr. K. is doing now. This non-specific, gender-neutral stuff is dangerous.

They just don't get it. I've said that so many times during this hearing. I've heard it said so many times. In tones of anger, rage, amazement, bewilderment. THEY JUST DON'T GET IT. Pandora's case seems so obvious to most of us here in this room. We sit listening to Anne and the witnesses say what we know to be true. We sit nodding in understanding and agreement. It all seems so obvious. So true.

And then they ask a question that comes from another planet! A question that shows so clearly that THEY JUST DON'T GET IT! I feel despair again. Rage and despair. Hearing our arguments put so well, in so many ways, by so many different women over the past four days. HOW CAN THEY STILL NOT GET IT?!

Of course. I know the answer to this. I should have seen it. Why should they get it? What do men have to gain from understanding what we are saying to them? Nothing. What do they have to lose from understanding what we are saying? Potentially everything. Why did I expect them to get it?

An after note:

I just read David Miller's decision. We won! I am ecstatic!

I am thinking, "Of course we won. We had to win. How could he have decided against us?" At the very same time I am thinking, "I don't believe it. I never expected Pandora to win. He could so easily have decided against us."

It is a good decision. He got it. His argument shows clearly that he understood almost all of what we were saying to him. This is an important victory. I still think it should never have had to happen, but it is an important victory.

**And then they ask a question that comes from another planet. A question that shows so clearly THEY JUST DON'T GET IT!**

say what Pandora has meant to her.)

Of course, that's what this hearing is about. Men can't possibly write for Pandora, since the subject is the experience of being a woman. Would men be happier if the editorial policy was written that way? "All persons who are experts on women's lives (i.e.

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# Decision misses significance of lesbian oppression

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women extends heartfelt congratulations to the Pandora collective. The Human Rights Commission decision establishes, once and for all, your right to publish a women-only newspaper.

This is a land-mark decision for women. It is a clear validation of the fact of women's disadvantage, historically and currently. It is a clear recognition of the need for women-only activities and organizations. And it is a clear demonstration of the important role Pandora plays in its work toward the amelioration of women's disadvantaged position in society.

In his decision, adjudicator David Miller writes: "The evidence that I heard at the hearing satisfied me that historically and to the present day women as a group in our society have suffered substantially inequality and disadvantages in all aspects of public and private life... [and that]...it is reasonable that women's groups may decide to form women-only organizations, such as Pandora, for the promotion of women's equality and that such organizations may advantage women over men" (p.9).

It is a good decision. And it has ramifications for other women-only groups, as well as for groups that work for equality on the basis of other factors such as race or physical ability. It says that Human Rights legislation should be interpreted in light of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It says that the activities of disadvantaged groups to redress their inequality may, of necessity, exclude members of dominant groups. And it says that exclusion for such purposes is reasonable and in conformity with the intent of Human Rights legislation.

A point of interest: During the week after the decision was made, our phones rang off the hook. Callers were irate, called us idiots, traitors, radicals, man-hating lesbians. The calls were threatening in tone, if not in words. Almost every angry caller said we were all a bunch of lesbians. Said everyone

involved in supporting Pandora was a lesbian, a f---ing dyke, and so on.

In making his decision, David Miller refused to allow or consider evidence about women's experiences of male violence, and evidence about the oppression of lesbians. He judged that "the particular disadvantages suffered by certain sub-groups of women" were not relevant.

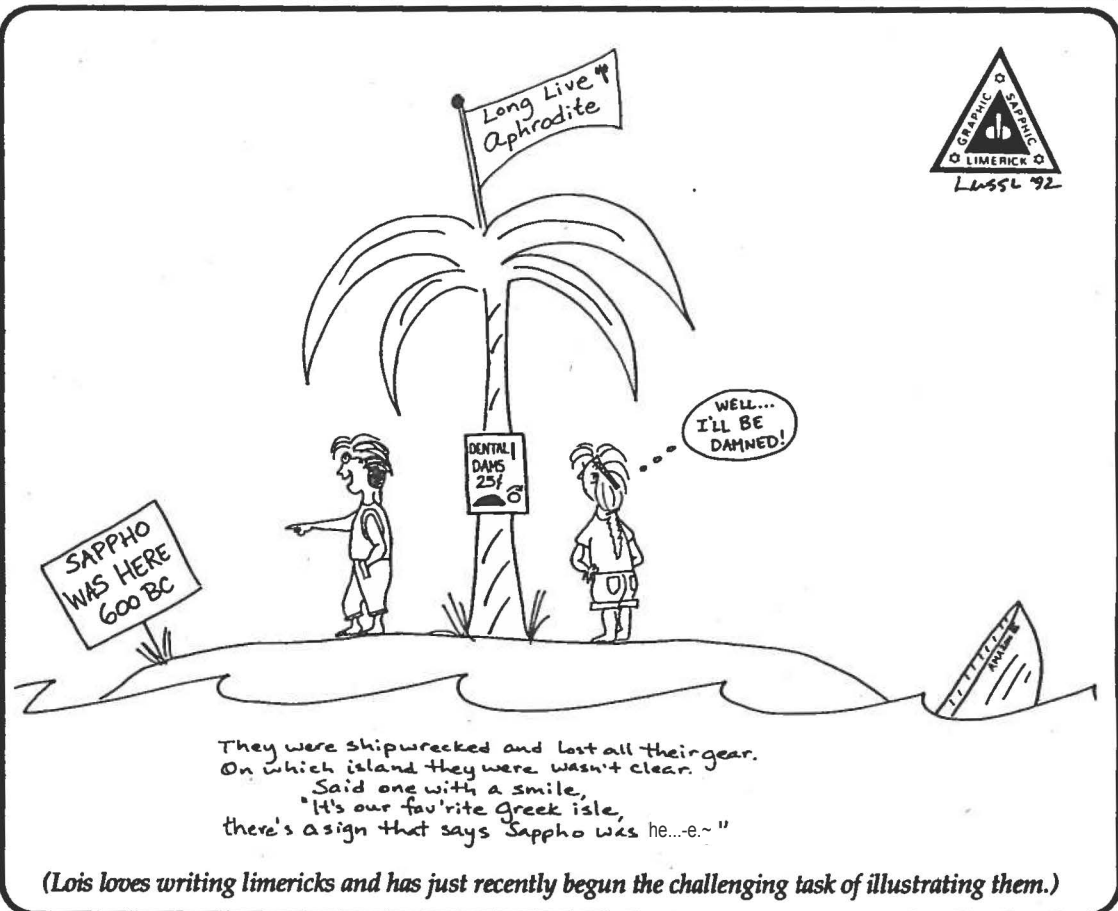
In seeing this evidence in a limited way as an argument about sub-groups who are even more oppressed than "women in general", he missed its significance. Our irate callers made the significance of this evidence very clear.

Women who suffer male violence may be a sub-group, but their experience is part of the oppression of all women. Not all men have to beat women, and not all women have to be beaten, for male violence to be a force that keeps all women in place. Rape, battering, harassment, assault — these are tools of male dominance. Each of us does not have to have experienced male violence for it to affect all women.

Similarly, the oppression of lesbians is not a sub-issue purely about sexual orientation. It is relevant to all women. Lesbians violate the rules of sex-role socialization. Lesbians can be seen to exemplify independent womanhood. Hatred of lesbians is another tool used to keep all women in line, to maintain the sex-roles that keep women dependent and keep men in power. When women act outside of the required gender-roles, when we aren't "feminine" enough, we are labelled "man-hating lesbians". The hatred of lesbians sends clear messages to all women to keep toeing the line.

Thus the aftermath of the Pandora hearing. Women from the collective receive death threats. The Status of Women receives calls that are implicitly and explicitly threatening. And all women involved are called man-hating lesbians. Sure sounds like someone's feathers are ruffled — women must be stepping out of line!

Again, congratulations on your tremendous victory!



(Lois loves writing limericks and has just recently begun the challenging task of illustrating them.)

## Pandora's hearings document women's exclusion from law

Marguerite Cassin

I was pleased to testify in the Pandora Case. My reasons are both personal and political. I feel my own oppression very deeply, and my work as a feminist scholar is my way of working on this oppression. This work of mine, as I like to call it, is a quite solitary pursuit, conducted within the context of the patriarchal domain of the university. My work often gives me considerable pain and anxiety. I wonder if it is "on the right track" and if it will be "of use" to women and men who are more activist than I in seeking equality. I am therefore very grateful to have had work which appears to have been useful to offer the hearing. In this respect, I want to thank Pandora, Mr. K and the Nova Scotia Human Rights

Commission for providing the opportunity for me to have my work used in a practical setting.

In political terms, I see these settings (Human Rights hearings and administrative tribunals of various kinds) as very important sites of struggle for feminists as we seek to advance women's equality. These are settings in which ruling gets done.

We know from the work of feminist legal scholars and lawyers that the law has not been conceived, written or conducted to take into account the social location of women in society. As such, we know

that it is difficult, indeed at times impossible, to enter "fact" about women's lives routinely into judicial and quasi-judicial processes. This hearing and decision enters historical, social, economic and ideological dimensions of women's lives into "fact"; it documents our exclusion, our oppression. In our world, in which ruling takes place through concepts, the entry of this knowledge offered by women on the basis of their own experience and by "authorized academic experts" is very important.

The members of the Pandora Collective and their lawyer, Anne Derrick, are to be congratulated for preparing such an excellent case. I am aware that this was a lot of work and likely means a lot more work to pay the bills. I think it is important to see that this case has gained more than a favourable decision. It offered a teaching and learning experience for the members of the press who attended the hearing and for the public of Nova Scotia who read the press reports. The transcripts and arguments, as well as the decision, stand for women and men to use as they work to advance social equality.

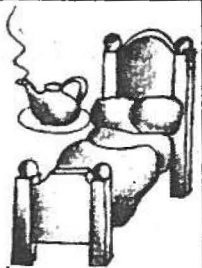
As an experience, I found testifying quite interesting. It was wonderfully supportive to have the members of the Pandora Collective in the room while I testified. I have testified before and have come to know and describe the experience of testifying as an engagement with ruling. I find myself anxious in these settings because I know that is important to produce a good performance. For me, this involves controlling my anger and anxiety in favour of creating an appearance of calm, confidence and authority. I felt a lot of responsibility to women as I testified and had to remind myself that I just had to do my part as well as I could, and other women and men would do the rest.

I was amused at the irony created by the character of the room in which the hearing took place; it was authentic "early ruling class masculinist": dark hardwood panelling (presumably from tropical rain forests) decorated with paintings depicting men's military history.

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# Access to feminist talking books limited —how you can help

Robin Parker

I have a memory of a cover of *Cosmopolitan*, a fleeting glimpse, one moment perfectly preserved. I am a child just learning to read, straining in the checkout line at the grocery store to peer high enough to read out loud, "If you could bring only three items of makeup to a desert island, what would they be?"

This was a gateway into an exotic and forbidden world of glamour and grownups, and for some reason, it intrigued me. It still does. Who would bring cosmetics to a desert island? I would bring tools to build with, hunt with, matches, medicine, paper and pens and, oh hell, while I'm packing, books. If you could bring only three books to a desert island, what would they be? Impossible question; a conundrum.

Like many women, I found my way to the world of feminism using books as a compass. Bookstores have been highlights on the journey: the Toronto and Ottawa Women's Bookstores, Red Herring Books, the Glad Day Bookshop, City Lights Books. Ah, luxury, delight and riches!

The titles roll off my tongue: *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*; *The Madwoman's Underclothes*; *Yearnings*; *In the Name of the Fathers*... These books are meeting places, the sites of heated debate, surprise and tears. The flurry of printed pages we leave behind us as we move through our lives are testament to a conversation between women, a transcript of our thoughts and struggles, a history of the women's movement.

So I challenge you, choose three of those books, because I am about to whisk you into another dimension, a dimension of blindness.

Don't be fooled. The blindness itself is not the desert island. It is a rich world filled with sounds and smells and sensation. It is the world of feminist

books that has deserted you, and you stand clutching fifteen audio cassettes, the equivalent of three books. And that is all. You waited two months for one of the talking books to arrive from B.C. and none of them is what you really want to read. The CNIB doesn't have too much on lesbianism or women of colour. Are you surprised? You've heard all the fuss about the new Ms magazine, but you don't have access to that, either.

I've been doing research for a summer job, and I've discovered almost no feminist materials are accessible to visually-impaired women. Very little on audiotape; even less in Braille. There's unbelievably little available. The Womyn's Braille Press in Minneapolis is the only organization in North America solely dedicated to making women's literature accessible.

Imagine not being able to get access to books on feminist theory, violence against women, lesbian mothering, feminist science fiction!

As always, the solution to this problem is incredibly simple; it is the world that complicates matters. I had the crazy idea that if only women could volunteer for the CNIB or the Ferguson Tape Library (at SMU), these books would be recorded. We would arrive in droves, clutching feminist classics, ready to read. But the CNIB has a book selection committee, and no recording studios in Halifax. And you need to audition to read for them. The Ferguson Library transcribes course materials for post-secondary students only.

So let's do something exciting. Let's found a feminist library for the blind. Let's start recording books! If you're reading anyway, why not read it onto a tape? I have the National Braille Association's recording instructions. All we need is a four-track recorder and a microphone, and a place to keep the tapes. If you are interested in this idea, contact Robin Parker, 492-2658.



After enjoying a wonderful women's weekend in Charlottetown, the return trip on the ferry was a chance for out-of-province women to get together and

keep the spirit alive. Seated from left to right are Sue Atkinson and Betty Ann Lloyd. Peering through the window are Brenda Beagan, Lois Loewen and Carrie Melsom. (Photo by Myrna Carlson.)

## Oodles of praise for PEI Women's Festival

Myrna Carlson, Lois Loewen, & Carrie Melsom

We've been to the island — Prince Edward Island — for the 9th annual P.E.I. Women's Festival. It was a weekend of music, entertainment, meeting other women, workshops, laughter and fun in the heart of Charlottetown. As well, for a group of us who travelled from Halifax together, it was a girls' bonding weekend (Lois, Carrie, Sue and Myrna.)

We set off Friday night in

Raunchy Red Rhonda, the bright red Honda, adorned in her signs of pride. For women with prairie roots, the concept of an island is especially fascinating. As well, it was Carrie's first trip to P.E.I. and she was wildly excited, especially during the ferry trip. As we made the crossing, the night was cool, the water choppy, the moon was big and beautiful.

The opening act that evening was three women, "Margie, Sigrid and Denise." Unfortunately, we arrived too late for the Friday entertainment. However, we heard that Laura Smith was at her finest.

We all stayed with Salli, who was a great conference co-ordinator and a great host to us.

We got up early Saturday morning to register for the day's workshops. The morning included a key note address by Jeri Wine. She talked about her personal healing journey which has led her to Prince Edward Island. Jeri talked about healing, sexuality and spirituality. She shared some of her personal techniques, one of which included her furry gray bunny whispering words of encouragement in her ear.

After lunch, there was a wonderful performance by a dance group called "Dance with DAWN" (Disabled Women's Network). During the rest of the afternoon there were several workshops to choose from. The workshops ranged from topics such as "self-esteem and body image" to experiential workshops such as the "lesbian totem" and "vocalizing and percussion." Other workshops topics included creative dance, creative writing, resolving conflict, yoga, astrology and massage. There were also special workshops and other events for children and youth throughout the weekend. For those who did not attend workshops there was the possibility of sightseeing around the island,

shopping, or (as in Carrie's case) getting a haircut.

Saturday evening included a variety show which boasted a showcase of P.E.I. women's talent. There was everything from classical music to poetry to a re-enactment of the famous Anne Murray and k.d. lang duet. A quick scientific poll conducted by the emcees that evening verified that the audience was composed of "100 percent feminist women." This was wonderful to see, considering the festival is attended by a wide diversity of women. In fact, it is the diversity which makes the festival so interesting and exciting.

The dance which followed was a lot of fun. The tunes kept us hopping until 2:30 am, and line-dancing came to P.E.I. with a vengeance that night.

On Sunday, the brunch began at 10:30 am. At noon the Rose Vaughn Trio performed. As usual Rose, Cathy and Pam were terrific. The final organized event was a talk by Deborah Fleming about her stained glass pieces, known as "The Illuminated Series."

The closing for the festival was a chant led by Rose Vaughn. It was a great way to feel connected with other women.

The mood of the entire festival was very positive. The price was completely affordable, with a sliding scale from \$10 to \$55 for the entire weekend. For some of our group (Carrie and Myrna), it was our first time attending the festival, but we all agree we will gladly go again.

One sad note is that several women (some of whom were involved in organizing the festival this year) are moving to another island on the other side of Canada. There has always seemed to be a connection between P.E.I. and Vancouver Island, and twelve P.E.I. women are headed to Victoria this year. They will be missed tremendously.

### We've moved!

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# Country feminist seeks like-minded others

**Ziggy's**

I live in the country. By choice. A choice that's taken me five years to complete, after 15 years of dreaming and imaging. My house — the locals would call it a camp — was raised and roof-tight by Christmas, and I moved in mid-April when my gravity-fed water supply had finally thawed.

And here I am. In the country. In the woods, really. My land is surrounded by miles of forestry lands, nestled up against a very old sugar maple that creaks like I do on occasional mornings. Just me and my dog and a family of friends nearby.

Synchronicity and generous serendipity got me here and I couldn't be happier. For five years I've been becoming emotionally prepared, and during those five years, I've also had Pandora cross my path. Or more truthfully,

had it handed to me, accompanied by words like, "Here's a paper you should enjoy. It's all about feminists, and those lesbians — you know, those women who wear comfortable clothes and ugly shoes and don't seem to care what people think of them."

That was my first intro to Pandora and, as it turned out, I did enjoy it. But living away from the city as I, and most of the people I cared about, did, I found scarce material of interest for my "country-house" needs.

A personal description, while only made up of words, might enlighten others with similar situations. I am a white, recovering Catholic and middle-class escapee, single celibate feminist novice-pagan crone wisen-hymer. After years of political and community activism, I am in retreat, seeking spiritual balance, and on a path to discover the

warrior/heroine within. I like to think of myself as "on Sabbatical" rather than unemployed or "between jobs."

My work, my research, involves living in balance with this land I find myself a steward of, and searching for my "Goddess roots" here on the land.

While I have no wish to re-invent the wheel, I do feel often that I am re-inventing myself. No, more than that, my environment is forcing me to face myself and see the importance this place has for me at this time in my life. The easily-seen metaphor for the entire planet, in this little corner of Nova-Scarcity, is hard for me to miss.

I'd like very much to have this first attempt develop into an on-going column, where other wimmin who live "in the woods" also share their experiences, struggles, discoveries, challenges and triumphs, whether big or

small. My mythic quest will be to support the heroine in me by allowing her to guide my development.

Nature, that is any natural environment, has always been my nurturing well. Although I was a city child, my earliest memories are of trees, grasses, huge skies, little flowers, the healing power of winds, and the awesome beauty of violent storms. My mother imprinted me early with a love of, and a respect for, the natural environment.

It may not mean much to the grand-scale gardeners or farmers out there, but putting in my first salad garden, in a self-built raised bed made of stripped logs, gave me a greater sense of accomplishment than putting together another grant proposal. Building a "Ziggy-style" screen door left me

breathless. Digging dirt from beside an old foundation and unearthing old pottery shards sent me to my spells index to banish any lingering spirits confused about their existence on this earth-plane. Watching a loud stinky dinosaur of a machine dig the hole for my new pond (i.e. How could any hole that big ever fill up with water, and/or why did I think this was so necessary when the destruction to my blackberry fields was so total?)

So all you neo-pagan/Wiccan/feminist/back-to-the-land questers—write to me, care of Pandora, about your funny or not-so-funny experiences, your concerns, your challenges or questions. Where are we? Let's get in touch with each other and with our earth. We need her and she needs us.

## The Scarecrow

**Pandora:**

Please find enclosed a copy of "The Scarecrow." This is a story in which I recount abusive memories through a dream state.

**Sandra Sweeney, Dartmouth, NS**

"What a storm we had that year, Martha will tell ya, that big old scarecrow just blew right off its perch, tumbled around in the air like a balloon losing its air, we found it the next day, come to rest just over the fence near Old Jacob's farm, up back of the old family property."

She has stopped falling now, all around her, in a wash of green, the Jolly green giant corn, that her parents planted every spring, the ripe ears of golden corn reaching to the sun, they are bleeding, their silken tassels crimson against the blue growing sky, she can't understand, the ears are bleeding

"Those are your ears. Your ears are bleeding," that same sing-song voice babbles to her, over and over.

Below her, in a depression, a bright pool of rainwater left by yesterday's storm, a twinkle, she reaches for, it must be her baton, she pulls up a hammer, holding the peen the claws reach out for her wrist, the brown etched shaft balances straight upwards, she drops it back into the pool, that water splashes up around her, raining down in aqua-tinted shards sparkling in the crimson sky.

"Papa's hammer," she hears someone say.

I'll get it later when I have more strength. I think I'll just rest here under this oak; oak, tall wonderful restful brown trunks, a beautiful cool wooded glade of handsome oaks,

Far far away in the upside down world, she can hear someone screaming, "You're bleeding. You're bleeding. Jesus, don't you get it? You're bleeding. You got to get up. You're bleeding."

She bolts up out of her sleep, taking the tangled night-sweat soaked covers with her, her heart beat fills her aching chest,

"I'm only dreaming. It's just a dream. Turn on the light. I'll see everything is all right. It was just a bad dream," she tells herself.

She bumps her shoulder into the wall, the pain floods her entire being faster than the light floods the room, in the remaining shards of the mirror she sees her lopsided reflection, her one shoulder drags loosely, far lower than the other, her hand is the corrosion warning skeleton hand pasted on the cans under the sink in the bathroom, there is dried desert-caked blood everywhere, and a still barely flowing dark stream snaking across her neck from her ear,

Plummeting, twisting, cartwheeling, over and over her body spinning, clumsily arcing over itself, the bright blue sky sunlight twinkling on the majorette's

silver baton clasped in her left hand realizing she has never owned a baton, she opens her eyes,

It is no longer a little girl's silver smiling baton, it is a white western-twisted spindle on the staircase in her father's home she clasps, she closes her eyes to shut out forever the upside down scene of inverted white walled reality rising up on all four sides of her, she can't let go, if she loosens her grip she will fall, and she knows that she will fall too far, that unlike Alice she won't get back out again,

"Alice doesn't live here anymore" the sing song voice whispers.

She is an old weather beaten scarecrow wearing someone's last hand me downs, a red checked shirt is stretched over her straw lumpy body, green-brown spikes of hay poked through her wrist and ankle cuffs, telling the world what she is made of, hay can spontaneously combust, she recalls reading about it somewhere in a dusty old book with a black binding and yellowing pages,

Iron fists smash into a big lumpy pillow, it is her chest, there is no noise really, just a swish of displaced air and a soft whoomp that breathes in the pain, interrupted by short tearing noises as the straw rips through the red and black, red and black, red and black checks covering her chest,

She does not scream, how can she? she is a scarecrow and scarecrows do not scream, even when their button eyes are picked off by their namesakes, scarecrows do not scream

The steel-toed boots take aim at one straw hand wrapped around the spindle, peeling back pink flesh over white knuckles,

"This is white knuckle airlines, fasten your seat belt please it's going to be quite a ride."

She lets go to search for the lap belt and begins to fall, stumbling, tumbling, humbling, her good for nothing scarecrow body falls, bouncing on the rock wall that separates Martha and John's property from Old Jacob's, she doesn't feel it when her head smashes through the gyprock wall, she doesn't feel it when her shoulder catches the 4 x 2 stud, it breaks her fall and it breaks her collarbone, she doesn't feel it when the white-red bone tears through her flesh, but she hears it, a clean white hot snap

Voices approach, it is John and Martha, coming to collect the scarecrow, fix it up, sew up the tears, clean off the red soil-mud caked all over it, get it back in the field before the birds eat all the crop,

She hears them, she does not want to see them, she knows it is a dream but for some reason the dream frightens her so she transforms herself into a hawk and spreading her wings flies up and away from that menacing Jolly green giant corn awash in the deepening crimson sunset far below.

## Women in media focus of new group

Why is it that only two women in all the media in industrial Cape Breton are covering hard news? How often does sexual harassment happen to media women, and how do they handle it? What important stories aren't getting covered because editors or producers dismiss each one as "just another women's story"?

These issues were the focus of a meeting of media women who met in Halifax in May. Out of that has come a first newsletter, and some vibrant ideas for a national network we propose to call WIN, or the Women's Information Network.

WIN's (wo)mandate, we suggest, would be to support and promote women working in the media, as well as women affected by media coverage. This would include creating a databank of "equity offenders" — media employers who practise systemic discrimination against women. We also want to document incidents of sexual harassment and ways women have dealt with it. In addition, this could be a place to document sexism as portrayed in the media.

Moreover, we want to use this databank to share story ideas coast-to-coast — stories that could be adapted with local angles and stories that were rejected somewhere because of the "women's angle". At the same time, we envision a databank of sources as a way to promote using more women as sources.

For this network, we suggest setting up a national Hot Line — an 800 number for women to call in their stories and problems and solutions. And we plan here, in Nova Scotia, to produce a regular newsletter to keep women in contact with each other.

Groups of media women across Canada are meeting over these same issues. They hope to hold a conference in Winnipeg in the fall with representation from each region. Our group in Halifax has not yet decided who will go. If you have any suggestions, please contact Pandora at P.O. Box 8418 Station A, Halifax, B3K 5M1 or call 454-4977. A tentative date of September 5 has been set for the next meeting in Halifax. If you want to get involved, please contact Pandora.



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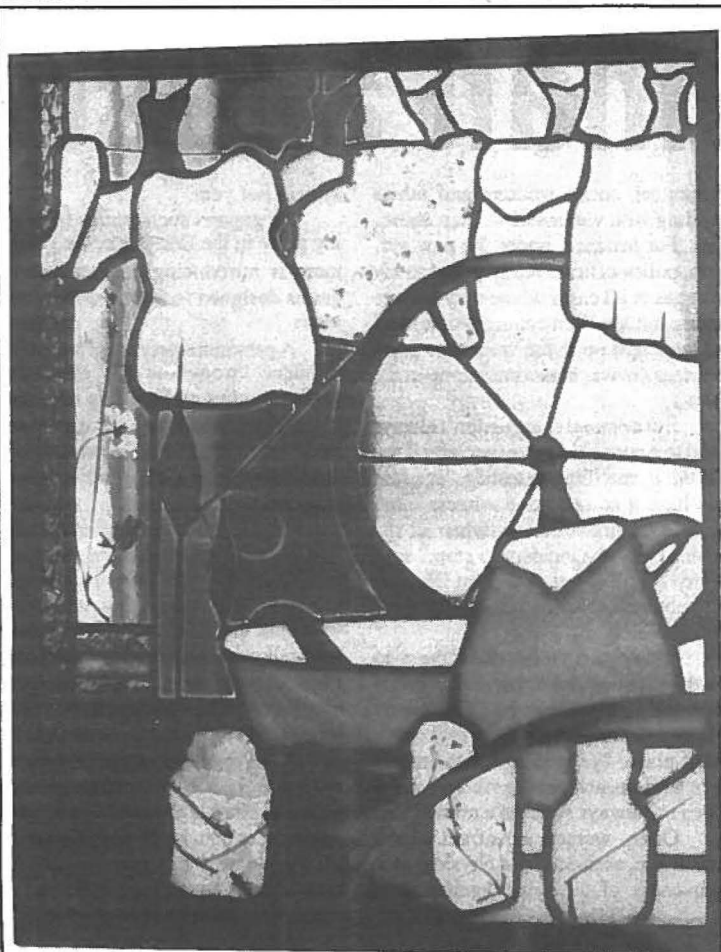


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"She, At Home" from the Illuminated Series, a set of stained glass panels by Deborah J. Flemming, was displayed at the PEI Women's Festival where Deborah gave a talk about her pieces. Hopefully the owners will allow the works to be collected together again so that we can continue to enjoy them. Colour photographs of the 13 panels in the series are available as a set. (Photo by Kirsten Nichols)

# Film festival promotes steamy conversations

Anna Macara

So you're a lesbian, right, and you're sitting around with some other dykes, complaining—there's too much to do! You've been out every night and you just can't keep up the pace. Then everyone laughs because this is so weird. Lesbians in Halifax with something fun to do, busy with something that doesn't involve meetings, that doesn't mean working for the community and that is relevant to Lesbians. Is this for real?

Of course it is. It's the first Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Film Festival, and it happened right here in Halifax from June 19-25. It was great. The Centre for Art Tapes did a fabulous job of setting up and presenting films. There was a little something for everyone. Something to watch, something to wonder at, something to be challenged by, and something to disagree with.

What a way to get to know more about the women you see out and about. A simple question like "Which were your favourite films?" could result in all kinds of information about likes and dislikes. Interesting stuff, fascinating stuff, stuff you don't find out when working on this, or that, committee.

Maybe I'm more interested in 'stuff' than you because I'm not getting any (stuff, that is). You went to see the art, right? Well, really and truly, I did

too. I saw films about older Lesbians, I saw films about Asian Lesbians, I saw films about AIDS, about being out in a small town, about winning the lottery, about women changing their lives; and I enjoyed them and learned from them... but, what I talked about was ejaculation and oak leaves.

Tuesday night was Girls' Sex Night. I know some of you were there. They had to have a second showing that started at 11:30 that night. I was early. I wanted a good seat. Admit it, you were early too.

So what do you think about female ejaculation? I'd never heard of it before. After watching "Nice Girls Don't" and "Sluts and Goddesses" I certainly knew about it. For those of you who missed these enlightening films, female ejaculation involves the ejaculation of fluid from the urethra as a result of stimulating the prostate and urethral sponge (otherwise known as the G Spot). It looked interesting but it also looked like a lot of work for little reward. My big questions were, who cleans up and who sleeps in the wet spot?

Of course, I haven't tried it, so why don't one of you adventurous women write to tell me if it's worth the effort.

There were other things hap-

pening in Halifax during the same period as the Film Festival. Pride Week celebrations got under way, and Jezebel Productions brought Sensible Footwear to town. Both events got me out and spending money. The Sensible Footwear performance was sold out, a clear sign for Jezebel that women in Halifax want more comedy and laughs.

Now it's back to regular movies and TV shows, working on committees, and petting my cats. So much for Lesbian content.

But it's not all bad news. The other day a friend said, "There's something queer about TV lately. Every time I turn it on I see something about homosexuality." Every time? Well she was able to list off about six things in the last few months. Maybe things are looking up. Maybe things will be getting a little queer on TV. We can only hope.

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## If they won't teach you, teach yourself

Sarah Eaton

Aphra Behn (1640-1689), feminist, political activist, and early abolitionist, was the first woman in England to earn her living by her pen. The most prolific writer of her age, she had eighteen plays produced; she also published poetry and translations. From: *Love Letters Between a Nobelman and His Sister*. Virago Classics. 1987.

Milo opens the door to greet some new arrivals as laughter emanates from her living room. We are getting to know one another well, but it's been a long time coming.

Now, we even have a name: the Aphra Behn Society. The women of Saint Mary's University have finally gathered as a group, as women, to act as a unit for the betterment of women on campus and everywhere. Our purpose thus far has been to arm ourselves with knowledge so that as we take action in the university community, we will be prepared for the resistance we will — and have already — met.

Late in April, a group of eight women students (mostly English majors) met to discuss their feelings and frustrations about how they felt they were being treated in their classes. At that point we were angry. Some of our professors gave the impression that women's work — both scholarly and literary — was worthless when compared with the work of men. We were being taught by some professors that women's work was secondary and worth less than men's. For many of us, anger and frustration festered throughout the year. Confrontation meant being ridiculed (just subtly enough so that sexism was next to impossible to prove), and it also meant putting one's grades at risk if one was militant enough.

The anger of that first meeting was

vented and shared. Then a mandate fell into place. We would educate ourselves about the work of women. We would read articles, books, poetry, and stories by women. We would get to know prominent women scholars and activists through their work. If our profs wouldn't teach us, we would teach ourselves.

Our membership has doubled since April. Word of mouth is our only method of advertising. And we are a varied group; we have mature students and younger students, foreign students and local students. We are all very different and all very dedicated. So far we have worked on a cooperative basis, sharing the responsibility of organizing meetings and keeping each other informed. The traditional patriarchal system of having an executive body and a general membership does not fit the Aphra Behn Society. The typical power struggle of a hierarchy has been traded for solidarity and openness.

At the meetings we usually discuss a work we have agreed to read (Kate Chopin's "The Awakenings"

was a recent selection) and talk a little about the writer and her background. From there the discussion branches out. We share stories about ourselves and our lives. We learn about each other and, in doing so, learn about ourselves. Those of us who didn't already know, have come to realize that women's causes are still being ignored, and women still unite for their own protection and betterment.

For many of us, the Aphra Behn society has come to mean more than an academic exercise. We have reached out to each other, made new friends, discovered new things, become stronger people.

By the time classes begin, the society will have a strong foundation, and members will already know they can and will work together. We know we will be met with resistance, but we also know that we will continue to grow and gain strength. It is in this that we take hope.

(To contact Sarah about this new society at Saint Mary's University, call her at 443-9212 or 425-1755.)

### Art Gallery Mount Saint Vincent University

Come and see our new showcase for works from our permanent collection in The Communications Centre & Library adjoining Seton Academic Centre. On display are works by contemporary artists representative of art and craft from the region, work by women and by artists of native ancestry. On permanent display in the stairwell is a new sculpture by Suzanne Swannie and Andrew Terris, funded by the Canada Council and The Sobey Foundation. Phone 457-6160 or 457-6408.

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# NB takes aim at woman abuse

Carol McLeod

The statistics are shocking. Between 1980 and 1990, almost half the 2,518 women murdered in Canada died at the hands of their male partners. Nationally, one girl in four is sexually abused by the time she is 16. Among women, one in 10 is assaulted by her husband or partner each year.

In Atlantic Canada, the rate of assault is even higher. A survey conducted by Decima Research Ltd. in 1988 showed that 24 per cent of married or cohabiting men in the region admitted having committed at least one violent act against their mate during the previous year.

"Based on those figures, we feel that at least 40,000 incidents involving violence between partners occur each year in New Brunswick," says Rosella Melanson, Director of Communication for the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

She adds that statistics show the average victim is beaten at least 35 times before calling police. And the crimes aren't limited to the poor, the unemployed, and the under-educated. Woman abuse is a problem that occurs in both rural and urban locations, cuts across all ethnic and cultural groups, and affects every socio-economic level.

To combat the problem in New Brunswick, several government departments — including Health and Community Services, Justice, Income Assistance and Education — established guidelines in 1990 for dealing with the physical and sexual abuse of women.

This step has hammered home the message to police officers that domestic violence is not a private matter between the parties involved.

Interviews the Advisory Council conducted around the province a few years ago showed many officers had little understanding of the issues asso-

ciated with woman assault. Some actually believed women who stay in an abusive relationship do so because they like it.

The Advisory Council also found that many police officers didn't know it is their duty to lay charges in all cases of woman assault.

"(Such) assault is supposed to be treated like any other form of assault, and whenever a police officer has reason to believe a crime has been committed, he's supposed to lay charges," Melanson says.

## The average victim is beaten at least 35 times before calling police.

Statistics compiled by the RCMP showed that between October 1988 and September 1989, only 145 charges were laid in the 410 cases reported in the 43 rural areas and municipalities patrolled by the force.

To many concerned groups, the numbers seemed unrealistically low. As a result, the government announced in 1990 that it was launching a three-month pilot project, known as "Woman Abuse and the Criminal Justice System".

"It deals specifically with violence against women where an incident has been reported to the police, and attempts to determine how the justice system has responded," says New Brunswick Solicitor General Bruce Smith.

Information was obtained from the RCMP throughout the province and from municipal police forces in Fredericton, Woodstock and Grand Falls. Between August 1, 1990 and October 31, 1990, the RCMP received 188 complaints of violence against

women. The other three forces received a total of 30.

Many women feel those numbers are still low and are concerned victims are not reporting assaults. They are encouraged, however, by the fact that in 91% of the pilot project cases, police concurred that a crime had been committed. As a result, 99 charges were laid, 6 peace bonds were issued, 31 cases were cleared otherwise, and 22 were still active at the end of the study period.

But dealing with the offender is only part of the picture. Under the government's new woman abuse protocols, police officers, crown prosecutors, social workers and others dealing with victims of woman abuse, have attended training sessions held to sensitize them to many aspects of the problem — including what the victim goes through.

The material covered includes everything from identifying and helping abused women to debunking the myths associated with the crime.

A manual given to those attending the training sessions offers clues, for example, on identifying victims who might refuse to admit they've been beaten when injuries force them into a hospital emergency room. Often, such women may appear frightened and ashamed. There may be a long delay between the time the injury occurred and the patient's arrival for care. The victim (or her abuser, if he accompanies her) may minimize the injuries, which often involve blows to the breasts and abdomen — especially if the woman is pregnant.

The manual emphasizes relevant facts associated with woman abuse. For instance, women don't stay in an abusive relationship because they like being battered. Men who are violent in their domestic relationships are often quiet and controlled outside the house.

Finally, the protocols establish intervention guidelines for police, health care professionals, income assistance

personnel, social workers and others dealing with victims of woman abuse.

For instance, under the new system, police officers are required to lay charges in all cases where they believe an assault has been committed, instead of leaving it up to the woman to press charges (as was sometimes done in the past.)

But criminal charges don't always lead to a conviction — especially if the victim is unwilling to testify. "It's rare we have a co-operative witness other than at the time of crisis, when all she wants is for the incident to stop," says Mary Beth Beaton, Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions (family law) for the province.

"She doesn't think down the road to the fact that there has been a crime and will be a prosecution. That's why we're sometimes between a rock and a hard place. We're directed to treat it like a crime, and yet the victim herself does not always see it as a crime."

Often, women are afraid of the emotional, economic and physical consequences of testifying against their

system last year.

To prevent such crimes from taking place in the first place, the government is introducing educational programs designed to improve social attitudes.

A personal safety program already in place throughout the elementary grades teaches children the difference between so-called "good" touching and "bad" touching and encourages them to speak out if they are sexually or physically abused.

As well, the Department of Education is hoping to introduce a program within the next few years on dating violence. "It's our contention you don't wait until children are of dating age to start talking about being nice to other people," says Rebecca Moore, a consultant with the department's services branch.

"This should start in kindergarten or grade 1. Ideally, the curriculum would explore how people can express anger other than by hitting. Hopefully, by the time they reach dating age, they'll have developed an attitude of respect for themselves and others."

Anything that teaches self-respect, instills a sense of the rights of others, and decries violence is a step in the right direction, says a victim of woman abuse.

Susan Harrison (not her real name) says she and her husband (whom she left several years ago) both came from violent families. "If my husband was angry about something, he'd hit me to relieve the frustration. If he wanted something, he'd holler for me to get it.

The worst part was that our son saw it and accepted it as normal. He's grown up now and treats his girl friend like dirt. Maybe if there'd been a program when he was in school, he'd have realized what was going on at home was wrong — and that might have helped all three of us."

**You don't wait until children are of dating age to start talking about being nice to other people.**

partners. That's something prosecutors take into account. But in cases involving serious bodily harm, the case will probably proceed to trial.

"Even though the vicious assault happened behind closed doors, it is not a private matter — it is a public concern," Beaton told a symposium on woman abuse and the criminal justice



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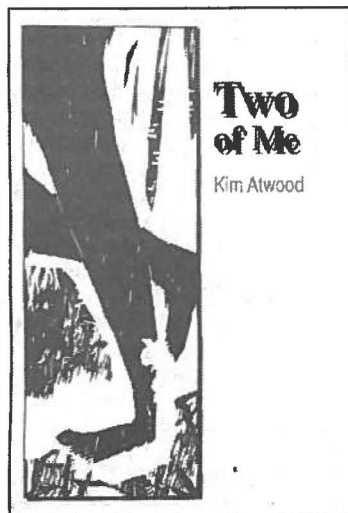
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# Recent books of interest to women

Pandora has received the following books in recent months. The information about each title has been supplied by the publisher.



**Two of Me**  
by Kim Atwood  
As 40-year-old Shelley returns to her native village on Nova Scotia's South Shore, she relives the events that force her to look at her precarious relationships with her partner, her friends and her child.

Not only a harrowing account of a young girl's growing-up in an alcoholic and abusive family, *Two of Me* is also a beautifully written piece of fiction. The book is "rich and full in its detailed description of the imaginative and real world of a young girl-child growing up in a fishing village on the seacoast; it is unflinching in its portrayal of the violence and chaos which reign in the home of an alcoholic parent." —Toni Ann Laidlaw  
ISBN: 0-9694180-3-5  
Roseway Publishing Company, \$13.00

**Getting Wet: Tales of Lesbian Seductions**  
anthologized by Carol Allain & Rosamund Elwin

The hottest anthology of the season, *Getting Wet* is by, for, and about lesbians in lust and love. This is sex fiction that gets under the covers and rolls them back, sex fiction that inscribes the lesbian erotic poignantly, playfully, and powerfully. *Getting Wet* entertains and allures while firmly establishing lesbian sexuality as vital, diverse and resilient.  
ISBN: 0-88961-170-X  
Women's Press, \$12.95

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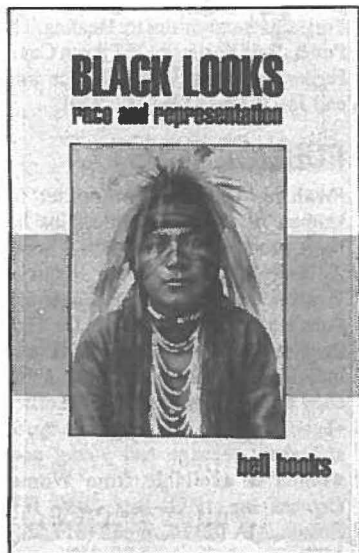
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**British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women**  
Edited by Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag

This collection explores the rich and complex experiences of women from the 18th century to the present. Twenty-three essays attest to the vital presence of women in the cultural, economic and political life of women in the province. For too long, women's lives have been treated as peripheral; *British Columbia Reconsidered* brings them to the forefront of contemporary scholarship. A dynamic collection and essential resource on Canadian women.  
ISBN: 0-88974-038-0  
Press Gang Publishers, \$21.95



**Black Looks: Race and Representation**  
by bell hooks

This is bell hooks at her best. She combines critical cultural theory along with popular culture: her critical eye moves from the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings to Madonna videos to current alliances between Native Americans and Black Americans. As ever, hooks is original, provocative and passionate.

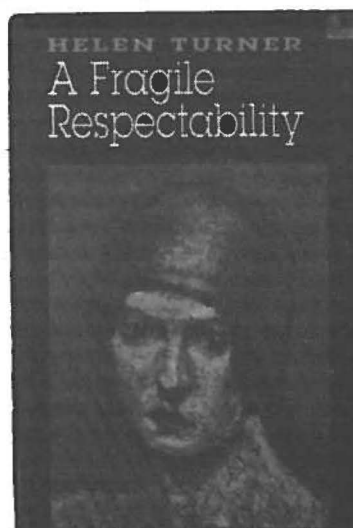
bell hooks digs ever deeper into the personal and political consequences of contemporary representations of black women and men within our white supremacist culture. She takes on popular music, advertising, literature, television, historical narrative, and film, to demonstrate her incisive intelligence and passion for justice.  
ISBN: 0-921284-62-4  
between the lines



**Friends I Never Knew**  
by Tanya Lester

Tara has exiled herself on a Greek Island, away from all that is familiar. She is firmly resolved to finally write about the extraordinary women she has known through her work in the women's movement and whose stories she has jotted down over the years. But as she pieces together and labours over the scattered fragments and sketches, she finds herself telling another, unexpected story: her own.

From Lou, who redefines Tara's notions about old age, to Juanita, who achieves artistic freedom despite struggling with poverty, discrimination, loss and exile, Tara finds herself weaving her own story between the lines of theirs. In the end, it is these women, speaking in the pages of her notebook, that bring Tara out of exile and allow her the freedom to act once again.  
ISBN: 0-921881-18-5  
gynergy books, \$10.95



**A Fragile Respectability**  
by Helen Turner

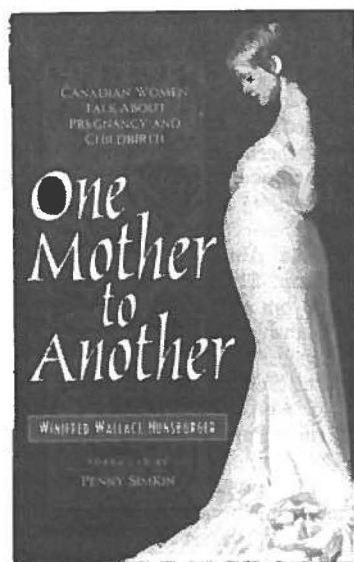
When Philippa Jerrold, internationally renowned artist and one of society's elite, is taken for a tramp, she realizes she must come to terms with her past or lose her sanity. Philippa's past is one of emotional deprivation; she is constantly torn between her need for acceptance and approval and her own inner sense of integrity.

This biographical novel is the story of a woman's determination to understand herself and the influences that shaped and controlled her life. It is an intimate and passionate journey into the human heart.

Although Helen Turner began writing her novel only a decade ago at the age of 76, she "always intended to write." However her urge to write was overpowered by her urge to paint.  
ISBN: 0-921054-99-8  
Nimbus Publishing, \$16.95

**A House not her Own: Stories from Beirut**  
by Emily Nasrallah

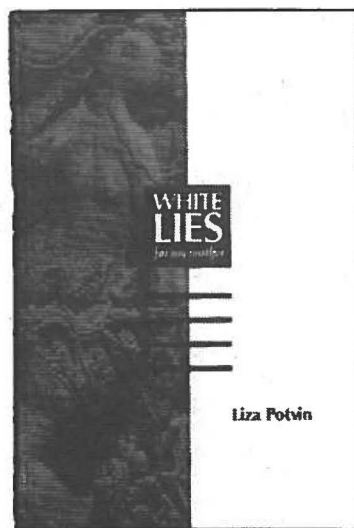
Emily Nasrallah writes of what she knows too well: war and its devastation of a country and its people. These war stories are rarely told—of the women, children and civilian men who live within the bombed-out shell of Beirut.  
ISBN: 0-921881-19-3  
gynergy books, \$12.95



**One Mother to Another: Canadian Women talk about Pregnancy and Childbirth**  
by Winifred Wallace Hunsburger

Long before hospital births and prenatal classes, women learned about birth from other women, and in exchanging their stories, participated in a tradition as old as birth itself. Here are stories of many Canadian women who tell about one of the most important and memorable events of their lives.

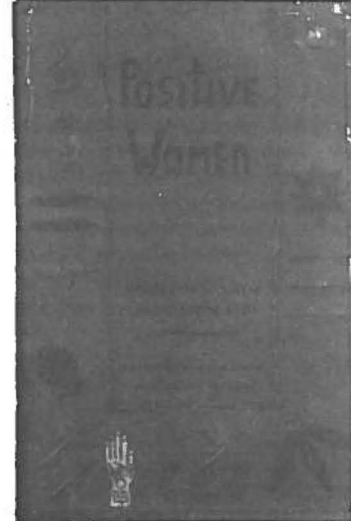
Not another practical guide to preparing for birth, but an intimate and personal look at the immense emotional and psychological impact of the birth experience.  
ISBN: 0-920079-92-X  
Fifth House Publishers, \$9.95



**White Lies (for my mother)**  
by Liza Potvin

Sexually abused by her father and grandfather since she was a baby, Liza Potvin examines the impact of this abuse on her relationship with her mother.

With painful clarity, Potvin exposes the traumas of body and spirit and laments the destruction of her childhood, but she also celebrates the release offered her by language — the language of dreams and recovery. In a voice at once mournful and resilient, autobiographical and poetic, Potvin writes a narrative to the mother she longs for.  
ISBN: 0-920897-13-4  
NeWest Press, \$14.95



**Positive Women: Voices of Women Living with AIDS**  
Edited by Andrea Rudd & Darien Taylor

*Positive Women* is the first international collection of writing by women living with AIDS. From 14 countries and five continents, women describe their lives, experiences, feelings and struggles. Highly personal and intimate, their stories appear as journal entries, narratives, poetry, graphic or photographic images. *Positive Women* is about women who shatter myths, take control and find their own power in the challenge of living with AIDS.  
ISBN: 0-929005-30-9  
Second Story Press, \$14.95



**Margins**  
by Terri de la Peña

One night, a car accident does more than shatter Veronica's leg; it breaks her heart too, when her best friend and lover Joanna is killed. *Margins* is the gripping story of Veronica's recovery and her attempt to build a new life on honesty and love.

Recovering amid a strong but often suffocating family, Veronica realizes that none of them knew the real nature of her relationship with Joanna, and so they can't fully understand her grief. As she begins to heal and come to terms with her loss, Veronica must decide whether to resume her deceptions or trust her family with the truth.

To complicate matters, Veronica finds herself gradually attracted to two women, but she doesn't know if she's ready for another relationship. And then there's her writing to worry about, and her Mexican-American society, and her gay friends... life is complicated. But, as Veronica learns, it's also worth living to the fullest, even if it means taking big risks along the way.  
ISBN: 1-878067-19-2  
Seal Press (distributed by Raincoast Books), \$13.95



# Notices/Calendar

**PLEASE NOTE:** We think the calendar and notices are important parts of Pandora. We like to think it helps keep women across the network informed about what is happening in the community. PLEASE call and let us know the dates of important events. Call Pandora at 454-4977 or write to us at P.O. Box 8418 Stn A, Halifax, B3K 5M1.

## CLASSIFIED

• **Help wanted:** Billets and bilingual women who can assist with whispering translation at A National Conference of Women's Centres to be held in Halifax October 1-4, 1992. Lots of volunteer help is needed. Call Phyllis Price at 677-2794 or write Women's Centres CONNECT, 99 York St, Bridgewater, NS, B4V 1R2.

• **Dalhousie Medical School** is looking for women to act as teaching associates to help teach medical students a well-woman exam. Contact Dr. Cathy Cervin for info: 494-7010.

• **Jane Hurshman Corkum Memorial Foundation** has been started to continue her work. Send donations to Jane's Fund, Second Story Women's Centre, 9 Dominion St, Bridgewater, NS B4V 2J6.

## EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

**Women's Employment Outreach** offers free employment counselling services to women. Workshops start the first Tuesday of every month, 9:30-11:30. Call 422-8023.

## RESOURCES

• **Sistering**, offers practical and emotional support to women. Their newest project is a booklet, **Sisters Pick You Up: Sistering's Outreach Program**. Useful as a resource for developing programs for isolated women. Available from Sistering, 181 Bathurst St, Toronto, Ont, M5T 2R7. (416) 861-1954.

• **Lupus, the Disease With 1000 Faces**, is a booklet produced by Lupus Canada containing information on all aspects of Lupus. \$4 from Lupus Canada, Box 3302 Station B, Calgary, Alberta, T2M 4L8.

• **Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre** has produced three booklets on childhood sexual abuse: **A Booklet for Adult Survivors**, **A Booklet for First Nations Adult Survivors**, and **A Booklet for Partners and Friends**. Contact Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre, 306-620 View Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1J6 or call (604) 383-5370.

• **DisAbled Women's Network of Canada (DAWN Canada)** has produced a manual, **Meeting Our Needs, Access Manual for Transition Houses**, which provides information on the victimization of women with disabilities as well as practical advice

on how transition houses and sexual assault centres can better meet the needs of women with physical and mental disabilities.

## EVENTS & GROUPS

• **Nova Scotia Women Artists Journal**, a 13-part TV series, begins in September at 10:15 am on ASN. This 15-minute program features news about visual arts activities in the Atlantic region as well as interviews with artists and people involved in arts related activities.

• **Cumberland Co Transition House** wants people to help with their fundraising efforts each year. Contact DeAnne or Susan at 667-1200.

• **Sexual Abuse Survivor's Therapy Group**. \$15/week. Tuesdays 6:30-9:30 pm. To register, call Pauline Vaughan at 454-2958 11 am - 7 pm.

• **Support Groups at SSAV Centre: Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse; Self-Help Support Group; Parents of Sexually Abused Children.**

• **A Support Group for HIV+ Women** meets the fourth Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at #206-5224 Blowers St., Halifax. Call Johnneen at 425-4882.

• **The Feminist Therapists' Support Group** meets regularly. For more info contact Judy at 425-4514.

• **The Social Action Committee of Bryony House** is looking for members. First meeting will be Sept 15. Call Myrna at 454-6728 or Brook at 461-2604. All interested women are invited to attend.

• **Third Place Transition House** is open in Truro. P.O. Box 1681, Truro, N.S. B2N 5Z5 (902) 893-3232.

• **The Transition House Association** holds regular weekly support groups for abused women in Charlottetown, Montague and Summerside, P.E.I. For info 892-0895. Collect calls accepted.

• **Listen to Stereohype** women's music hosted by Cathy Porter on CKDU 97.5 FM from 10:30 am to noon.

• **Listen to Fill Her Cup** (news and interviews about women's issues) on CKDU 97.5 FM, 10:30 am to noon on Wednesdays.

• **Kickin' Afrolistics** broadcasts Thursdays from 9:00-10:30 am on CKDU 97.5 FM. Hosted by Deb O.

• **Cross Legged She Sits** broadcasts Friday 7:00-8:00 pm on CKDU 95.6 FM. Music by women.

## PHONE LINES

• **Cumberland County Family Planning** has started a **sex information phone line** for teens. Staffed Wednesday evenings 7-9 pm. Call 667-7500.

• **Literacy Information Line** has a toll-free number you can call between 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. to get information on programs available to help you improve your reading, writing and math skills. 1-424-7544.

• **Transition House Association of Charlottetown, P.E.I.** announces that

crisis line services at Anderson House are now available toll free. Women may obtain information and support by dialing 1-892-0960 toll free.

• **Fredericton Rape Crisis Centre** provides information on action, information and prevention. Call the crisis line at (506) 454-0437, or their business line (506) 454-0460. You can also write them at P.O. Box 174, Fredericton, N.B. E3B 4Y9.

• **Service for Sexual Assault Victims**, 24-hour crisis line: 425-0122. Emotional support, referrals, information.

• **N.S. Advisory Council on the Status of Women** has a toll-free number within N.S. 1-424-8662.

• **INFORM-AIDS** provides anonymous, confidential information and referral services about AIDS. Open Tues. to Fri. 5 pm to 8 pm. Call 1-902-425-AIDS (toll free in N.S.).

• **The Pictou County Women's Centre in New Glasgow**, has established a Rape Line offering confidentiality, anonymity, information, and peer counselling for female victims of sex abuse, incest, and rape. The line is staffed by volunteers. 752-2233.

• **The Abortion Information Referral Service** 422-4123. Sponsored by CARAL/Halifax.

• **GALA (Gay and Lesbian Association of Nova Scotia)** has an info line on gay and lesbian events. Call 423-7129

## CALL FOR MATERIALS

• **A Family Portrait**, Gay and Lesbian Canada '92 is planning to compile a collection of letters, drawings and poems by Gay men and Lesbians from across Canada. What does it mean to be Gay/Lesbian in Canada in 1992? Does AIDS figure prominently? Is coming out of the closet easier today than it was? What does "Dyke" really mean? Contact David Roman at (416) 778-8811. Deadline October 15.

• **An anthology to explore the ways women of colour create, think and act on erotic fantasies.** Working title: **Graphic Details**. Deadline September 30. Contact Graphic Detail, ATTN: Makeda Silvera or Leleti Tamu, Sister Vision Press, P.O. Box 217, Station E, Toronto, Ont, M6H 4E2.

• **Centre for Women's Studies in Education** presents **Feminism and Education: A Canadian Perspective**. Deadline October 15, 1992. Write Publications Committee, Centre for Women's Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor St West, Toronto, Ont., M5S 1V6, or call (416) 923-6641 ext 2204.

• **Anthology on mixed race women:** How has being of mixed race affected who you are? What race/ethnicity/culture do you identify with? Have you felt welcomed? Isolated? Reaffirmed? Ostracized? Send stories, poetry, interviews, photographs, essays, graphics, letters, etc to **Mixed Race Anthology**, Sister Vision Press, P.O.

Box 217 Station Toronto, Ont., M6H 4E2. Deadline October 31.

• **Two anthologies on lesbian and bisexual women's experiences** of and resistance to heterosexism and homophobia/lesbophobia: 1) **Fiction and Poetry Anthology**; and 2) **Non-Fiction Anthology**. Deadline January 1, 1993. Contact RESIST, Women's Press, #233-517 College St, Toronto, Ont., M6G 4A2.

• **Pottersfield Portfolio fiction contest** on the theme of Healing — spiritual, emotional, physical, political. Deadline November 15. Entry fee \$10 per story which includes a one year subscription to The Pottersfield Portfolio. Send entries to: Healing, The Pottersfield Portfolio, 151 Ryan Court, Fredericton, NB E3A 2Y9. For info, call Joe Blades (506) 472-9251.

## PUBLICATIONS

• **Making Changes**, a booklet for women in abusive relationships has been produced by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Professionals and organizations may obtain the booklet for \$1.50 from the NS Government Bookstore. Individual women may order a free copy from the Status of Women office.

• **Teen Voices**, a new magazine by, for and about teenage and young adult women is available from Women Express inc., P.O. Box 6009 JFK, Boston, MA 02114, or call (617) 227-4557. Sample issue \$2.00 (US).

• **Women and Recovery**, a new monthly newsletter for women in recovery as well as service providers. Subscriptions are \$18 plus \$4 postage (US prices) Write Women and Recovery, Women to Women Communications, P.O. Box 161775, Cupertino, CA 95016.

• **Single Mothers' Survival Guide** is now available from Dal PIRG, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S. Cost is \$3 (or what you can afford).

• **Jobstories**, over 50 interviews with BC women in growth occupations. From Learning Resources, #102-2511 East Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V5K 1Z2 (604) 251-7476. \$19.95 plus \$2 each for shipping and handling.

• **Who Calls the Shots: Proceedings of the First Int'l Conference on Women, Media and Advertising**, \$15.00 + \$3.75 post (US) and Sisterhood is Global, Dialogues in the Philippines \$12.00 + \$2.50 post (US). From Women's Media Circle Foundation Inc., 96 Maninang St., Teacher's Village, Quezon City, Philippines 1101.

## CALENDAR

• **Wednesdays at 10 am** Women's Group. North Branch Library. Make your mornings your time to come to the North Branch Library for two hours of

friendly conversation and informal discussions of local and global interest. The Women's Group will discuss such issues as North End bus service and health topics such as asthma, as well as enjoying visitors from other countries. All women are welcome.

**Late September:** Playing on an Igloo, a drawing by Inuit artist Agnes Nanogak and other works featured in a 12 stamp Canada issue will be shown at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Playing on an Igloo was commissioned by the Art Gallery of Mount St Vincent University to mark International Year of the Child. It is part of their permanent collection.

**September 23-27:** Women's REEL Vision Film Festival. Halifax.

**October 1-4:** National Conference of Women's Centres, Halifax. Contact Phyllis Price at 677-2794 or write Women's Centres CONNECT, 99 York St., Bridgewater, NS B4V 1R2.

**October 4:** Pot-luck Sunday brunch for lesbian moms, kids and friends. 11 am. Call Lynn or Lena at 469-4764.

**October 6:** Women's Work in the Global Economy: Speaker Fiona McPhail. Halifax Main Library, 5381 Spring Garden Rd. 7:30 pm.

**October 9-1:** Out/Rights the second Pan-Canadian Conference on Lesbian and Gay Rights in Vancouver, BC. A place to exchange information and develop strategies. Call (604) 683-4176 for info.

**October 13:** Women's Work in the Global Economy: Restructuring of International Dept. Speaker Emily Burdon. Halifax Main Library, 5381 Spring Garden Rd. 7:30 pm.

**October 15:** Midwifery Today, 7:30 pm Halifax City Regional Library, 5381 Spring Garden Rd.

**October 15-18:** St. John's Women's Film & Video Festival. LSPU Hall and the Avalon Mall Cinemas. Call (709) 772-0359 for tickets or information.

**October 15-19:** National Child Care Conference: Putting the Pieces Together. Radisson Hotel in Ottawa. Contact (416) 538-0628 for info.

**October 17:** "Black Friday" a lesbian coming out play at the Church, corner Fuller Terrace and North Street, Halifax, 8 pm. Dance afterwards at 9:30 pm. Play and dance — \$9; dance only — \$5. All women welcome.

**October 18:** Person's Day.

• **Black Friday** at the Church, corner of Fuller Terrace & North St, Halifax. 8 pm. \$5. All women welcome.

**October 20:** Women's Work in the Global Economy: Working Conditions. Speakers Jane MacMillan and Evelyn Riggs. Halifax Main Library, 5381 Spring Garden Rd. 7:30 pm.

**October 22:** Midwifery: The Ontario and Nova Scotia Experience. 7:30 pm Halifax Main Branch Library, 5381 Spring Garden Rd.

**October 23 & 24:** Continuing the Dialogue, a conference in Calgary, Alberta, Hospitality Inn. Contact (403) 262-1873 for info.

**October 6:** Women's Work in the Global Economy: Women's Economic Independence. Speaker Susan Ward, Jessica Bowden, Janette Mansfield, Joan Mendes. Halifax Main Library, 5381 Spring Garden Rd. 7:30 pm.

**November 12:** Dream on Sister: A fund-raising auction for National Action Committee on the Status of Women. 6:30 pm Sheraton Centre, Toronto. Contact (416) 759-5252.

**November 13-15:** Making the Links: Anti-racism and feminism, a conference in Toronto. Contact Rita at 416-924-0178.

## Service for Sexual Assault Victims

24 hour Confidential Crisis Line

425-0122

For Survivors of Sexual Assault and Abuse

3115 Veith St  
Halifax, N.S.

453-4320

## VEITH HOUSE

• Counselling  
• Literacy Program  
• Adult Upgrading  
• Supervised Access

• Preschool  
• Advocacy  
• Parenting Program  
• Spousal Abuse Treatment Program

FORD ROWE