

trying to keep the lid off...

Pandora

NEWSLETTER AS OPPOSED TO NEWSPAPER

March 1994

December, 1993

volume eight number one

Halifax, Nova Scotia

ISSN 0836-723X

HELP!



brought to you by amani, bev, buseje, judith, karan and tina with assistance of muinjij, jesse and myah

We've been here before and we're back here...AGAIN

Amani called me today. Another Pandora meeting has been cancelled because two women can't make it. And last meeting there were only four of us. I don't think we can go on much longer trying to produce the paper... But how can we bear to give up now? We fought a long battle to keep Pandora a safe space for women to tell their stories. We won – but have we? There are so few of us now to do so much!

Over the last few years of Pandora's existence we have made many pleas, some wishful, some urgent. You've heard us, and responded with your money, your letters, your stories. What we need now is you – your effort, your time, your help. We just can't do it alone.

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We thought it would be a good idea to let you know who "we" are, and why we joined Pandora, and what we do, and what is involved in producing the paper. So here are some of our stories.

I am Judith. I joined Pandora at the nadir of my life, when I needed so desperately to focus upon something that I could still believe in. I had always been a feminist with strong convictions that women, if we would take back our voices, would ultimately empower ourselves enough to create a society that would nurture both genders, instead of prizing the one and despising the other. I looked upon Pandora (which I had read, but never bought) as a way to begin taking back my own voice. It was time, and time, too, to begin to build a new ladder of self-esteem and skill to climb out of my abyss, instead of calling feebly for help. Working for Pandora helped me to do both.

This's beginning to sound like a testimonial!

The first few meetings were hard for me. Pandora is a collective, and because we work on a consensus basis, we ultimately come to know each other very well; but each new beginning has an interim period of "us" and "you," to go through, and it can seem overwhelming at first. When "you" becomes "us," it is worth it. Pandora women have all learned so much from each other, of each other, of the power of women's voices, that we are richer in ourselves.

And in our friends. I have memories of so many good

times, so much shared laughter at the Pandora potlucks, the bowling, the whale-watching trip. Who of us will ever forget the potluck meeting when we all brought rice? Or Debbie's deck catching fire when we barbecued? Or Pandora Collective shivering in Chocolate Lake on a bleak autumn day, just to get a picture to be used for our next cover? (See Pandora: Still Making Waves) Or Carrie's outrage when the Calendar Page she'd worked on for hours was eaten by the computer? Producing Pandora isn't easy, but it creates friendships even through glitches and fiascos.

One of my jobs on Pandora when we are in production is to prevent glitches or fiascos in print. Because I'm good at that, I also catch some mock growls and insubordinate muttering from women doing computer input and layout; production days are like that, but it's all in fun. What we take home with us when the paper is finally ready to be sent to the printer, is collective, self-congratulatory relief. We've done our jobs and we still like each other.

You'll find at the end of this article some of the jobs Pandora members do. We don't all do everything; I currently do Pandora thank-yous for subscriptions and donations, and answer the answering machine on my days, and do a drawing or two for the paper if we need something to fill a hole, and go to Distribution to put the paper into the wrappers, into the bundles, into the mail. Others do other things, and somehow, after what seems like months, the paper gets out.

Someone during the Inquiry said, "Once a Pandora woman, always a Pandora woman." I think it's true that even the women who no longer work on Pandora still grab a copy as soon as it's out and read it from cover to cover. Some of them take copies to their friends. Pandora still matters very much to them, and will. I hope it matters to you, too. If it does, please join us..

I have memories of so many good times, so much shared laughter at the Pandora potlucks, the bowling, the whale-watching trip.

My name is Tina. I have been the president for the past two years. I must say that this position is easy. I joined because Karan wouldn't stop bugging me. I kept putting it off. I seem to fit right into Pandora's style. However, I have become more active over the past year. I won't bore you to death with the details, but if you come to our next meeting I will bore you with the details then. (Contd. on page 4).

Righting the debt—Thanks to all

“Fat cat hungry lawyer gobbles up women’s collective?” No that’s not right. “Greedy law firm destroys struggling group of volunteer women?” That’s no good either! What really happened when Anne Derrick agreed to take on the case of the Human Rights Commission versus Pandora is at times, often misunderstood and unfairly represented in the women’s community. The Pandora collective would like to set the record straight to avoid further confusions.

When we first approached Anne Derrick to represent us against the patriarchal escapades of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, it was because we believed in her politics and ideology about women’s rights and equality. We believed that Anne would defend the collective from a position that we trusted and had confidence in.

It was never the intention of the collective to ask Anne to do the case for free. In fact, we knew right from the beginning that the case could be lengthy and expensive, especially for a small collective. With this awareness, we proceeded with the understanding and agreement that our legal services would be paid for. It was, however, agreed that these services would be provided at a reduced fee.

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finally zero.
HURRAY!***

What ensued after this agreement was a tremendous amount of discussion in the women’s community over whether the case should have been pro-bono. Some women felt that it was outrageous for Pandora to be paying out legal fees. This is in fact correct; however, not because we believed that the case should have been taken on for free, but because of the ludicrous allegations of “sex discrimination” by a regulatory body which supposedly is established to provide protection to marginalized groups.

What happened next is well known to everyone. We fought the case and we won. The total legal bill came to \$38,151.

Pandora struggled for a couple of years and managed to pay off \$18,329 of the total legal debt. Recently, Anne Derrick notified the collective that the remaining \$19,822 in debt was forgiven. This means that the Pandora legal debt is finally zero. HURRAY!

Pandora was not required to pay interest on the outstanding balance, nor were we ever pressured to do so. It was very clearly explained to the collective that if we found ourselves “unable” to pay the debt in full, no action would be

taken against us. Despite this, we did feel a commitment to try and raise the full amount.

As a gesture of support to help save Pandora (and not because they didn’t need the money), Buchan, Derrick and Ring agreed to forgive the remaining \$19,800 at the request of Anne Derrick. Pandora did have a commitment to fundraise the total amount but were fast approaching a time when we were questioning our ability to do so.

***“Why don’t we ask men
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or ever ask women who
aren’t feminist?”***

We feel it is questionable for women to ask other women to provide professional services for no charge just on the basis of being “feminist sisters.” As feminist women we should recognize the value of other women’s work; of the labour and commitment involved in becoming a professional woman in a patriarchal world, where being less valuable is a “natural” given fact on the basis of gender.

Feminist women always have, and always will, provide a certain amount of “free” work. Why don’t we ask men to provide free services, or ever ask women who aren’t feminist? Should we as feminist women expect other feminist dentists to clean our teeth for free? Or do research for free? Or teach for free? No we should not.

Feminist women will sometimes find themselves in difficult and compromising situations. The feminist counsellor who has to make a decision about an abused woman who needs help but has no money; the feminist lawyer faced with a young victim of sexual assault. My experience is that most (but not all) feminist women are extremely sensitive to these situations and are committed to ensuring that services are provided when needed. We need to question anyone who turns away a woman in need of help for financial reasons.

Legal, counselling, health, employment, and educational services should be provided free of charge to anyone who needs them. However, until we reach that time, let us not blame feminist women for needing to make a living when they are already marginalized and cast off as radical, alternative, and less than equal.

The Pandora Collective would like to extend a sincere thanks to all our financial supporters who helped out over the past couple of years; to the law firm Buchan, Derrick and Ring for their patience and support, and finally a very special thanks to Anne who stood by the collective as a feminist sister as well as a lawyer. She proved her commitment to challenging injustice and inequity a thousand times over. Thank you!

Attention Women Save Pandora!

We need your help. Without your energy,
Pandora cannot publish another issue.

Please come and bring your ideas
about how to save Pandora

Date: **Thursday, March 17, 1994**

Time: **7:30 pm**

Place: North Branch Library
2885 Gottingen St. Halifax

Call 455-9656 for more information

All women welcome to attend

(Contd. from page 1)

My name is Amani. The past four years of involvement with Pandora have been both wonderful and, at times, exhausting. Over the last year, my energy has decreased and I find myself necessarily trying to sever my ties with the paper. I know there are many women with dynamic energy who could bring a new dimension to a now tired publication.

The Pandora women with whom I've shared the last four years have become my friends. There is a social aspect to working on the paper that I will miss, as we spent many a grumpy Saturday mornings together questioning and arguing about our "process."

I would encourage new women to take an interest in the paper. It will enable you to make new friendships and participate in a meaningful and empowering process. Pandora is special, but in order to remain what it has been, it must expand to incorporate diversity.

Even though I am leaving Pandora, I hope that it will continue to be a voice for women.

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alternative media which
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I am agent 27. By the time I got involved with the paper it was already on its last leg. Meeting after meeting the participants were saying this is the end, there is no more energy or active people who want to carry on with the paper the way it is. This is not the kind of encouragement I was looking for.

Pandora is the only alternative media which offers marginalized voices a chance to be heard, and I wanted to be a part of that. It now seems as if I may never get the opportunity to participate.

I'm Bev and I am writing this testimonial because Tina said I had to (and she's the president). I was just on maternity leave from all this and now I'm back for some strange reason and I'm not sure if I want to be or not (hard to decide between this and changing shitty diapers). It depends on the food at the next potluck and if people continue to criticize the cookies my kid makes.

I'm Karan. This magazine is a good idea. It's too bad that marginalized women are getting involved in a magazine that has a possibility of closing. It makes the going that much harder, something we're used to, but hoping through the womanist movement to change. These are some of the issues that could be shared if you come to the meeting to help keep the paper alive, that is assuming that the people who read this

magazine give a shit about working with marginalized women or on any issues that are not polite.

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The following are jobs that Pandora women do over a three to four month period for each issue:

(1) Come to meetings. Usually there will be at least one business meeting per month, and we are trying to keep these to a 2 hour limit. Before Production there are usually at least two "Story" meetings, wherein we decide what stories we already have (usually these are sent to us in the mail) and what stories we might like to have. Everyone takes responsibility for asking for a story and receiving it (preferably on disc already and with one readable copy) by the due date. We then meet to read what we have. Anything not already on disc has been typed into the computer by this time, usually by the person who has received it. We make a date to go into production.

(2) People who have chosen to learn to do page design meet at this time, and start designing.

(3) Production day starts. Women who like computers start putting the stories onto "pages" on the computer screen as the designers have suggested. This takes a while. During this time, what has already been produced on hard copy is being proofed and/or edited.

There are usually four Production Days. They don't take a full day – we normally work about four hours each time. During the first Production Day a few pages are produced, and proofed, and some corrections are made. When an article has been printed on good paper, it is laid out by hand on a flat (the sheet that goes to the printing company), and when it is joined by its accompanying article, pictures, ads, etc., it is proofed one last time. If there are no changes, it's done. And so it goes, page by page.

(4) Someone calls for a date with the printer, takes the ready flats out there, and someone else for a date for Distribution.

(5) Women are called to come to help; the room we do Distribution in is booked; mailing bags are picked up; someone stamps Pandora envelopes, creates and pastes on the labels, and gathers together everything we will need to bag the Pandoras; someone brings the printed Pandora in from the printers and together we bag it. Women leaving Distribution take the Pandoras that are to be left at places around town to those places. Someone takes the mailing bags to the mail and takes a trunkful of Pandoras around to other places that usually have some. Then we rest – and begin a new series of meetings for the next issue.

This is a lot of work for only a few people. There are other on-going jobs, too – picking up, sorting and answering the mail, adding to the subscription list, sending notices, getting ads, invoicing ads, taking pictures, collecting money, banking and recording, etc. We have short term and long term volunteer work available, and very few of us to do it.

Please help. We can't do it alone.

Pandora women have a dream

Our dream is to revitalize Pandora. As part of this process, we envision each issue of Pandora representing a special theme or issue. We would like to be able to publish special issues on different topics of interest to a diverse group of women. Pandora is inviting Aboriginal, Afro-Canadian, young, lesbian, poor, women with disabilities and all women in general to contribute articles related to their/our identified issues. Any, and all issues of concern can be included in special issues. We invite your ideas to add to the following list.

Some of our ideas include:

- Native women and the police
- Women and AIDS
- Health, counselling and therapy issues
- Education and childcare
- Women, violence and survival
- Sexual harassment and action taken
- Midwifery and wholistic birthing
- Alternative healing practices
- Racism
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Joblessness
- Art/poetry
- Children
- Lesbian issues
- Celebrating sexuality

We welcome any woman who wants to write, draw, take photographs, design, produce, distribute or help out with any part of Pandora. If you are interested, please attend the meeting on March ~~15~~¹⁷ (see insert).

Pandora women were unable to produce another issue of the newspaper which is why you are receiving this brief newsletter. We hope new women will come out to the meeting planned for March and bring new energy to enable the publication to continue.

Return to:
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