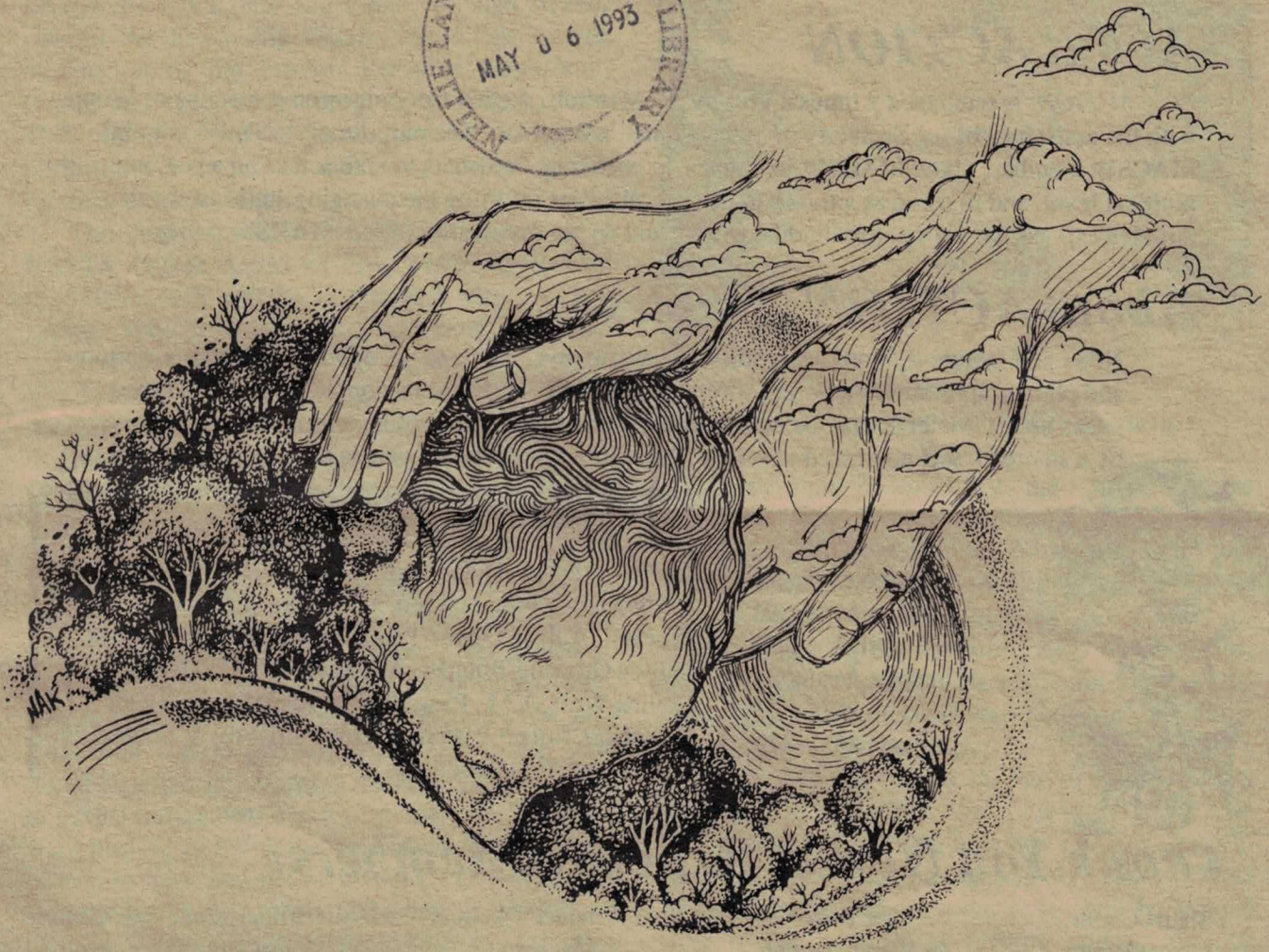


# ACTION

MANITOBA ACTION COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN NEWSLETTER

May 1993

Vol. 20 No. 4



## INTERNATIONAL MIDWIFERY DAY -- MAY 5

**Inside: Midwifery vs. "Barbarian" Birthing Practices  
Backlash Against Incest Survivors & Therapists**



## About MACSW

The Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women is a volunteer-based, non-profit feminist organization working through political action, public education and personal growth in order to improve attitudes, raise issues and remove inequalities affecting women today.

MACSW was formed in 1971 by a group of women who presented a brief to the federal Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967. MACSW has branches in Brandon, Dauphin, Thompson and Winnipeg.

## About ACTION

*ACTION* is published 9 times a year by the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women, with the assistance of the Secretary of State Women's Program. The purpose of *ACTION* is to inform MACSW members about MACSW initiatives, to encourage members to take action on a personal and political level, and to serve as a forum to discuss all issues affecting the changing status of women. Articles express the views of individual writers and do not necessarily reflect MACSW policy.

## About ACTION Articles

News and feature-style articles, profiles, reviews, essays, letters to the editor, illustrations, cartoons and photographs are all welcome! Written submissions should be double-spaced and typed (2 pages max.) Material may be edited. Sorry, submissions will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. **Deadline for the next issue is the 15th of the month.**



Send stuff to:  
*ACTION* Newsletter  
MACSW  
16-222 Osborne St.S  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3L 1Z3  
Phone 453-3879

**This issue:** MACSW staff, many incest survivors, Dawn, Diana, Judith, Bridget, Kelly Logan, Pat Sadowy, Leslie Jackson, Marion Foster, Doreen Wuckert, Allison Dewar, Pam Jakubec, Marjorie Turton, Shirley Growing-Boulder, Anessa Maize, Ceridwen Collins-West, A.M., Pam, Sharon, Joan, Rhona, Heidi Eigenkind, Robert Pasternak (cover artwork) & Newsletter Coordinator Fiona Muldrew.

## Thank You New & Renewed Members!

Sherri Carter  
Lillian Bonin  
Bonne Robson  
Donna Cassels  
Cindy Hanson  
Paula Mallea  
Sharon Kellar  
Dan Jardine  
Yutta Fricke  
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Yolanda Efshen  
Pauline Greenhill  
Dianne Vanstone  
Barbara Abramchuk  
Laura Crookshanks





## Parkland Branch Report

Heather Dootoff, Administrative Co-ordinator

This morning as I was making a note regarding a meeting which had been cancelled, the words I had written jumped off the page at me... "Brighter Futures postponed". No kidding!!

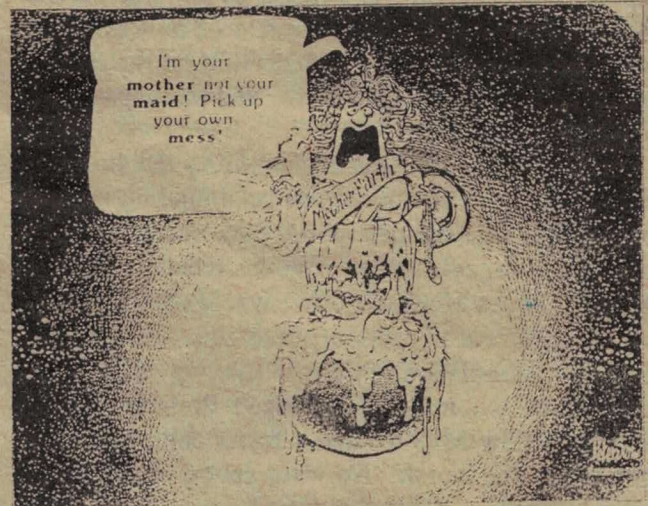
We are still reeling in the Parklands as we watch jobs disappear before our very eyes--at least forty jobs in the last month and a half, through funding cuts to the Friendship Centre, the Crisis Centre, elimination of the Human Resource Opportunity Centre and rural dental program and much more. These cuts are devastating to the lives of families and particularly women and children, through loss of services and loss of jobs. Where will it stop?

The Action Canada Network is organizing a NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) Caravan, which will be in Dauphin May 2. This caravan will provide a good opportunity to voice concerns about NAFTA, regroup and re-energize. The Action Canada Network is a cross-country coalition of national organizations and provincial coalitions representing women, farmers, unions, anti-poverty groups, churches, nurses, fishery workers, students, seniors and non-governmental coalitions. This is one of several events occurring in the Parklands which are a result of coalition and network building. Phone 638-3599 in Dauphin for more info.

Several agencies in Dauphin were invited to participate in the training of the Canada Employment Centre U.I. staff. Training will focus on the new legislation and in particular, the "just cause" and "fired for misconduct" cases, especially as they relate to sexual harassment and discrimination. While we were pleased to be invited to participate and have a chance to meet and network with CEC staff, it was very unsettling to learn about the new legislation and to consider the impact on people's lives, including the UI staff, who will have to deal with this new workload. What came out of the discussions was the importance of employees talking to CEC before they quit and giving as much information as possible about the work environment when making claims. The appeal process is also important--it's one way to put extra pressure on the system.

Two other events held in Dauphin this past month were the elder abuse workshop, sponsored by Community Legal Education Association and

organized by a local committee, and Earth Day Celebrations, co-sponsored by the Dauphin Allied Arts Centre and the Parkland Status of Women. All this on the tail of an exhaustive weekend in Thompson sorting out the future of MACSW! And for our next trick.....



## Thompson Branch Report

Debra McVittie, Administrative Co-ordinator

By the time you read this, the AGM will have come and gone. I am anticipating at this time that our out of town guests will have had a nice visit and will have taken back good memories of Thompson. Special thanks to Joanna and Jean who endured the stress of working out the fine details of the AGM, the childcare workers, those who took in billets, those who attended and others who helped in making the entire weekend a success.

Tammy Barter from R.D. Parker Collegiate is a new face in the office these days. Tammy has volunteered 110 working hours to TACSW and will receive a credit from the highschool in return. Most of the "running around town stuff" will be handed over to her as well as helping update resource material, typing and on and on. Four hands are really better than two. She and I will also be setting up a table with information on TACSW, Date Rape, and Feminism at the 7th Annual R.D. Parker Health Day. We will, of course, also have on hand, t-shirts and our latest fundraiser--Mascao Chocolate Bars for sale!

We are currently working on a special membership letter to send to potential new individual/group members.





## Brandon Branch Report

Jennifer Howard, Administrative Co-ordinator

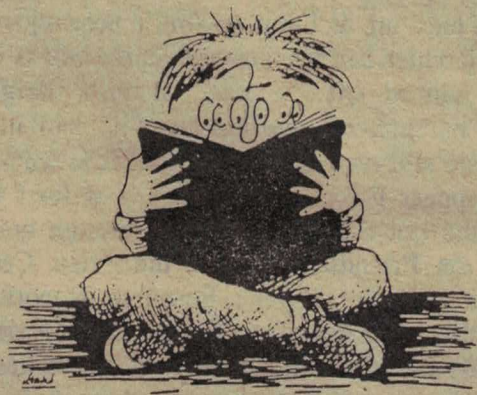
The word of the month was BUDGET.

By the time the provincial budget came down on April 6, the government's theme of tax cuts for the rich and program cuts for the rest of us was clear. MACSW was kept busy commenting on the impact of the budget to the local media and participating in local demonstrations.

The first protest was organized by the Brandon Friendship Centre (whose provincial funding was cut by 100%), in response to the cuts endured by 56 provincial organizations. We marched to Justice Minister James McCrae's office where several people spoke about the impacts of these cuts. The Foster Family Association, whose funding was also completely eliminated, challenged Premier Filmon and his fellow MPs to take a foster child into their homes for one month. No word yet on whether they have accepted.

The second demonstration, which took place the day after the budget, was organized by the Brandon and District Labour Council and the Coalition for Fairness. About eighty people from various walks of life showed up to march to the Provincial Building and make their voices heard. MACSW spoke again about the injustices of a "share the pain" budget that includes almost \$13 million in new tax breaks for business while extending taxation to those on Social Assistance. We also heard from the local Child Care Association who informed us of the drastic cuts to subsidized day care and the doubling of user fees. As I write this I hear on the radio that child care workers, 96% of which are women, make the least of the ten lowest-paid professions at \$13,518 per year.

Then there's the federal budget which includes the radical changes to Unemployment Insurance. MACSW was invited to a preview of the training video designed to sensitize UIC agents. The impact of this legislation is likely to be monumental and I had the feeling that there was very little understanding of the complexity of the issues that these agents would have to deal with. How can one person decide what sexual harassment is when whole Supreme Courts can't? We have an excellent resource in the office called "For a Just Cause". It was produced by the Public Service Alliance of



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Canada and the Canadian Employment and Immigration Union and is a frank and readable explanation of the new legislation and how it affects workers.

On a more positive note, we are busily organizing a Gender and Development Conference for next International Women's Day. We have applied for a grant from the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation and are waiting for their decision. If all goes well it promises to be a very exciting and informative event.

We should start planning for the MACSW garage sale soon. This is usually our big fundraiser of the year so if you would like to help, call the office. Take Back the Night is only a few months away, so if you're interested in planning the march, give me a call.

A closing thought--by the time you read this MACSW's 1993 AGM will have passed and we will have made some difficult decisions regarding our budget and direction. In these days when deficit-phobia prevails, it is sometimes easy to forget who our real adversaries are and to turn our frustrations on each other. But we must remember that as women, we have always survived, even in the most hostile environments. I am confident that, in the end, Sisterhood will prevail.



## Winnipeg Branch Report

Susan Banks, Administrative Co-ordinator

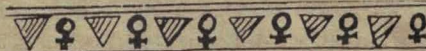
Plans are continuing for a sequel to last year's March Against Violence. The date has been changed to Saturday, June 19, 1993, beginning at noon. This year, we have decided to hold a Rally on the Legislative grounds. The theme of the Rally will be "Peace-nic in the Park: Ending Violence in our Communities". Tentative plans for the day include an appearance by Loonisee, a clown troupe which deals with social issues; speakers from the Disabled, Aboriginal and Asian Communities; and workshops on a number of topics including Building Peace through Play, Wen-Do, Safe Neighbourhoods, Racial Violence, Conflict Resolution, Empowerment for Women, Violence in the Lesbian/Gay Community, Homophobic Violence and Links between Racism, Sexism and Violence. Volunteers are needed for a number of tasks including media/publicity for the event, distributing posters and working in the Children's Area. Please call the MACSW Winnipeg Branch if you would like to help out. There is also the possibility that we will be combining this Rally with the Walk for Peace. Be sure to check next month's ACTION newsletter for further details.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women is sponsoring a national campaign entitled "Future of Women's Work". The research project is designed to collect information on what is happening economically, politically and socially on the national and international levels as well as in individual women's lives - at home, in the workplace outside of the home and in our communities. A meeting has

with the Nellie McClung Theatre, followed by a drop-in social. We are striking a committee to organize this event and are requesting your involvement - let us know if you would like to sit on the committee or can put us in touch with others who may be interested (perhaps some of the founders and original members of MACSW). The next MACSW Anniversary Committee meeting will be held on May 10, 7 p.m. at the MACSW Winnipeg Branch.

On March 29 we held a meeting to discuss the possibility of organizing a MACSW Anniversary Fundraiser/Reunion at Merk's restaurant in October. Many ideas were suggested including a dinner theatre been scheduled for May 12, 1993 at 7 p.m. at the MACSW Winnipeg Branch to discuss these issues and how they affect women in Winnipeg. Please attend if you would like to contribute your ideas!

Volunteer week was April 18-24 and I would like to thank all of those volunteers who have helped out during the past year. There are too many to name, but you know who you are!

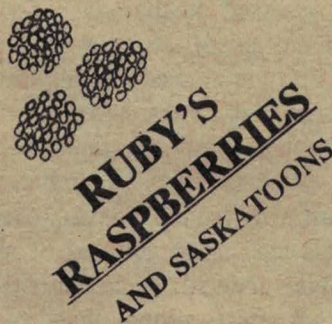


## Income Tax Services

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## URBAN & RURAL WOMEN MAKE THE SUMMER CONNECTION !



- ♀ Ruby Reske-Naurocki is a rural feminist hoping to link up with 4 urban feminists to work as a team on her U-Pick Raspberry farm.
- ♀ Pickers are needed to supply berries for Neechi Foods (Aboriginal co-op) in Winnipeg and other orders.
- ♀ Picking will last 5-6 weeks starting mid-July.
- ♀ 45 minutes from Winnipeg, near Beausejour.
- ♀ Proceeds from the farm go back to: Victims of Violence, the Women's Circle at Hope Clinic & the Jessie Saulteaux Resource Ctr.
- ♀ To make your rural connection this summer **Ph. 1-268-3549** ♀



## True or False Memory Syndrome?:

The Backlash against Incest Survivors and Therapists  
by Shirley Growing-Boulder

"This is the first generation in the history of the world where survivors of child sexual abuse are being heard and believed," said Ellen Bass at a recent workshop in Winnipeg. Ellen Bass and Laura Davis are authors of Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, which has sold over 750,000 copies since 1988. The book is popular because incest is so commonplace yet, until recently, rarely talked about. Under 10% of sexually abused children report the abuse when it occurs--some are intimidated into silence, some repress the memories till decades later in order to survive the horror, and some don't survive. Conservative data states that one out of four girls and one out of ten boys are sexually abused, so the walking wounded are in the millions. The walking are also talking now as never before. Winnipeg's Sorrow & Strength Conference about childhood sexual abuse attracted 400 survivors, therapists and supporters last year. The 3rd annual conference was held from April 28-May 1 with many excellent local and national speakers.

Before coming to Winnipeg, in November, to lead a workshop on child sexual abuse, Ellen Bass was warned over the phone not to come. It is believed that the caller was a Winnipeg member of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF), a Philadelphia-based group of parents who say they have been falsely accused of incest. The foundation is backed by several psychiatrists and psychologists who blame a "disastrous therapeutic program" for encouraging clients to believe they suffer from repressed memories of incest which the FMSF sees as false. The FMSF pamphlet states, "False Memory Syndrome...typically produces a continuing dependency on the very program (i.e. therapy) that creates the syndrome." False Memory Syndrome is a term made up by the FMSF with NO scientific or medical legitimacy. It is NOT an official "syndrome" as the name suggests. Several FMSF board members have recently resigned and others have questionable research techniques. The New England Commissioners of Child Welfare Agencies asked Dr. Anna Salter to research the work of two FMSF board members, Ralph Underwager and

Holida Wakefield. They were concerned about the accuracy of information Underwager frequently used when he testified on the side of the accused in sexual abuse cases, saying that children were easily convinced to make sexual abuse charges because of leading and suggestive questioning. Salter found that there were many inaccuracies and quotes taken out of context which put their research on child sexual abuse into question.

Despite harassment, Ellen Bass came to Winnipeg and spoke of the FMSF as part of a backlash against incest survivors and their supporters who have made "significant social progress." The incest survivor movement is mostly women who are setting their own agenda for healing which is upsetting the status quo. Since there are so many incest survivors speaking out in every community, the pillars of society are started to crumble and they are desperately looking for some legal crazy glue.

The FMSF began in the States, coincidentally after many people started winning court cases on sexual abuse charges against their abusers. Surprise! Surprise! The FMSF offers members tax deductions for their contributions, legal advice, access to legal counsel and financial assistance to families for legal services. The "Syndrome" appears quite catchy, with almost 2000 families signed up in North America, including 120 Canadian members--10 in Manitoba. Therapists are blamed for "destroying families" by encouraging false memories among their clients. A San Jose Book Review of Confabulations: Creating False Memories, Destroying Families says "the authors of "Confabulations" also blame recovery guru and PBS darling John Bradshaw and radical feminists for consciously using the ammunition of repressed memories in a war on the family." The FMSF sees psychiatrists and psychologists at the pinnacle of professionalism while therapists and social workers are "lesser-trained", "pseudoscientific" and, you guessed it--that darn f-word, feminist! If feminist therapists are as greedy as is implied why are they so overworked and underpaid? They must have a Masochistic Personality Disorder to wage war on the imploding nuclear family!

Could it be that all these FMSF members and board members are suffering from a syndrome rather than the accusers. Perhaps those accused of abuse are victims of True Memory Syndrome, a devastating sickness that affects people afraid of: the

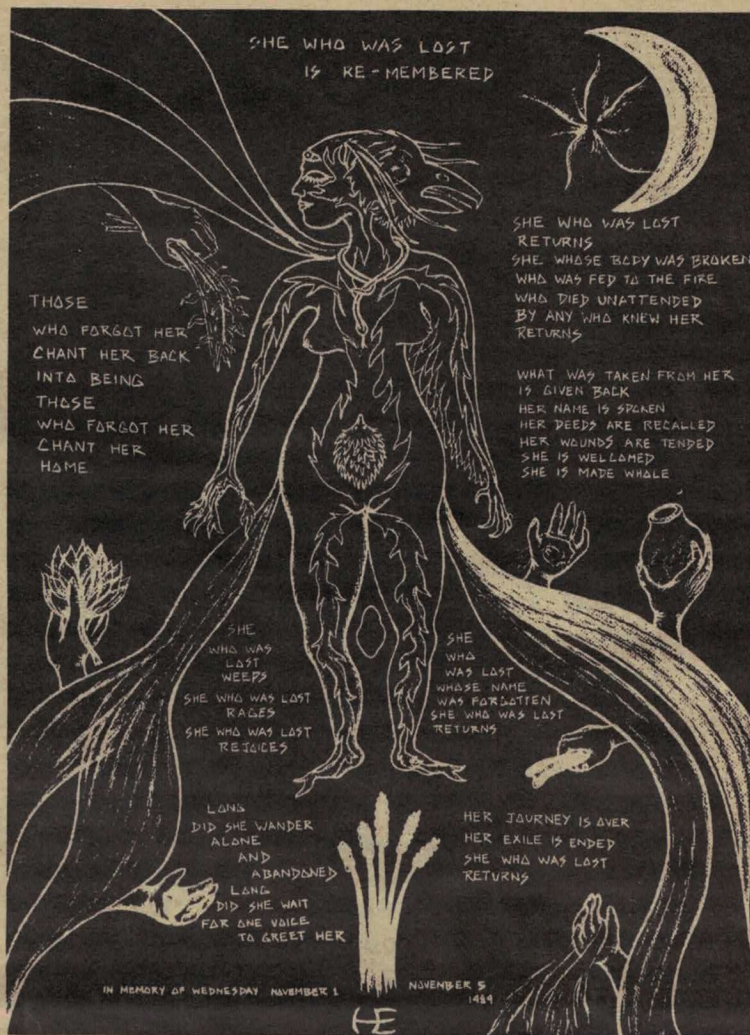


truth, loss of status, money and other forms of power? It seems that those accused of abuse have a "continuing dependency on the very program that creates the syndrome," but for them, the dangerous "program" is abuse and denial, not therapy.

After all, does it make sense that women, who are often low-income, pay for therapy if it has a "devastating effect" on them and "typically produces a continuing dependency" on therapy, as the FMSF claims? Would anyone want to break off ties with their family unless something traumatic happened to sever the bond that children form with the people who first show them affection? Would a woman be more influenced by her therapist than her parents when we are conditioned from birth to seek our parents' approval?

Leaders in the incest survivor movement, such as Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, are the first to admit that they are concerned about some "overzealous therapists who have told clients they were sexually abused before those clients had a chance to find out for themselves." However, they try to confront these problems without jeopardizing the lives of survivors or raising money for people charged as abusers (mostly men).

One survivor I met named Bridget suggested the book Trusting Ourselves: The Sourcebook on Psychology for Women by Karen Johnson, M.D. and Tom Ferguson, M.D., as a guide for patients' rights and tips for finding a good therapist. She recommended private therapists, crisis counsellors, social workers, psychologists or psychiatrists of any gender or age, as long as they help you trust yourself without pressuring a certain action or telling you what your problem is. Bridget had memories of incest before she saw any counsellor but she denied them for a long time. It was extremely difficult to admit that her father had abused her, but she could feel the abuse in her body when repressed memories resurfaced. Sometimes, survivors may know they were abused but they don't know by whom. They may identify the wrong person at first in order to subconsciously protect a parent or favourite relative, but the mistaken identity doesn't last long. Bridget believes a false memory cannot be planted in one's mind because the true story will soon surface with a corresponding memory or a bodily reaction. Bridget desperately did not want to believe her memories in order to avoid the painful reality of betrayal by loved



"She Who Was Lost is Re-membered" by Heidi Eigenkind.

ones. Ultimately, she was disowned by her family when she told them about her memories. In her case it involved the loss of a large inheritance, so the only benefit in confronting her parents with her sexual abuse was her own self-healing.

As her therapist helped her deal with the painful memories, Bridget overcame some childhood health problems. She now has fewer allergies, migraines, and nightmares. At times she couldn't breathe, couldn't sleep and her legs went numb. She felt suicidal and almost didn't make it.

Pam Gahan, a social worker and counsellor at Sherbrook Counselling Services said that, usually, incest survivors get worse before they get better as they deal with the pain of incest memories resurfacing. This could be misinterpreted as regression by skeptics of the repressed memories, when it is really part of the healing process.

The skepticism around incest survivors is similar to the way many of us are taught to deny problems of poverty, sexism, racism, and homophobia. We



are more likely to blame the victim than solve the problem. In a recent Winnipeg Free Press column, a local FSMF member said her daughter was making false accusations to help her "avoid responsibility for her depression...a reason for feeling unhappy," as if the individual is solely responsible for her own depression, or having a reason to be unhappy would make depression easier.?! This type of dog-eat-dog, rugged individualist thinking means that abusers are protected and the abused are further tortured with doubt and abandonment. When I visited the Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre, where they counsel incest survivors, they received two calls in two hours from women who had heard of the FMSF and were questioning their memories of incest and their sanity. Most media reports support the FMSF as "scientific" even though its board members' research has been discredited. Richard Ofshe, another board member, was quoted as saying "the incidence of cases in which repressed memories correspond with facts is about as common as Siamese twins joined at the head." I'm sure he's got some interesting "facts" on Siamese twins! "We believe that there is torture in other countries, because the spheres of power here allow us to condemn those torturers. How can we ignore the overwhelming pain of torture in our own communities?"

Judith is an incest survivor who is pushing through the cement of denial that has been smothering her life for too long. Judith paraphrases Yeats by saying "we applaud men who go to war, but it takes more courage to go into the inner self." Judith suffered sexual abuse from her father, godfather and their business associates from the age of 2 months till she was 22. She survived by dissociating the abuse from her memory and observing everything in great detail except the abuse. As a child, she learned how to find beauty in small things. At the age of 49, she sought psychiatric help once again, for chronic depression, and joined an Adult Children of Alcoholics group. The psychiatrist suggested that she write down her dreams. In the last four years she recorded 1130 dreams and has remembered the history of abuse. She writes in her journal every day and has learned to trust herself and her memories more. She has also had many health problems from the abuse such as fainting from menstrual cramps, eczema on her buttocks, migraines, anal pain and cysts in her breasts which had to be drained. The cysts stopped forming the

month she started remembering the truth of her abuse. Therapy helped her unlearn the denial strategies she had learned from her family, who still deny any abuse happened.

Another survivor, Dawn, said she knew she was healing from incest when the past no longer held her back. Now, she's still afraid to do some things but she'll do them anyway because she feels stronger, whereas in the past she wouldn't have risked as much. Diana is another survivor for whom "the personal is political." Like many survivors she sees therapy as a way of taking responsibility for herself and her own healing but also healing in our society. She is better able to deal with stress and now when she sees abuse she'll call people on it and try to stop the cycle of abuse. With new courage and self-awareness, incest survivors are challenging abuse in their lives. The backlash against incest survivors and their therapists is inevitable considering the extent of abuse being uncovered. Despite the backlash, the incest survivor movement is growing and is an unstoppable force for healing and social change.

**For counselling on child sexual abuse please call one of the following centres:**

**Klinik 24 hour Crisis Line 786-8686**

**Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre 269-6836**

**Women's Health Clinic 947-1517**

For an updated copy of Bold Print's mail order catalogue for books on sexual abuse, ph. 452-9682 .



*Heidi Eigenkind will have a show at Ace Art, starting June 1, entitled "In sites: A Topography of Incest."*



## house of lords

the house of lords stands apart  
and denies in an easy breath:  
who dares resist  
who dares confess  
who admits that such things exist  
in a house where privilege rests  
and the bloodied victim  
behind the door is  
false in her extent  
to which the crown  
repents and doles out the  
paper with the pills and  
victims come and  
victims go and  
the lords persist that the conquered do not exist and  
the rest is manufactured  
by the therapist who  
has not kissed the  
ring the crown exhibits  
and therefore is of  
no consequence

©1993 by Ceridwen Collins-West,

### **WILL POWER: A New Meaning to an Old Word, A New Solution to an Old Problem** Heather Dootoff

At recent Provincial Coordinating Committee meetings, MACSW members have been facing an old problem...deficit...with renewed excitement and energy. Ideas were bubbling up all over the place.

One suggestion, not a new idea in and of itself, but new to MACSW, was that of gifting money through your will to organizations you support, in this case MACSW.

This idea was quickly dubbed Will Power. I think this is a very appropriate and clever name. First of all, I love a good pun. Second, I like the positive turn on a word which has historically been quite a negative word, in my vocabulary, anyway. Will-power was the quality I was always lacking. It would enable me to be thin, organized, fit, and any number of other goals to which I never quite measured up. Will-power was something mystically outside of my reach.

Viewed in this new way, Will Power is an

empowering concept. A simple clause in your will ensures that the work that you have supported throughout your life, which is in constant threat due to inadequate funding, will continue, and continue more forcefully, with less reliance on government funding and less time devoted to financial worries.

Alternatively, you can have a life insurance policy with the benefactor as MACSW. If you would like to consider this, talk to your lawyer, accountant or contact your nearest Branch of MACSW for more information.

*Taken from me  
Robbed Stolen  
Broken  
My pleasure  
My sex.*

*My blameless vulva  
Let him in because she had to  
She had no choice.*

*Penetrated Hurt  
Violated  
Forever disturbed  
So that now  
When my vulva aches for a touch, a stroke,  
I curse her/me  
Because it hurts too much  
To feel such goodness.*

*I think of the women  
Whose pleasure and sex have also been robbed  
Stolen Broken  
Literally Taken  
Removed  
From their bodies.*

*Without thinking  
My hand moves to rest against my vulva  
As if to protect and guard.  
I stop cursing her.  
I am so glad she's still there.*

This poem came out of me after reading Alice Walker's book "Possessing the Secret of Joy", (about a woman recovering from genital mutilation), while working through another phase of healing from having been raped when I was fourteen. A.M.



## Devolution of "Barbarian" Birthing Practices

Anessa Maize

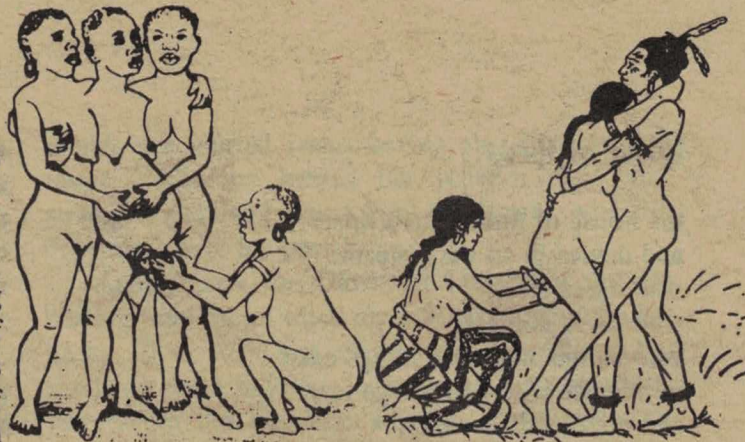
(In honour of International Midwifery Day, May 5)

It's March 13, 1993 and I am at a Birthing Conference for members of the Manitoba Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists gathered to discuss modifying their birthing practices. The head of Obstetrics at St. Boniface Hospital is giving a presentation on Vaginal Birth after Cesarean. He is making a point about the risk being higher for a woman with two previous cesarean scars on her uterus, hence a repeat cesarean would be necessary. As a visual aid, he uses the image of a Conan-type barbarian he-man (the doctor) wielding a sword (scalpel) at two larger than life beasts (the two previous cesarean scars). The room full of approximately 100 obstetricians, general practitioners and nurses is chuckling and laughing. Excuse me?!

What I heard and saw at this conference further validated my opinion that obstetrics is full of misogynist, patriarchal values and attitudes. I had already come to that conclusion after witnessing, as a labour companion, a number of births in hospital, and after listening to women's horror stories of their hospital birth experiences. Time and again women are mistreated and abused at the hands of doctors and nurses during a time in their lives that is supposed to be transforming and empowering. And what's scary to me is that a lot of women don't know they are being mistreated and don't know that birth can be experienced differently.

Nancy Wainer Cohen in her book Open Season: A Survival Guide for Natural Childbirth and VBAC in the 90's writes: "It never ceases to amaze me how someone without a vagina can be such an authority on them. That we listen to men, who have never been pregnant, never felt a contraction, never felt a baby move inside--and that we follow their instructions and take their word as gospel truth--is pure folly! Janet Leigh continues: "...these men dictate the terms of birth and control the passage of women through territory that is uniquely feminine. How did we ever let this happen?" <sup>(1)</sup>

An historical overview would be helpful here. Since the beginning of time women have been helping women birth. During the Burning Times, "the Inquisition announced that no-one did more



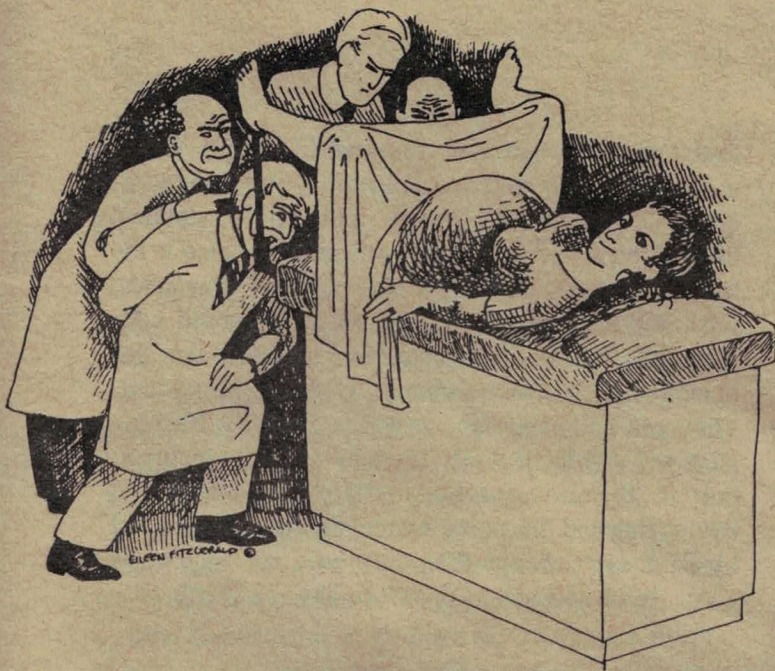
*Birth practices of the Wakamba people, Central Africa and the Dakota people, North America.*

harm to the Catholic Church than midwives. They eased the pain of labour, punishment for Eve's sin. New laws proclaimed that any woman who dared cure without having studied was a witch and must die. Since most women were banned from university, the rise of the male medical profession was guaranteed." <sup>(2)</sup> Many midwives were tortured and killed. In Canada, women gave birth at home with midwives or by themselves until the late 1800's. In 1865, "a statute passed by the Province of Canada placed midwifery under the jurisdiction of licenced medical practitioners, i.e. those who could attend and be licenced by a medical college, a college which, like any other in the 19th century, did not admit women." <sup>(3)</sup> Sound familiar?

They didn't torture and burn the midwives, but they did actively work to quash them. The male medical profession co-opted childbirth and turned it into a business which provided them with a steady income. They could charge more than a midwife and it became a measure of status to have a doctor attend you. <sup>(4)</sup> As well, midwives began to be prosecuted for practicing medicine without a licence and so found themselves out of a job and, more significantly, out of birthing woman's culture that was again being destroyed. In the early 1900's, birth moved almost completely into the hospital and labour and birth were totally out of the hands of the women themselves.

Common obstetrical procedures done in our mothers' generation included being tied down, laying flat on the back, legs splayed, feet in stirrups, pubic hair shaved, enema administered, body draped, no food or drink, intravenous drip, isolation (no family or friends), water bag ruptured, assorted anesthetics and analgesics whose effects could range from complete unconsciousness to numbing from the waist down, episiotomy (a cut made with scissors at the





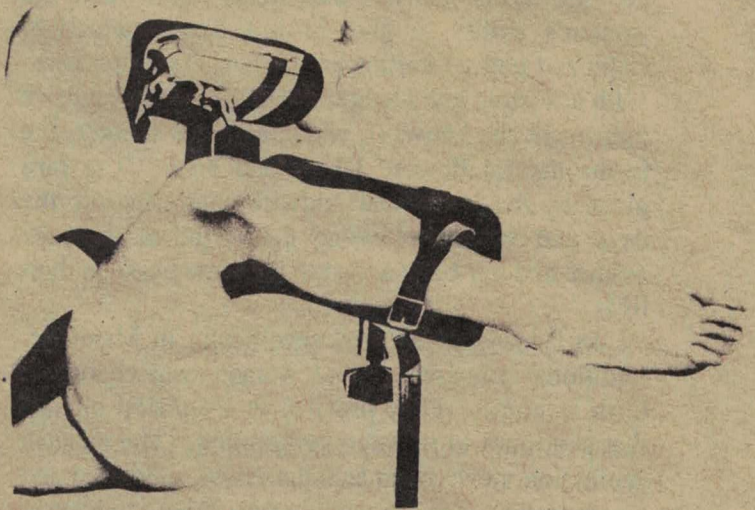
*Pregnant woman as "object" or "sterilized field."*

lower end of the vagina to enlarge the opening), forceps delivery (inserting two large metal blades up into the vagina and onto the baby's head and pulling the infant out) and cesarean section. After she had been delivered of her child, she wouldn't see or hold the baby for maybe 12-24 hours and then only every 4-6 hours for a feeding. How many of our mothers look back and remember birth as an empowering, good experience?

It's now 1993 and not a lot has changed. Of those procedures used in our mothers' time, only a few are no longer performed. Women aren't tied down and no routine shaves and enemas are given. A woman can have her partner and one "significant other" in the room with her. In some hospitals, she can labour, deliver, recover and spend postpartum all in the same room and there are now women doctors practicing. Well, I still say not a lot has changed. During an average hospital birth in Canada today a woman can expect to have an external fetal monitor strapped to her belly and an I.V. inserted in her arm, both of which limit the range of movements she can make. She can also expect to not be allowed food or drink, to wear a hospital gown, to have numerous strangers stick their fingers up her vagina to check dilation of her cervix, probably not have her own doctor, have her labour progress continually assessed and augmented with rupturing the bag of waters and being given Pitocin (a synthetic drug used to bring on unbearably strong contractions) to speed things up. An internal fetal scalp clip may be screwed into the baby's head. The woman will be told what

position to be in and ordered when and how to push. She will likely be given an episiotomy and if it's not going fast enough, the baby will be pulled out by forceps or a vacuum extractor. If all else fails, one out of five women will have Conan the Barbarian wield his sword and take her baby by cesarean.

Birth has become a medicalized and technologically managed event. The implications and negative long term effects these interventions and disturbances create for women are far-reaching. "...the medicalization of women's lives brought about by technology produces continued debilitation to our bodies and spirits...in the midst of a man-made environment, it is important to persist in asking woman-centered questions. Why, for example, does technology reinforce the biomedical "fact" that a woman's reproductive system is pathological and requires an enormous amount of intervention? Why do these technologies reduce the totality of a woman's being to that which is medically measured?" (5) Why indeed?! "In any society, the way women birth and the care given to them *"point as sharply as an arrowhead to the key values in the culture."*" (6) The Conqueror still reigns in our society. Our woman's culture has been disrupted, our power forcibly taken from us. Our society does not value and respect woman and her life-giving power, her amazing, mysterious body. Men don't understand that power, feel afraid of it, and want to control and manage it.



*Emancipation", an oil painting by Maina-Miriam Munsky, based on hospital birthing practices.*

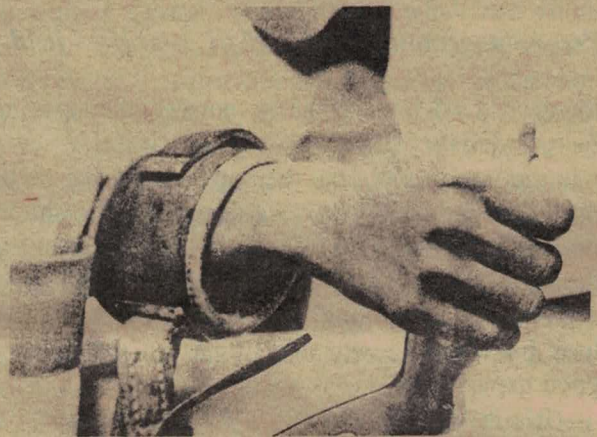


Throughout the centuries of oppression and persecution, there have been women who have continued to be with women in their labours and births. We now call it the midwifery model of care. But it's not a new idea--it's been around since the beginning of time. We aren't creating anything new, we're just re-remembering the traditional skills and values of our birthing woman's culture. A traditional midwife values the essential mystery of life. She listens to the woman. The pregnant, labouring and birthing woman is the one who knows what is best for her and her baby. When a woman gives birth in an environment that is familiar to her, that she controls, in which she is free to be herself, and is surrounded by those who respect and honour her, (7) birth is truly a rite of passage. And so it should be.

A traditional midwife views birth as a healthy, normal and important event in a woman's life. Because of the nature of opening and vulnerability during labour and birth it is vital for a woman to know and feel completely comfortable with the people attending her. A traditional midwife spends many hours prenatally getting to know the woman and her family so that she is not a stranger at the time of birth. She comes to the woman when she is needed by her and stays with her for as long as the labour takes. She responds to the woman's needs; supporting, comforting and nurturing her physically and emotionally when needed. Her tools are simple and her skills many. She trusts nature and the woman's ability to give birth. She is attentive. Calm and patient waiting are trademarks of her care. With academic knowledge, clinical skill and intuitive judgement she knows if, when, and how to intervene in the natural flow of labour and birth. The care given by the traditional midwife continues into the days and weeks following the birth, as the new mother and her baby adjust to this new phase in their lives.

In Canada today, and specifically in Manitoba, traditional midwives attend women who choose to birth at home. They practice in a political climate that continues to threaten persecution. The medical profession views them as unqualified, untrained and incompetent. It views women who choose to birth at home as irresponsible, selfish and foolish. They consider birth in the hospital safer than home. There is no statistical evidence that birth in the hospital is safer or that birth at home is unsafe. (8) In fact,

statistics from around the world show better outcomes (lower perinatal mortality) with midwife-attended homebirths than obstetrician-attended hospital births. "The reason for the difference is the harmful effects of the greater use of obstetrical intervention in hospitals." (9) And, I would add, attitude. Hospitals and doctors can talk until they are blue in the face about changing birthing practices. They can call their labour wards "Family Birthing Centres" and hang pretty curtains and nice pictures, but if the misogynist, patriarchal attitudes of controlling and managing women in their labours and births doesn't change then there will continue to be a misuse of power and therefore abuse in birth.



*Woman's Hand Strapped down for New, Improved Hospital Birth, from the book Immaculate Deception.*

Notes:

- (1) Cohen, Nancy Wainer. Open Season: A Survival Guide for Natural Childbirth and VBAC in the 90's. Bergin & Garvey, 1991.
- (2) "The Burning Times" - a film directed by Donna Reed, produced by Studio D, National Film Board.
- (3) Starr, Christina; "In Praise of Midwifery", in Healthsharing Magazine, Spring 1991.
- (4) Ibid
- (5) Cohen
- (6) Ibid
- (7) Baldwin, Rahima. "Special Report on the 1st International Conference on Home Birth", quote by Sheila Kitzinger.
- (8) Ibid
- (9) Ashford, Janet. "Marjorie Tew's Campaign for the Truth about Birth Safety", quote by Marjorie Tew, in Childbirth Alternatives Quarterly, Summer, 1987.



## Male/Female Team Workshops on Violence & Gender Issues

Doreen Wuckert

In June, 1992, the Violence Against Women sub-committee of MACSW met with the Manitoba Men's Network (MMN). Male/Female team workshops were planned to help prevent violence against women. These workshops are intended for youth and/or adults from schools, community groups and other interested organizations.

Some women from MACSW and some men from MMN are ready to work together to develop positive changes and positive roles for children, youth and adults. Co-ed team workshops are a unique concept. Few, if any, male/female teams present workshops on issues of gender and violence.

A series of workshops have been developed called "Toward Meaningful Relationships" and pamphlets are now being distributed. Workshops are planned for:

- developing positive communication skills
- sexual harassment
- anger management
- violence in the home
- the myth of "Happily Ever After", the difference between romance, infatuation and love
- the elements of a healthy loving relationship
- sex-role stereotyping
- pressures on teenagers today
- exploitation of youth regarding drugs, prostitution and sexual abuse
- date rape
- developing meaningful relationships

The workshops are designed to help develop personal power, rather than power over others. They are intended to be interactive in exploring alternative ways of dealing with anger, violence and sexism. The objectives of the workshops are:

- to educate the public regarding sex-role stereotyping, sexual harassment and various types of violence in society,
- to provide positive and progressive male and female role models, and
- to provide follow-up materials and resources for continued exploration.

Current members of the Resource Team are:

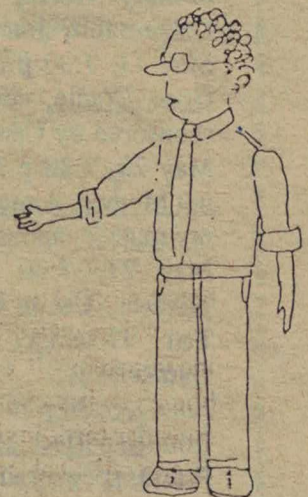
- David Rice-Lampert, Probation Officer, Community and Youth Corrections

- Jan Rodgers, Counsellor, Winnipeg School Division #1
- Chris Sunde, Probation Officer, Community and Youth Corrections
- Doreen Wuckert, Teacher, Assiniboine South School Division #3


**We need more volunteers (female or male) to present workshops. For more information contact Doreen Wuckert at 837-9613.**

"You make me feel insignificant  
You treat me like a child. You  
belittle me. You don't like my  
friends, you get angry with  
me when I see them, you  
don't want me to succeed,  
you undermine me, nothing  
I say is correct, I can't  
even choose a movie or  
order DINNER, You think  
the things I'm interested  
in are ridiculous, every-  
thing is rational and  
calculated to you, you're  
not supportive of my  
work, you don't want to  
take me seriously, you  
want to own me and  
control everything, but  
people aren't like that  
you can't run their lives  
or derive your security  
from possessing  
them. You can't  
expect me to  
spend my life  
trying to be  
what you think  
I should be."

"BUT I LOVE YOU."







## Announcements

**Congratulations to Sunera Thobani, from Vancouver!!! She is the New President of NAC** (National Action Committee on the Status of Women) We printed one of her poems, "The War is Declared", in the last issue of ACTION - are we psychic or what? See you soon in Saskatoon, Sunera! Hint! Hint! Sign up for the NAC AGM in Saskatoon, **June 4-6**. Your local Branch may be organizing transportation.

MACSW is planning a **FUNDRAISING** dinner for Oct. 23 at Merk's restaurant. Nellie McClung Theatre will perform! We need volunteers to help with the Silent Auction, ideas for entertainment, publicity, etc. Please ph. Doreen at 837-9613.

**Desperately Seeking a Treasurer for MACSW--**a stimulating volunteer opportunity! Ph. your nearest Branch to find out about exciting fringe benefits.

**AIDS Awareness Workshop:** the Manitoba Aboriginal AIDS Task Force facilitates AIDS workshops on basic facts, condom education, HIV testing, cultural awareness, and AIDS resources. They will do workshops for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups throughout Manitoba. Also available: resource library of videos and pamphlets relating to Aboriginal people and HIV/AIDS. Write 110-424 Logan, Wpg, R3A 0R4, ph. 957-1114.

**Bold Print Events, 478 River, Wpg., ph. 452-9682:** May 6, 7:30 p.m., Author readings: **Clarisse Foster, Melody Goetz, Heidi Harms, Susan Rempel Letkemann, Joan Thomas.**

May 13, 7:30 p.m., **Joanne Arnott**, author of My Grass Cradle, new poetry (Press Gang publishers), sponsored by Canada Council.

May 20, 7:30 p.m., **Di Brandt**, author of Mother, not Mother, Agnes in the Sky, and Questions I asked my mother, sponsored by Canada Council.

May 27, 7:30 p.m., Author readings: **Jacqui Fileccia, Cecile Guillemot, Candace Holmstrom, Teo Tkachuk, Sandra Vincent and Lorna Cameron.**

June 7, 7:30 p.m., **Candis Graham**, author reading from Imperfect Moments, new short stories (Polstar Press), sponsored by Canada Council.

Apologies go out to the U.N. End of Decade for Women Committee for using their Logo on this page for the March issue of ACTION. My feeble excuse is we need more graphics. Sorry for that carelessness on my part. Sincerely, Fiona Muldrew, Newsletter Co-ordinator.

May 12, **Menopause & Myths:** Thompson YWCA and Health & Family Services host an informal discussion, 7 p.m., Health & Family Services Bldg., 871 Thompson Dr., ph. Anne at 677-7209 or Marion at 677-7218. Call 778-6341, extension 105 for information on a Menopause support group.

May 12, 19, 26, June 2 & 9, **Exploring a Vision for Tomorrow: The Whole Thinking Revolution**, five Wednesday evenings, 7:30 p.m., \$20, Unitarian Church, 790 Banning at Sargent, sponsored by the Foundation for Global Community, formerly Beyond War. Ph. 488-9350 for more info. Sessions include:

- 1) Current Reality--crises and need for a vision for the future,
- 2) Values in Transition--paradigm shift necessary for transforming present obsolete value system to one in harmony with our future vision,
- 3) The Universe Story--seeing human beings as one species of an interconnected universe,
- 4) Whole Thinking--examining the communication process and systems analysis necessary for a sustainable future,
- 5) The Vision for Tomorrow--reconnecting our individual lives to the entire system.

May 29-30, **Manitoba Men's Network Spring Conference: Men, Power & Sexuality--Exploring Masculinities**, Klinik, 870 Portage Ave., Workshops include: Toward a Healthy Non-Exploitative Male Sexuality; Responding to Sexist Remarks; Media, Toys, Violence & Children; Violence on the Playground, ph. David Rice Lampert at 453-2268.

May 30, **5 Pin Bowling Night!**, 6 p.m., Academy Uptown Bowling Lanes, 394 Academy Rd., Wpg., book not less than 2 weeks prior to event, call 452-8844. Adults only. Sponsored by Networking for Women, a Wpg. Lesbian Womyn's Collective.





# MACSW MEMBERSHIP FORM

**Yes!** I want to add my voice to the hundreds of Manitoba women who belong to MACSW.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please indicate if you want to receive the MACSW newsletter in a plain envelope without the MACSW identifier.

**NEW MEMBERSHIP**

**RENEWAL**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/Town \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W)

**INDIVIDUALS** \_\_\_\_\_ Regular \$25 (or what you can afford)  **ORGANIZATIONS** - \$50

Please sign up, even if you can't afford the membership fee.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining \$40

Your membership includes a subscription to the ACTION Newsletter, published 9 times a year.

Make cheques payable to MACSW and send this form to:

MACSW Winnipeg Branch  
16-222 Osborne St. South  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 1Z3

I'm interested in getting involved with the following issues: (please check)

## ISSUES

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare/Parenting       | <input type="checkbox"/> Media Monitoring    | <input type="checkbox"/> Prostitution               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Equal Pay/Workplace       | <input type="checkbox"/> Midwifery           | <input type="checkbox"/> Women of Colour/Racism     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Law                | <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal Women    | <input type="checkbox"/> Reproductive Health Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farm/Rural Women          | <input type="checkbox"/> Trades & Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Women               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Pensions            | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence Against Women     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International Women's Day | <input type="checkbox"/> Pornography         | <input type="checkbox"/> Women & Poverty            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian Issues            | <input type="checkbox"/> Education           | <input type="checkbox"/> Women/Disability           |
|  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Young Women's Group        |

## ACTIVITIES

- |  |   |                                      |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter    | <input type="checkbox"/> Political Action | <input type="checkbox"/> Lobbying    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Office Duties | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising |

## NEAREST MACSW BRANCH

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> WINNIPEG<br>16-222 Osborne St. S<br>Winnipeg,<br>R3L 1Z3<br>453-3879<br>453-4157 | <input type="checkbox"/> BRANDON<br>202-107-7th St<br>Brandon,<br>R7A 3S5<br>725-2955 | <input type="checkbox"/> PARKLAND STATUS<br>OF WOMEN<br>118 Main St. S.<br>Mail: Box 23<br>Dauphin, R7N 2T9<br>638-3599 | <input type="checkbox"/> THOMPSON<br>Box 722<br>Thompson<br>R8N 1N5<br>778-8549 |
|---|---|---|---|



## Calendar of Events - MAY



- 4 **NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) Caravan in Thompson.**
- 4,11,18,25 **TACSW Business Meetings**, 12-1, 3rd fl. YWCA, 39 Nickel Rd., ph. 778-8549.
- 4 **Midwifery Model of Care**, 7 p.m., Rm. 2M70, Manitoba Hall, U of Wpg, presented by MB Traditional Midwives Collective & MB Homebirth Network & the U of W Women's Centre.
- 5 **International Midwifery Day Celebration**, 12 Noon, Legislative Bldg., Wpg., bring a picnic lunch, sponsored by MB Homebirth Network & MB Traditional Midwives Collective.
- 5 **Winnipeg Branch Meeting**, 6 p.m., YWCA Mtg. Rm.C, 2nd fl., 301 Vaughan St.
- 5 **Nellie McClung Theatre Benefit** for Canadian Dimension Magazine & the NAFTA Caravan at the West End Cultural Centre, Wpg., 8 p.m., \$8.50/5.00
- 6 **Wpg. Women & Words writing group**, 7:30 p.m., MACSW office, #16-222 Osborne St. S. Call Pat at 488-0988.
- 7-8 **Alternative Healing for Women Workshop: Art Therapy, Massage Therapy & Dream Interpretation**, May 7, 7-10 p.m., May 8, 9-4:30 p.m., \$30, ph. FGWRC, Wpg., 269-6836.
- 7-9 **Family Violence Workshop** for service providers--understanding violence against women by male partners, 8:45-4:30 p.m., 73 Arlington St., Wpg., \$75, Phone Sally Papso at 772-2504.
- 8 **Single Parents in the 90's: Challenges and Opportunities Conference**, 8:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m., Riddell Hall, U of Wpg., \$10, Childcare provided (\$1 per child), phone 786-9792.
- 10 **MACSW Anniversary Fundraising Committee**, 7 p.m., MACSW Wpg. office, See p. 3.
- 11-13 **Northern Communities Race Relations Conference**, Flin Flon, ph. 687-3810
- 11 **Planning meeting for Summer Solstice events**, 7 p.m., Brandon MACSW office, ph. 725-2955.
- 12 **Future of Women's Work**, planning meeting, 7 p.m., MACSW Wpg. office, see p. 3.
- 13 **Parkland Status of Women Branch Meeting**, 5:30 p.m., 118 Main St. S., Dauphin.
- 15-16 **Workshop: Working with Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse**, 8:45 a.m.- 4:30 p.m., 73 Arlington St., Wpg., \$75, Phone Sally Papso at 772-2504.
- 18 **Brandon Branch Meeting**, 7:30 p.m. at the office. Discussion: Ayerst Pregnant Mare Urine (PMU) processing plant. Ph. 725-2955.
- 21 **Working Together for Change in Women's Health Care**, 7 p.m., Union Centre, panel from Canadian Women's Health Network Consultation in Wpg., May 21-24, ph. 947-1517.
- 21 **Judy Small** (feminist singer) in Concert, West End Cultural Centre, Wpg., 8 p.m.
- 22 **Gays & Lesbians of Brandon and Elsewhere Social**, ph. 727-GAYS, Fridays, 7-10 p.m.