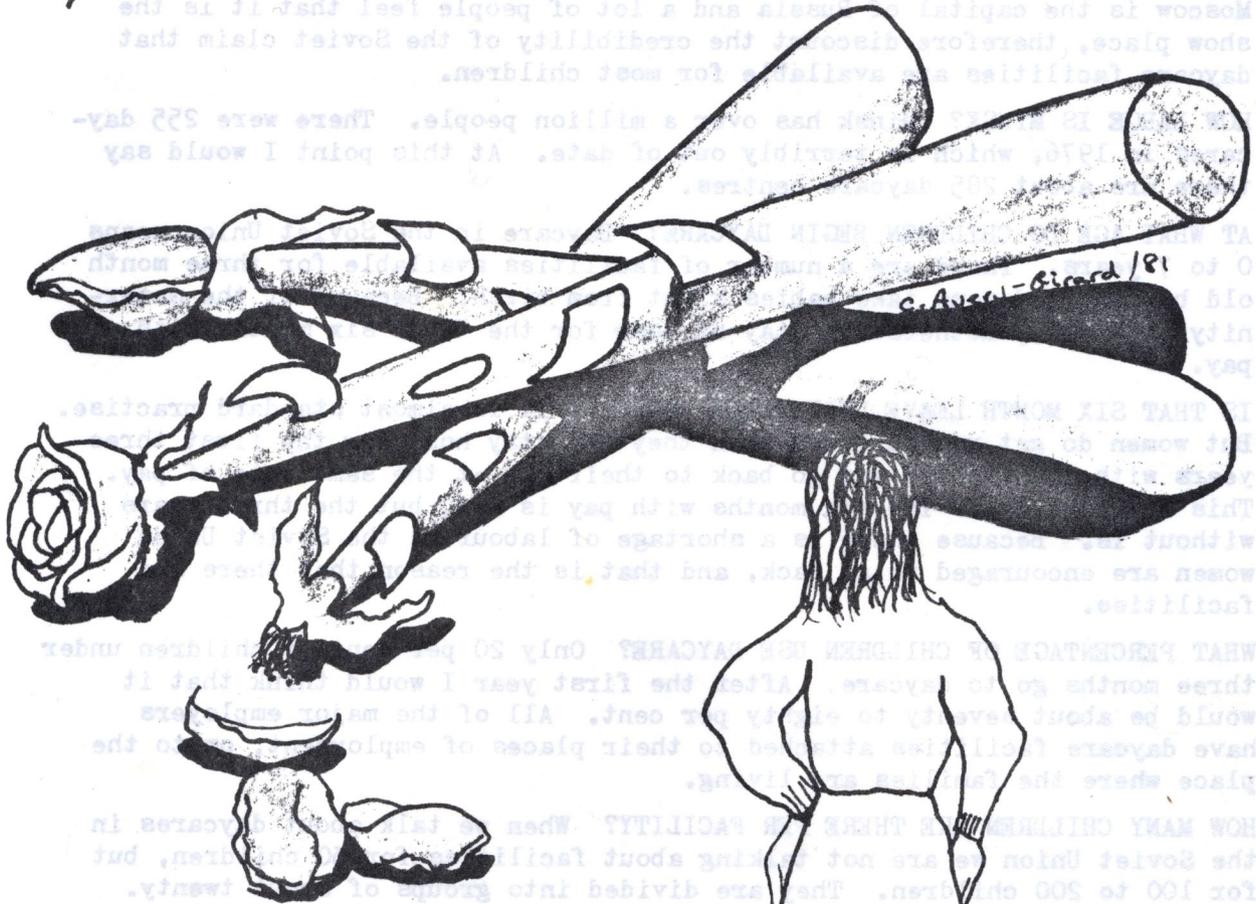


# BCFW newsletter

April 1981



a woman's life is  
a bed of roses

# daycare in russia

The following interview regarding daycares in Russia was with Larisa Tarlick, who is the Early Childhood Education Coordinator at the North West Community College in Terrace, B.C. She has visited the Soviet Union several times, last year spending seven weeks, five days a week in fifteen schools.

WHERE DID YOU STUDY DAYCARES? My thesis was in Minsk.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE MINSK RATHER THAN MOSCOW? Basically because a lot of studies have come out of Moscow and therefore have been disclaimed because Moscow is the capital of Russia and a lot of people feel that it is the show place, therefore discount the credibility of the Soviet claim that daycare facilities are available for most children.

HOW LARGE IS MINSK? Minsk has over a million people. There were 255 daycares in 1976, which is terribly out of date. At this point I would say there are about 285 daycare centres.

AT WHAT AGE DO CHILDREN BEGIN DAYCARE? Daycare in the Soviet Union means 0 to 7 years. There are a number of facilities available for three month old babies, and some take babies right from birth. Because of the maternity situation, mothers can stay at home for the first six months with pay.

IS THAT SIX MONTH LEAVE UNIVERSAL? No, but it is almost standard practise. But women do get unpaid leave when they can stay home for the first three years with their child and go back to their job at the same rate of pay. This is universal. The six months with pay is not, but the three years without is. Because there is a shortage of labour in the Soviet Union women are encouraged to go back, and that is the reason that there are facilities.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN USE DAYCARE? Only 20 per cent of children under three months go to daycare. After the first year I would think that it would be about seventy to eighty per cent. All of the major employers have daycare facilities attached to their places of employment, or to the place where the families are living.

HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE THERE PER FACILITY? When we talk about daycares in the Soviet Union we are not talking about facilities for 30 children, but for 100 to 200 children. They are divided into groups of about twenty.

HOW ARE DAYCARES STAFFED? Each group of children has a teacher and assistant. Each facility has a housekeeper, plus huge staff who facilitate the children's lives, including a doctor. There is a doctor in every daycare centre in the Soviet Union, and at least two nurses who look after the children. Each child has a medical record, with regular check-ups. Every daycare centre in Belorussia has a visiting dentist who spends at least four months a year in the facility. Most children do not have to go outside of the facility for their medical care. There is a liason with the family and when there is a problem there is much working with the family to help with the medical or social problem, or whatever.

Teachers who work with children work a six hour day, plus five hours a week outside the classroom for preparation. So if the daycare is open 12 hours a day they have two teachers per group plus two assistants. In Canada we

## DAYCARES IN RUSSIA (cont'd)

have a ratio of one teacher to eight children, but in comparison to the Soviet Union we have to take into consideration that their teachers and assistants do not do any cleaning. Also, each daycare centre has cooking facilities and cooks who bring the food to the room so that the children do not have to go anywhere else to get their food. For each facility there is a director, gardeners and an equipment specialist. This person develops learning material for each centre. If the teachers are doing a project on the fire hall the specialist would help find material. This is their full-time job. Each centre has a full-time music specialist, and physical education instructor. Under the new five year plan all new daycare centres are going to have swimming pools because they feel that swimming is a very healthy activity and that all children should learn to swim.

WHAT ARE WAGES LIKE? On a Russian scale teachers get an average wage of between 400 to 500 rubles, depending on their qualifications and their position. If they are working for a factory they share in any production bonuses. There is a whole lot of society respect for teachers and their work. Here we still have difficulty and associate teaching with babysitting.

WHAT ARE THE SEXES OF DAYCARE WORKERS? There are very few male workers. However when I was in Minsk I was at one daycare where there were three males working. That is a new thing. Men have not been seen as people who look after children. I really think that in a few years that will change. Also it is because teachers are being paid better.

COULD IT BE THAT THE TRADES AND TECHNOLOGICAL JOBS ARE BEING FILLED? No, in the Soviet Union there is still a desperate need for more workers.

HOW ABOUT TRAINING? Teacher training is a four year program at a university level. They can work in a facility before and do on the job training but it is changing. Plus, every five years every teacher, elementary, junior high or daycare, must have three months of retraining paid by the State.

ARE DAYCARES FLEXIBLE TO WORKING PARENTS? There are daycares that provide 24 hour care. This includes daycare to cover sleeping time for parents working night shift. Therefore you don't have parents picking up their child after working and trying to get some sleep while coping with the child. There are also five day facilities where the child stays overnight, then goes home for weekends. There are daycare facilities for parents working 12 hour shifts.

WHAT ABOUT SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN? There are facilities right in the daycare for these children. This includes mentally retarded children. Children who are trainable generally are put into facilities with normal children as soon as possible. They feel very strongly that children will develop best if they have a role model so there are very few isolation situations.

HOW DO THEY DISCIPLINE CHILDREN? In the whole time I have been in the Soviet Union, invited or uninvited into a facility, I have never seen anyone being abusive of a child. That is not saying that I haven't seen people helping children to learn discipline, but I have not seen the kind of harassed teachers we have here. Basically, social pressure is used. There is a social society and they spend a lot of time and energy helping children to learn to be socialist in the sense of caring that what they do affects

DAYCARES IN RUSSIA (cont'd)

other people. Children are reprimanded, but not violently. Soviets feel that bad behaviour should be ignored. Teachers don't spend a lot of time saying, "Johnny don't do that." Instead they say, "Remember we need to do these things." There is a much more positive approach to children.

WHAT TOYS AND ACTIVITIES DO THEY HAVE OR DO? They have a lot of climbing/physical activity apparatus and the usual dolls, trucks, construction blocks and books. A lot of time is spent reading, singing and dancing. Music is a part of the program and physical activities are a very important aspect. You see a lot more of that than here.

DID YOU OBSERVE SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING OF CHILDREN? I observed boys and girls playing with the variety of materials available. I saw girls playing with construction material and boys playing with dolls. I would say that a truer statement would be that children are allowed to play with whatever materials are there, without distinction as to whether they play with this or that. However, there are comments made as to roles in some ways. Basically in the literature and discussions you would get a fairly traditional view of sex roles. This is in contradiction to what they see on field trips to factories, etc. where they would see women doing non-traditional work.

We thank Larisa for the time she spent giving us this interview and we wish her much success on her thesis.

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## Douglas College Courses

Feminist Issue Series - New Westminster

Thursdays, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. beginning March 12.

Topics: Fat and Body Image, March 12

B.C. Family Relations Act, April 2

Sexual Harassment, April 23

Play as Re-Creation, May 14

Options for Women - Surrey

Saturday, May 2, all day

Introduction to Assertiveness - Richmond

Saturday, April 4

Leadership Training - Working with Battered Women and their Batters - Surrey

Thursday & Friday, April 9 & 10

Wen-do, Women's Self-Defense - Surrey

Tuesdays, April 28 to June 2, 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.

For more information call 525-2075

# daycare in prince rupert

Prince Rupert is a northern coastal town. The main industries are fishing and pulp and paper. It is also a service centre for outlying regions. There is a population of about 18,000 people but this changes throughout the year, as much of the work is seasonal.

Prince Rupert has four nursery schools which operate morning and afternoon sessions. These are not to be confused with daycares- their main purpose is for socialization not childcare.

There are five licensed daycares. Three of these are group daycares, taking up to thirty-five full-time children three years of age and older. They are open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The average cost for this is about \$180 per month. There are a combined total of seventy-seven places for children, but the demand is much higher. Two of these are run by non-profit societies whose boards are made up mainly of parents. One of the advantages of this is that parents can direct the running of the daycare. The disadvantage is that many working parents do not have the time and energy to participate. The third daycare is run as a private business.

There are also two family daycares which operate out of private homes. These are restricted to five children, only one of which can be under one year old. These two homes are the only licensed facilities that take children under three years old.

Each daycare has a designated supervisor and several staff. The number of staff is related to the number of children. There must be enough staff to meet the licensing requirements, but enough fees from the children to pay for the staff. Most of the staff have had Early Childhood Education courses which are offered at Northwest Community College. Nevertheless their wages remain low, averaging about \$4.50 to \$5.00 per hour.

As in the rest of British Columbia, daycares are officially approved by the Ministry of Health. This ministry is responsible for licensing. The Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of Education have input in establishing programs for staff training and staff evaluation. The Ministry of Human Resources is also involved in subsidizing daycare costs for low income families. No ministry has total responsibility for daycare. Daycare is not a high priority with the present provincial government and tends to get lost in the shuffle.

The majority of children in Prince Rupert are cared for in unlicensed private homes. There are two problems with this. The Ministry of Human Resources will not subsidize the daycare costs for low income families if more than two children are being cared for. Also, there is no control over the quality of daycare offered. (A co-operative system of babysitting is now operating here but is not satisfactory for most working parents.)

## DAYCARE IN PRINCE RUPERT (con't)

These homes remain unlicensed for a number of reasons. Many people are intimidated by the bureaucratic red tape involved. They are also concerned that they will not qualify, either because they are caring for too many children or because their homes are too small. Fees average \$10 to \$12 per day and women who are supporting their families by babysitting must take in more children than the licensing allows in order to survive. Income tax can also be avoided if there is no official record of the number of children being cared for.

Daycare in Prince Rupert is far from perfect. It is not designed for parents who work shifts or who have seasonal work. There are not enough licensed daycares. Many parents, especially those with lower incomes, are forced to place their children in less than optimal situations. It is impossible to find a licensed daycare for children under three years old. There is no industry participation in providing daycare and very little government involvement. If British Columbians recognized the value of high-quality daycare, as the Russian people have, perhaps some of these situations could be remedied.

## Childcare Policy of BCFW

Coming out of the last B.C.F.W. Convention there appears to be a heightened awareness of women as mothers and their roles, and the roles of their children in the feminist movement. This is a vital and sensitive issue which needs to be faced by all feminists whether currently parenting or not.

It is B.C.F.W. policy to provide childcare for all children of members attending B.C.F.W. meetings. You have the option of getting a sitter in your home and the B.C.F.W. will reimburse your costs based on current rates paid for sitters in your area. Or you can notify the B.C.F.W. contact person for your region/meeting/committee that you will be needing childcare and it will be arranged. Please give adequate notice. In this case the B.C.F.W. will pay the child care person directly.

Regretfully the B.C.F.W. can not pay travel costs for children accompanying mothers to meetings/conventions. If you cannot afford to pay your children's passage and must leave them at home B.C.F.W. will pay for 24 hour childcare, again based on current rates in your town.

At best this is still a haphazard approach to childcare. Any suggestions for improving this service would be appreciated. We also need an ongoing list of people who will volunteer to take on childcare occasionally. To those who say "Let the member group look after it" please realize that depending on people from your own group is difficult since you often want to go to the same meeting.

# prince rupert transition house

Maud Bevan House, a shelter for battered women and their children opened in Prince Rupert on International Womens Day, March 8, 1981, with an open house. The home has been named after a local woman whose much publicized case of assault was the catalyst for local efforts to obtain a shelter, which began several years ago.

After almost a year of intense negotiations with Ministry of Human Resources, a contract was signed on January 23 of this year, enabling Prince Rupert Transition House Society to open a shelter with per diem funding from Ministry of Human Resources. The staff of four was hired on February 24th. The hiring committee of the society had a difficult task picking only four workers out of the more than thirty applicants.

Possession of the shelter, owned and rented to the Society by the City of Prince Rupert, occurred during the month of February. Inspections for fire regulations etc. were carried out along with much needed painting and cleaning before the opening at the beginning of March.

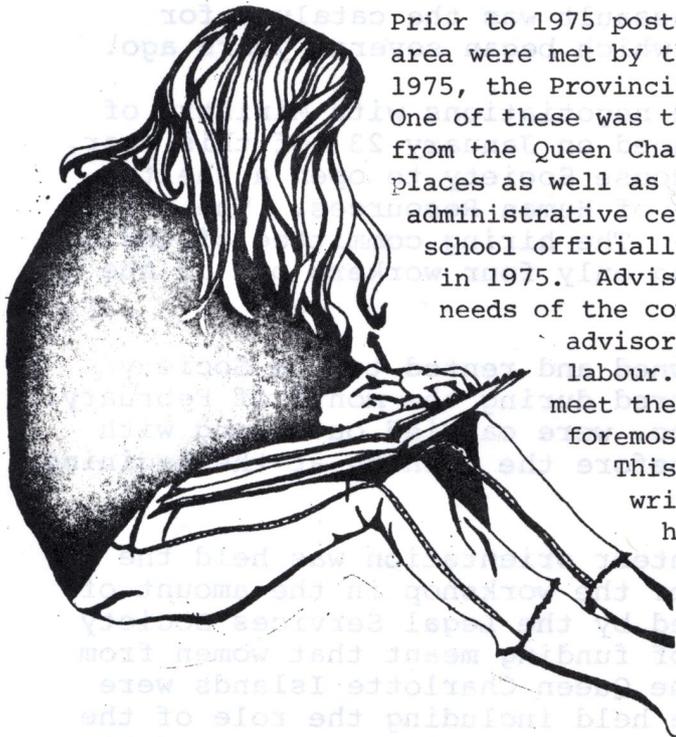
A workshop for staff and volunteer orientation was held the weekend of February 27. Funding for the workshop in the amount of approximately \$3,500.00 was provided by the Legal Services Society of British Columbia. This source of funding meant that women from as far away as Fort St. John and the Queen Charlotte Islands were able to attend. Many sessions were held including the role of the Ministry of Human Resources, Mental Health, Family Court Counsellors, Legal Services, alcohol counselling and first aid. A worker from the Vancouver Transition House was also on hand to offer her expertise and answer questions. Over forty women attended the weekend sessions, which proved to be both an informative and exhausting weekend for all involved.

Just prior to opening, an agency workshop was held March 6, to inform the local service agencies about the role of Maud Bevan House and to advise them of admission policies. The film "Loved Honoured and Bruised" was also shown.

Now that the shelter is open at last, the Society members are busy fundraising, and seeking donations of furniture; working with the staff establishing procedures to ensure the smooth running of the shelter; and are gearing up for next year's negotiations with the Ministry of Human Resources where it is hoped to successfully argue for money for more staff and for an extension of the basic time period that a woman is allowed to stay at the shelter.

The entire period from the time of the local woman's group first documenting the need; to the opening of the shelter, took more than three years, countless telephone calls, letters, and many outright refusals to fund a transition for Prince Rupert. The opening of Maud Bevan House shows us all that persistence can pay.

# Women & Education



Prior to 1975 post-secondary educational needs of the north west area were met by the vocational school situated in Terrace. In 1975, the Provincial Government started five community colleges. One of these was the North-West Community College serving the area from the Queen Charlotte Islands to Smithers with outlets in these places as well as in Prince Rupert, Kitimat and Hazelton. The administrative centre is situated in Terrace. The vocational school officially merged with the North-West Community College in 1975. Advisory groups were set up to assist in meeting the needs of the community in course selection. The three strong advisory groups in this area are aboriginal, women and labour. The main aim of the college is to hopefully meet the needs of everyone in the community but first and foremost the needs of native people, women and labour.

This is the philosophy of the college and it is still written into their constitution. The college council has one representative from each school district in the north west area and the provincial government appoints its own representative. The advisory groups put forward ideas for courses to be given and the council implements them and finds instructors.

In the early years of the college operation workshops and non-traditional courses were offered. There was a lot of support and enthusiasm for the women's courses which were always well attended despite the lack of day care. No day care has ever been offered by the college although a push was made by women taking courses and the advisory group for such a facility. The college, however, does not see this as their responsibility. By 1979 the advisory groups began to lose power in their abilities for course selection. The women's group here, always a strong voice and support on the advisory board, began directing their energies into the Transition House society which had rapidly developed into a full-time commitment. The focus of the college turned more towards university courses and traditional types of education, rather than weekend workshops and non-traditional/academic seminars previously so popular with women in the north west. The university education being offered meets the needs of only a limited number of women in the community, with the result that enrolment and support for the Women's Studies programme declined drastically. By 1980 it was due to be withdrawn. The women's groups here and in Terrace presented a brief to the college council in support of the programme and because of this it was extended. The present position of the Women's Studies programme is that the co-ordinator is now employed only on a quarter time basis instead of the original half-time, there are no women councillors and only one or two university transfer courses are offered in each area during week nights and one college preparation course.

There is heavy enrolment in the vocational areas, typing, business studies, etc. but there is no attempt to co-ordinate these areas with Women's Studies. An overlap has been requested by the Women's Studies co-ordinator but this has been denied. There is concern that the Women's programme will eventually be withdrawn from lack of support. Some of the reasons for this are courses not meeting the needs of the women in the northwest, lack of adequate information and advertising about courses and programs available, inflexible structure of courses and times and lack of day care.

To meet the needs in the northwest area, the college must be instrumental in reaching out and encouraging women to search for types of programmes and courses to be of use and interest to them. The college has a real responsibility to stimulate and raise the consciousness of those women who have never considered using a continuing educational facility.

A supportive women's councillor, who could help define the needs of the local women and work with a programme co-ordinator would be a valuable asset to the Women's Studies programme and the college generally. The present pattern seems to be to try and fit the women into the college and not fit the college to the needs of the women.

We hope Women's Studies will evolve and change with the support of the local Options for Women's group. Options hopes once more to direct its energies in that direction now that the Transition House has been successfully opened.

Our thanks to Laurie Jones, past co-ordinator of Prince Rupert college and to Gail Emmerson, the Women's Studies co-ordinator for their help. They are not responsible for all the views expressed in this article.

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## Co-ordinating Collective Meetings

The following is the schedule for future co-ordinating collective meetings:

MAY 2 & 3, Vancouver, 45 Kingsway

JULY 18 & 19, Victoria

OCTOBER 3 & 4, Vancouver

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APRIL PROGRAM GUIDE FOR THE LESBIAN SHOW THURS. 7:30 pm ]02.4FM

April 2: Lesbians and Alcoholism: On this show we will discuss the prevalence of alcoholism in the lesbian community and what we as individuals and as a group can do about it.

April 9: No Theme, Theme Show: Every once in a while we collect up all the items that didn't fit with a previous theme and present them on a no theme show.

April 16: Collectives, why they do and don't work: Back on Nov. ] & 8 we ran two half hour shows on collective process, why they don't work and why they do. On tonight's show we're running these two shows back to back.

April 23: Lesbian Humour: Do you know what lesbians find funny? On tonight's show we hope to offer some suggestions.

April 30: Lesbians and Music, spotlight on Teresa Trull: On tonight's show we are running a comparison between Teresa Trull's first album, The Ways A Woman Can Be, and her new LP, Let It Be Known.

# REGIONAL REPORTS

**VANCOUVER ISLAND:** On Feb. 21 thirteen Women's groups from Nanaimo and Victoria met in Nanaimo to discuss "Alternatives to Isolation", and how to improve communications between feminist groups on the Island.

In the morning information about each group's goals and current happenings was shared. The afternoon session dealt with problems in communicating and solutions. It was decided that a newsletter for groups on the Island was a good idea. Also, a calendar of events on the Island will be drawn up and distributed. Any submissions to the calendar should go to Gillian or Ruth, the area reps. Reports of the proceedings of this meeting will be sent to all BCFW member groups on the Island. Other groups on the Island, who are not yet members of the BCFW were urged to join.

There will be another meeting, Apr. 15, in Nanaimo, at the Women's Resource Centre, beginning at 10:30 a.m. The topic chosen for discussion is "Transition House Funding" and how all groups could facilitate efforts to get such funding. Everyone is reminded that they accepted responsibility to get as many feminist groups represented at the next meeting as possible.

**WEST KOOTENAYS:** For International Women's Day the Nelson Women's Centre has set up booths in the mall and library providing general and anti-nuke information for woman. The Centre will also be celebrating with a social get-together.

The women from the Nelson Women's Centre is busy building! They received some minimal government funding to construct a

**WEST KOOTENAY (cont'd)**  
children's adventure playground near the tourist centre.

Trail's Transition House recently opened it's doors after a long struggle. It is operated by the Women In Need Society.

IMAGES will soon be completing a 20 page issue on mental health. A subscription to IMAGES is only \$4.00 a year. Their address is P.O. Box 736, Nelson, B.C.

Sarah David will be in the Kootenays in April, for several workshops on Feminist Therapy, and Skill Sharing for Women who work with Women. These workshops will be in New Denver and Nelson between April 4 and 12. Please check with the Women's Centre for more information.

**PRINCE RUPERT:** Options for Women have been meeting regularly every two weeks; one meeting for informal feminist discussion and one for business. There has been a new influx of members, much needed because so many of us are involved in the start up of the Maud Bevin Transition House.

This newsletter is the result of a collective effort by the members of Options for Women. We decided to focus on issues affecting women in the north and use local resources. Some problems are perhaps unique to isolated communities but some we share with our urban sisters. This is by no means a complete compendium of problems we face. We hope that this will provide you with a northern perspective on issues affecting us all.

TERRACE REGIONAL REPORT:

The Terrace Women's Centre, along with other local women's groups is co-ordinating an afternoon of speakers, films and displays for International Women's Day. In keeping with this year's theme of the "high cost of living", a poverty meal is planned. Speakers will be from local unions and education groups and will discuss women and work, women in other countries and other areas of interest to women.

In February, Northwest Women In Crisis took part in a workshop given by two women of the Vancouver Women's Health Collective. They learned much about their own bodies and various women's health issues. This sparked some lively discussion on women's health issues that are specific to the local areas, and which will be ongoing towards actions for positive change.

Northwest Women In Crisis has recently begun a new training session to bring more women into the local anti-violence-against women movement.

The Women's Studies programme at NWCC sponsored a series of workshops given by the Vancouver Women's Health Collective last month in Prince Rupert, Terrace, Kitimat, Kispiox, Moricetown and Smithers.

VANCOUVER REGIONAL MEETING was last held on Feb. 4/81. Some items of note from the agenda are:

- the Women's Building Committee will be holding a general meeting in the early spring.
- Press Gang is soliciting manuscripts and poster ideas, and is reprinting Common Ground.
- Women in Focus have moved to 456 West Broadway and their art show opens March 17.
- LAFMPAG is holding a workshop on childcare and discussed what is best for children at political and social events.
- Lesbian Radio Show needs help -- ideas, people to cover events, etc.
- Rape Relief is offering support to individual groups if interested.
- SFU Women's Centre is offering a health series and trying for a paid staff woman.

Topics discussed include:

CHILD CARE -- Vancouver region intends to vote on a child care policy at the next meeting. Accountability will be discussed at length next time.