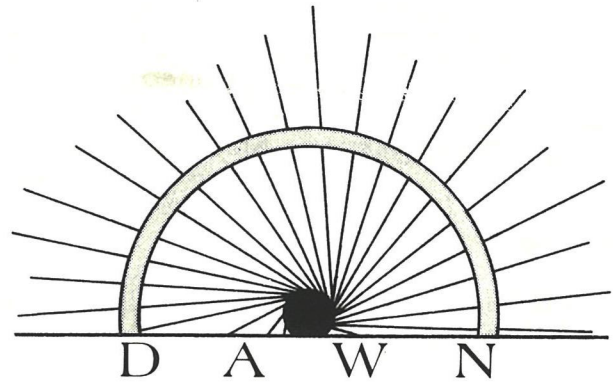


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DISABLED WOMEN'S NETWORK - TORONTO NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1991 ISSUE

Joyce Burkholder and Suzanne Nadon invite you to ...



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at the Ecology Retreat Centre

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DAWNING

DISABLED WOMEN'S NETWORK - TORONTO NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1991

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The A.R.C.H. Retreat—Direction for the 90's

"Where should we go from here?" It was this theme which began the series of events at the A.R.C.H. (Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped) Retreat, June 12 and 13 in Toronto. As a participant and D.A.W.N. Toronto representative, I had the unique opportunity to see the inner workings of A.R.C.H. through the conversations and stories told by both the staff and the consumers present.

The purpose of the retreat was to provide a forum to the various disability-rights and consumer groups to give direction and input into the present and future endeavours of all persons with disabilities.

While A.R.C.H. has worked effectively in addressing the legal concerns of persons with disabilities, they felt that they could do more. The participants were required to review A.R.C.H.'s objective as outlined in 1987, and determine the various areas that needed improvement. Doing more outreach to rural areas, students with disabilities, and getting more consumer involvement at different levels within A.R.C.H. were just a few of the areas considered.

While much energy was spent dealing with the tasks at hand, the evening's task was the easiest -- to feast on good food, enjoy the company and be challenged to a rousing and unique game of Trivial Pursuit hosted by Harry Beatty and Carla McKague. What a team! A great time was had by all!

Overall, the Retreat presented itself as an enlightening experience. Although A.R.C.H. has made many inroads in the areas of disability and equality-rights, it became clear that much more work needs to be done. The legal needs of women and men with disabilities continues to be a challenge to the non-disabled, legal profession -- a challenge that should not rest solely on A.R.C.H.'s doorstep and the disability-rights movement. It is a reality that must be acknowledged and dealt with by the legal community at large.

Fran Odette

Disabled Women Break Out

D.A.W.N. Toronto's April Symposium on Violence Against Disabled Women

The April symposium, from the feedback from the disabled women who attended, and also the rest of the community who attended was an unqualified success! This was due mainly to the brilliant organizing of the co-ordinator Margaret Best, the volunteers, the workshop facilitators and all the panelists.

It became very apparent on the first day that the many disabled women who had come to participate in the weekend took control of the proceedings of each day. One woman stood out from all the other women, either able bodied or disabled -- Susan Odell with her lively intelligence and strong sense of humour. This was a woman with no verbal communication, and yet, throughout both days she asked some of the most pertinent questions, representing, a group of disabled women who rarely get a chance to make their thoughts and ideas known in public.

On the second day, after the Bear Pit session, there was, I understand, a great deal of anger and some confusion among the women who had confronted the legal panel. Obviously we did something wrong! We should have allowed an hour or so to be set aside after this session so the women could talk among themselves and exchange their feelings of pain and anger. Oh well! We learn from our mistakes -- it will not happen again.

The topic was very timely. There is so much literature rolling off the presses and reports from the media on this topic that it seems an ideal opportunity to share both physical and sexual assault against disabled women, among ourselves and among the community who help to serve us in our crisis.

The disabled panelists were articulate, sensitive, and direct, sharing some of their own painful experiences. No article written on this symposium would be complete without an acknowledgement of that well known performer and singer/songwriter Jane Field whose songs include Wen-Do and

Feminist Men and other topics. Her songs and her style can have you in tears at one point and laughing uproariously at another point. This is some dynamite entertainer.

As the chairwoman of D.A.W.N. Toronto, I would like, at this time, to thank very sincerely all those people who made this symposium possible:

- The David B. Archer Co-op -- who kindly gave us the space
- Chris Bib -- the caterer
- The volunteers
- Judith, Melinda, Georgia and Michael
- The panelists from Toronto and St. Catharines, as well as the moderator
- The workshop facilitators -- Jane Field and Marilyn Walsh (Wen-Do)
- David Hingsburger -- service provision
- Bob Alexander -- men confronting their violence
- The legal panel
- The incomparable Margaret Best -- who made everything run like clockwork, because of her understanding of the issues of disability

Well done everyone and thanks to all those folks who turned out for two days on a rainy weekend.

Liz Stimpson



Violence Against Disabled Women: A Symposium

"The statistics were shocking. I never realized that they were so high." This was one comment from a disabled woman following a recent symposium held at the headquarters of D.A.W.N. Toronto, April 20 and 21st.

The weather outside was rainy and dismal, however, this didn't stop the proceedings from happening inside. Although the conference was held on a weekend, it was well attended by family, friends, "professionals" and women with disabilities.

The topics ranged from panel presentations on sexual and physical assault and the "disabled women", individual workshops i.e. Wen-Do, Sharing Our Experiences, and a group for caretakers and service providers.

On Sunday afternoon events became heated, as the audience and a panel of women with disabilities questioned and challenged a panel of legal "professionals" (judge, prosecutor, police and defense lawyer) in the Bear Pit. As a participant, it was a frustrating experience to watch those in the "pit" attempt to be made accountable for the discrepancies and bias so evident within the criminal justice system regarding the legal concerns of women with disabilities -- e.g. the stigmatizing and prejudicial treatment of women who are deaf or have communication disabilities by both the Crown and defense lawyers; prolonged waiting periods for court hearings or having a case thrown out because it took too long to come to trial.

While the data presented illustrated the enormity of this issue for women with disabilities, the personal stories of survivors and those who worked with the women demonstrated clearly the need for more work to be done in this area, particularly in the area of legal reform.

Myths still prevail surrounding the credibility of disabled woman, and the process restricting her from reporting her experience.

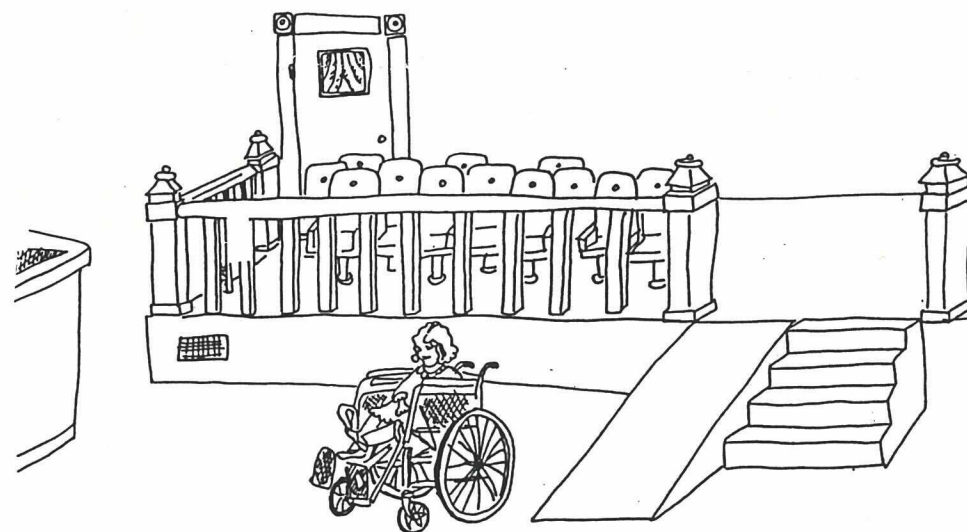
It became clear upon the conclusion of the symposium that the legal system at all levels should no longer "pass the buck" as far as dealing with the concerns of disabled

women who are the survivors of violence. As women with disabilities spoke out, the message was clear -- we as women with disabilities do not want to be patronized and segregated in our experiences. We can no longer be silenced nor tolerate the injustices of a system that appears to protect the criminal and render many of us as "powerless" and still vulnerable.

This symposium allowed many women the opportunity to safely share aspects of their lives, to gain some sense of power/strength, and to have their voices heard!

Many thanks to Liz Stimpson, Margaret Best and the other wonderful women who offered their support to make this symposium a reality.

Fran Odette



Fundraising Committee

At the D.A.W.N. Toronto meeting in June '91, some members volunteered to be part of the fundraising committee. The first official meeting was held on July 4th, 1991. Members brainstormed together to share ideas and develop a list of fundraising activities. The group also discussed the possibility of obtaining funds/donations from other sources, and the proper kinds of approaches and techniques that should be used.

In August, there will be a guest speaker who will provide the committee with appropriate fundraising techniques and guidelines to get us on the "right track". Members are enthusiastic and committed to the task at hand. The immediate goals of the committee are to raise funds for INDEPENDENCE '92 and for the HEALTH AND DISABLED WOMEN PROJECT. Long-term fundraising for D.A.W.N. Toronto is the primary focus and reason for forming a fundraising committee.



In the future, for certain fundraising events, the committee may ask D.A.W.N. members to join in by volunteering their time and/or skills in some capacity. Fundraising is a vital and necessary activity of most non-profit organizations. D.A.W.N. Toronto intends to be in a position to send delegates to conferences and important events by money raised for such activities.

We need your support! Don't be afraid to become involved if asked. The Fundraising Committee will keep you abreast of their activities and progress in future editions.

Yvette

Independence 92

Independence 92 coincides with the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. The international congress and exposition will be held at the B.C. Pavilion in Vancouver on April 22 - 25, 1992. The congress focus will be on "self determination by persons with disabilities". The congress will be chaired by Rick Hansen and Nancy Thompson and will be addressing a global group of disabled people.

Independence 92 will be covering four themes -- Education, Employment, Community Participation, and Social Change Strategies.



D.A.W.N. would like to attend and be a part of this congress and exposition. A fund-raising committee has been set up and every effort will be made to send a few of our own representatives.

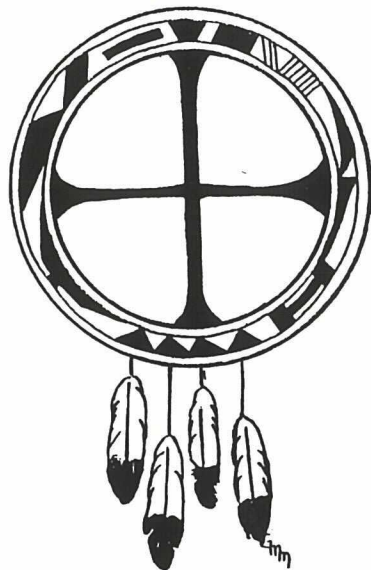
Jeanette Flesar

The Last Conference of the Season

One could not wish for a better place to end a long season of conference-going than in Timmins, Ont. From the hotel to the fabulous crisis centre workers, the conference held at Northern College and the folks who helped me throughout my stay and the town with clean air and clean streets -- all combined to make an absolutely wonderful stay in Timmins.

Timmins is a going concern for the disabled with a new PUSH group starting up as well a People First also starting soon, and a vital centre for Community Living. The disabled in Timmins are well served. This is a town I would like to go back to because of the hospitality and genuineness of the people.

Liz Stimpson



Northern Voices

May 30 - June 2 I attended a conference in Timmins. Over 250 people were delegates. From the time our plane landed we were treated to Northern Ontario hospitality and friendliness.

A wheelchair accessible van was waiting for us and we were whisked off to the Senator Hotel. As soon as we got into the lobby, a volunteer helped us with our luggage and showed us to our rooms.

Later on that evening we attended a wine and cheese reception and got to meet many of the delegates, the conference organizers, conference volunteers and St. Johns Ambulance volunteers.

On Friday the conference officially opened and the delegates went off to their respective workshops. Workshops were overflowing with people and had interesting speakers. On Friday evening we were treated to aboriginal traditional dancing.

During the last dance of the evening the delegates joined in the circle with the aboriginal dancers. Right at the end everyone shook hands as we went around the circle. It was a very moving experience which I will never forget.

On Saturday I was a workshop speaker. I spoke at four workshops along with Grace Teskey and our wonderful facilitator, Mary Fortier. I spoke about disabled women's issues and our health project. Grace talked about the work that she does with aboriginal disabled persons on reserves.

I was very impressed with the number of aboriginal disabled persons who were delegates at the conference. It was obvious that a lot of work had been done by the conference organizers to make sure that aboriginal disabled persons were included in the conference as delegates, speakers, facilitators and volunteers.

I was exhausted by the end of Saturday but got new energy when I attended the banquet and dance in the evening. A fabulous band called the Mod Squad played great music for us.

On Sunday plenary sessions were held and afterwards people went back to their communities with new energy and enthusiasm and new friends. Northern Voices was a conference which really brought disabled consumers together.

Pat Israel

D.A.W.N.'s Annual General Meeting

D.A.W.N.'s Annual General Meeting will be held on September 15th, 1:30 - 3:30 pm at 160 The Esplanade.

All members of D.A.W.N. are encouraged to attend this important meeting. New members of the Board will be elected and policy involving the new board will be decided upon.

D.A.W.N. wishes to express its appreciation to past Board members for all their efforts.

Committee on the Status of Women in Toronto

This new Committee at the City of Toronto is to be made up of 15 women representing the diversity of Toronto's population and concerns including the access to equity in employment, housing, recreation, food, health care, information and social service, child-care, disability and literacy.

As a participant in the committee, you can increase:

- knowledge of women's issues;
- develop and implement policies, programs and services to women;
- advise and consult with politicians;
- inform your community and affect the daily lives of women in Toronto.

If you are interested, send either a letter or a tape with your name, address and an expression of:

- your interest in women's issues and experiences in this area;
- your time availability on a monthly basis;
- your vision of what the committee can accomplish

**To: Equal Opportunity Division, City of Toronto
180 Dundas Street West, Suite 301
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z8**

For further information please call Patricia O'Hagan at 392-7855; TDD 392-0083.
Submission deadline September 9, 1991.

We are an Equal Opportunity Community!

Announcements

Women and Psychiatry meeting with speakers Kate Millet, Helen Levine and Bonnie Burstow sponsored by Resistance Against Psychiatry and Phoenix Rising in conjunction with CWSE (Canadian Women Studies Education) Saturday September 28th at 6:30 pm.

OISE auditorium

252 Bloor Street West

Admission is on a sliding scale

\$8.00 donation is appreciated

Contact Kali Munroe at (416)

538-7103.

Gynergy Womyn's Coffee House invites you to become involved. Meets at 519 Church St. Community Centre on the 4th Monday of the month 8:00-10:00pm. Performances include music, poetry and drama. Donations are welcome; B.Y.O. Mug For more information call: 651-8800 or 462-9304.

The Disability Network

The Disability Network may be seen

on CBC Television across Canada

Saturdays at 12:30 pm and on

Newsworld Saturdays at 4:30 pm.

These half-hour programs on current issues are hosted and produced by people with disabilities. Themes for future programs include The Arts, Education, Travel, Learning Disabilities, Employment, Attendant Care and Natives with Disability. Check local listings for details.

D.A.W.N. Toronto will gladly entertain your written submissions for its upcoming issues of The DAWNING.

Bouquets

THORNS TO:

*Steven Young, manager of Spiaggia Trattoria Restaurant, for refusing to accommodate a disabled woman and hurling abuse at her.

*York University for their refusal of accommodation of a disabled woman, thereby cancelling her ability to attend classes in Fine Arts Department.

ROSES TO:

*Carla McKague for her spectacular success in the Ontario Court of Appeals which resulted in striking down provisions in the province's Mental Health Act that allowed doctors to administer anti-psychotic drugs to inmates of psychiatric institutions against their wishes.

*Anne Swarbrick and Shelley Martell for supporting abused women despite it putting their cabinet positions in jeopardy.

*Mimi Shulman for not dropping her case of abuse by the Spiaggia Trattoria Restaurant.