
ASWAC

Alberta Status of Women Action Committee

February/March 1992

Volume III, Number 1



A Networking Conference for Women
sponsored by the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee

May 1 - 3, 1992
at the Inn on 7th
Edmonton
(10001 107 Street)

Keynote Speaker:
Naomi Wolf, Author of *The Beauty Myth*

Early Bird registration (before April 1)
\$75 for ASWAC members
\$85 for non-members
After April 1 all registrations \$100
(All prices include GST)
Low income rates available

Early registrations will be entered to win a conference
fee and hotel accommodations for the weekend.

OPEN TO ALL WOMEN

For more information call the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee
421-0306 EDMONTON • 233-0731 CALGARY • 329-8338 LETHBRIDGE

ASWAC

Alberta Status of Women Action Committee

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The Alberta Status of Women Action Committee gratefully acknowledges financial support from the Secretary of State Women's Program and the Alberta Wild Rose Foundation

ASWAC Events

NEWSLETTER NAME CONTEST

The call for submissions for a name for the ASWAC newsletter met with an overwhelming response, which we are about to use as an excuse to explain why you haven't heard anything about it since our Oct. 91 edition. We would like you to help us choose. It has been suggested, (more than once) that we keep our current name, which really isn't a name. So send in your choices as well as any new ideas (just to make it harder). Include your name so we know whom to credit. Thanks. The current submissions are: ASWACTIVIST, SPIRAL, HER-STORY, PASSAGE, CHANGING WOMEN, WOMEN'S MONTHLY, WOMEN'S WORD WEEKLY, THE THEMIS, THOUGHTS OF OUGHTS, CHANGING TIDES, NEW ATTITUDE, CHANGING ATTITUDE, ON THE VERGE, WOMEN'S WRITINGS, SAVING GRACE, LADIES LONGSHOT. ASWAC will launch the new newsletter name at the Spring Conference.

FROM THE ASWAC NEWSROOM:

The deadline for submissions on our next newsletter is June 2/92, publication date is middle of June '92. Please send all submissions as soon as possible to our Edmonton office.

We invite your input and would like to hear from you. Is there something you'd like to see in the newsletter? Would you be interested in writing an article? Please let us know if you've attended a workshop or conference and would like to share the information.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY T-SHIRT DESIGN UPDATE

Due to financial restraints, the IWD t-shirt will not be produced. We would like to thank all the women who submitted their wonderful art work. To those who submitted ideas, please watch your mail as we will be sending you a special something. The winner of The Take Back The Night T-Shirt Design was Lisa Braun of Calgary. Thank you, Lisa, your t-shirts are being worn by women all across Alberta.

TO THE BOARD OF 1991

A long overdue thank you to the past Board Members. The staff and present Board would like to extend their heartfelt appreciation to the women who served on the ASWAC Board for 1991. Your work and experience has benefitted us all. Thank you!

CHECK YOUR MAIL

ASWAC is currently working on an organizational review. We welcome your input and will be sending out questionnaires to our membership. In addition to returning the questionnaires, please feel free to contact the office any time to discuss concerns or suggestions about ASWAC's direction and future.

OUR FEATURE

By Sharon Reiner

By the time children born this year reach maturity, it will have been 100 years since March 8 was officially declared International Women's Day. March 8 was chosen in remembrance of the 1857 strike when women textile workers in New York stopped work and marched in the streets to protest twelve hour work days, incredibly low salaries and child labour. At the time of the protest police reacted swiftly by brutalizing the women and trampling them with horses.

Between 1900 and 1908 in Montreal, women textile workers lead more than 40 strikes for the same reasons. In many instances women were forced back to work in fear of retaliation by the army.

By the time International Women's Day was declared, very little had changed, and the strikes continued in the needle trades in 1934 and in the garment industry between 1935 and 1952 in Quebec. On March 19, 1911, 30 thousand women took part in demonstrations in Germany and Austria and on March 8, 1917, the Russian Revolution began when women textile workers of St. Petersburg went on strike in a massive International Women's Day demonstration marching for freedom.

Since then, the world has celebrated March 8 as International Women's Day. Celebrations in United States, Germany, Great Britain and many more have seen thousands of women and men marching together and working together to promote the concerns of women around the world. The United Nations declared 1975 the International Year of the Woman, which evolved into 1975 through 1985 being the International Decade for Women where substantial initiatives were undertaken throughout the world to improve living conditions and the status of women internationally.

International Women's Day is now celebrated throughout the

world to recognize the valuable contributions women have made by working and resisting together. Women have achieved the right to vote, have improved working conditions, have secured the right to equal treatment in the eyes of the law and have worked to promote equality of opportunity.

It is also a time to realize that there is still a long way to go. In this country women continue to struggle for equal pay for work of equal value, to reclaim the right to control our own bodies, and the right to access the decision-making processes which control our destinies and our children's future. Women around the world continue to work together to eliminate poverty, increase literacy and improve health care.

Within the trade union movement, the environmental movement and the peace movement, women band together to create a more humane world for the children. The history of women's struggle is marked by attempts to create change. This year's International Women's Day theme honours the past and looks to the future: "Women Creating

Change - Continuing the Resistance and Marching for Freedom".

On March 8 join millions of women, men and children around the world in the celebration of International Women's Day.

Women Creating Change
International Women's Day
Marching For Freedom
1992
Continuing the Resistance

Sunday March 8
Gather at 2 pm • Gazebo Park (104 St & 83 Ave)
March down Whyte Avenue to Catalyst Centre (10943 - 84 Avenue)
Speakers • Entertainment • International snacks
Women and Men welcome! • Free Childcare-call 421-0306
ASL interpreter on site.
Edmonton International Women's Day Committee

LABOUR DONATED

Alberta Feminist Calendar

CALGARY

Women and the Constitution: Understanding the issues. Wednesday, February 26, 7:30 pm at the Calgary YWCA, Room 210, 320-5th Avenue S.E. Panel and discussion featuring: Judy Rebick, President, National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Pam Barrett, House Leader, Official Opposition. Moderator: Sheila Martin, Acting Dean, Faculty of Law, U. of C. Organized by the Calgary Women's Coalition on the Constitution.

So You Are Thinking Of Going Off The Pill, presented by the Calgary Birth Control Assoc. 7 to 9:30 pm. A workshop on understanding your fertility cycle, updated info on contraceptive methods and ways of communicating these choices in relationships. \$15 registration fee or as financial situation permits. For more information call Valerie or Narmin at 283-5580.

Oxfam Day- February 29. Oxfam Canada's 50th Anniversary program "Working For Change" is designed to educate Canadians about development issues, and to ask them to participate in Oxfam work by donating a day's pay or a day's time working for development. Since 1992 is a leap year, consider donating this extra day to Oxfam. For more information call 269-3755.

March 7th, Human Rights and Women at Risk: A Conference for Women with Disabilities, 9am to 5pm, Golden Age Club, 610-8th Avenue S.E. An opportunity for women with disabilities to become more aware of their rights and to share their experiences and concerns. Speakers and discussion groups. Confidentiality respected. No registration fee. Conference includes lunch, attendant care and transportation. For more information or to register call Brenda at 244-2721. Organized by the Independent Living Resource Centre, Advisory Committee on Women's Issues.

Saturday March 7th International Women's Day rally and march begins at 6:30 pm at McDougall Centre (455-6 St. S.W.). Entertainment featuring Peggy Ward and Cathy Miller to follow at Carpenter's Hall. ONLY 150 tickets available from Arusha Centre, the U of C Women's Collective and Resource Centre and the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee. \$2 - \$5 sliding scale. For more information call Jean at 289-9401.

International Women's Day Ritual 4:30 pm. A women's ritual celebrating our strengths, connections to other women and resistance to the patriarchal society we live in. Limited space available. Pre-register by calling Cheryl at 283-8725. One World Film Festival, University of Calgary-Science Theatres. Over 60 international films and videos providing alternative perspectives on: the environment, international development, women, aboriginal rights and peace. Also live entertainment, guest speakers, information displays, crafts, books, workshops and the kidfest 1 to 5 pm Saturday and Sunday. Programs available February 10th. For programs, tickets and information call the Arusha Centre at 270-3200.

Abortion Support Group. If you are a woman who has experienced an abortion and feel a need to talk to other women who have had a similar experience, you may be interested in Calgary Birth Control Association's 10 week Abortion Support Group. This is a safe and supportive atmosphere for women to share feelings and discuss concerns about how having an abortion affects our lives. For more information call Gerri-Lynne at 283-5580.

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society offers Job Search courses in English, Vietnamese, Spanish and Chinese at their main office and a S.E. location. For more information contact Employment Unit, CCIS at 262-2006. They also conduct a 4 day program entitled Job Search Strategies. For more information call Taj or Joanna at 262-2006.

The Committee On Sexual Exploitation In Professional Relationships, appointed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, wants to hear from groups and individuals about the problem of sexual abuse of patients by some members of the medical profession. Call toll-free: 1-800-661-4689. If anyone wants to lay a formal complaint they may call this number and will receive assistance. The Committee will also hold a public hearing in Calgary on April 10th at the YWCA.

Calgary Status of Women Action Committee is accepting workshop proposals for Oct. '92 Conference entitled Celebrating Identity, Moving Towards Alliance, Creating Community. Proposed workshops should be about two hours in length, address one of the conference themes and can be any format. Proposals must be postmarked by March 15th. For more details call 262-1873.

Discovering Erotica: an informal interactive workshop for women. 1 to 4 pm Saturday March 21. An opportunity to discover, develop and affirm our sexual/erotic visions and values. To pre-register call Patricia at 264-6778. Presented by Alberta Coalition Against Pornography and Calgary Birth Control Association.

National Action Committee On The Status Of Women Regional Conference for representatives from NAC member groups. April 10 and 11 in Calgary. Election for new Alberta Regional Representatives to be held. Consider running or nominating someone else. Renew or get your NAC membership now! Call Yvonne Stanford at 263-1550 or 289-7671 (evenings).

YWCA Women Of Distinction Awards Dinner 5:30 pm Tuesday May 5th. A gala reception/dinner to honour women nominated for awards and to celebrate the achievements of all women. Tickets \$75. (\$40 tax receipt) For ticket information call 263-1550 (local 377).

Alberta Feminist Calendar

EDMONTON

A Centre For Women: A Wellness Association Room 319 - YWCA, 10305-100 Ave. 423-9922 Ext. 7327 Professional nursing staff will provide information on health issues, and organize referral to proper agencies and professionals. There is no fee for these services. Workshops, classes & support groups will be organized to respond to the expressed needs of women & their families A variety of talks are being offered. Mother's morning out at the Centre, Wednesday mornings in March 9:30 to 11:30 am. Get together for group activities on self-esteem, problem-solving, assertiveness and more. Child care will be provided, please let us know by the Monday prior if you will attend and how many children you will be bringing. Single parenting, first meeting, February 19 at 7:30 pm. Eating Distress group, first meeting: Tuesday, March 5 at 7:30 pm. Incest survivors, Saturday, February 22 at 2 pm. To register please call the office.

Menopause Support Group 1930-2100 Women's Centre Meetings are held every third Wednesday thru till May. For further information please call Gladys Roth at 477-4829 or Barb Rocchio at 454-3133.

Athabasca University is offering an evening course entitled "Issues In Women's Health" Time: Thursdays, 7 - 10 p.m. Dates: January 21 - April 21 Location: AU Edmonton Learning Centre, 2nd Floor 9942-108 Street. Cost: \$238.00. Women Studies 401 Contemporary Feminist Theory: Canadian and American Perspectives is a 3 credit course which will be offered by Athabasca University, Monday and Thursday evenings, from April 27 to June 11, 1992. The course includes units on Mothering, spirituality, challenging barriers at work, differences among women, and the women's movement. For further information call instructor Cathy Bray at 431-0616 or Athabasca University (Edmonton Learning Centre) at 421-8700.

Theatre Network presents Sky Geezers by Connie Massing, Thursday, February 27, curtain 8 pm, at 10708-124 Street. This will be a special benefit performance for Edmonton Women's Shelter LTD. (W.I.N. Houses). Ninety percent of the price of each ticket (\$10 each) will be turned over to E.W.S. to assist victims of family violence in the Edmonton area. Tickets are available by calling 471-6709, they will also be available at the door.

The Committee On Sexual Exploitation In Professional Relationships, appointed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, wants to hear from groups and individuals about the problem of sexual abuse of patients by some members of the medical profession. Call toll-free, 1-800-661-4689. If anyone wants to lay a formal complaint they may call this number and will receive assistance. The Committee will also hold a public hearing in Edmonton, April 3 at AADAC

Downtown Centre. The Committee will be in Grande Prairie, April 24 at AADAC Centre and in Medicine Hat, May 1 at the Medicine Hat Lodge.

February is Women's Month at the YWCA in Edmonton. A number of speakers and sessions are being hosted. Admission is a nonperishable donation for the Edmonton Food Bank or a cash donation to help recover costs. Please call 423-9922 for more information.

1992 YWCA Tribute To Women will be May 6 th. Awards dinner will be held to celebrate the many outstanding women from the greater Edmonton area. Tickets are available for \$75 by calling 423-9922. Nominations must be received by no later than 4:30 pm Friday, February 28, 1992.

International Women's Day celebrations will be held Sunday March 8th. at 2 pm. We will gather at the Gazebo at 83 Avenue and 104 Street, then march down Whyte Avenue, up 109 Street to Catalyst Theatre. There will be speakers, entertainment and international snacks. All women attending International Women's Day activities will receive a pass for Sunday evening at the Global Film Festival. Special films on Sunday evening will focus on Women and Development. Child care is available, please call 421-0306 for more information. There will be a banner making session at #50, 9930-106 Street at 7:30 pm. Please come, and bring a friend.

The Women's Program and Resource Centre will be celebrating International Women's Day by hosting an open house, Tuesday, March 10, 1992 at 7:30 pm at 11019-90 Avenue. The evening's program will begin at 8 pm. Participants from previous writing classes offered by the centre will read from their works. Beverages and snacks will be served. Come and bring a friend. Building Strong Women's Groups. If you are involved with a women's group or resource centre, this two day workshop is designed for you. Dates are March 14 & 15, 9 am-4:30 pm, fee is \$60, enrollment limited to 25. The instructor is Pat Rasmussen. For further information contact the Women's Program and Resource Centre at 492-3093.

Indo-Canadian Women's Association has moved to #106, 2024-57 Street Edmonton, AB. T6L 2Z3, telephone is 490-0477 as of November 1st 1991. The centre offers: support, drop-in for women, informal counselling, information and referral, interpretation and workshops. All services are free. Volunteers are welcome. On Saturday March 21 you are invited to participate in the International Day of Racial Discrimination, organized by the Indo-Canadian Women's Association. The theme is Unity Not Uniformity. Please join us at theatre 2-115 Education

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WomanSources in Alberta

The following is a list of resources for women throughout the province. We receive a number of phone calls for women looking for resources or support groups in their area. If you have such information that you'd like to share, please write to us. We welcome all input.

BLAIRMORE

The Crowsnest Pass Women's Resource Centre provides a take-a-break and meeting area, a library, a playroom, quality used clothing for sale, and a private counselling room. The centre has comprehensive information on legal and family matters, finances, child development, government and community services. The centre sponsors talks, seminars and workshops on issues of interest to women, as well as providing contacts and support services for women with family and personal problems. A newsletter is produced 5 or 6 times a year. Please call the office for further information at 562-8000.

CALGARY

The YWCA Women's Resource Centre, 320-5 Avenue S.E., is an information and referral centre for women. Staffed by volunteers, the centre offers peer support, a Legal Advice Clinic, and supportive, informed referrals to city services and organizations. Drop by for coffee and browse through the Centre's brochures, check on upcoming events or use our resources. For more information about the Centre or referral to other services, phone 263-1550, extension 397.

CAMROSE

Camrose Women's Shelter provides shelter for women in crisis, battered women and women awaiting other social or specialized services. Services will be extended to all women who meet entrance criteria. Programs and services include: counselling services, information on support groups for self-esteem, a parenting group, interspousal violence treatment program, children's services, anger management for school-age children, a community awareness program, as well as a follow-up program and volunteer training. Membership fee is \$5.00. Please call the office for further information at 672-1035.

EDMONTON

The Women's Program and Resource Centre, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta 11019-90 Ave, T6G 2E1, Ph: 492-3093. There is still time to register in our courses. As many are held on the weekend, it does make it possible for women living outside of Edmonton to attend. Please call our office for information on how to register or for a copy of our brochure. Some highlighted courses are: Sisters In Dreamtime, Women and Anger, Female Sexuality, Journal Writing, Women and Burnout, Building Strong Women's Groups, Women: Healing Ourselves. There are many others

of interest to all as well as Career Development Courses. Call or drop by to browse.

FORT McMURRAY

Women's Resource Society at #305-8706 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 3G2, phone 743-2121 has a lending library of books, tapes and videos. The centre publishes a quarterly newsletter and receives a number of newsletters and papers from other women's groups, so drop by and browse. For further information call or write.

GRANDE CACHE

The Grande Cache Transition House Society offers residential services, counselling and community outreach social workers who counsel women, men, and children. The centre runs support groups. The centre also has a library and video library. We print a newsletter on a yearly basis. The yearly membership fee is \$5.00. If you would like to become involved or need more information please call the office at 827-5055.

LETHBRIDGE

The Women's Resource Centre at #202, 325-6 Street S., 329-8338 is also the home of ASWAC Lethbridge. The resource centre has a small library and a calendar of events. They also publish Womyn News. Call the office for more information.

RED DEER

Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society, #112, 4818 Gaetz Ave. Red Deer, Alberta T4N 4A3. The society promotes involvement of women in activities aimed at understanding and improving the social, political and economic position of women living in both rural and urban Central Alberta. There is a resource library, advocacy and referral service, career planning, Women of Canada study kits, meeting room and monthly newsletter. There is a small membership fee, contact the office at 347-2480 for further information.

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The phrase "Working Mother" is redundant.
-Jane Sellman 20th century writer.

Write On!

As feminists, it is important that we are politically active in whatever capacity we can be. While political activism takes on a variety of meanings to a variety of people, one means of activism in which many of us can participate is letter writing. Writing letters to MLA's and MP's is a relatively effective way of lobbying on an individual basis.

In order to provide ASWAC's membership with information regarding issues warranting letters we have created this section for political information sharing. To this end, we encourage members to let us know of any other letter writing campaigns in which they are involved.

The Edmonton ASWAC office has a copy of MP's names and ridings, if you require this information please call the office. Please send a copy of your letter to the Edmonton ASWAC office.

•Are you a single parent who receives child support? If so, how do you feel about paying tax on this money? As far as we know, Canada is the only country taxing child support. We realized, after doing our taxes, that 45% of the money from child support payments are being clawed back by the government. Once again, the system is skewed in favor of the non custodial parent. We recently read in the Journal about a woman in Quebec who is filing a class action suit against the federal government on behalf of women everywhere. For the last three years she has been filing separate tax returns for her children in which she declares the child support as their personal income. We want to give her our support. If you are interested in learning how to file separate tax returns for your children, and/or joining our struggle to fight for a more equitable taxation law, please contact ASWAC at 421-0306.

•Although ASWAC and many other women's groups have received their Secretary of State Women's Program funding for the current year, there is always a concern about next year's funding. The Women's Program is currently being re-evaluated and it's "mandate" expires March 31, 1993. At that time, the program can be renewed or cancelled. Therefore let's ensure the government is aware of what the Women's Program means to individual women and that there is an incredible amount of support for it. An example of what you can do: Write a letter congratulating the Conservatives for continuing to fund women's groups and include an example of how you have personally benefitted from the Secretary of State Women's Program. (eg.: used the services of a Women's Resource Centre or attended a workshop presented by a Sec. State funded group). Address your letters to: The Honorable Mary Collins, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. The Honorable Robert R. de Cotret, Secretary of State. The Right Honorable Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada. Also your Member of Parliament, send a copy of your letter to M.P. Dawn Black, N.D. Status of Women Critic, and M.P. Mary Clancy, Liberal Status of Women Critic. No postage on letters addressed to: House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0M5. It is clear the government needs to not only continue the Women's Program but to expand it.

Calendar continued

North U of A, at 1 pm. The program includes Canadian Portraits, short NFB films and a panel discussion. Fil Fraser will be on the panel. This event is free of charge, followed by a grand reception. Please call the office for more information.

Suicide Awareness Week is March 2 to 8, 1992. In 1990, 83 Alberta women killed themselves; 37 of those were from Edmonton. Women in Alberta have an increasing suicide rate. Community Connections has organized a week of activities. Please call Susan or Lisa at 482-0198 for more information. A reminder that the number for the distress line is 482-4357 and Suicide Prevention Program is 482-4636.

Global Visions Festival, March 6, 7, 8, 1992, at the U of A: International Centre and Tory Lecture Theatres (North End of HUB Mall on Ground Level). A Festival with a Vision of a More Just World. (Formerly The Third World Film Festival) •70 hours of excellent feature and documentary films•Speakers and workshops•Live music•A photo contest•International food•An information and craft fair with over 30 non-profit organizations•A big dance Saturday night•Free day care (ages 2-5)•A kids' Festival (ages 6-12). Come see the best environmental films. For more information contact The Edmonton Learner Centre at 10920-88 Ave, T6G 0Z1 or call 439-8744.

LETHBRIDGE

International Women's Day-"Looking Back, Moving Ahead". Celebrations will be held on March 14 this year. We will begin at 10 am at the YWCA. Workshops will include topics such as midwifery, women in the labour force, and women and development. There will also be a workshop by men for men, two-step dancing and circle dancing! All this will be kicked off with a traditional sweetgrass ceremony. Faith Nolan will provide entertainment. Call Mirella for more information.

March 31, 1992 will be my final day at ASWAC Lethbridge. The visions workshop '92 resulted in new and very positive ideas. ASWAC's strengths were identified and discussed. It was put forward that the Resource Centre element of ASWAC would become the project for the future. With the Resource Centre as the focus, there was excitement about the possibilities of a new beginning. We would like to hear from women in our area. Your ideas and concerns are an important part of the future of the Resource Centre. Please call Mirella at 329-8338. Thank you to all the women who attended this years Visions workshop.

Conference Updates



We are very excited about the up coming Making Connections: Sharing Women's Vision, Values and Work, to be held in Edmonton at the Inn on 7th, May 1st to 3rd. Naomi Wolf will be our keynote speaker, to be followed by a grand reception. We will be sending brochures to our membership. If you would like more brochures for your friends or co-workers or to distribute, please call 421-0306 and we'll get them out to you.

Display Tables

Making Connections '92 offers yet another way for you or your group to participate in this exciting weekend. Display tables, information booths and sales areas are available for a minimal fee.

Information booths/display tables are available to groups and, individuals who wish to staff the table and provide advice, information, or referrals to conference delegates on issues, products or services which are of particular interest to women. Administration cost: \$50.00/booth.

Sales areas - are available for those who wish to sell products or services of interest to women attending the conference. Administration cost: \$50.00/booth plus 10% of total weekend sales.

Space is available on a first come, first serve basis and you must register through the Edmonton office. The conference organizing committee reserves the right to refuse applications at their own discretion or because of space limitations.

Sponsor a Sister

Because the Women of Alberta have insisted that the Making Connections Conference be financially accessible to all women and because of ASWAC's continuing work with women in poverty, the Conference organizers are asking for your help. If you are able, please include with your registration fee a donation to the subsidy fund which will enable other women to attend the conference who, due to circumstances beyond their control, cannot afford the entire registration fee. Keep in mind that the set conference fee is already very reasonable as it includes the keynote address, all workshop choices, all meals and child care for the entire weekend. If you are in a position to sponsor a sister, please include what you can afford in addition to the registration fee.

Can You Help ?

On January 27 over thirty women showed up at the ASWAC office eager to volunteer their services in connection to the Spring Conference. Over refreshments and munchies, women signed up to work on committees, to advertise the conference, and offer ideas. As a result, most of the pre-

conference organizers are working to promote and plan the details of the weekend, but we still lack commitment of workers for May 1, 2 and 3 (the conference itself). Bodies are still required for the hosting committee, to be "go-fors", to work at tables, to work with registration, to escort media and much more... So, the good news is even if you couldn't make it to the volunteer social on January 27 (which was a lot of fun, by the way), you can still volunteer. Call the ASWAC office as soon as possible and we'll discuss what you'd like to do. Everyone is welcome to help as little or as much as you would like. A special thanks to HPI Beverages and Labatt's for sponsoring the social evening. Another social is planned to work on a few more details and touch base, so watch for posters and call the ASWAC office in Edmonton for more information.

Getting The Word Out !

The Publicity and Promotions Committee is vibrant and active and is working hard to get the word out about the conference but you, as newsletter subscribers, can help too. If you would like to distribute brochures, or would like a poster or two in your community or to give to your friends, there are plenty available through any of our regional offices. Be sure to remind people as you hand them a brochure that the conference fee includes all meals, child care, and a nifty registration kit made up of an ASWAC travel cup (made of recycled plastic, 5 cents from each mug will be donated to Friends of the Earth), a fashionable and functional canvas bag, an ASWAC pen and numerous other goodies. Something for everyone!

T-Shirts

In keeping with tradition, ASWAC has produced stylish t-shirts for the conference. They will be available (in a limited quantity) at the conference for purchase. An advance sample is displayed in the ASWAC Edmonton Office if you would like to see what the fashion trend for May is going to be. Watch for them at "Making Connections" and act fast. They're going to go like hotcakes.

Ask Around

If you know of anyone who may be able to donate pads of writing paper (they don't have to be many pages each) for the delegates at the conference, call the Edmonton office. Donors will be identified in the conference program and can include their own logo on the paper if they wish.

Entertainment

On Saturday evening, Alberta entertainers will bring you sounds of the province in an "Alberta Women's Theme Night". This event is open to both conference delegates, and to the public. The evening will be another great chance for women to socialize and share in women's culture.

The Legal System, Again Part II

By Christine Leonard

Part one of this article, in the last newsletter, described the many problems faced by women in the justice system. This article, in contrast, will provide a small ray of hope for the future for women in the justice system, as it describes the actions of the Supreme Court of Canada in cases of significance to women.

The Supreme Court of Canada has heard a number of cases in the last 5 years which were of great significance to women. In all but one of the cases, the outcome was favorable to women in terms of making the system more equitable and recognizing the reality of women's lives. The cases are as follows:

- The Supreme Court of Canada, by a vote of 7-0, overturned the acquittal of a man who threatened to rape 3 women. The original trial judge had indicated that rape or threat to rape did not necessarily constitute a threat to cause bodily harm. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that "violence and the threat of serious bodily harm are indeed the hallmarks of rape." The ruling went on to say that to argue that a woman who has been forced to have sex has not necessarily suffered grave and serious violence is to ignore the perspective of women. "For women, rape under any circumstances must constitute a profound interference with their physical integrity." The man was eventually convicted and was sentenced to 15 months in jail.

- The Supreme Court of Canada overturned a lower court ruling which stayed sexual assault charges against a man because the victims had waited almost 30 years to lay the charges. This ruling was also by a vote of 7-0. The top court said that "for victims of sexual abuse to complain would take courage and emotional strength in revealing those personal secrets, in opening old wounds. If proceedings were to be stayed based solely on the passage of time between the abuse and the charge, victims would be required to report incidents before they were psychologically prepared for the consequences of that reporting."

- In a case involving two midwives charged with negligence causing death when a baby was stillborn, the Supreme Court unanimously voted that a fetus is not a legal person and has no guarantee of life under the Criminal Code. The court upheld the lower court's acquittal of the two women, saying that a fetus cannot be considered a distinct person for purposes of a negligence prosecution.

- The above ruling was one in a series of rulings in which the Supreme Court has rejected or refused to consider assertions of fetal rights. In the case of Chantal Daigle, whose boyfriend had tried to get an injunction to stop her abortion, the Court ruled that the fetus had no rights that could be enforced under civil law. Another related case involved the Courts refusal to hear arguments based on fetal rights under the constitution.

- In 1987, the Supreme Court of Canada, in the Morgentaler case, ruled that the abortion sections in the Criminal Code were contrary to the principles of fundamental justice and acquitted Dr. Morgentaler. The Court said that "forcing a woman, by threat of criminal sanction, to carry a foetus to term unless she meets certain criteria unrelated to her own priorities and aspirations, is a profound interference with a woman's body."

- In 1990, the Supreme Court of Canada acquitted a woman who killed her abusive partner, and ruled that the defense could call expert witnesses to justify the defense of battered wife syndrome. The law regarding self defense states that to claim self-defense, the accused must believe on reasonable grounds that she was in danger. Case law indicates that the test of whether her apprehension was reasonable is whether a reasonable or ordinary man would have had the same apprehension. However, the Court stated that "if it strains credulity to imagine what the 'ordinary man' would do in the position of a battered spouse, it is probably because men do not typically find themselves in that situation....The issue is not, however, what an outsider would have reasonably perceived but what the accused reasonably perceived, given her situation and her experience."

Another factor in the ruling was that the battered woman did not have to wait until the assault was underway before her fear and apprehensions would be validated in law, as this would, in the words of an American court, be tantamount to sentencing her to "murder by installment."

The one case in which the Supreme Court ruled in a manner extremely unfavorable to women was when the rape shield law was struck down. Under this law, defense lawyers had been prohibited, except in rare circumstances, from asking a victim about her past sexual history. The Court ruled that the rape shield law could interfere with an accused's right to a fair trial. The justice minister has since introduced new legislation which would restrict when the defense can raise questions about the woman's sexual past and the circumstances under which a man can claim that the woman consented to sex.

It has been interesting to watch the actions of the Supreme Court over the last few years. Until the rape shield law was struck down, the judges appeared to have begun to shed some old-fashioned, discriminatory ideas about women. Not only have the rulings been favorable to women, but the judgements contain statements which demonstrate an understanding of the issues of equality and empowerment for women.

Continued on Page 10

A Review Of The Beauty Myth

As reviewed by Sheryl McInnis.

"...It profits women little if they gain the whole world only to fear themselves." (page 103) And fear each other. It is these two ideas that run throughout Naomi Wolf's book *The Beauty Myth*, (Random, 1990). The myth that women must be beautiful to have value is not new, and "beauty" is a concept that changes over time and place. What is new in the last two decades, as Wolf explains, it is the political use of the myth as part of the anti-woman, anti-feminist backlash that seeks to keep women "in their place."

Strong, independent, ambitious, assertive, self-confident women are construed as "ugly". Being "ugly" has become the sin that replaces 'active sexuality', (Victorian myth), and 'unmade beds', (cult of domesticity), as that which keeps a woman from being comfortable with herself and other women. To circumvent this attitude or separate themselves from 'those feminists', women are persuaded, or manipulated by images, to starve themselves, paint new faces, endanger themselves with chemicals, or resculpt their faces and bodies with surgery. It is our acceptance of this message that makes the *Beauty Myth* a political issue. Our beauty as women is not on our terms, it is decided for us, but we have become blind to that fact.

Wolf enlarges on this theme by examining in detail how the *Myth* affects women in work, culture, religion, sex, hunger, and violence. She ends prescriptively (*Beyond the Beauty Myth*) by suggesting that women can overturn the myth by celebrating their own bodies, faces and living processes as they are, and by extending that celebration to other women. There is no doubt that this book is painful to read; that there will be much resistance among us to what she has to say. Most feminist analyses of women's place in our world are painful and do elicit anger. However, if we can grasp that each woman's beauty must originate in her femaleness, from choices she makes for herself, not as she is reflected in men's eyes or against the artificial standards of other women, then we will become autonomous agents able to work for a better world.

For me, this book tends to focus on white middle class heterosexual women, who are educated and/or employed. The author does not examine the specific politics or conflict faced by women of colour, the poor, native women, lesbians, or the disabled, when they must situate themselves in two or more cultural definitions of 'beauty'. She also tends to ignore the ways in which women resist the *Beauty Myth*. This makes her analyses focus largely on victimization. At times her sweeping statements lack substance or are poorly referenced. However this book is a useful introduction to the societal pressures which shape definitions of women's beauty.

Those of us who do resist the overall *Myth*, may give up

parts of it very slowly. Last week I went swimming for the first time since relinquishing the need to shave my legs. Glory be, there was no lightning bolt from on-high and the other women in the change room did not run screaming from the sight. Another part of the *Myth* bit the dust. Read this book thoughtfully and decide for yourself what makes YOU beautiful.

Naomi Wolf will be speaking at the Making Connections, Sharing Women's Vision, Values and Work Conference to be held May 1 to 3, 1992. There will be a question and answer period. Phone ASWAC at 421-0306 for more information.

Hug These Women

The ASWAC Newsletter collective consists of women who volunteer their time and energy. We take this opportunity to thank these women for their work. Louise Janzen, Tammy Horne, Christine Leonard, Dorothy Mandy, Moyra Lang, Sheryl McInnis. A special thanks to Suzanne Trudel without whom this issue would not be possible. If you would like to become involved with the collective please call the Edmonton office.

Thanks also to Celebrating Women in Calgary, who held a fundraising event and donated the money to ASWAC.

A whole bunch of hugs to the women who help out in the office, Lorraine Gregoire and Angele Courchaine. They have made our days easier and we thank them for their work.

Thank you to all the women who helped fold the brochures, Jenny Kain, Debby Carlson, Christine Leonard, Lorraine Gregoire, Moyra Lang.

Thank you to Dorothy Mandy, who ran around doing errands on more than one occasion.

A big thank you to Nicole at U of A Pro Choice, for putting up Spring Conference posters around campus.

Thank you to Shanta at Promotional Advertising Plus, who has been very flexible and supportive.

Colleen Lee at the Inn on 7th has been wonderful to work with and the staff thank you for all your extras.

Thank you to Debbie Smith, who ran the Calgary office, while Nancy was away globe trotting.

A really big thank you to all the women who have phoned or dropped by to show their support for ASWAC and our projects.

News From NAC

A report from Yvonne Stanford-Alberta Regional Representative. Lots of challenging and exciting work and happenings around the National Action Committee (NAC). In particular I'd like to highlight:

Boycott of New Reproductive Technology Commission-NAC and the Coalition for New Reproductive Technologies, with great regret and disappointment, are asking all women's groups to boycott the consultation with the Commission scheduled for the end of February, to prevent further credibility being given to this thoroughly discredited operation. We are convinced the report of the Commission will be severely biased, and ignore the hard work of women's groups.

NAC in Alberta: We are holding a meeting of Alberta group members of NAC April 10 and 11 to support the decision to build a stronger member base in the region. This follows a number of years of work on organizational change. All member groups are invited to send representatives to discuss how we can participate in NAC campaigns, how we can support the work of the regional representative and how the reg. rep. can work with the member groups. This meeting is being organized by the Alberta Friends of NAC support group. Travel and child care subsidies are available. Please renew or obtain your group's 1992 NAC membership, and plan on coming.

Election of Regional Representative: My two year term as Alberta Reg. Rep. to NAC concludes in June at our AGM. The election of a new reg. rep. will take place at our regional conference, although mail-in votes will be counted. Please think about who our next representative should be, and be sure your group's membership is up-to-date in order to participate in this election.

New "Rape Shield Legislation": we achieved almost everything we asked for, and experienced a very good process of consultation with national women's groups, including NAC and ASWAC. We are working to include recognition of the situation of doubly oppressed women, who are subject to assault and less able to access the justice system. This is the first time that women's reality has been reflected in sexual assault legislation, and is a significant victory for us. I encourage you to support its passing through Parliament.

NAC AGM: In Ottawa, June 5 to 8. Reserve the date, and consider coming to this important AGM as we prepare for our participation in the upcoming political events of our country.

For information on these and any other NAC issues or concerns, please contact me at: 5007 Barron Crescent NW, Calgary, AB, T2L 1T8. Home phone: 289-7671, work phone: 263-1550, Fax: 263-4681.

More WomanSources

SUNDRE

Help For Victims Of Family Violence located in Sundre offers programs such as: a crisis line, public information and education, volunteer training, support groups for battered women, sexual assault support groups, public educator, second stage housing, and some resource material. Please write to the office for further information at Box 705 Sundre T0M 1X0.

WHITECOURT

The Wellspring Women's Association at Box 681, Whitecourt, AB, phone 778-6209 has a resource library. They have a selection of books and periodicals, pamphlets, videos (VHS and Beta).

Part II Continued

-At the same time, there have been two female justices of the Supreme Court who have made public statements about the law being unfair to women. Justice McLachlin, speaking about abortion and prostitution laws, said that these laws lead to unfair and unequal treatment of women, and that they use the criminal law to enforce sexual morality and deal with complex issues on the backs of women. Ex-judge Bertha Wilson said that "as long as women are systematically subordinate to men, they will suffer, at the minimum, ongoing psychological domination and at the maximum, physical and sexual abuse." She also said that the notion that family matters are private has served men well but has done "untold harm to those dependent upon them."

-The first part of this article detailed the difficulties faced by women in the justice system at the lower levels of the courts. Reading the stories of what happens at the lower level leaves one feeling that there is a long way for women to go to gain equality in the justice system. Looking to the actions of the Supreme Court and the public statements of two female justices, one begins to feel that there is hope. The Supreme Court of Canada has made some progressive decisions regarding women's issues in the last few years. -However, there is still a long way to go before women will be equal partners in the justice system and before the justice system treats women and women's issues with understanding and respect.

-There have been attempts recently to get judges to attend courses on gender issues and gender sensitivity. Judges appear to be amenable to attending these courses, yet few women are willing to put much faith in these courses making a difference. If a judge is so naive or old-fashioned that he requires training to make him aware that the system is biased against women, one brief training session is not likely to give him a true understanding of the depth and range of the issues. While the training sessions are a start on the path towards equality, no woman should be prepared to accept the training as the solution.

Membership Form for The Alberta Status Of Women Action Committee

Please check one:

Donation []

Membership new [] or renewal []

\$20.00 is our suggested membership fee, if it is too much, contribute what you can.

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Phone: [home] _____ [work] _____

Please make cheques payable to: Alberta Status of Women Action Committee.
Membership fees are an important source of our income.

Please return to:

Alberta Status of Women Action Committee
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Women Unlimited Presents

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in Concert

March 6th, 1992
Provincial Museum Theatre

Warm-up: Comfortable Shoes

Tickets: at Bass and The Bagel Tree (10347-Whyte
Aveune)
439-9604

Heather Bishop will also play at the following places in
Alberta:
Saturday, March 7, St. Albert, Arden Theatre, children's
concert at 2:00.
Sunday, March 8, Hinton, Hinton Community Centre,
7:00.
Thursday, March 12, Airdrie, Bert Church Theatre, 7:30.
Friday, March 13, Calgary, Orpheus Theatre at SAIT,
8:00.
Saturday, March 14, Banff, Banff Centre, children's
concert at 7:00 pm.