

West Kootenay

507 Hall St., Nelson, V1L 1Z1

Women's Association

FEB '93

Women's Centre Report

Those of you (yes, we are speaking to YOU) with overdue library books - February is amnesty month and then we are instituting a fine system. So, please search your shelves and piles for books that may belong to us and get them back. If you find books to donate we would be happy to have them for our shelves and/or a used book sale.

For those who find it hard to make it here in our open hours, remember the drop-in is open to 6 p.m. on Thursdays. You can also phone and make arrangements to come in during non-drop-in time if you want to use the resource files or library. The library group could use more workers if you would like to do some task-orientated volunteer work at the Centre.

The Solstice gathering in December was most enjoyable, Deborah and Margaret Shirley hosted a capacity crowd at the Centre. Deborah's Teen Group has got off to a great start this month on Thursday evenings. Twice a month on Wednesdays, Abra Brynne continues to coordinate the (closed) support group for survivors of childhood abuse.

Monday evening the first of February, a support group for women in abusive relationships will start facilitated by myself and Anna from Community Services. Anna has worked in both a transition house and in second stage housing. Deborah's smoking cessation program will soon be getting under way on Tuesday evenings, give us a call if you want to sign up.

Great excitement is mounting about the Sunday sessions with Helga Jacobson and Naida Hyde which are also starting in February. See elsewhere in the newsletter for more info. The Centre has the bus stop kiosk on Ward rented for the month of February, so give it a glance (and feedback to us) when you're in that neighbourhood.

... continued page 2

The support and feedback of the Association membership is very important to us as staff and to the ongoing work of the Centre. Deborah and I would like to thank the Coordinating Collective, committee members and the many other individuals for their work and input, it's much appreciated. Those of you who find it impossible to just "drop-in", please phone us with your concerns, suggestions or just to say hello. We love to hear from you.

- Sam Simpson

WKWA Report

It's been a long two months since my last report, due to the Solstice/Christmas hiatus, but they have been very busy months - for me at least. As many of you know, we started off December with our annual December 6th Vigil, only this year we expanded the event. The women who did the organizing wanted to add creative and hopeful elements to the commemoration of the murder of the fourteen women in Montreal. And so, in addition to the Vigil, we also held parallel workshops for women and men, at the end of which the two groups joined together and discussed the significance of the Massacre in their lives, and shared concerns and visions around the issue of violence in our society.

We also wanted to heighten the profile of the Vigil in our own community, so a group of women painted a mural commemorating the fourteen women. This mural, complete with the names of the fourteen women, can be seen on Stanley Street on the wall around the construction site. We are grateful that the city of Nelson gave us permission to block off that block on Stanley St. on December 6th so we could hold the Vigil next to the mural. I believe the day's events were meaningful for all who attended. Many thanks to each of the organizers!

As for the business of the Association, we decided that an evaluation of Sam as a paid employee of the Association was long overdue. As agreed in her original contract, Deborah's six month evaluation is also due, so by the time you receive this newsletter, we will have completed both evaluations. At this stage of the process, I believe that all members of the evaluation committee have found it to be an informative, valuable endeavour.

... continued page 3

Another issue that has arisen is fee scales for Association events. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that all events have a sliding scale available and many of our events are by donation. Given the nature of our funding, we must try to cover the costs of the events, but it is our policy and our desire to welcome all women to the Centre and the Association. No matter how much or how little money we have, what our sexual preference is, or how many children we do or don't have, we are all sisters, and we can learn and be empowered by each other.

We continue to work with the Committee on Polygamous Issues with the goal of producing a report on the polygamous community in Creston. This report is funded by the Ministry of Women's Equality and it is hoped that the information in this report will enable the various government agencies to better respond to the particular needs of the members of the community. At our AGM, the membership agreed to sponsor the Committee based on the knowledge that Luanne Armstrong was the primary researcher. I feel that the Association membership should know that Luanne is no longer working on the project. However, we continue to monitor the work of the Committee and hope that the final report will be useful information for the Ministry of Women's Equality.

Marcia Braundy donated \$2000. to our Role Modelling Project, for which we are profoundly grateful. This money has enabled us to hire Margaret Shirley to update the data base and do whatever mailouts are necessary. Thanks to both Marcia and Margaret for enabling us to continue an important project.

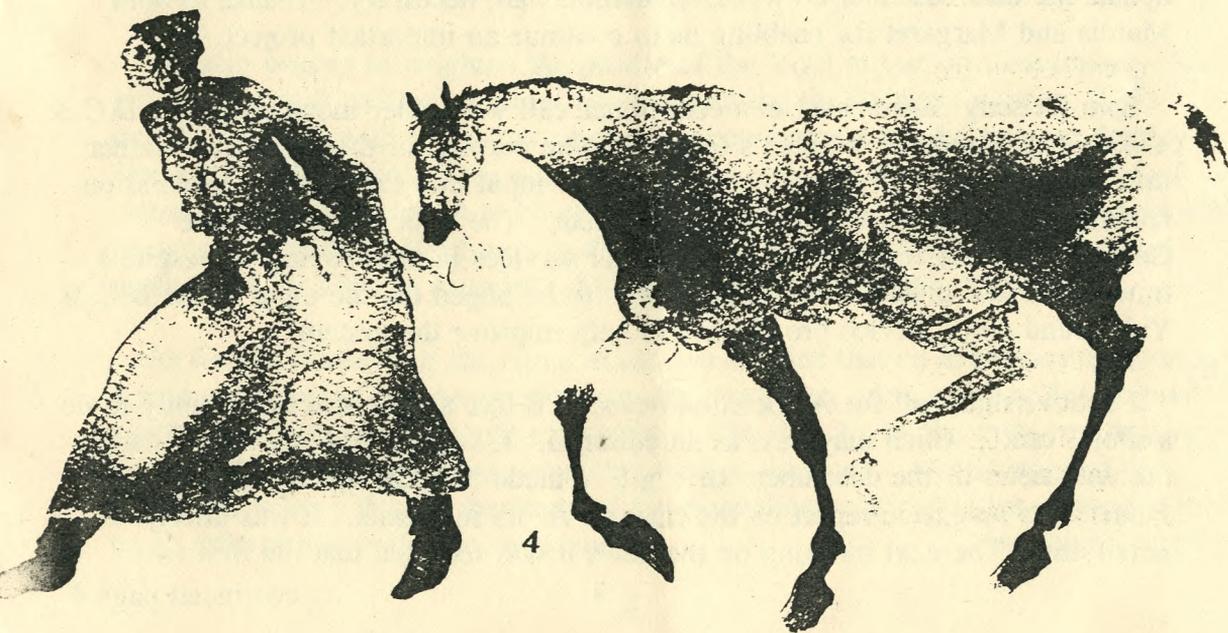
Sam recently participated in a conference call with other members of the B.C.& Yukon Association of Women's Centres. The purpose of the call was to gather information from various member centres for input into the Korbin Commission recently struck by the Provincial Government. The basic mandate of the Commission is to review delivery of social services in the Province. Despite a time-frame that is decidedly limiting, it is to be hoped that the input of the B.C.& Yukon and other service providers will help improve the system.

I believe that's all for Association news. I'd like to take this opportunity to do a short "rant", which may pass as an editorial. It's ironic that my report started out with news of the december 6th Vigil. I made the mistake of reading the January Ms magazine report on the rape survivors in Bosnia. It was utterly horrifying. The next morning on the news it was reported that the first two

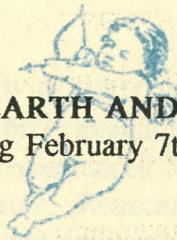
homocides in greater Vancouver for 1993 were both young women who were each assaulted and murdered. That did me in. It never fails to dumbfound me that our society doesn't screech to a halt and scream "NO!!!!".

This ongoing misogyny and endless violence against women and children surely is completely unacceptable. The fact that the violence is so specifically directed at us simply because we are females is outrageous. And the fact that it is so widespread is cause for deep mourning. It takes very little time to come up with a horrifying list of clitorectomies, rapes, wife battering - euphemistically called "spousal assault" so maybe we'll forget that the overwhelming majority of those assaulted are women!! - sexual harassment, etc., etc. And then there's the fact that all over the world women have little or no rights simply because they are women and therefore somehow inferior and/or evil. Our voices have not been heard throughout much of recorded history and are still not adequately heard since whatever we are doing, whether or not we are getting paid for it, could not be worth recording.... This is all so very, very sad. Anyway, thanks for letting me rant. I am attempting to regain my optimism by reaching out to women like you and by reading such books as Riane Eisler's The Chalice and The Blade. For I refuse to give up hope.

- Abra Brynne



WKWA Events



THE WOMAN I LOVE IS A TREE: WOMEN, THE EARTH AND THE SPIRITS*: Every other Sunday for five sessions beginning February 7th, 11:00 - 1:00p.m., at the Women's Centre.

The theme explored in each presentation in this series is women's relationships with each other and with the natural world. This series of discussions will be introduced and facilitated by Helga Jacobson. Accompanying each presentation Naida Hyde will lead related guided imagery, meditation, or shamanic journeying. In looking at different aspects of women's spirituality "theory and practise" will be combined. Each presentation will be self-contained.

- 1) February 7th - Earth, Nature, and the Goddess: The Work of Marija Gimbutas
- 2) February 21st - The Sacred Hoop: The Work of Paula Gunn Allen
- 3) March 7th - The Shaman's Path: Women, Healing and Power
- 4) March 21st - States of Grace: The Work of Charlene Spretnak
- 5) April 4th - Ecofeminism, Spirituality, and Changing World

Enrolment is limited to 12 women. Please call the Centre to register by Friday, February 6th.

* The title is borrowed from "The Woman I Love is a Planet; The Planet I Love Is a Tree" By Paula Gunn Allen, in Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism edited with essays by Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Ornstein.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENTS:

Thursday, March 4th, location and time to be announced.

Sunera Tobani from Simon Fraser University, will present a talk over the supper hour in Nelson. This will probably be a potluck affair, so please call the Centre for details. Also, watch for IWD window displays on Baker Street during March 1-7.

Saturday, March 6th, 7:00p.m., Elks Hall, Nelson. See "Five Feminist Minutes Cabaret" advertisement elsewhere in newsletter.

HEALTH ISSUES SERIES: dates to be announced.

The Centre is getting closer to presenting a series on women's health. We plan to hold sessions on PMS, menopause, and breast cancer. If you are interested in participating in the planning or if you have ideas you would like to see included in the series, please call us at the Centre.



Other Events



Happy Valentine's Day to all our members!

WEST KOOTENAY GAY & LESBIANS: now have a space at Slocan Park for movies and coffee houses after our monthly meetings. First coffee house: *Sunday, March 7th, around 5:00pm.* Performers needed. Please call Susan at 355-2406.

MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE: will be coordinating and co-facilitating an indepth group for female sexual abuse survivors beginning the latter half of February, for 12 weeks.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT: at Selkirk College, Castlegar Campus, March 4th, 12:00-1:30pm. Sunera Tobani will be speaking on the topic of "Violence Against Women Globally".

FEBRUARY 15-16: in Vancouver. *Group Skills for Supporting Women in Difficult Relationships.* This workshop is directed toward front-line workers and counsellors. Fee \$165. At the Justice Institute, phone: 222-7224.

FEBRUARY 19-21: in Vancouver. *Healing the Past, Forming the Future, the 10th Biennial National Association of Women and the Law Conference,* with over 25 panels, plenaries, and workshops. Topics such as anti-racism, feminism, women's prisons, lesbian strategies and pay equity will be on the agenda. For more information call 255-1811.

APRIL 9-11: in Vancouver. *Pathways to Personal Transformation and Healing: A Workshop for Women,* presented by Naida Hyde, Ph.D., R.Psych. This two day experiential workshop will provide an opportunity to learn and practise new ways of accessing healing power for ourselves through the use of meditation, guided imagery, connecting with spirits in Nature, shamanic journeying, and celebratory ritual. Bring yourself (in comfortable clothing), a journal for writing, a gift for your inner child, and a rock the size of your fist. For more information call 538-1205.

Did You Know?

* A woman was brutally assaulted in Nelson last year. The enclosed letter will help keep her attacker in prison. Please write your name, address and signature on the letter and send to the address in Drumheller. (It's the one on the letter.) If you have any questions please call the Women's Centre.

* The Federal Government is proposing a 20% cut in funding to women's organizations. That means us!!! Please write to the new Secretary of State, Monique Landry, and speak of our outrage at the idea. Refer to women's organizations in general and women's centres specifically. Write: Secretary of State, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6.

* Religious fundamentalist groups have been writing Pierre Blais, Minister of Justice, asking that he not grant same sex couples status as families. Please write and let the government know that same sex couples are indeed families!

EMERGENCY GIFT PARCEL DONATIONS: are needed for women going to safe homes or motels. Please drop off any of the following at the Nelson Women's Centre: shampoo, toothpaste & brushes, brush/comb, menstrual supplies, disposable diapers, small toys/books, a very modest "nice item" for the woman.

PREGNANCY & CHIDBIRTH COUNSELLING: available from Lori Hanson, experienced Midwife & Prenatal Educator. Reasonable, flexible rates, appointments in your

FILM/TELEVISION INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT DATABASE: a new service for industry employers-- a computerized Bulletin Board listing qualified women available to work in all sectors of the film and television industry. This service is offered free of charge to employers and database participants. If you are an interested employer or potential employee we will send you more information. Please call Debbie Nightingale, Toronto Women in Film & Television at (416)638-5423 or fax: (416)398-2872.



The Wilson-Tyabji Scandal

I think Gordon Wilson is a nincompoop, and my opinion of Judy Tyabji, based on the issues isn't much higher.

But this is one of those times that I'm bound to defend even nincompoops when the issue is sexual harassment.

It makes me furious that Judy Tyabji is being hounded. It pisses me off that these power-jockeys in the Liberal caucus can't stand to see a woman have more power than they do. It infuriates me to see the men in the media go for it, some of them who have a far closer relationship with the politicians than Judy Tyabji or any woman could ever have. They drink together, they golf together, they shmooze together, and it's not exclusive to the Liberals. The guys in the press like to snuggle up to power, much as they try to deny it in the clubby little atmosphere of any Legislature in the country.

So then this woman gets to be House Leader in the caucus, and I will admit, some reporters held back on the rumours until Vaughn Palmer made his there-is-no-truth-to-this-story-story-but-the-public-has-a-right-to-know.

Did they figure this might be some bit of revenge on the part of a whole bunch of men - like Tyabji's estranged husband who is calling the press in Victoria? Or perhaps some members of the caucus themselves, even Gary Farrell-Collins who left after not getting the right answer to the question, might you now or might you ever in the future ever consider having an affair with this woman? What was it Joe McCarthy asked in the 1950s?

It was Judy Tyabji herself who I first heard say this is the worst case of gender harassment she had ever encountered. Then I heard Margo Harper on CBC's Morningside raise the same issue - gender harassment of a female politician. Could this be an example of why women hesitate to enter politics? You get some power, and it's because of favouritism, not because you have the best qualifications. It's because the male leader can't resist you, and over pillow talk he will further consolidate his leadership, and you of course will become unquestionably loyal.

The only possible decency I can see of this whole thing is that Judy Tyabji, who certainly does not believe in affirmative action, and believes any woman of quality can move forward, and that we shouldn't judge at all on the basis of gender, then

maybe she will think again. No this is certainly not the worse case of gender harassment she or any other woman has seen; but maybe it will cause her to reconsider some of the sanctimonious, holier-than-thou pronouncements she makes about women.

This whole thing is about power. If Judy Tyabji were to remain in the nether realms of the Liberal caucus, and if she and Gordon Wilson were to develop a romance, I doubt anyone would give a rip. They just don't want to see a woman get a leg up on the old boys, real or imagined.

Gordon Wilson, meanwhile, may face a leadership review, but right now nobody has the power to demote him. Guess which caucus member will get shuffled if he tries to defuse the issue before the review?

- Rita Moir

International Women's Day '93

International Women's Day '93

Your chance for the spotlight!

Mark this on your calendar:

Saturday, March 6, 7pm, Elks Hall, Nelson.

Sometimes you do something that is such fun you just have to repeat it. The Five Feminist Minutes Cabaret is one such event. Two years ago, the Elks Hall resounded with cheers and laughter, dry ice smoke rolled out from under the doors, and over twenty women overcame stage fright and did all kinds of amazing things – some of which they didn't even know they were going to do when they arrived.

Here's your chance to contribute your creativity (and/or your cheers and laughter) to this year's version of this astounding event.

So don't just stand there – *do something!* (for five minutes) at the WKWA's Five Feminist Minutes Cabaret.

Don't just stand there...
do something!
(for five minutes)



**FIVE FEMINIST
MINUTES CABARET**
7PM • SATURDAY, MARCH 6
ELKS HALL • NELSON

Gossip & Message Board

WANTED: free fabric or old clothes. I make hats out of scraps. I'm looking for velvet, cotton, leather, wool, rayon and brocade. Thanks. Pam at 352-5397. *No Man's Land Recycled Wares.*

LOOKING FOR HOUSEMATES: I am a woman in my late 30's, professionally employed, with a 4 year old child. I work in Nelson but live in Appledale (Slocan Valley), in a large beautiful house which I'd love to share with another parent-child(ren) team. I am looking for another woman who would genuinely prefer to live in such a situation, where responsibilities for children, house, cooking etc. could be shared. We are essentially vegetarian, try to avoid consumer excess and TV, and love books, music and being with other people. If you are interested in meeting us or finding out more, please contact Lynne at 226-7726.

SMART, GORGEOUS PUPPIES: Mother is Nika - a sort of border/collie/shepard cross. Father is Connor, the beautiful, gentle, smart, pretty big black dog that lives next to the Vallican Whole. He is Rita Moir's black lab/Irish setter cross. To ask about the puppies, call the family of the mother dog at 226-7952.

EATING DISORDER WEEK: February 1-7th. If you would like pamphlets, posters or more information you can call the Eating Disorder Resource Centre of British Columbia at 631-5313 or in Nelson, Kristina Johnston at 354-1270.

ARE YOU HUNGRY FOR INFORMATION?: The Nelson Women's Centre receives several newsletters from other organizations each month. We also keep resource files on a variety of subjects of concern to women.

A NEW HOME FOR THE WOMEN'S CENTRE: is just what we are looking for. Please help us make our dream happen by becoming part of the *One Hundred Club*. Simply donate one hundred dollars to our house fund and you will be part of this special club. Already two women have made their contribution and four others have pledged. Call today - don't delay.

DO YOU LONG TO BE A WRITER?: or do you just need a vehicle for your feminist rants? Either way, the WKWA newsletter welcomes your submissions. Please call the Centre to find out about upcoming issues.

Pitawanakwat Saga Continues

In 1984 Mary Pitawanakwat filed complaints of sexual and racial harassment and unfair job dismissal against her employer, the Secretary of State with the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Since then she had to go twice to the Federal Court of Canada to force the commission to hear them. (The federal government tried to argue that the Human Rights Act did not apply to them...)

Finally on December 23, 1992 the tribunal released its report which found evidence of harassment and discrimination in the Regina office against Pitawanakwat but also ruled that she must bear some of the blame. Although she was dismissed in 1986 and therefore six years without employment, the tribunal only awarded Pitawanakwat with two years back pay, saying that her initial inaction contributed "to the sad state of affairs" in the department.

January 18 a coalition of women's and labour groups denounced the ruling as unjust. Sharon McIvor of the Native Women's Association of Canada said the decision "is offensive because of the victim blaming and the harsh penalty taxed upon the victim."

Judy Rebick president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) said that the officials criticized in the report for harassment and racial comments have been promoted, while Pitawanakwat is being forced to move out of the province if she wants to take a job with the department and will receive compensation for only a small part of her losses.

McIvor said her association wants federal human rights commissioner Max Yalden to review the decision, and Rebick said that NAC is calling on Monique Landry, the new Secretary of State, to reinstate Pitawanakwat to her Regina job with full lost wages.

- Sam Simpson



More Mini-Reviews

Yes indeed, here are more reviews.

I'll start with a book I meant to read the first chapters of and ended up consuming the entire thing. Flying in Place by Susan Palwick is a novel that came to me with a stickit on it saying: put in Violence section. This I have dutifully done but I'd like to say that it could have easily gone in the Fiction section. The main character in the novel, a 12 year old girl named Emma, is being sexually abused by her father. The novel is a well written, sensitive and realistic account of her experience. And it concludes on a fairly uplifting note. I'd like to recommend this book for both adults and teenagers. Violence section.

Now for two books on one of my favourite subjects: eating. Both The Hungry Self: Women, Eating and Identity by Kim Chernin and Feeding the Hungry Heart by Geneen Roth, deal with the issue of compulsive eating. They look at the emotional aspects of women's eating habits and the roots of our troubles with food. Chernin's book focuses on the mother daughter relationship in a contemplative way, whereas Roth's book looks "eating as metaphor" in a more self-help format, with plenty of anecdotes, poems and other asides. Health section.

Dykeversions from the Women's Press Fiction group, is a collection of lesbian short stories. As usual for an

anthology, the stories vary in quality but there are definitely some good reads in here. Established authors such as Ann Cameron, Suniti Namjoshi and Ingrid MacDonald appear as well as lesser known Canadian writers. Fiction section.

Finally, books I don't even pretend to review. Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: How to Prevent, Investigate, and Resolve problems in Your Organization has a fairly self explanatory title. Lives of Their Own: The Individualization of Women's Lives, on the other hand, is a fairly dry and statistical look at Canadian women's working lives. Work section.

- K.Linda Kivi

THANKS

to Abra Brynne, K.Linda Kivi, Rita Moir, Sam Simpson, & Deborah Schwartz for their contributions to this newsletter

This newsletter is produced by members of the West Kootenay Women's Association. Memberships in the Association are \$15 annually and include a newsletter subscription and library borrowing privileges. Memberships and submissions to the newsletter can be sent to 507 Hall Street, Nelson, B.C. V1L 1Z1