



AWARE



NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY ANTI-GONISH WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

RESOURCE CENTER 863-6221



MOTHER



WORKING OUTSIDE THE HOME: A MOTHER AND CHILD COMPROMISE

Most mothers will agree that working in the home and caring for children is a challenging and rewarding experience. If our roles as mothers and caregivers as well as homemakers were recognized by society as being truly valuable and indispensable, I'm sure more women would decide to fulfill this role without seeking further work outside the home. However, for financial or other reasons, many women decide or are forced to work away from their families. There are as many different situations as there are mothers, so I will simply submit some of my experiences and observations.

While expecting my first child, I was determined to return to a career outside the home immediately after my maternity leave. I spent a lot of time assuring my friends and family that being a "stay-at-home-Mom" was simply not for me. What a surprise! When the time came to leave my baby and go back to work, I wasn't so sure about my decision.

I now have two children (ages 3 and 1 1/2 years) and I work three days a week outside of the home. I am more than happy with my situation, and I think I'm pretty fortunate to have been able to make the choices I have - not everyone has this freedom. I am currently job sharing with another woman - I cannot say enough about how great this opportunity has been (that's another subject). Being at home with my children for four days a week seems to be a very healthy balance for our family right now, although this may change as my family matures. I think my children actually seem to appreciate me more and take me less for granted than when I was with them seven days a week. They also accept the fact that mothers go out to work - that this is a normal thing to do.

There are two points which continually remind me that women are placed in an economically vulnerable position as nurturers. The first is that I constantly feel guilty about paying a woman less money than I myself make when she is caring for my children. If women with good salaries were to pay their caregivers a proportionately higher wage, where would that leave low-income women? Would they end up with less adequate child care because it is too expensive? This work is outrageously underpaid. The second point is that a woman easily compromises her financial survival and becomes prone to complete dependence on her partner when she decides to work in the home full time. Even working part-time, a woman's earning power will usually be well below her spouse's.

I feel more fulfilled when I follow both the careers I've invested so much time and energy into - being a mother and a biologist.

H. Mayhew

When asked to write an article on mothering I wondered what perspective I could use, and the recurring idea was one of dependence/independence. It seems today that from the moment our children are born, we are encouraged to be independent from them and they from us. If a mother simply wanted her children to learn independence, she could look out for them less, spend less time with them and think about them less. But it is the quality of independence that concerns most mothers. Can their children make it on their own because they are full of resources or because they "had to"? Do they help others along the way because someone took time to help them, or do they ignore the needs of others because there was no one there when they had a need? Will they meet challenges because they feel nurtured, secure in themselves and their abilities, or because they had to fight to get them and they will fight to keep them?

"Nothing is more important in the world today than the nurturing that a child receives in the first three years of life, for it is in these earliest years that the capacities for trust, empathy and affection originate... In those first three years... you ought to set every other priority aside and do your best."

(C. Barker, M.D., psychiatrist and founder of the Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)

"To a tiny baby, when mother is out of sight she ceases to exist. The baby has not yet developed object permanence. Babies do not possess object permanence until sometime after the first year." (Wm. Sears, M.D., Nightmare

Parenting)

I hear you audibly sighing or shaking your head, but further to this point I have one more (anecdotal) quote:

"But the trouble was, my baby was growing up with me as an onlooker. So strangers knew me in a restaurant but one night my son did not. When I came home he cried. He reached out for his sitter, who was leaving, and shrieked at me. This was not manipulative behavior- this was a tired,

teething ten month old little boy who wanted the person he knew best to comfort him. I was not that person. If I was not that person now, who could he turn to later at five or at ten?"

(Rhonda Arnold, Sequencing)

All of these quotes show the strong need a child has for support and nurturing from a primary caregiver- preferably a parent who in fulfilling that need is building a foundation for interaction, trust and support throughout the formative years. Soon these children will have the opportunity or choice to go to school; they will grow, and their needs will not be so strong, but every woman and child has the right to fulfillment of these needs. This is where women must continue their challenge in the workplace- and in society in general- to place more value on mothering and parenting, both financially and emotionally.

In Sweden there is a statute which says that every child has the right not to be physically abused. Sweden has put a ban on spanking, but in conjunction with this it has longer maternal and paternal leaves- up to seven months with pay. If Swedes want to take more time off without pay, then their jobs will be held for them.

As women in our society today, we must demand more daycare at the workplace, more flexibility of hours, and more job sharing; our careers must be more open-ended and we must be able to resume them after an interval of absence (for childbirth or childbearing). The point that Rhonda Arnold makes in her book, Sequencing is that women can have it all, but not all at the same time. As a woman moves through her life, she should have the right to the time with her children when they are small, and she should have the right to continue her life in the workplace when the need is fulfilled.

More women today are finding a way to do this by creating their own businesses, taking on work at home, or sharing work. It is only through these pioneering mothers that society will see alternatives to the alienation of youth today.

A MOTHER'S STORY

When I gave birth to my children I was lying on my back, my feet and hands were strapped down and I was drugged and screaming. I was not in control and had never been taught anything about delivering a child. No friend, partner, or family member was there to help me. This is how I know we women are oppressed.

My mother was always uncomfortable talking about child-bearing and it seemed during my first pregnancy that she was trying to protect me from knowing that it could be very painful. She said they always put you to sleep just before the baby is born. The idea of being in control of the process was totally alien to her. My mother-in-law only wanted to repeat over and over that it is painful at the time, but you forget about that once you get to know your child. My physician, an older man gave me some pamphlets. My sister gave me a book. I had no contact with a community health nurse. I didn't know what a midwife was and they were probably not able to practise legally in that time and place anyway. This is how I know we women are oppressed.

As I nursed my first child he became ill with severe diarrhoea. I asked my mother-in-law if she thought it had something to do with my having caught a cold. She didn't think so. She wasn't sure because she had bottle-fed all of her six children. So I called the physician who said that yes, the cold was probably the cause of the diarrhoea. I began bottle-feeding the baby immediately and the problem cleared up.

My mother, who had only made a few brief attempts at nursing two of her five children told me I should not express any of the milk which was now swelling in my very sore breasts. If I "got rid of it" she said, my breasts wouldn't stop producing it...then what would I do? (I guess she assumed that I would not resume nursing after my cold was gone - in fact, her and my mother-in-law both seemed relieved that I would now give up this odd desire I had to nurse the baby which they were obviously uncomfortable with and knew little about.)

I followed my mother's advice and a few days later I had to go to the out-patients clinic with a severe inflammation in one breast. The nurse told me it could have been worse. Later when I tried to resume nursing, my husband walked in just as the baby was struggling to get used to the breast again. He said I must be perverted to want to have this baby sucking on my breast...that it must be some sexual problem I had. Obviously the baby didn't like it, but I did! I gave up nursing at that point and was ashamed of myself. This is how I know we women are oppressed.

When I was pregnant with my second child I went out for a Coke with a girlfriend because my husband had reneged on his promise that we would go out somewhere to celebrate our wedding anniversary. When he came home very late and found I wasn't there, he came looking for me. When he found me with my friend, he ordered me to come home with him and on the way home he told me that I was lucky to be pregnant because if I wasn't he would beat me for going out like that. I knew he would have because he had hit me before and he threatened to hit me all the time. The police took him away the night he hit me, but he came back in the morning and nothing had changed. This is how I know we women are oppressed.

When he finally left us I had to get welfare. It wasn't enough to live on. They told me I could work part-time and earn up to \$200 without anything being taken off my monthly benefits. But I couldn't claim any child-care expenses, so I would be lucky to break even after I paid expenses like transportation, clothing, and child-care, so I stayed home and felt very discouraged.

My children are grown up now. They are healthy and beautiful. It has been really hard raising them and many people have blamed me for our difficulties. I guess I have made some bad choices, but I based them on bad information I was given by my culture, family and church. I meet younger women all the time who are having exactly the same problems I had when my kids were small - high rents, bad housing, low welfare rates, no child care... Instead of trying to help, most people blame these women for making bad choices. Activists lobby governments and go to conferences and network and brainstorm, but not much has changed. I realize that not all women have such bad experiences, but I also know that many of those who don't, judge and blame the ones who do, rather than look for ways to help them. This is how I know we women are oppressed.

Anonymous



☺ Mother Earth ☺

I try to mother Mother Earth. I try to minimize my impact on the environment. I try to be kind to and considerate with the fellow creatures that inhabit this planet.

I am also very conscious about what message I give to the neighbourhood children that come to visit me. I try to display to them the many abilities that women have, especially in nontraditional roles/jobs. You don't have to have children of your own to feel like you're mothering!

May Goring Bancroft

MY MOTHER ... A ROCK

At a recent Political Skills Workshop called Winning Women I was a panelist asked to discuss what motivated me to become involved in "politics". Among many things I talked about I highlighted my mothers encouragement and example as being a great motivational force. Growing up in rural Nova Scotia the eldest of eight children (born within ten years) I did not have an opportunity to belong to any outside organizations until I was fourteen. Distance and lack of transportation were the two main deterrents. My father and mother were both very strong individuals and conversation never lacked interesting topics in our house.

I was very unsure of myself as a young girl and adolescent and as a result was always on the outside of my circle of friends. It bothered me a lot and often my mother found me crying. I would tell her what they did and in later years she would tell me she'd be so mad she wanted to call their parents but she didn't. Instead she'd tell me I was just as smart, just as pretty and not to be so worried about what they thought. She always saw good things in me when I was lacking in self confidence and although I might not have believed it at the moment it's cumulative effect was very positive. I spent many a Friday and Saturday night lying at the foot of her bed dreaming out loud of future things. Getting a degree maybe, making lots of money. What it was like when she was young living on her own, all kinds of things. I would try to shock her with my liberal views (I would never get married or have kids).

I loved her when she backed me up, hated her when I was grounded but as I look back she was a rock. I always knew what she stood for, her values were consistent. She wasn't perfect but she tried, she was strong. She had opinions on everything and she could back them up. (I still dislike to debate with her because of her elephant memory for facts.) As I developed an interest in politics and other things it never occurred to me I couldn't succeed if I worked hard. My mother taught me the greatness of being born a woman by the value she placed in herself and by the time she had for me.

Yvonne MacLeod

Once upon a time in the childhood of the race, people told stories, lived within a rich horizon of myth, punctuated their lives with rites of passage, celebrated the changing seasons with rituals, entertained themselves with tales about the antics of gods, goddesses, foxes, and crows. But now we have come of age and outgrown such childish superstitions. We have left myth behind and entered the age of enlightenment. Henceforth scientific method and reason will answer our questions about how things are, technology will give us the power to change what we don't like, and economic realities will determine how we spend our days. Long live the information revolution! Onward to that brave new world of artificial intelligence and computerized data banks that will tell us everything we need to know. Everything except "Why?" and "What is the meaning of my life?"

Don't believe a word of it!

To the contrary, this enlightenment notion—the notion that we have outgrown myth—has collapsed with a thud, and suddenly myth is the news of the day. The old myths of the hero have come roaring back in new garments in the *Star Wars* trilogy. Feminists have revived the myths of the goddess and are busy inventing new rituals and rites of passage. Bill Moyers's television series with Joseph Campbell, the great mythologist who died in November 1988, received

the kind of attention usually reserved for rock stars or quarterbacks, and Campbell's *The Power of Myth* and *Hero with a Thousand Faces* remain on the *New York Times* best-seller list week after week. It seems that Americans are finally taking seriously what Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist, said is the most important question we can ask ourselves: "What myth are we living?"

A PERSONAL NOTE ON PERSONAL MYTHOLOGY

To the best of my knowledge, the idea of personal mythology was born on November 4, 1964, the day the ground on which I stood trembled, the day the giant fell and left me with a shattered world—the day my father died.

Then one day it occurred to me that every people, every tribe had a mythology that gave them answers to its agonizing questions about the meaning of life. I began to study anthropology and mythology, not in an abstract, scholarly way, but to find what the stories of other peoples could tell me about my own life. I went to collections of the myths of various tribes and peoples, such as Frank Waters's *Book of the Hopi*, and analyzed the repertoire of fundamental questions and answers that were included in any mythology:

Where did I come from?

Why is there something rather than nothing?

Why is there evil in the world?

What happens to me when I die?

With whom do I belong?

How close should I be to my mother, father, brother, sister, wife, husband, cousin, son, daughter, lover, or friend?

What are my duties, my obligations?

What is taboo, and what should I avoid?

What is the purpose of my life, my vision?
Whom should I imitate?
Who are the heroes and heroines?
Who are the villains?
Who is our enemy?
What are the stages along life's way?
Who are my helpers, guides, allies?
What is disease?

How can I be purified, healed?

What should we do with bounty, wealth, surplus?

What is our relationship with animals?

THE PUBLIC SELF

Every person is composed of at least three nations—one public, one private, and one unknown. Each nation has its own boundaries, customs, laws, language, and traditions. Some boundaries are guarded and may be crossed only by trusted friends. The frontier between the known and the unknown self is always heavily guarded. No one of us can travel freely in the hidden places of his consciousness but, fortunately, messengers slip past the border guards and bring us dreams and images from the unknown. Ideally the highways that connect the nations should be well marked so that we can travel anywhere. But ignorance or fear keeps us from exploring the outer limits of ourselves.

Let's begin with the public self, the *psychic territory* that is supposed to be open to all—officials, acquaintances, colleagues, and strangers. The human animal is always social; there is no solitary self, no man is an island. Even when we retreat to solitude we carry within us myriad voices. When there's no one else to talk to we talk to ourselves.

The public self performs for an audience, real or fancied. It is the creation of the eyes that watch it. We learn to put on masks and costumes and play the roles society expects of us. A girl begins to learn what is expected of a woman the day her mother gives her a doll instead of an erector set. Bankers shine their wing-tips, railroad engineers climb into overalls, sailors and bikers have themselves tattooed, punk rockers shave their heads or dye their hair neon colors. By compounded example we learn the language and dress that are appropriate to our class and profession. But by changing your metaphors and images of yourself and your language, you can enlarge your public self and the possibilities open to you.

Most of us hate to admit that we conform to the dictates of groupthink. But clearly the need for social approval is as fundamental to the human animal as the need for food. Community is not a luxury for human beings. The self is created by its multiple presentations; without an audience there's no individual. So long as we do not identify totally with any single role—doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief, healer—we remain free to explore the many possibilities of the private self as well as of the public self.

Viewpoints

One way to identify your public self is to locate the words you most often use to describe yourself to others. The story of your official public self is told by the way you fill in blanks on insurance or tax forms. (Name, age, sex, birthplace, marital status, police record, health, organizational affiliations). A more complex story is told by the terms you use to describe yourself to others.

Make a list of the ten words or phrases that describe you best. I am _____. They might be functions, feelings, activities, affiliations (ticket taker, frightened, Rotary Club president, student, competent, _____).

- Stop. If you want to do the above, do it before reading further. Many of the Viewpoints introduce perspectives from which you can spy on yourself. The element of surprise may startle you into unfamiliar positions from which you can see what you've hidden from yourself.
- Now rank the words or phrases in order of importance.
- Now cross them out (give them up) one at a time until you are left with your single most important characteristic. By relinquishing your self-definitions one at a time you will get an idea of the most prized and the least crucial levels of your public self. (With two or more playing, this can be a revealing game.)

You are both like and unlike other persons. Only you can write your autobiography. But when it is written it will be a human story. If pride depends upon the sense of uniqueness then humility rests upon awareness of our membership in humanity.

- In what ways are you unique? What qualities distinguish you from your friends, your enemies, the masses? Do you think other people consider you unusual? Odd? Average? A character? An individual? Unobtrusive? Hostile? Do you agree with them?
- If you were placed suddenly in an alien culture how would you identify with and distinguish yourself from the natives?
- If you were to die tomorrow how much of the story of your life could be reconstructed from what other people know of you? Who knows you best? How much of your essential self is public and how much is private? How would you be remembered?

Healthy spit supply part of motherhood

I received a birthday card from my daughter that said she loved me. When you opened it up, it continued, "But I never forgave you for cleaning my face with spit on your hanky."

We laughed. She, because she thought I was embarrassed. I, because I never used a hanky. I used fingers.

In truth, I thought the sentiment was rather ironic coming from a kid who drank from the water jug in the refrigerator and deposited so many crumbs in it that it looked like a Christmas paperweight.

Since she is not yet a parent, how is she expected to know that mothers are endowed with a spit supply that develops during pregnancy, much like milk

glands? After birth, there is an increased amount to fulfill the demands of child raising.

Mothers need all the spit they can get. At first it seems gross, but you soon adapt to it. How else do you remove a milk stain from a bib? Lipstick kisses from a cheek? Chocolate from lips? Bird-doo and mud from shoes? Ice cream from noses? Spilled food from shirts?

Mothers need saliva to tame flyaway hair and cowlicks, remove mustard from car seats and get fingerprints off walls and doorknobs. They need it to condition swim goggles. (You don't think kids are going to use their own spit, do you?) With each child, I had a fear that my spit would dry up before I had her trained to soap and water.

We are storytelling animals. As our primitive ancestors sat around the fire carving spearheads and eating blackberries they told stories which in time were woven into a tapestry of myth and legend. These tales were the first encyclopedia of human knowledge. They explained where the world came from, why there were people, why snakes have no legs, why corn smut stops birth hemorrhages, why conch shells are sacred, why coyotes howl at night, and why the gods put fire and death on earth. In the dramatic telling the triumphs of heroes and the antics of fools came alive again. Stories told the people of a tribe who they were, where they had been, where they were going, and how to stay friendly with the spirits.

*All sorrows can be borne
if you put them into a
story or tell a story
about them.*

ISAAC DINESSEN

Extracted from
"Your Mythic Journey"
Sam Keen and Ann Valley Fox.
Our Resource Center
Library.

*As My Mother
Used to Say...*

✂ Don't cross your eyes or they'll freeze that way.

✂ You've got a face only a mother could love.

✂ Don't go into dark alleys.



ERMA
BOMBICK
At W's End

Parents do a lot of gross things in the name of motherhood and fatherhood. It doesn't matter on what economic level you live, when a child hands you a shoe with a knot in the shoestring that he has wet on all day long, the first thing you do instinctively is put it in your mouth and try to loosen up the knot with your teeth. If we had an ounce of pride, we'd say, "You put that shoe in my face one more time and I'll cut its tongue out!"

And what is the first thing you do when a child wants to get rid

of his gum? You stick out your hand and say, "Spit it out in here." You have absolutely nothing in mind as to what you're going to do with it. It just seems the thing to do.

There isn't a mother alive who has watched her child play in his food until it looks like road kill, and when he doesn't want it, hasn't eaten it herself rather than "waste" it.

We are born to sacrifice, but my daughter is too young and too inexperienced to know these things. I live for the day when she has spit on three children, a Naugahyde sofa, a steering wheel, a light switch and the handles of a shopping cart, and doesn't have enough saliva left to put on mascara. Then, she'll know.

The Charlottetown accord is a bad deal for women. The accord threatens the rights of aboriginal women, seriously undermines equality rights and threatens new and perhaps existing social programmes. The absence of significant participation of women in the negotiation process has produced an agreement that excludes women and minorities from the so-called Canada Round.

The fact of an agreement among First Ministers and aboriginal leaders, however difficult it was to achieve, does not mean that this is a good agreement for Canada. In our view, even if the agreement is accepted in Quebec and the rest of the country, it will simply postpone further constitutional wrangling and will solve nothing.

We are also concerned with the tone of the debate thus far that reminds us of the scare tactics used during the Meech Lake Accord. The Charlottetown Accord is a fundamental restructuring of Canadian federalism and shifts the balance between federal and provincial government powers in a permanent and crucial way. It also shifts the balance between government rights and individual rights achieved in 1982. These are profound issues that need public debate. Furthermore, the people of Quebec and the aboriginal people have the right to democratically decide their future. The right to self-determination for Quebec and aboriginal people must mean the right to mean the right to democratically decide their future without being overwhelmed by a massive campaign orchestrated by the majority political elites.

Aboriginal women, with the exception of the Inuit, have been excluded from these negotiations from the outset. Despite a court decision that the exclusion of the Native Women's Association of Canada from the constitutional negotiations was discriminatory, the Prime Minister refused to invite them to the last meeting or to future meetings. There is no guarantee of gender equality

for aboriginal women in the text and NWAC and the National Metis Women of Canada believe that their rights will be threatened under this self-government agreement.

The Canada Clause, one of the most significant elements of the new agreement, has received little public debate. It is our view that the Canada Clause establishes a hierarchy of rights that will undermine Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. While the Supremacy of Parliament and the equality of the provinces are enshrined as a fundamental characteristics of Canada, the Charter is not. Moreover, the clauses referring to racial and ethnic equality and gender equality are more weakly worded than the other clauses. Section 15, which deals with equality for other groups, does not mention people with disabilities, lesbians and gays as fundamental characteristics of Canada. The minimal demand of racial minority groups that Section 27 of the Charter be strengthened has also been rejected.

The problems with the Canada Clause can be overcome without violating the central principles of the agreement. The addition of an over-riding equality rights clause and amendments to the Canada Clause can be made (we are now working on language for these). If the intention is to create a hierarchy of rights and to weaken the Charter then Ministers should be honest about this with the people of Canada. If this is not the intention then changes to the agreement in this area must be made.

NAC opposed Meech Lake on the basis of the threat to new social programs. The Charlottetown Accord has the same opt out with compensation clause as Meech plus a new provision enabling First Ministers to restrict federal spending powers in existing social programs, such as medicare and education. The provision on new social programmes will be an enormous barrier to the establishment of a national childcare

programme and other new cost-shared programmes such as initiatives to end violence against women, remove barriers to the participation of people with disabilities, clean up the environment etc. The provision on new social programs gives license to first Ministers to restrict the instrument that has given universal medicare in this country. The Social covenant gives us no comfort because it is totally toothless.

The agreement on the division of powers is also threatening to women and other disadvantage groups. A patchwork quilt of training programmes and immigration policies will mean even more inequity between rich and poor provinces and a requirement to fight province by province for affirmative action in training and for fair non-racial immigration policy. We still fear that UI is threatened.

Moreover the provision on inter-governmental agreements will permit a continuing devolution of power. We believe there was another solution that would have responded to Quebec's demands for more power at the same time as protecting social programmes. Unfortunately, none of our political leaders was willing to argue for asymmetrical federalism, which in our view is the only formula for a lasting constitutional solution within the framework of federalism.

The decision to permit provinces to decide how to elect Senators is a good example of the problem. Because certain First

Ministers opposed the agreement to elect the Senate by proportional representation - an electoral system that better promotes the representation of women and minorities - the First Ministers have decided to leave the election of the Senate to the provinces. So far four provinces, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia have promised to design their electoral systems to promote gender equality. While we are pleased with 3% women in the legislature, will be the least likely to embrace a system that will promote a stronger representation of women.

Now that changes to the House of Commons are also being proposed, we believe that the under-representation of women and minorities there should also be addressed. We have proposed a political accord that would begin a discussion on a system of proportional representation in the House of Commons, as well as other measures to reduce barriers to women and minorities in our electoral system.

While most of the decisions of the Constitutional Conferences were rejected by First Ministers, the public consultations before the behind closed doors process did achieve important results. The most destructive aspects of the original Federal proposals, such as an economic union proposal that would have threatened social regulation, property rights, and Council of the Federation have been removed. Aboriginal self-government and minority linguistic rights has been strengthened.

JUDY REBICK, PRESIDENT OF NAC

WILL SPEAK ABOUT WOMEN AND THE CHARLOTTETOWN ACCORD

WHEN:
Wednesday, October 7th

TIME:
7:30 PM

WHERE *UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM*
~~237 Bruce Brown Hall~~
Biology Building
St. F. X. U.

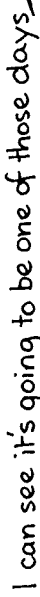
DRACONIAN IMMIGRATION BILL

The federal government has introduced a draconian immigration bill that will violate the most basic human rights of immigrants and refugees and does nothing to improve the situation of immigrant women.

The government is trying to ram Bill C-86 through before an election without sufficient public discussion. The bill will transform the immigration system. Genuine refugees will be turned away at the border without a hearing. For the first terms and conditions of work will be imposed on immigrants. These terms are similar to those imposed on domestic workers that we have protested strenuously. A person may be refused entry to Canada based on past associations, making human rights and trade union activists vulnerable to exclusion.

In addition, the bill addresses none of the concerns of immigrant women. Spouses who are charged with abuse may withdraw their sponsorship and immigration will issue a deportation order to the woman. Bill C-86 allows for refugees to be detained, to be fingerprinted, to be deported to a third country which may be unsafe. NAC has joined the Coalition for Just Refugee and Immigration Policy; NOIVM and the Congress of Black Women are also members. Local coalitions are forming.

Join your local coalition,
write Immigration Minister
Bernard Valcourt and demand
that the government
immediately withdraw Bill C-
86. Meaningful public debate
is needed to ensure fair and
just treatment for refugees
and immigrants and to bring in
changes that will protect
immigrant and refugee women.



GENDER EQUALITY IN THE SENATE

The Nova Scotia government has led the country in its push for and its support of gender equality in the Senate. They have said they will ensure women fill three of the six Senate seats reserved for Nova Scotia in the proposed Constitution.

However, the Nova Scotia government is presently receiving 50 letters against to every letter supporting gender parity in the Senate. Premier Harcourt from British Columbia has already caved in under such pressure and withdrawn his support for the equal representation of women and men Senators from his province.

People are willing to vote against the Constitution proposal in order to prohibit women's guaranteed representation in the Senate. If you believe men do not adequately represent the voice of women and if you believe we should be equally represented with men in the Senate, please write Premier Don Cameron and our M.L.A. Bill Gillis. The government needs to hear our support in this matter.

THE GREAT MOTHER

Once upon a time before the rule of the fathers- in the dawn of pre-history, the mother goddess reigned supreme in the lives of peoples. Stone age sculptures of the great Mother, aside from cave paintings, are the earliest works of art known. They appeared everywhere from Siberia to the Pyrenees depicting a world view centering around the goddess. When Meredith Stone (feminist historian anthropologist) researched and wrote her book When God Was a Woman it sparked the imagination of women interested in a revival of goddess lore, wisdom, ritual and religion. Since then (early seventies), many books have been written on the goddess and many women have welcomed this world view which places the divine within oneself, nature and the universe. Seeing the divine in every thing and person demands a world view which respects the earth, animals, plants, and water, and recognises each and every thing as interrelated, interconnected, dynamic parts of a whole- a cosmic order in and of itself.

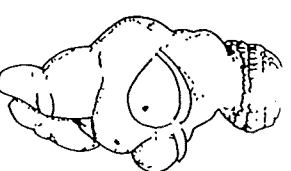
Erich Neumann wrote a classic text called The Great Mother in which he described the appearance of the mother in sculpture and painting throughout many cultures. The great mother was depicted as a fertility symbol. Stone age figures show her as squat, huge and fecund with rounded body belly and breasts. Early female figurines also depicted half female half bird, showing the shamanistic qualities of women- the power to move between worlds; the act of giving birth involves

stepping to the edge of life and death. The great mother was the primal source- the first cause whence everything came and to whom all things returned. She had many aspects: maiden, mother and crone. She was at once the nurturing, giving, encompassing protector, and the terrible devouring mother. She was the cause and mother of the world. The whole universe rested upon her, rose out of her, and melted away into her. She was mother and grave, both ugly and beautiful, virgin and crone, darkness and light, winter and summer, birth giver and death bringer. It is easy to see how numinous a figure she was and how powerful women must have been- giving birth from their own flesh, bleeding without dying, producing food from their breasts.

Where and how have we forgotten the power and beauty of women? How can we retrieve the respect for earth and woman as divine...respect for all humanity as sacred- man and woman, child and beast, bird and every living thing? Mother, show us the way that we may live in partnership as a human family protecting this sacred earth.

We need the return of the mother principle as no other time in the history of the world has needed it. And we need women to step forth to claim their respected place in the universal order.

by: Barbara Hayes



And then all that has divided us will merge
 And then compassion will be wedded to power
 And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
 And then both men and women will be gentle
 And then both men and women will be strong
 And then no person will be subject to another's will
 And then all will be rich and free and varied
 And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many
 And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance
 And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old
 And then all will nourish the young
 And then all will cherish life's creatures
 And then all will live in harmony with each other and the Earth
 And then everywhere will be called Eden once again



WORD FROM THE CENTRE

After being closed for the summer (due to lack of funding) the Women's Centre is open and bustling.

Our focus this year is housing and poverty. We are working with a women's housing focus group to develop low-income housing solutions that genuinely meet women's needs. We are also participating on a Community Housing Committee which is looking at the need for low-income housing from a community perspective.

Many women have come to the Women's Centre with personal stories of childhood sexual abuse. For many years women dealt with their abuse in private counselling or on their own. If they wanted to work in a group they had to leave Antigonish. There were no support or therapy groups in Antigonish for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Last year St. Martha's Hospital led the way in offering women a therapy group through the Department of Mental Health.

This year we are pleased to offer women a therapy group through the Women's Centre as well. The group will begin in October and will run for ten weeks. For more in formation about the group, please call the Centre at 863-6221. We are trying to acquire a good cross-section of books about sexual abuse in an attempt to expand our present library resources.

On another note! Have you heard enough about the Constitution to know how you will vote in the October 26 referendum? If you're still have as many questions as answers, you might want to hear what Judy Rebbick, president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), has to say. NAC has taken a "NO" position because they say the constitution is 'a bad deal for women'. We are hoping Judy will be in Antigonish October 6 or 8 to speak about Women and the Constitution. Watch for more information.

We would like to thank all of you who showed your support for the Centre during National Women's Centres Day. We may call on you again during the year to support us in our quest for provincial funding.

We didn't organize a Take Back the Night Walk this year. Did you miss it? Would you like us to organize one for next year. Can you help? Would you like to help organize December 6 Day of Remembrance? or the International Women's Day Cabaret?

We would love to hear your ideas, comments, and suggestions about issues you would like the AWA/AWRC to work on and events you'd like to participate in.

Lucille Harper

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS

GREAT NEWS.....

First : Thank You All
for the wonderful job everyone
did on the "Club 200" last year.

IT WAS A GREAT SUCCESS

!!!THANKS!!!

Second: GREATER NEWS.....

The "Club 200" Tickets are
on their way once again..Round 2

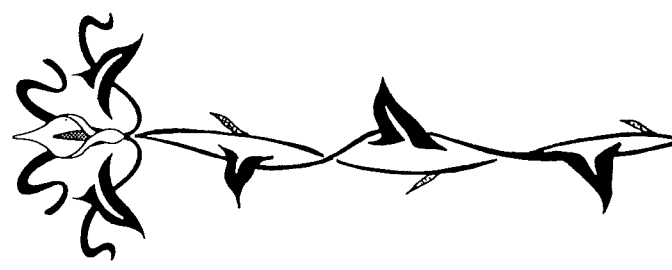
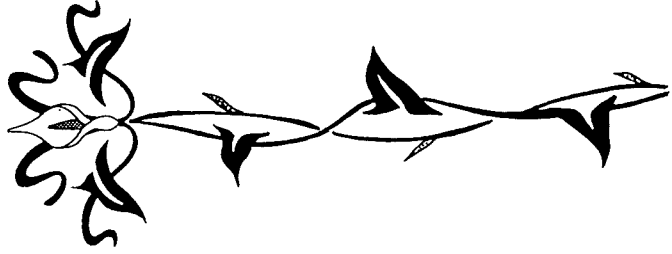
Anyone wishing to help out in the selling of
the "Club 200" tickets please call the Centre

AWAAWAWAWAWAAWAAWAAWAAWAAWAAWAAWAAWAAWAA

For more information please call the Centre.

or leave a message for Oona, Charlene, Myrna
863-6221

...Thank you...



A FAMILY HEIRLOOM

Many of us have family heirlooms. A fragile vase grandfather imported from Italy or maybe the embroidered pillow cases grandmother stitched by candle light many years ago. No matter what it may be, each holds memories from past loves and carries with it a special story.

It all started 24 years ago. A beautiful young woman was lying in a delivery room baring her first child. The child was me; the woman my mother. From that moment on she would mold and shape me, as a potter shapes fine, pottery, using firm and strong, yet, soft and gentle hands.

Now, as an adult and a mother myself, I understand the struggles she endured each day, silently battling many dysfunctions. Yet, she never let her hurt show, even when the weight of the world rested on her shoulders. Not surprisingly, she always had enough strenght to carry me through my troubling times in childhood and adolescents. Over the years we have both struggled through divorce, incest, poverty and many emotional upheavals. Each acted as a crutch for the other in times of need.

MY MOTHER'S HOUSE

-An excerpt from my mother's House
by Sidonie Collette

NINE o'clock; summer; a garden looking larger in the evening shadows; rest before sleep. Hurried steps on the gravel from the terrace to the pump, from the pump to the kitchen. Sitting close to the ground upon an uncomfortable little foot-stool, I rest my head, as I do every evening, against my mother's knees, and guess with my eyes closed: 'That's Morin's heavy step, on his way back from watering the tomatoes. That's Mélie emptying the potato parings. A little high-heeled step: here's Madame Bruneau come to have a chat with Mother.'

A charming voice reaches me from above:

"Minet-Chéri, what about saying good evening nicely to Madame Bruneau?"

"She's half asleep, the little darling, let her be."

"Minet-Chéri, if you really are asleep you'd better go to bed."

"Not just yet, mother, not till a little later! I'm not a bit sleepy."

A slender hand strokes my hair and pinches my ear. How dearly I love its three little hard lumps caused by the rake, the secateur and the dibble.

"Of course not, children of eight are never sleepy!"

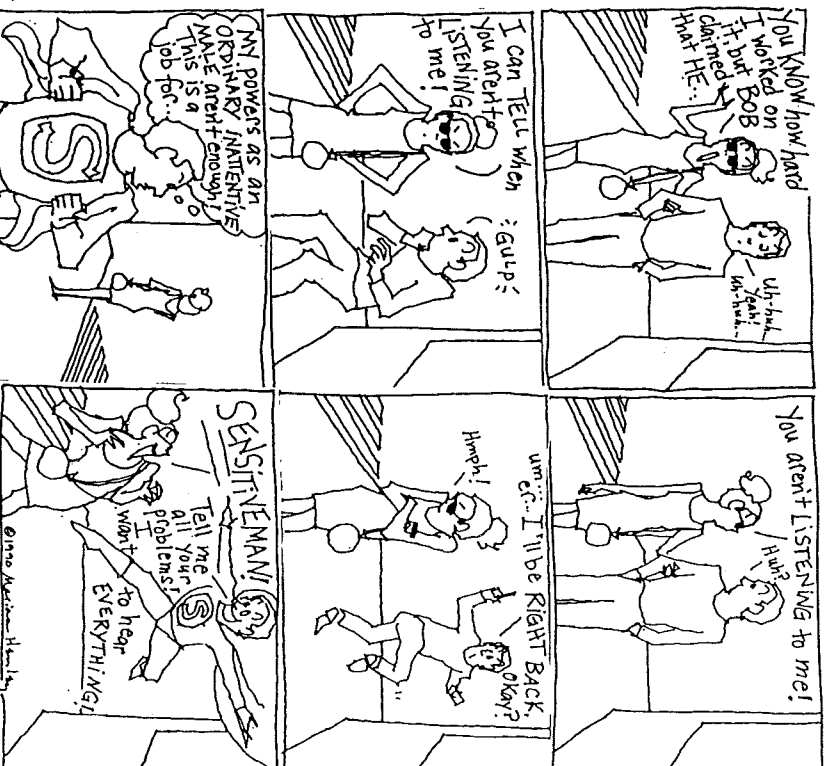
In the failing light I remain leaning against my mother's knees. Wide awake, I close my useless eyes. The linen frock under my cheek smells of household soap, of the wax that is used to polish the iron, and of violets. If I move my face a little away from the fragrant gardening frock, my head plunges into a flood of scents that flows over us like an unbroken wave: the white tobacco plant opens to the night its slender scented tubes and its starlike petals. A ray of light strikes the walnut tree and wakens it; it rustles, stirred to its lowest branches by a slim shaft of moonshine, and the breeze overlays the scent of the white tobacco with the bitter, cool smell of the little worm-eaten walnuts that fall on the grass.

At age 45 my mother now realizes that life can be short and is very precious. She now battles what I believe to be one of her most difficult battles, Diabetes and Multiple Myloma (Bone Cancer). She bares the physical pain and all who know her bare the emotional pain. Yet, her spirit remains unbroken. She strives for independence and frowns upon pity.

We've talked many times about death and realize that to all of us its inevitable. When she says to me, "I'm not scared of dying," it makes my heart swell with a multitude of emotion.

You see, I'm very rich. I'm the heir to the most precious of all heirlooms. No, its not fine china or jewels. It lies in the vault of my heart; its strenght, courage, patience, humility, and dignity. Forever etched on the wall of the vault, shining like gold and diamonds in the early morning sunlight, is a picture. My inspiration, my mother.

SENSITIVE MAN



MOTHERHOOD-

AS RELATIONSHIP AND INSTITUTION

Motherhood- a word that conjures up thoughts of warmth, shelter, safety, longing, love, intimacy, primal bonding, expectation, denial, need, anger, desire, abandonment, humiliation...the list could go on. What other relationship is more primal or more basic!! The one unifying experience shared by all women is that period of time spent unfolding in a woman's body. We are dependent on this mother for all our needs, and carry with us the influence of this relationship throughout our lives to our death. Women have been identified by a patriarchal culture as childless and barren in relationship to their status as child bearer although there is no term for non father in social categories. Adrienne Rich, when she wrote Of Woman Born in the seventies, wrote passionately on the institution of motherhood and vividly described the ways it enslaved and de-humanized women: " Most women in history (patriarchal) have become mothers without choice and even greater numbers have lost their lives bringing life into the world."

At the same time she wrote about birthing and raising her own children, describing the feelings of love, hate, the hopes, fears, longings to be free of responsibilities, the resentment of being "taken over", engulfed by this onerous all-consuming role...the remorse felt after feeling angry at the helpless child, the guilt, the shame that we cannot be perfect and love ourselves lessily and unconditionally... the incredible sweet tenderness of this love both exquisite and all consuming, the raging anger at being consumed. As mothers we experience all these feelings - not one of us will deny the conflicting emotions one is subject to as a mother.

Most women have been mothers in the sense of tending and nurturing the young, as sisters, aunts, nurses, teachers, foster mothers and

step-mothers. Most of us have been raised by mothers or women who for money or through family bonds stepped in to assume responsibility for our care. Men can beget children in passion or by rape, and disappear, leaving a woman to deal with the consequences of her decision...to raise or abandon the child to suffer the stigma of illegitimacy, to consider abortion or adoption- all heavily weighed social choices carrying far-reaching penalties, fears and demands and annihilations.

The women in patriarchy have been denied the right to control their bodies, to limit male access to their bodies or to limit when and how she would be impregnated; in the name of motherhood they have suffered deprivations for themselves and their children. Women have raised children under very harsh circumstances. In 1915 the Women's Cooperative Guild in Britain published a volume of letters written by the wives of manual labourers about their lives as mothers and workers in the home. These lives were a contradiction of the idealised home as a protected place away from the struggles of a harsh and cruel world. The average woman had five to eleven children with several miscarriages, most of them with no pre-natal care or adequate diet. The anxiety and physical depletions of incessant child bearing is a strong theme of those letters, as is the insensitivity of husbands demanding sex throughout pregnancy and often immediately after delivery. These women endured repeated pregnancies with little money or food to stretch for the coming child; at the same time they had to contend with the heavy labour of scrubbing floors, ironing, washing, cleaning, taking in washing and mending to make ends meet. In 1860 in America a million women were employed outside the home. By the end of the Civil War there were 75,000 women working in New York

THE WOMEN WHO MADE THIS NEWSLETTER POSSIBLE

Barbara Hayes, Gail Rebbeck, Lucille Harper, Diane Walsh,
Heather Mayhew, Moe Thomas, May Goring Bancroft, Myrna Skakun
Katherine Reed

The image of the mother in the home, however unrealistic, has haunted and reproached the lives of wage earning mothers; and yet today, in the nineties, are we any closer to resolving the demands , dilemmas and responsibilities which motherhood carries?

"Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, that is not difficult."

by: Barbara Hayes
with extracts from
"Of Donors Born"
By Adrienne Rich.

AS IS USUALLY THE CASE WE'RE WOEFULLY UNDER-
FUNDED....SEEKING HELP FROM BOTH MEMBERS AND
FRIENDS EVEN THOUGH WE KNOW YOU'VE PAID YOUR
DUES. WE ARE LOOKING FOR EITHER A SERIES OF
POST-DATED CHEQUES FOR A 12 MOUNTH PERIOD OR
6 MONTH PERIOD OR A LUMP SUM IN WHATEVER
AMOUNT YOU CAN AFFORD.

Mail to: 204B Kirk Place
219 Main Street
Antigonish, NS
B2G 2C1

For more information please call the Centre.
or Leave a Message for Oona, Charlene, Myrna

Charlotte Whitton

-MEMBERSHIPS ARE DUE. PLEASE
TAKE A MOMENT NOW TO PUT YOUR
CHEQUE IN THE MAIL, OR DROP BY
THE CENTRE WITH YOUR FEE. (\$7.
UNWAGED, \$15. REG., \$25
SUSTAINING)

IF YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE
PLEASE CALL

863-6221

...Thank you...