

SPOKESWOMAN

St. John's Status of Women's Council
Magazine

Spring 2004

32 years of Feminism!

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The ideas and opinions expressed in the *Spokeswoman* do not necessarily reflect the views of the St. John's Status of Women Council



At the Women's Centre

The GIA Project on Women's Housing

By Jane Robinson

The Gender-Inclusive Analysis and Housing Policy Development in Newfoundland and Labrador has been a major part of my work with the St. John's Status of Women Council during the past two years. The project developed out of SJSWC's Hammer and Nail Project (1999-2001), in which we did action research on women's housing issues in St. John's.

In the GIA Project we went province-wide, and reached out to involve a broader group of low-income women in housing research and policy change. We used the definition of gender-inclusive analysis which had been developed by the Women's Policy Office in the provincial government.

Collaboration has been a central element of the GIA project. From the start, we requested and received the

assistance of other equality-seeking groups. We set up an advisory committee consisting of the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, the Association for New Canadians, the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, the Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Women's Health Network, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Lantern and the Provincial Association Against Family Violence.

The overall goal of the GIA Project was to identify housing issues of low income women and other marginalized groups in Newfoundland and Labrador and to work towards policy and legislative changes to address their needs. There have been three phases of the project.

In Phase One, we carried out a consultation on housing and homelessness in the winter of 2002-03. Susan Williams was hired as the researcher/ writer for the project. We organized six focus groups, one video-conference, two conference calls and 20 telephone interviews. In total we heard from about 100 people concerning housing issues in their areas. The participants represented disability organizations, women's centres and shelters, Aboriginal women's organizations, new Canadian organizations, anti-violence groups, family resource centres, tenants' associations, health care providers and mental health self-help groups.

In September 2003, we published the *Something's Got to Change* research report. This 65-page report discusses the serious shortage of affordable, accessible, adequate housing in urban and rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

It makes 11 recommendations for policy change. For example, the report calls on governments to increase the supply of affordable housing; raise shelter allowances and heat subsidies; introduce rent controls; improve inspection and enforcement of regulations on building conditions, fire safety, public health; provide more information (in plain language and alternate formats) about housing rights and responsibilities; increase funding for repairs for low-income home owners and develop a provincial housing strategy

Something's Got to Change research report has received much acclaim from women's groups, community groups and government officials. The report can be downloaded from our website: www.sjswc.ca. An audio version of the full report can also be accessed from the website. The written report is also available from the Women's Centre, 83 Military Road, St. John's, A1C 2C8.

In Phase Two of the GIA Project, we organized a three-day Workshop on Gender and Housing Policy. The workshop took place in at the Signal Hill Interpretation Centre in St. John's from Nov. 23-25, 2003. Women from around the province who had taken part in the GIA research, spoke on panels about the housing issues in their areas.

Ruth Flowers of Inuit Women of the Torngats spoke about the need for more funding to keep women's shelters open on the Labrador Coast. The shelter in Hopedale has remained closed for four years. A participant from Grand Falls-Windsor said mental health consumers are at times placed in seniors' homes because there is nowhere else for them

to stay. An international student told of the housing conditions she has experienced in St. John's.

"Some landlords) think that we probably come from poor countries anyway, so we can put up with things like overflowing toilets, mice and mould, and that even if we wanted to complain, we wouldn't know how," she said.

More than 60 people took part in the GIA Workshop. Most represented community groups, government agencies and departments with a housing mandate. There was one landlord present. We were encouraged by the participation of the minister for the Status of Women, Joan Burke. In small groups, participants prioritized the recommendations contained in the *Something's Got to Change* report and ranked them from "do-able" in the short term, to medium- and long-term. At the close of the Workshop, a Housing Policy Working Group was formed with community and government participation.

Phase Three of the GIA Project involves providing supports for the Working Group to meet by video-conference and develop a strategy for change in prioritized areas of housing policy. We have held three video-conferences so far, and some action steps have been taken. The department of Government Services has agreed to set up a 1-800 number for Residential

Tenancies issues. Human Resources, Labour and Employment will include a cheque insert on landlord-tenant issues in the social assistance cheques in May.

Terms of reference for the Working Group have been drafted and several subcommittees have been formed. We are calling for social condition to be included in the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Legislation. A committee is looking into building and safety codes to determine what housing inspection services are available, and to make this information public.

There is much work still to be done. What's next? A presentation at the upcoming Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) conference ... and Phase Four: Taking the Working Group into 2005. Thanks to all of you who have given your time and energy to the GIA Project and the working group. We acknowledge the financial support of Status of Women Canada and Health Canada for the GIA Project.



Tribute

Thanks and farewell to Jane

By Phyllis Artiss

In June Jane Robinson will depart from her job as co-coordinator of the Women's Centre. All of us on the Board of the Centre/SJSWC, as well as staff, volunteers, visitors and others who have had the privilege of working with Jane since she started working with us in 1997 will miss her horribly, but we send our warmest wishes as she sets forth for new adventures and triumphs.

Jane has been coordinator or co-coordinator for most of my years on the board. From the time she stepped into the role of co-coordinator at the Centre (initially with Dawn Onishenko and later with Michelle Boutcher, Danielle Finney and now Lisa Zigler) Jane created a calm, orderly, welcoming, safe space for women of all ages, backgrounds, interests and abilities. Whether orienting new staff, board members and volunteers; interacting with women who drop in to the Centre; chairing public meetings; conducting media interviews; cross-examining politicians, or promoting any of the many causes she is committed to, Jane always has been well prepared, articulate, resourceful and respectful. She listens, is quick to understand differing perspectives, pays attention to all, addresses their needs, and brings out the best in them. As an administrator, she dazzles us with her quiet efficiency, producing reports on time, balancing inadequate budgets, producing instantly just the file or document (often ancient) we need to settle a question in the middle of a meeting. . . and usually offers tea and reassurance at the just right time.

As a writer she is committed to clear, informative, jargon-free. . .and correctly punctuated. . .prose.

She's a whiz at fundraising. At SJSWC, Jane applied for and received grants from both obscure and high-profile, competitive sources: funds she directed towards innovative, useful projects that enhanced not only our coffers but also our effectiveness and profile in the community.

Her research, and that funded by projects she initiated, contributed to our understanding of special needs of women in the province, and she has acted on the results of this research. The GIA/Housing project, for example, which she describes elsewhere this issue, is on its way to changing public policy and the way bureaucrats, politicians, owners of rental housing and the rest of us look at housing issues. Because of this research and Jane's ability to mobilize support for following through on it, the gendered nature of homelessness and inadequate housing in this province (largely hidden till now), are being recognized and addressed.

Jane has also served as our collective conscience, reminding us always, whether we are selecting articles for the Spokeswoman, organizing a party, or conducting the daily work of the Centre, to ask whether we are being inclusive, whether we are relying on stereotypes, whether we are unknowingly discriminating against women with disabilities, those from religions or cultures different from ours, those who are poor, or those of different sexual orientations. She has given her support and caring concern to members of the motherboard when we have needed it to keep going. She has been ready with encouraging words as well as strategies for survival in a hectic organization. The motherboard has worked smoothly as a result.

Jane is a living example of that old

activist adage: Think globally, act locally. She brings to her work with us her perspective from six years as Development Education Officer at Oxfam, and before that at the Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institute.

She sits on the national board of CRIAW (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women). Her ongoing engagement with research and social justice at the national and international levels informed all her work with us.

At the same time she was firmly rooted in the local. At the Women's Centre, she



spent many hours each day addressing the immediate needs of women who came to the centre to use the clothing bank or get something to eat, and others who phoned to ask where they could get help in their struggles with violence, inadequate health care, legal problems and a multitude of other challenges.

THANK YOU, JANE.

May you go well, stay well, and continue to bring order, lightness and balance wherever you go.

Staff

At the Women's Centre

By Lisa Zigler Co-coordinator

The past several months have been a very busy and exciting time at the Women's Centre.

One outstanding example of new initiatives resulting in increased requests

for service is the *Adopt a Women and Her Children for the Holidays*.

On average, the Women's Centre responds to more than 300 requests for support, information, referral and individual advocacy per month.

In the fall of 2003, the Centre responded to the needs of women who were dropping into the Centre seeking information about a variety of topics. Many of these women were socially isolated. The *Women's Film and Discussion Group* provided some of these women with an opportunity to meet one another watch a film and have a lively discussion afterward. Topics such as homelessness, addiction, stress reduction, self care and health issues such as menopause and cancer were discussed. The Centre worked with three social work students to assist with putting together this group.

In October 2003, in recognition of Women's History (or as we like to say, Herstory), month, I organized a showing of the video *The Untold Story: of Women Story of the Suffragettes of Newfoundland*. The producer of this film, Marion Frances White spoke about how the film was made and the significance of this struggle to women today.

In December 2003, the Women's Centre embarked on one of its most successful programs to date. In response to increasing calls for assistance with gifts and food throughout the holidays, a new program called the *Adopt A Woman and her Children for the Holidays* was developed and launched. This program matched single parents with children to generous individuals, families and in some cases, companies who "adopted" them for the holidays. These donors provided gifts and food for the families. All information about the families was kept confidential. We had a team of eager Santa elves deliver these gift.



Tree, Lisa and Jane Playing Elves

This program received extensive media coverage, which can be read in the media section of our new website (www.sjswc.ca).

To say that this program was a success would be an understatement. At the end of it all, we had matched more than 30 families with donors. In addition, we had received so many extra gifts (more than 200) that we donated many to the Association for New Canadians and the Native Friendship Centre. These organizations in turn were able to assist a significant amount of other families. We also received donations of \$3,500 in cash which was used to purchase food gift certificates, taxi chits and personal care items for women in need.

In January 2004, Rebecca Fagan, a fifth-year social work student at Memorial, began her field placement at the Women's Centre. Rebecca worked with women who phoned and dropped in. She assisted with our fund-raising efforts, attended community meetings and became involved with International Women's Week.

In early January 2004, the International Women's Day committee was formalized and swung into action. This diverse committee was made up of women from a wide variety of community organizations, labour and government. SJSWC took a

leadership role in organizing and chairing this committee. I spent significant time involved in community development, establishing partnerships and helping to plan an exciting and thought provoking week of events.

The IWD theme concerned women and economic equality. Our slogan was "Women's work makes cents....we want dollars!". Throughout the week (March 6-13, 2003), a variety of events were held in St. John's, including a sold out Bread and Roses brunch for 200 women. an open house at the Women's Centre, panel discussions, art shows, music nights and much more.

One of most important events held during this week consisted of a series of meetings with the political leaders of all three provincial parties in this province: Premier Danny Williams, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women Joan Burke, Opposition leader Roger Grimes and members of his caucus and NDP leader Jack Harris. A wide variety of organizations had an opportunity to convey to them issues such as violence against women, funding for women's centres, pay equity, the minimum wage, child care and housing. SJSWC looks forward to continuing this ongoing dialogue with our politicians.

The SJSWC/ Women's Centre also hosted a special meeting with Minister Joan Burke and Sheree MacDonald of the Women's Policy Office and our board and staff in March 2004 to discuss our program and future plans.

One of the new programs that came out of these meetings was *Feminism Fits*. SJSWC along with other community partners has compiled a list of women who have agreed to write a letter once a month to Premier Williams about issues affecting their lives. Each month, women are asked to suggest an issue. Information about one

of these issues is then sent out and participants are encouraged to send an email to Premier Williams on the 8th of each month. The eighth is significant because IWD is March 8. If you would like to be involved with this initiative, please send your email address to me at sjswc@nfld.com

In March 2004, SJSWC/Women's Centre launched our brand new website. Designed by Janice Lockyer of Rufus Designs. This website continues everything you would want to know about our organization. Please visit us on the web at: www.sjswc.ca

As the weather gets nicer (this will happen won't it?) I am looking forward to helping volunteers work on our garden out back. If you have a green thumb please contact me to become involved.

That's it for now.

Memorial

Gert Crosbie

By Marilyn Porter

Gert Crosbie, who died Saturday March 27, 2004 aged 78, is a loss to the entire women's community. Many feminists will associate the name Crosbie with the unfeminist mouth of John Crosbie.

Gert was related, of course, but she seemed come from an entirely different order of person.

Indeed, her mother, Janet Miller Murray was the first Newfoundland woman to study to become a lawyer. And Gert remained interested in women's education and dedicated to opportunities



for women – especially Newfoundland and Labrador throughout her life.

Gert was generous, caring, energetic and engaged. She related warmly to everyone she met and was endlessly fascinated by the diversity of life. She gave unstinting service to causes she was committed to – as diverse as her work for children with cerebral palsy (including the foundation of Virginia Waters school) and her painstaking additions to the genealogical material in the Maritime History Archives.

I only knew Gert in the last year or so of her life – and I wish it had been longer. She had lived through 'interesting times' in Newfoundland, and both her family connections and her own interest meant that she had an unmatched richness of memories to draw on.

And, generous with her memory as she was with everything, she would happily spend hours exploring and commenting on the past, and especially women's place in our history.

In many ways, Gert represented a whole generation of women who made us what we are today. We must value them – and when they are gone – honour them and their contribution.

Marilyn Porter is a research professor at MUN in sociology and women's studies.

Tribute

Remembering the courage of Nellie Nippard

Lyrics by Jim Payne

*Nellie Nippard died today
God bless and speed her on her way*

*Along to her eternal rest
By any measure she passed the test
In this life she was put upon
Faced turmoil and was badly wronged
While justice stood on feet of clay
Nellie Nippard died today*

*This woman of reluctant fame
To notoriety staked no claim
But by her strength the struggle led
To make sense of the blood she shed*

*So women wouldn't stand alone
When brutalized in their own homes
That victims wouldn't have to pay
Nellie Nippard died today*

*So may God rest her weary soul
May heaven keep her in its fold
In a place to call her own
With a cushion near the throne
She spoke of dignity and worth
For her battered sisters on this earth
While the scales of justice sway
Nellie Nippard died today*

In memory of Nellie Nippard, a courageous advocate for women suffering from violence.

Nellie Mae Murphy, 54, better known as Nellie Nippard, died in November 2003 in hospital in Gander after a 10-year battle with cancer.



In July 1990, Nippard, a native of Lewisporte and mother of six, was stabbed in the face,

stomach and back by her estranged husband Llewellyn Nippard, who left her for dead.

She miraculously survived the attack and made preventing violence against women her personal campaign, pushing the National Parole Board to allow victims to

give impact statements at parole hearings.

Jim Payne is a renowned Newfoundland musician and songwriter.

Media

My experiences as a sex columnist

By Kaya Anderson Payne

I started volunteering for The Muse, Memorial University's student newspaper, before I had any idea I would be writing a sex column for them.

I just stopped by the office because I was friends with some of the staff. I promised their systems administrator I would help him update the webpage. It was a nice place to have lunch and lie low when the rest of campus was so busy and crowded.

One morning in September, that same systems administrator mentioned to me that The Muse was looking for someone to write a sex column and he thought I might be interested. So, I stopped by their general meeting that day at lunch. There, the Op/Ed editor asked me the same question - nice and loudly, in front of the whole staff. "Ah - OK," I said. And so it began.

They wanted me to start with a piece on heterosexual intercourse positions and I obliged with two columns on the topic, followed up shortly thereafter with two columns on barrier methods of birth control and STI prevention. I didn't really expect people to notice the columns. In fact, I went so far as to remind my friends to read The Muse so they wouldn't miss them. "It's only a campus paper," I thought. "No one really checks the back pages of the Opinions section."

But I was wrong.

In January, we published the first half of a column entitled "Mind-blowing cunnilingus." Not only did it - and the accompanying diagram - raise some eyebrows, it also generated some nasty letters to the editor, one of which had to be edited for slander before it could be printed.

Furthermore, The Muse's editor-in-chief refused to print the second half of the column. At the time, he told me he didn't like the way part one had been written (He still hadn't looked at part two).

Coincidentally, that week The Muse hosted a national conference of the Canadian University Press. By and large, my Canadian peers praised the columns, as did one of our keynote speakers. And, when the CUP women's caucus found out about the reaction the cunnilingus column had received here at home, they organized a letter-writing campaign to the editor expressing their support. St. John's native Misha Warbanski of Concordia University arranged to have the column printed in full in their paper, The Link. At this point, the editor in chief agreed that the column was well written, but still refused to print the second half on the grounds that it was too long. Throughout this process, the section editor was extremely supportive of my writing and was arguing for it to be published, as were a number of other people who had begun writing to The Muse. But it was generally only the negative feedback which was reproduced in the editorial section.

The whole thing attracted so much attention, I ended up being the focus of an article in The Telegram. I was also

contacted by several other media sources who were interested in the columns, though so far nothing



has come of this.

Throughout all of this, my friends have been fantastic - encouraging me every step of the way. They have done everything from suggesting sex positions and confirming that my oral sex techniques are solid - and for that I'm grateful.

My roommate has been particularly great, as she would give me feedback while I was actually in the writing process and laugh at me as I played with dental dams in an attempt to discover how best to describe their proper use.

My family, too, has been very supportive. Despite her initial shock at seeing my photo, with the headline "Pleasure and Payne" jumping out of the newspaper at her, my mother and the rest of my close relatives have been extremely positive.

The volunteers at MUN's Women's Resource Centre were wonderful throughout the conflict over the cunnilingus column, validating my position and going so far as to broadcast some of my previous articles on their Feminist Power Hour show on CHMR.

I've had other reactions which were a little more upsetting. One day I came across a local online forum discussing the Sex Geek columns and while some of the comments were nice, others labelled my writing as everything from pointless to "softcore porn bullshit."

The reaction within the Muse's office was also distressing, since I kept hearing different reasons as to why "Mind-blowing cunnilingus part two" was being kept out of print. (It eventually was posted on The Muse's website - it never made the paper in the end.) Furthermore, The Muse printed an abundance of letters criticizing me and implying that I had insisted I be allowed to write about sex. Despite the fact that the column and all its topics were the ideas of the paper's masthead, this notion

was never corrected - and that, too, was hurtful.

I've certainly made a name for myself as the Sex Geek. I'm involved with a lot of activities and groups, both on and off campus, which I think are more interesting than The Muse and I feel that a lot of my accomplishments are more noteworthy than being a student writer. Yet, I'm usually identified now as a sex columnist when someone needs to describe me.

I've also learned that there are rumours concerning my personal life circulating around campus. Depending on who you ask, I might be a heterosexual sex fiend, a sexually frustrated lesbian, or a religious virgin. Only a couple of people have bothered to ask me which of those rumours are true, to which I say "none" - and the details are really no one's business but my own. I find it pretty funny that people actually care about this kind of thing and have come up with such silly ideas. Some of my closer friends have suggested I promote these myths about myself for amusement's sake, but to me it doesn't seem worth the effort.

I don't regret writing about sex. I'm planning to keep it up, in fact. Even since the fuss about the cunnilingus column, I co-authored a Valentine's Day feature about masturbation. I think it's really important to talk about our sexuality and to promote honest discussion. I know that at least some people find the columns educational and many others find them entertaining (some of the men in my Paton College residence would read them aloud each week as they were published, for example).

I have fun with what I do, and I don't particularly mind what people say about me as a result. I'm still shocked that people have paid so much attention to the whole issue and that there's an impression now that I'm 'larger-than-life.' But maybe I

shouldn't be.

When I began writing, my only (and rather naive) fear was that I was going to be boring. At least I don't need to worry about that.

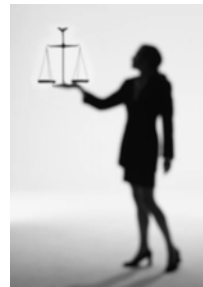
Legal

Divorce kits revamped

By Twila Reid
Board member

The Canadian Bar Association Law Day Committee is a group of lawyers who organize activities each year with the view to educating the public surrounding legal issues.

Law Day will be celebrated across the country on April 15th, 2004. As a member of the Law Day Committee, I suggested one of the activities we do this year is work with the Women's Centre to draft a new



and improved divorce kit in order for the centre to get back this much-needed source of revenue. A committee composed of women's centre staff member Jane Robinson, family law lawyer

Bernadette Cole and myself undertook this task.

The divorce kits provided an easy to understand step by step instruction manual on how to apply for an uncontested divorce. The women's centre has been unable to sell their very popular divorce kits for some time because of the many changes to the family law rules and procedures.

Well . . . the new kit is just about complete! It was officially launched April 15 at the Legal Information Fair at the Avalon Mall. It summarizes the

procedures necessary for divorce in nine easy to understand steps. It also includes copies of required court forms, information on filing costs and phone numbers and additional guidelines with respect to "desk divorces," a brand new way of obtaining a divorce that does not require any court appearances.

Special thanks to Bernadette Cole of Benson Myles Law Firm for undertaking the enormous task of revising the kit to explain the very complicated legal procedure of a divorce in a manner that is easy to understand and follow.

In solidarity

Vigil a necessary reminder

By Nancy Cater

On Dec. 6, 1989, 14 women were killed, simply because they were women.

They attended Polytechnique in Montreal and went to school to study like it was any other. Some were close to graduation, planning the next step in their lives and looking forward to new experiences.

Dec. 6 was the last day they went to school.

This piece of our history reflects a bigger problem in our society. Women are killed because they are women. Women are assaulted, raped, battered, abused and harassed because of their gender.

We live in a society that still allows for these things to happen on a wide continuum that varies, and one that perpetuates devalued positions for women.

The 6th of December has turned into the

National Day of Remembrance and action on violence against women.

Anyone who thinks that this day is unnecessary or hyperbolic should come to the next vigil to hear the stories of women they see every day. Classmates, co-workers, sisters, girlfriends - we are all these things to someone.

The Vigil for December 6th, 2003 was organized in a way that would reflect the continuum I mentioned earlier.

One part of the ceremony included 15 monologues written by women and read by women who have experienced 'gendered' violence in one of its many guises. There were stories about the fear we feel as women when we are told about the dangers that exist if you go through this life in female form.



There are stories about horrific rape and incest. The stories range in their experiences, but are connected by the consequences, all of which are devastating.

We look around our circle of female friends and relatives and note how many of them have been touched by violence. The numbers are astonishing and frightening. Why is this still happening?

What are we doing to our children? What kind of environment are we creating for them to grow into and live within?

The vigil organized by the Sexual Harassment Office of Memorial University aims to use these monologues as a way to raise awareness about violence against women.

Violence starts very small, but at a very significant stage with the names women

are called as they walk down the street, or harassment on the job that we convince ourselves is just something we must put up with and ignore. But is it?

These actions are connected to something entrenched much deeper in our consciousness about women. If it is OK to call women names and blame them for attracting unwanted sexual advances, then it is okay to kill them for taking positions away from men at the technical school. Right? Marc Lepine thought so.

Stop violence against women at every level, no matter how insignificant it may seem.

Nancy Cater is a student in the master of women's studies program at MUN.

Community

What's happening at LBGT-MUN

By Byron Rolls
General director, LBGT-MUN
VP communications, GSU

The LBGT-MUN Resource Centre is delighted to invite the members of the women's movement and the feminist community in Newfoundland and Labrador to be involved in the exciting events we have planned in the coming months.

We would like to take a moment to highlight two important events and how you can get involved.

Pride Week 2004

Last year was a groundbreaking year for the queer community in St. John's, as the LBGT-MUN Resource Centre led the St. John's Pride Week Committee.

With another Pride Week coming, we

hope to be just as heavily involved and to help lead our community into another, bigger and better year of Pride. LBGT-MUN is currently beginning public discussion on Pride Week 2004.

We would like to invite any interested community members to be involved in the making of this year's Pride Week.

We need organizations/individuals who wish to host events; individuals able to do some of the "grunt work"/organizing, ideas for a logo and slogan and more.

We plan to ensure that this year's Pride is a good balance of events, akin to last year, which included bowling; a nature walk; a Drag Race; Pride Dance, socials at East Side Mario's, Aqua, Bitters. Dooley's, Graffenberg's, the Zone, Tsubar and Liquid Ice, as well as a variety of other fun events.

The only significant difference we anticipate is an increase in the number of people participating in events. We want to ensure the women's community understands we need their support - marching with us, putting together an event, etc.

We want this year's Pride to not only show our love and support for ourselves, but to showcase the support we've received from other community members and groups.

For example, we want this year's Pride March to include community-group representatives holding placards that say "Our organization supports equality/the LBGT movement" and for heterosexual people to hold signs saying "You don't have to be gay to support equality."

If you would like to get involved in the planning for Pride Week, please contact the LBGT-MUN Resource Centre. We welcome all interested community members and organizational representatives.

The Queer Monologues

LBGT-MUN is calling for submissions for a fall production of The Queer Monologues. The purpose of this event will be to provide awareness of lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgendered and "queer" issues. This will be completed through a two-three hour series of skits that highlight the personal stories of lesbian-bisexual-gay -transgendered persons in this province.

Funds received from this event will be invested in LBGT-MUN's campaigns and projects, including an account we are establishing to help our community work towards creation of an LBGT centre for the larger metro area.

Submissions should be stories that reflect some aspect of lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgendered and "queer" life or the experiences of family and friends of lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgendered and "queer" people. Topics could include, but are not limited to: coming out stories; experiences of homo, bi and trans-phobia (i.e. discrimination)



at school, at home, at work, or through the healthcare system; love stories; happy stories; sad/angry stories; life stories; from people of all ages and backgrounds, from all over Newfoundland and Labrador.

All submissions received will be considered for "The Queer Monologues"; all submissions will be considered strictly confidential and can be fictionalized to protect the author in question (however such edits will only be done in consultation with the author).

Those who submit stories are not expected to present them. However if you are interested in being a

volunteer/presenter/actor for the showing of the monologues, you should indicate this on your submission.

For more information, to make a submission, or to indicate your interest in volunteering, please contact us. We look forward to your help in creating this new and innovative way to highlight the diverse/beautiful/challenging lives of lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgendered, questioning and other members of the community in this province.

We are planning a volunteer training later in May and are seeking people to apply, be screened and begin volunteering with us. No need to be a student, staff member or faculty member of MUN, we seek anyone and everyone willing to make a commitment to our organization. To apply, call us or send us an e-mail. We look forward to hearing from you.

Our contact information: Location, UC-6022. E-mail, lbgtmun@mun.ca;. Website, www.mun.ca/lbgt. Phone, (709) 737-7619; Fax, (709) 737-4743. Mailing address, LBGTMUN Resource Centre, MUN Student's Union, University Centre, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1C 5S7.

Housing working group

Apartment crunch on west coast

By Lorraine Sheehan

We don't often think about homeless people or people in our area that are suffering from inadequate housing, but there are serious problems and they are sure to get worse.

In Stephenville, there are 64 apartments that will have the rent increased in June

from \$560 to \$725. Now, many will say that is not so bad as heat and lights are included. But when you look at the fact mostly people funded by Human Resources, Labour and Employment occupy most of these units, you will see that this is a major problem. The total rent allowed by HRLE is \$448 so the tenants have to dip into their meagre living portion to pay the balance on their rent.

None of these tenants will be able to continue to rent these properties. Where will they find other suitable housing? The proposed rate is higher than any other rate in the area. Will anyone be willing to pay this rate to live in these apartments? Will all these people be displaced just to have the proposed rate drop again? What is the true motive behind this drastic increase?

We need policies that protect both the landlord and the tenant. There is also a lack of accessible housing in this area. Housing without stairs and small units for single people who chose to live alone. The aim of the Working Group is to look at current housing policies and to work to make change.

Fiction

A letter home

By Dr. Mira Parai

Dear Mom:

It may take one or two weeks for this letter to reach you. By then you might have heard it.

You may not know though that it's your Angela. I have a new name. The name you gave me is heavenly. Angelica!

Daddy used to call me Angel, His Angel, no one else's.

Remember, one day I was crying to get wings so that I could fly.

Next day, Daddy bought me a pair of beautiful silver angel-wings and told me, "Angel, here is the wings, but don't fly away. Don't even try. You are beautiful angel in our home. If you try you may get hurt."



Mom, do you still remember those days? Dad all the time used to put me on his shoulder while we took the walk in the park by the river. Dad had a big black mole on the back of his neck and I pinched it every time on my piggyback ride. You told me that it was a bumblebee that lost the stripes, stung and got stuck on his neck.

How old was I then Mom? Maybe three or four? That was the time Dad got a big job and he had to go out of town every month or so. I was so happy, because when he got back from the trips he brought toys and dresses for me.

I remember one day after a long and loud arguments, Dad left the house and you cried for hours and hours. I was sitting by you. At last you hugged me and said, "Angel, Dad got a new friend and he wants to be with her. Don't worry, we will be fine, right Angel?"

"Yes Mom", I answered, though wondering. That's the last time I saw Dad. Three or four Christmases he sent me cards and gifts. Was he living in Ontario or Edmonton? I can't remember.

We had real hard time some days, even half hungry till you got John as your friend. I remember the day you said that we would be moving in with John to his house by the lake. It was nice and happy for 10 or 11 years. John was nice. I even called him

Dad from the very first day he took me in his lap.

I don't know Mom, what happened when I was in Grade 10? Remember, one day I told you that after school when I came back John made a pass. You were at work. You heard me, but did nothing.

Why Mom? Was John more precious than your Angel? I hated you, Mom, I hated me and got angry with John.

Next time when he tried, I decided to run away.

Dad left me, Mom doesn't care. Uncertainty is my friend. I left St. John's Airport. I cried don't know why, but I did. The tears covered my eyes. I couldn't see anything, but still tried to have a last look. Last look for what Mom?

I ended up in Halifax, knowing no one, took a shelter in a downtown motel. Mom, the very first night I was molested. Mom I was scared, shaken up, didn't know what to do.

I complained to the manager. He was nice, called the police and fixed an extra lock on my door. In three four day's time I ran out of money. The manager helped me to pay the room rent. He even sent me different places for job.

But who will give me a job to a teenager with a Grade 11 education?

Eventually I ended up with Kate, Pam and others. Like others, I took a new name, leaving behind my past. My earning was good. Three of us rented an apartment, started smoking and tried to enjoy life as much as possible.

We had only the present - our past got lost in the ocean of time and the future was unseen in the dark, so utmost try was to hang onto the present.

It was my 23rd birthday. Kate arranged a surprised birthday party for me. After the party, we went to the movies. When we

returned, there was a message slid under the door saying to contact the mentioned phone number.

For the next seven days, the three of us were really busy. Almost every evening, we had appointments. Some sort of conference, convention or meetings were going on in town. We were tired but kept going on.

And because we were earning so well, we planned a trip to Bermuda as a vacation that next week. Lying down on the sand with bright sunshine on our faces was the dream for us. Saturday night was the last I was working before taking off for holidays.

Those guests were really generous. I was picked up in a luxury car. We went to the hotel Sheraton. One ordered fancy dishes and drinks. We danced for three or four hours before going back to his hotel.

Mom, I might have been halfway drunk. I came to my senses when it was almost morning. The sun was up and I opened my eyes. I was sleeping by his side. I could only see the bare back. Mom, I couldn't believe my eyes. I ran out of the hotel and to the street. The ghost was chasing me. I needed a place to hide. Mom, where could I hide?

Mom hide me somewhere. The ghost kept on chasing me. I ran, don't know how many miles. Sat down on the sidewalk to catch my breath. I closed my eyes, but still could see the bumblebee without the stripes.

Oh, Mom, where are you? Take me in your arms and hide me. Two days, I couldn't talk to anybody.

This is your Angel's last letter Mom. Your Angel is flying over the cloud. Mom, you promise me, you will never let Dad know about it. Just tell him that his Angel tried to fly, but forgot the wings.

Yours, Angel.

This story is in memory of an unnamed woman in Halifax who took her life by jumping from a three storied apartment.

Dr. Mira Parai is a pathologist who enjoys writing in her spare time.

Book review



Eric Schlosser's Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All- American Meal

By Yamuna Kutty

I must say, my first impression of this book, (judging by its cover) with a bag of french fries and two comic children's faces, was not my idea of good reading. But, once I picked it up, there was no putting it down. Every page was interesting and full of facts - an eye opener for me. But certain sections in the book made my blood boil.

Now, I understand the way governments and corporations perform. I see how taxpayers are manipulated into paying for all the mistakes made. How and why strikes are squashed, while the corporation makes profits and CEOs are paid.

A lot of questions I had before are answered here. There are a lot of common everyday names and places mentioned, but for the purpose of this review, I will stay away from naming names.

This is a book about fast food, the values it embodies and the world it has created. Since 1973, the average hourly wages of the U.S. worker has been steadily declining. Almost two-thirds of women are employed, motivated less from a feminist perspective than the

necessity to pay bills.

This has changed the way families live - turning to fast and affordable meals where half their food budget is spent.

The fast food industry was quick to capitalize on this change. The industrialization of the fast food kitchen has helped to get by with a low-paid and unskilled workforce. A handful might climb up the corporate ladder, but the vast majority lack fulltime employment, receive no benefits, are the lowest paid (next to immigrant farm workers), learn few skills and float from job to job.

While quietly espousing support for the free market, this industry has greatly benefited from government subsidies. The fast food chains now stand atop a huge food-industrial complex that has gained control over American agriculture. Multinationals were allowed to dominate one commodity market after another. Farmers and cattle ranchers are being replaced by gigantic corporate farms with absentee owners. This leads to a few wealthy elite and large numbers of working poor. Small towns turn into ghettos.

I found it horrifying to note that the potato farmer got two cents out of every \$1.50 spent on a large order of French fries. Due to price control, the only thing the farmer has control over is what time he gets out of bed in the morning. I thought it was interesting to note the words of one staff member who said the fry companies now tend to be run by "MBAs from Harvard who don't know if a potato grows on a tree or underground."

I see this reflected in a lot of corporations these days. The demand for uniformity in the franchises has changed the way cattle and poultry are raised, slaughtered and processed - making meat packing into a dangerous job performed by poor transient immigrants whose injuries go unrecorded

and uncompensated. This explains a lot of the recent diseases among animals due to crowded pens and cages. The avian flu is one current example which the taxpayers will have to pick up.

Fast food is heavily marketed to children and prepared by people who are barely older than children. This is an industry that feeds and feeds off the young. This great economic vitality appeals to people overseas and they are turned into consumers as well. Sure, fast food tastes good but at what price?

When families with cars found it necessary to eat on the road, drive-ins sprung up. But they needed waiters or runners to serve. These were dropped to cut costs. Soon windows sprung up where one can pick up the meal. Working-class families could finally afford to feed their kids restaurant food.

Child labor aside, a bill was passed that allowed 16 and 17 year olds to be paid 20 per cent lower than the minimum wage. Their youthful inexperience makes them easier to control.

Not much English is needed and the basic job skill would be to get to work on time. Even though job subsidies were meant to train the poor to find meaningful employment, the fact that each employee brought in nearly \$2,500 in tax credits was a big money grabber. Most were never employed for more than four to six months. Overtime is almost never paid. Uniformity is stressed in everything except wages, thus leaving it up to the franchisee's area of operation and whim.

A lot of marketing research showed that children are the best consumers. TV commercials aimed at children were fruitful as they would bring their families with them.

Another way of keeping them coming was to make the place kid friendly with bright

colors, clowns, toys and gifts. Many working parents feeling guilty about spending less time with their children started spending more money on them. Getting kids to nag their parents made them "surrogate salesmen."

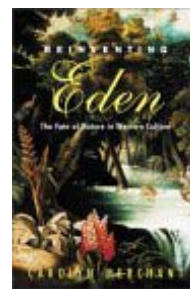
Market researchers organize workshops and focus groups, supposedly to entertain children, while secretly observing them and their tastes to apply to the advertisements and product designs.

They found the key to attracting children is toys, toys and toys. I found this in my own experience while walking with my little five year old friend after our big breakfast. We passed a fast food outlet and she said she was hungry. I knew she could not be hungry and told her so. She told me that she liked their toys.

In the face of cutbacks in schools and such other places, a good way in by these fast food outfits is to offer a small donation or some kind of funding in return for being the sole provider for their cafeteria. This 'favor' sometimes goes with the warning that if the sales fall, so would their revenue.

I could go on about a lot of interesting information in the book, but we have decided to keep it short. I would like to say, though, that this is a 'must read' book. It has about 97 pages of notes, bibliographies and index, etc. for further reading.

Book review



Reinventing Eden

By Kathleen Parewick

So how did you mark Earth Day 2004? (OK, besides reeling from the latest gorey details arising from Danny

William's evident lack of respect for the collective bargaining process.) Carolyn Merchant's latest book, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*, was released in paperback this April 22nd. Regardless of whether or not you bought it, Carolyn probably hoped you spent some of the day considering the way we have been socialized to think about our place in the natural world.

Reinventing Eden examines the infiltration of our scientific and economic thought by the religious narrative of the fall and recovery of Eden, and its consequent effect on perceptions of women and the environment. According to Carolyn Merchant, this is one lingering story line we must deconstruct in order to ensure it doesn't continue to limit our thinking.

A distinguished feminist theorist, the chancellor's professor of Environmental History, Philosophy and Ethics at the University of California, Berkeley, and president of the American Society of Environmental History, Carolyn was in St. John's briefly in late March for a number of speaking engagements built around Memorial University's Henrietta Harvey Distinguished Lecturers series.

In her talks, Carolyn drew on numerous artworks to demonstrate the pervasive cultural influence of Genesis - showing us images of Eve incarnate as a bold instigator leading a quizzical Adam to harvest the fruit of the original sin that was to see him cast out of Eden to forever labour on the earth.

Not only is the fall attributed to the feminine influence, we are also given to understand that redemption and recovery of the Garden are to be won through domination of the wilds. Carolyn's postmodern analysis highlights the gendering of this grand narrative Adam having been cast as a transformative force tied to the appropriation and cultivation of

land, while Eve becomes one in a series of female stand-ins for the "unrealized" potential of nature.

Carolyn makes the case for science, technology and capitalism having been used to rework the New World as a second Eden. What she terms the "recovery narrative" is embedded in North America's development history, wherein a "fallen" wilderness (Eve) has regularly been portrayed as awaiting correction or improvement by the toil and enterprise of the colonists (Adam's legacy).

As an antidote to this gendered narrative, Merchant prescribes a non-gendered, environmental 'partnership ethic' based on the belief that people and nature are equally important. In her words, "A partnership ethic holds that the greatest good for the human and nonhuman communities is in their mutual living in interdependence.

A partnership ethic entails a viable, sustainable relationship between a human community and a non-human community in a particular place - a place in which connections to the larger world are recognized through economic and ecological exchanges.

It is an ethic in which humans act to fulfill both humanity's vital needs and nature's needs by restraining human hubris. Carolyn Merchant encourages us to listen to nature and to seek ways to work co-operatively with it. In her mind, this is the path to a healthier, more aesthetically pleasing environment for this and future generations.

While in this respect not an entirely new perspective, Carolyn has nonetheless been an artful advocate and mentor, effectively explaining and so furthering a strong eco-feminist counterpoint to gendered messages that continue to influence our interactions with the environment.

Towards the end of her visit, Carolyn generously accepted an invitation to a hastily convened meal out with a few university students and staff. There she revealed that she and her husband are avid bird-watchers with a trailer ready to go at a moment's notice.

From her dinner table comments, I think we will have the good fortune of seeing her back this way soon.

Kathleen Parewick is a professional planner, community development volunteer and mother, currently pursuing a Ph.D in Geography at Memorial University.

Announcement

Annual general meeting

The annual general meeting for the St. John's Status of Women Council/St. John's Women's Centre will be held May 18, 2004 at 7:30pm at the RCA Gallery, LSPU Hall, 2 Victoria Street.

Our guest speaker will be Susan Ralph, who is currently on maternity leave from the Independent Living Resource Centre and will be speaking on the barriers and challenges women with disabilities face in terms of housing and general integration into the community and workforce.

Contact us

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Email sjswc@nfld.com

Website www.sjswc.ca

Drop by for a chat on Mondays and Thursdays between 12:30 and 4:30. These hours will vary so call beforehand.



Promoting the social, economic and personal equality of all women!

- [ABOUT US](#)
- [WHAT WE DO](#)
 - [The Women's Centre](#)
 - [Research](#)
 - [Education & Equality](#)
 - [Seeking Work](#)
- [MEDIA](#)
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Check out our new brochure

Welcome to the new St. John's Status of Women Council and [Women's Centre](#) Web Page!

The St. John's Status of Women Council recognizes that women, individually and as a group, have been and still are victimized by the existing social structures and practices

As a non-partisan, pro-choice organization, we actively promote the social, economic and personal equality of women. We are dedicated to the empowerment of all women while working within a feminist framework.

News

NEW APRIL 30, 2004
[Come to our Annual General Meeting](#)

APRIL 13, 2004
[Listen to "Something's Got to Change" Now](#)

APRIL 6, 2004

New SJSWC Web Site 1

**ST. JOHN'S STATUS OF WOMEN
COUNCIL/WOMEN'S CENTRE
MISSION STATEMENT**

The St. John's Status of Women's Council recognizes that women, individually and as a group, have been and still are victimized by the existing social structures and practices.

As a non-partisan, pro-choice organization, we actively promote the political, social, economic and personal equality of women. We are dedicated to the empowerment of all women while working within a feminist framework.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

The SJSWC Membership Fee is:

- . \$25/year for working women and those who can afford it;
- . \$10/year for low-wage and underemployed women;
- . no charge for unwaged women.

Renew your membership and support the work of SJSWC and the Women's Centre!

Membership includes a subscription to our newsletter *Spokeswoman*.

Please mark me down as a member of the St. John's Status of Women Council.

Name:.....

.....

Address:.....

.....

Tele.:..... **Email:**

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