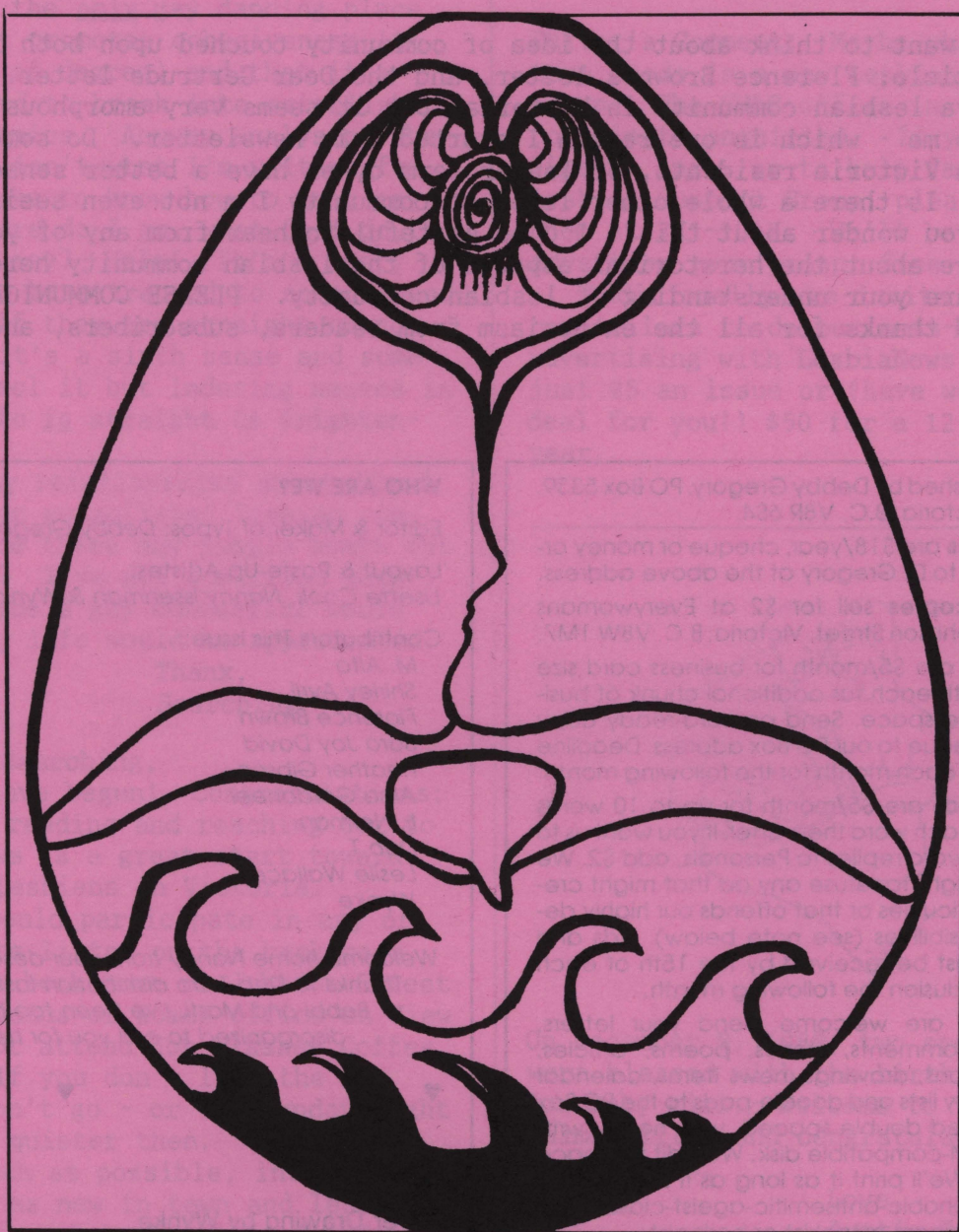


LESBIAN NEWS

Victoria's Monthly Lesbian
Feminist Newsletter

Vol. 1, Issue 6
February 1990

\$2.00



Editorial Musing

Last month we asked for submissions of magazine covers, and they've started coming in. To repeat the offer: send us the artwork for a *LesbiaNews* cover, and we'll give you a free issue (or extend your sub) + full credit. In April, we'll be running one of those devastatingly wonderful childhood photographs. Do you have any old photos showing you in your Dykette Days? If you'll send them in, we'll do a collage {no names mentioned, but we'll all have fun guessing, eh}. Get your photo in by March 15th - if you want it returned, include SASE.

Our readers don't seem to be an overly romantic lot - we didn't get any Valentine personal ads. It's probably just as well we're all so politically evolved beyond romance. You can place personal ads any time, info below in the left-hand box.

Finally, I want to think about the idea of community touched upon both in Sara David's article, Florence Brown's letter, and the Dear Gertrude letter. I guess we do have a lesbian community in Victoria, but it seems very amorphous and nebulous to me - which is one reason I started this newsletter. Do some of you longer-term Victoria residents, or longer-term dykes have a better sense of our community? Is there a whole other level of community I'm not even seeing? Do others of you wonder about this? I'd be grateful to hear from any of you who can tell us more about the herstorical aspects of the lesbian community here, or who want to share your understanding of lesbian community. PLEASE COMMUNICATE. Thanks, and thanks for all the enthusiasm from readers, subscribers, and contributors.

NEWS is published by Debby Gregory, PO Box 5339, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6S4.

Subscriptions are \$18/year, cheque or money order payable to D. Gregory at the above address.

Individual copies sell for \$2 at Everywomans Books, 641 Johnson Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1M7.

Display Ads are \$5/month for business card size and \$5/month each for additional chunk of business card-size space. Send camera-ready copy with your cheque to our PO Box address. Deadline is the 15th of each month for the following month.

Classified Ads are \$5/month for up to 10 words and 50¢ for each word thereafter. If you want us to hold and forward replies to Personals, add \$2. We reserve the right to refuse any ad that might create legal difficulties or that offends our highly developed sensibilities (see note below). Ads and payment must be received by the 15th of each month for inclusion the following month.

Submissions are welcome. Send your letters, questions, comments, stories, poems, articles, ideas, cartoons, drawings, news items, calendar items, grocery lists and doodle-pads to the PO Box address, typed double spaced, very neatly written, or on IBM-compatible disk. We edit for space and clarity. We'll print it as long as it's not sexist-racist-homophobic-antisemitic-ageist-classist-ablebodyist-personal attackist or boringist.

WHO ARE WE?

Editor & Maker of Typos: *Debby Gregory*

Layout & Paste-Up Artistes:

Lisette Cook, Nancy Isсенman & Wynke

Contributors This Issue:

*M. Alto
Shirley Avril
Florence Brown
Sara Joy David
Heather Gibson
Alisa Gordaneer
L. Nerman
Deb T.
Leslie Wallace
Wynke*

Welcome home Nancy from your desert sojourn.

Thanks to Deb T. fro distribution last month.

*Bobbi and Marti, I've been too busy/
disorganized to call you for help.*



Cover Drawing by Wynke

Dear Gertrude

DEAR GERTRUDE:

I am new to Victoria, and I am new to the gay world. I don't feel I need to label myself as gay, or bi, or tri but know inside myself that I would like my next relationship to be with a woman. I went to "the bar" a few times but found it difficult to get to know womyn. Is it because I was labelled "bi" or because they were drunk or because I'm unattractive...I don't think so. I believe that because it's a bar (booze city) and that it's the only gay dancing place in town it promotes cohesiveness (to some sort of degree) and that it's always hard to break into established group dynamics. Anyway analysing the bar scene isn't what I'm writing for. I would like to know how to meet gay womyn, where do I go, what do I do, what do I say? Help! It's a scary feeling to be attracted to someone and not know if they are straight or not. Some say it's a sixth sense and sometimes I feel it but inducing nausea in a woman who is straight is frightening.

Are gay relationships short lived, is there an established lesbian community, are there any single womyn out there?!?!? I've got a million questions, maybe a gay counsellor would help. Any info would be appreciated.

Thanx,
Searching

Dear Searching,

You have begun! Congratulations; finding, reading and reaching out to *LesbiaNews* is a great start toward meeting lesbians in Victoria.

You could participate in any of the events listed on the back page, visit the bookstore on Johnson Street or the Status of Women office on View Street, or attend Hot Flashes Coffee House. If you don't like the bar scene, don't go - or try Sunday night as it is quieter then.

As much as possible, introduce yourself as new in town and lesbian. I guarantee that what is induced will

not be nausea....It seems a little obvious, but, if you get to know someone first you have less chance of "coming on" to a straight woman. Then again, it may be just what she is waiting for....I'm not sure what reduces the fright level then.

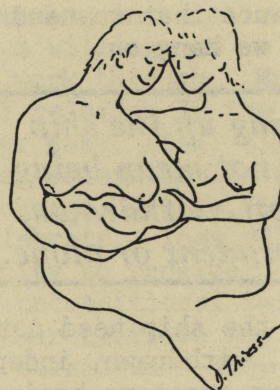
And as for the last questions: sometimes, I think so, and there must be.

Go For It!
Gertrude

Send YOUR queries on the fine points of lesbian living and loving to GERTRUDE.

Editor's Comment: Maybe what this town needs is a new Lesbian Support Group! The SWAG office is willing to coordinate enquiries. If you would like to join, or to help facilitate, a Lesbian Support Group, please phone them at 381-1012. We'll be happy to advertise your group, free of charge.

Additionally, we invite Lesbian counsellors to do business-card advertising with *LesbiaNews*. It's just \$5 an issue or (have we got a deal for you!) \$50 for a 12-issue year.



On December 9, 1989, two special women were blessed with the birth of an 8lb-10oz baby girl. Welcome to the planet Jaime Willow and congratulations to Jo and Shelagh.

Love,
Auntie Deb T.

FROM BONDAGE TO BONDING

by Sara Joy David

Continued from last month

We often within our own lesbian community refuse to expose the problems we are unable to solve. We were so sure that having discovered women we would create something different and do not want to admit or face our messes. We often cover it all up or pretend it is not happening in the way it is, in order to have the "ship" seem to be how we wish it could be or remember it was. After the post mortem we start again but not fresh in our next "relationship." We may detour through the patriarchal trap of blaming and judging our partners or ourselves. If we beat ourselves up enough we may succeed in keeping out of new "ships." If we believe the lies we tell ourselves about our partners then we keep looking for the elusive more suitable, more evolved, more perfect other.

So why bother? My friend Ellen Tallman once quipped that the only thing worse than not being in a relationship is being in a relationship and the reverse is equally true. We are conditioned to believe we require a "ship" to be fulfilled. Even in the face of massive evidence that we need to give up the ship, we hang on.

*Giving up the ship
need not mean being
cut off, withdrawn,
independent or alone.*

Giving up the ship need not mean to be cut off, withdrawn, independent or alone. Here are some beginning formulations about new ways of relating that lead from bondage to bonding and from codependence to interdependence. My good friend Justine recently shared that as she falls asleep she states "I am calling out to my tribe." I now do the same in calling out to my tribe to join in

naming and recognizing what has not worked and what we do not want, in sharing visions of what we want instead. Let us alone and together actively visualize and feel the joy, serenity, freedom, and oneness that connecting, joining, and true closeness can bring. Feeling energizes thought which in turn brings about the new reality we wish to create.

Here are some agreements that if we make and keep can enable us to walk through some different doors. I agree to do what I want, refrain from doing what I do not want and challenge myself to find out why I want what I want (so as to have some mechanism for

*We were so sure that having
discovered women we would create
something different.*

not perpetuating conditioned wants or to kid myself that withdrawal based in fear of intimacy is refraining from doing what I do not want). I agree to seek everything that empowers and expands me and encourage my friends to do the same. I will identify and abandon what limits and restricts. I agree to love and like myself unconditionally even while seeking to grow into all that can be better yet.

I agree to discover and honour my deepest inner truth and to communicate my truth to the best of my ability. I agree to be responsible and accountable for myself and refuse to be responsible for anyone I love while still agreeing to be responsive. I am willing to face past fear and pain when it surfaces without allowing it to interfere with current risking and opening. I will focus on solutions not problems. I will give all that I am willing to give without holding back or going into sacrifice. I will seek to allow everything but require nothing in terms of depth and

TO THETIS

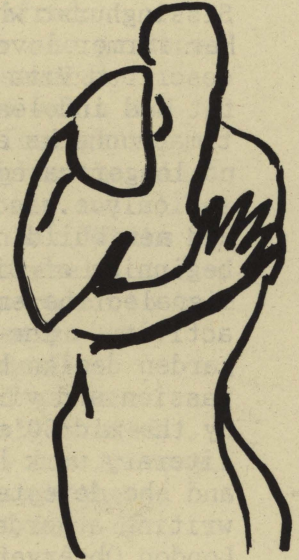
Wynke

Come stay with me a while
Watch the frilled surf caressing the sands
Fragrance of lilac and salt sea mist
Assailing the sweet twittering silence of the ocean evening
And we will be at peace with ourselves

Far below the moonlit waves
Filtered echoes of the long day's memory drift on the current
Your halo of curl moves magically among the seaweed
We are at one with life

Come stay with me til morning
The rays of dawn shall kiss your sweetened lips
Soft with dew and early rain
Arise to greet the quiet waters of timeless knowledge
We will be at peace with the sun

Remain with me til the sea ceases to be
Only strands of what went before lingering, as if a dream
Clasp my soul between your fragile senses
And we will be as one in love
O Thetis



closeness. I agree to join in friendships with others wanting to make these or similar agreements. I will not just speak these ideas but put them into practice daily to the best of my ability. I will not expect perfection but will acknowledge progress and learn from setbacks.

My intention is to discover the door from communication to communion. I sense a joy, aliveness, wildness, peacefulness, creativity and depth of bonding beyond the best of what I/we have known yet even in our most magical and timeless moments of being. I sense the above agreements as merely one set of next steps with different agreements revealing themselves further along the journey. I sense there are no agreements, rules, or processes that will not have to yield to being revised. There can be no

blueprints etched in stone.

In the 60's, 70's, and 80's much of my learning in relationships required a willingness to struggle, hang in, work through. My personal vision of relating in the 90's is one of greater ease, flow, simplicity. Functional relationships will be those that encourage, excite, inspire, free, open, celebrate. They will stretch our capacity to receive. They will be based in unconditional self love and will further increase how much we like and love ourselves. They will free the ego self to awaken the Self that is the seeker/knower. I sense that just as a strong grounding in self love has led us and will continue leading us into more functional relationships, that these deeper joinings and unions will give us a base for reaching deeper levels of community.

Vita Sackville-West left a great gardening legacy to England - the gardens at her last home, Sissinghurst Castle. I'm happy to say that the care of the gardens is now supervised by two women: Pamela Schwerdt and Sybille Kreutzberger, both able head gardeners by all accounts.

Vita and her husband moved into Sissinghurst when she was pushing 40. Her former lover Virginia Woolfe described Vita in the 1930's as "the fat and indolent country lady with tomato cheeks and black moustache that no longer cared for books or poetry and only...kindles about dogs, flowers and new buildings." Indeed, the beginning of Sissinghurst's gardens signaled the end of Vita's social activity. The intense discipline of garden design became her overwhelming passion and virtually her sole focus. By the mid-30's the bulk of her literary work had been accomplished, and she detested the necessity of writing a gardening column for the London Observer. In a strange quirk of fate, the compilations of these articles have become popular to gardeners (much to Vita's disgust I'd assume).

In the 30's and 40's Vita was the garden; the garden was Vita. Her thoughts and writing were fixed on little else as she gave way to the grossly internal life that plants engender when taken in excess. She eventually purchased over 100 acres to the north of Sissinghurst as "walking ground"; a place to indulge her need for long uninterrupted walks.

I am of two minds about her. I admire her dedication and skill at garden making. I'm repulsed by her tedious self-flagellation for her errors and sad for her loss of the love of women. The latter makes me more melancholy because I read great loneliness in her later writing, despite glowing descriptions of beautiful floral displays. Still, she and her garden fascinate me. I've poured over garden plans for Sissinghurst and traced the implementation of the plans. I've scoured "before-and-after"



Beyond Siss

by Heather Gi

photographs, studied paintings, sketches and descriptions. Through the perusal process I have come to know my own version of Vita the gardener - one I'd like to share with you.

Vita HAD to dig up turf and build flower beds. She had no choice. When spring smells came upon her land she was the same as we garden nuts today. She had to dig. I cherish most of all a photograph of Vita beginning to dig an enormous border down one of the castle walls. D-handled spade in hand (yes - the English gardener still insists on the masochism of short-handled tools), skirt flying in the breeze, she turns over the turf to make a planting bed. She had several gardeners under her employ, but real digging is the truest form of garden building.

Vita and hubby went out regularly to the woods in the spring on collecting sprees, using a baby carriage as transport for plants. They selectively dug up woodland plants for the Sissinghurst gardens, both understanding how to preserve and protect the existing plants in the woods.

Ms Sackville-West understood -



Linda Macfarlane

Sissinghurst

son, Dipl.T.

well before her time - the essence of selective logging. Walking through the north woods with the timber merchant she individually tagged trees for lumber, firewood or preservation. The 110 acres she purchased to the north of Sissinghurst hold good timber to this day.

She forbade fox hunting on her land. A record exists of her joy in foiling the hunt: "...they found their fox...when to my delight he had the sense to bolt straight into my own private woodland where the hunt is forbidden to follow...I reflected, not without pleasure, on what my neighbours must be saying about me. Nothing would disturb the fox now so long as he remained where he was..."

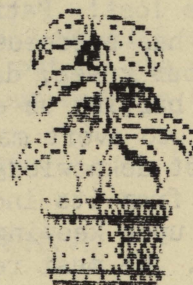
One of Vita's oddest obsessions was her "Box of the Dead". This was a wooden box outside the exit of her tower - her writing place - that held labels and notes about unsuccessful plantings. She whipped herself into achievement using her failures to weave the cat-o-nine-tails.

Although I'd not list any Rosa (rose) species on my top ten list of plants, Vita shamelessly described herself as "drunk on roses" in June and July. Her observations on the

habits, care and tending of roses have been used by many, but her STYLE with roses was really the thing. Vita loved old roses - non-hybridized, 5 petaled, smelly delights. She waxed rhapsodic about climbers and ramblers, and she understood that great roses need great care. In her garden diary she noted that to prune and re-hang the Rosa cultivar "Mme Alfred Carriere" took 3 days for one gardener and helper. Given that several hundred roses covered the walls and adorned the gardens at Sissinghurst, the labour tab alone boggles the mind!

One of Vita's most noted and ill-appreciated creations is her "White Garden". White is an extremely contentious color (or non-color to be precise) in the garden design business. When I was formally studying horticulture and garden design a professor blithely stated, "Why use white when there are so many colors available?" Although the comment showed a distinct lack of appreciation for the full color spectrum it begged the question - why? Vita HAD a very realistic *raison d'etre* for her white garden. She, unlike myself, was a night owl. She adored dusk and the late sullen English evenings. For those of you who have no white in your gardens, picture this: moonlight shining off... lillies, daisies, cherry blossoms, pale grey foliage, white roses, astilbes, white birch bark, twisted pear foliage - trust me on this: she thought of virtually everything available to her at the time and composed a mistress-piece. The elegance and serenity of the white garden remains, and is one of the best loved areas of Sissinghurst. I look forward to walking its paths one day.

NEXT MONTH: SOIL



Letter from Montreal

by Florence Brown

Dear Debby:

After the senseless slaughter of the 14 women that took place in Montreal, I've decided to try and make my views known instead of crying and shouting privately amongst a few intimate friends. I am sick and tired of being aggressed and called dirty names by men. What has become even more intolerable is hearing women condone such behaviour, suggesting that attacks on women are sometimes warranted. What I consider worst of all is when women - who imitate men - use language and force against their own sex. If we do not recognize what and who our real enemies are, we are doomed.

Most often women do not realize that they are their own worst enemy. How could they? Patriarchy has for 6000 years done a brilliant job brainwashing us; we really believe that our thoughts and conclusions are our own. So shrewdly and insidiously have men controlled our minds and bodies, that we women have failed to recognize the invisible strings attached, and how, in fact, they manipulate us like puppets.

Even during that tragic event in Montreal when it was so very obvious that this was a blatant attack on women, men tried to convince us that it was only an isolated act of a madman on a general rampage. When women, our own sisters, echo this ridiculous male propaganda - failing to recognize the enormity of their words, nor take into consideration what the consequences to themselves are - we are lost! Patriarchy, in its 6000 years, has succeeded in bringing us down to our knees, destroying our psyches and burying us alive.

In order to avert mass genocide of women we must acknowledge that patriarchy, from its inception, has been intent upon keeping women subservient. We must recognize that

in order to do so, they imprison us in a constant state of fear. Men are forever undermining women, physically and mentally, keeping women's self-esteem so debased that they become totally immobilized. Patriarchy has imposed "male gods" upon us, browbeating us into believing that, because women "are not created in the image of god", they must be "inferior"; and that because "men are created in the image of god", they are "superior, and therefore must be obeyed."

As soon as women question male dictates, we pose a threat to the patriarchal hierarchy. For 6000 years they have set the guidelines, which both men and women adhered to, observed and absorbed. Whenever women had the courage to defy these men-made rules, they paid with their bodies, minds and lives: witch-hunts, molestation, rape, abuse and multi forms of atrocities.

If, from the killing of these 14 women, and the millions who have gone before, we learn that we must not submit to patriarchy's misogynist rule, that we not pander to our persecutors, who enlist other women to abet them in their crimes, if we learn that together we are strong and can render patriarchy impotent, then those many women will not have died in vain.

I agree with Sonia Johnson in her book Wildfire that if women would encourage one another, validate each other, take a positive step together, without viewing every female action suspiciously, through a male-imposed perspective, we might stave off our own destruction.

We women must not emulate men and resort to violence. We must not threaten to kill every newborn male child - as was recently done in Montreal by a female separatist group. These are male tactics, and would only defeat our purpose!

Everywomans Books CELEBRATION

February 17 will see Victoria's only feminist bookstore celebrate its 15th birthday! In honour of our success and longevity, we're having a huge birthday sale, complete with goodies to tantalize your taste buds, and 15% off everything in the store to tempt your mad book-buying passions!

Later on that same evening, Everywomans presents a GALA READING by seven of Canada's most renowned writers, including Ally McKay [Human Bones] and P.K. Page [A Flask of Seawater, Brazilian Journal] of Victoria, poet Betsy Warland [A Gathering Instinct, open is broken, and in collaboration with Daphne Marlatt, Double Negative], Daphne Marlett [Frames: of a Story, Rings, Our Lives, and The Story, She Said], Angela Hryniuk [co-editor with Betsy Warland of flip], a newsletter of feminist innovative writing, and author of Walking Inside Circles], Toronto's Nancy Chater [Bodies of Knowledge: fear], and Adele Wiseman, [The Sacrifice, Crackpot, old Woman at Play, and Kenjo and the Crickets].

Everywomans Books is proud and thrilled to be Victoria's home of books for, by and about women. We are pleased to offer to our community this night of inspired celebration. Please join us in this rare evening of Canadian literary excellence, at Camosun College's Young Auditorium, Saturday February 17, 7pm.

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E V E R Y W O M A N S B O O K S

My last plea to women - and not to men: For our survival, we must support and trust one another when attempts are made by women to break out of the mold that has kept us petrified for 6000 years. We must accomplish our mission together through love and not through hate.

Womenspirit, don't be afraid to speak out on your own behalf; it is only a collective WE who can make that change!

WE WANT EQUAL TIME: 6000 YEARS TO EXPRESS OUR FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

Calendar

TUESDAYS, 2 - 5PM, BEGINNING FEBRUARY 6, FOR 10 WEEKS: OPENING DOORS A program for women over 45 and/or women on social assistance thinking about re-entering the workforce. Emphasis on self-esteem building, getting to know yourself better, identifying goals and learning new skills related to entering the workforce. Facilitated by Beth Trotter, MA, Counsellor. Sponsored by SWAG and Women's Programs [BC].

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 11, 8PM, NEWCOMBE AUDITORIUM: ELLY DANICA author of Don't: a Woman's Word reads from her life affirming book on surviving childhood incest and violence, and talks about finding her way out of the maze of childhood sexual abuse. Tickets at SWAG, prices TBA, form more info call 381-1012.

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477-8385

MONDAY FEBRUARY 12, 8:15pm UVIC CORNETT A121, PANEL DISCUSSION Practising Feminism in the Community, or "Feminist Activists: Paid to Make Changes", or "Ma, can I be a feminist and still make any money at all?" Free and open to the public. Info 381-1012. With Marianne Alto, Coordinator, Victoria Status of Women Action Group; Lorinda Allix, Past Coordinator, Campbell River Women's Center; Heather Nelson, Co-Coordinator Port Alberni Women's Centre

WATCH FOR IWD EVENTS CALENDAR NEXT ISSUE

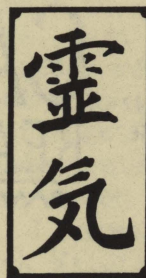


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NOTICES

Do you want to have a child, but don't want or can't find an appropriate person to do it with? Have you considered doing it on your own? This one-day workshop will cover many areas to consider and ways to go about deciding to have a child on your own. Practical, social, emotional and psychological factors will be presented and discussed. A package of materials will be offered. Facilitated by Morgan Traquair, M.A. (cand.) 370-1782

VICTORY METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH
Founded for and by lesbians
gays and allies
Sunday service 2:15pm
James Bay Community School
140 Oswego
Worship coordinator Steph Ozard
Information 386-5078

WANTED: a copy of Myths and Mysteries of Same-Sex Love by Christine Downing, to borrow for review in LesbianNews. Phone Leslie 380-0368.

Women interested in participating in a magical circle based on the work of Starhawk please contact Leslie 380-0368.

Subscription Form

Send to: P.O. Box 5339, Stn. B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6S4

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Classified Ad Form

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