

*IMAGES Kootenay Women's Paper* documented the women's movement in Canada as it was practiced in the lives of women in the West Kootenays, telling both personal and political stories.

It documented the struggles for effective and satisfying economic, social and political lives for women in the area, and linked arms and words with women from around the world, telling their stories along with our own.

In 1972, the Nelson Women's Centre was opened with Vita Storey as the Coordinator, supported by Maureen Argatoff, Gail Hawes, Donna Macdonald and many others. Work included a Doctor's Survey, Welfare Rights, Birth Control education and other women's health issues, and a survey of high school girls regarding women's roles and their feelings about themselves. The Trail Status of Women had formed and many women were engaging the work needed to respond to the Royal Commission Report on the Status of Women in Canada: Pensions, antiquated Marriage Laws, Sexism in the Schools, the need for Human Rights legislation and the lack of Day Care. Susan Charlton, Virginia Clover, Arlene Burwash, Marion Hurd and Diane Edmundson were only a few of those involved. In the Slocan Valley, a women's consciousness raising group was formed, meeting monthly, sharing, reflecting upon and analyzing their experiences. Several were participating in a theatrical production of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, directed by Nancy Harris. Bonnie Evans, Meredith Woodward, Kathy Woodward, Jennie Ash, Sue Zander, Jane Pine, myself, and 25 others were involved in the consciousness raising group. In Castlegar, the partner of the Director of Continuing Education, Arlene Omundson, was strongly

encouraging her husband to present more active programming for thinking women.

After a wonderful conference at Selkirk College, "About Women," where women from around the West Kootenays were able to meet and identify each other, attend workshops on Human Sexuality, Women and the Law, Women in Poverty, Women in the Labour Force, etc, The West Kootenay Status of Women Council was formed with all of these groups and others as members.

While each of the groups continued with their individual actions and lobbying work, letters to politicians, school boards, doctors, etc, it was decided to create a newsletter that each group could contribute to and keep us all informed of local actions and practices. Since the Nelson Women's Centre had 1 ½ paid staff, it was decided that the newsletter would be produced there. I had the great fortune to be the initial editor. The 16-20 page stencilled and gestetnered newsletter was produced in that form for over a year and a half. During that time, we were given an office at Selkirk College, and a typewriter, and Bubbles Hodgson, from Trail joined us, the Kootenay Women's Council, as Secretary and typist. We fought and argued and learned a great deal from one another, and I honour her work on the paper.

In May '73, we looked at the pros and cons of a Women's Ministry, in June Arlene Ommundson highlights the elements in the "Fight for Equality," and Sue Charlton and Julia Curtis each reflect on their experience at the Family Planning Conference at UBC. Over the summer, the Nelson Women's Centre conducted a "working women's survey, and discussed it in

September. Also in September, they received the “Women’s Kit,” two boxes of educational materials to be used in the schools. I just came across that material in the basement of the Women’s Centre, and it sure could be taken out and used today!

In May of 1974, the cover of the newly named IMAGES announced the Pass Creek Women’s Festival, the first of its kind in British Columbia, where women were taking the stage, performing, and presenting their wares in a crafts fair. We find book reviews, discussions of madness, a sex-role play from Kaslo, the priorities of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the minutes of the Trail Status of Women and their brief to the Royal Commission on Family and Children’s Law, a reflection and report from a meeting in Kamloops of 40 BC women’s groups and a letter to Dave Barrett, Premier of BC signed by all of them.

The most unique features were the personal reflections on individual growth in the women’s movement, in the form of articles, letters, poetry and prose written by women and children, examining the challenges faced in becoming the people we hope to be.

Bonnie Evans started it, as she wrote a letter of “Apologia” (Sept-73), and followed that up with a soul-searching self-reflection on the conundrums of loving and living with a man while seeking to become a liberated woman, and the importance of counting on your sisters in the movement for sharing and examining that. She signed her note Bonnie, and put her place of residence underneath, and started getting fan mail addressed to Bonnie Winlaw, and it stuck. Moe Lyons wrote about marriage (and what

precipitated her commitment to remain a single woman in a society where that isn't always easy. Libby Weiser, first woman to work outside at the Triangle Pacific mill in Slocan described her experience in getting and keeping the job. We follow her story over a couple of years. Alice Ages, a visitor to the Valley in the 1970's, now living in Victoria, wrote an incredible poem called Fifty-Fifty, about marriage in March, 1975.

In November of 1974, we produced the first newsprint issue, which announced the formation of the British Columbia Federation of Women, an activist coalition with representatives from across the Province. 350 women attending the founding convention at UBC. Ardith Roscoe and myself represented the Kootenays. Susan Charlton had been appointed to the Federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and this issue announced the lobbying efforts of the past 4 years was coming to fruition in an Omnibus Bill to change many of the laws that had been identified as problematic.

In March of 1975, declared International Women's Year by the UN, we found ourselves in the middle of what became a recurring debate, even up to as recent as last fall: should there be men at events for women? What is the meaning of "women-only" in the context of current society? I will not delve into this at the moment, but seek it out yourselves if you are interested. It was dealt with many times over the many years of festivals and benefits put on by IMAGES, the Nelson Women's Centre and the Kootenay Women's Council.

In May of 1975, it was a small paper, with the centrefold acting as the framework for the 4 day Western Canadian Women's Festival in June,

where we had Rita McNeil in Kaslo, singing her wonderful feminist songs a cappella, and the Slocan Valley Reader's Theatre presenting. We had workshops on gay and straight women can work together effectively, the first time that issue had been dealt with directly.

I got quite ill with PID, from an intrauterine device or IUD, and asked Moe Lyons to put out the paper. She did a magnificent job on the Abortion Issue in Oct. 75, which began the notion of themes for the publication. Again, there was hard information, news, and an incredibly personal story, along with analysis of the legal and moral implications. She also stated in her editorial that this would be the last issue unless a larger team came together to produce the paper as a Collective. This came to pass, and the IMAGES Collective was born for the next issue in February 1976.

We continued to use the wonderful and talented artists in our area for the cover, and illustrations within, and now included a half-page of what came to be called the Collectival, a collectively written description of what's in the paper, notices of our needs, our editorial policies and challenges to the public. All unsigned articles were the responsibility of the Collective, and many articles were written collectively! From this moment, til 1991, IMAGES was operated without government or other grants, by volunteers, supported by advertising by local businesses, subscriptions, and sales in local stores and bookstores across Canada.

Poetry, stories, fiction, analysis, facts, rants, upcoming political actions, news from the Western Canadian Women's News Service and local stories of interest as well as letters from around the country (Spring-75-p4-5 Gert) .

Explorations of the sexual politics of women's health (Mar-76; Spring-89), women's working lives (Apr-76, , our relationships to machines (, travel, changing relationships, our herstory, as rural women, aging, sexuality, the Arts, politics, healing and what it means to be a feminist. We looked at Violence against women, the Economics of Being Female, International Women, Music (, what it means to live life as a rural lesbian, Being Male and Going Green (. We had several articles on the local development of EMMA's Jambrosia (Dec-83-p9-10; Dec-85-centre).

The issue of gender parity in the legislature was addressed by Bob Skelly in Sept-84-p2, laying the ground for 25 years of resistance, before the Equity Mandate of the NDP finally set the stage for women to run in winnable ridings, and Michelle Mungall won the nomination for this riding in an unprecedented 4-way race with 3 other excellent female candidates.

Also in the mid-1980's, we closely followed the struggles of the people involved with the somewhat successful occupation of the David Thompson University Centre (Jul-84; Sept-84). And this project owes a debt of thanks to Ron Welwood, Chief Librarian at DTUC, both for subscribing and holding IMAGES in their collection, and turning it over to the Shawn Lamb Archives here so that we could fill in some holes in our collections for this project.

In the Autumn of 1990, the theme was on the environment (Autumn-90-Green). Always a bit ahead of our times, the always volunteer, often changing, growing and shrinking IMAGES Collective sought to shed important light on the issues of concern for women, all issues!

Many of the same struggles are facing young and older women today. There is much to be learned from the reflections on and analysis of on these issues for men and women today.

IMAGES dealt openly and honestly with difficult and challenging issues. We were incendiary at times, often personally reflective, with righteous commentary when necessary. We attended and critiqued a men's group by invitation, we explored lesbianism with ideas, stories and information at a time when it wasn't publicly discussed, but created rifts in the women's movement. We identified and critiqued sexism when it reared its ugly head, and we celebrated the successes of our sisters at work and in writing.

Working as a part of a Collective is not always easy, and can be quite uncomfortable at times. I left the Collective after 10 years, and it is always good to see something you started continue with its own life for another 9 years quite successfully, with clear politics, incisive analysis and delightful creative writing styles. I continued to contribute articles, and one can follow my construction carpentry career in the annals of the paper.

Technologically we went from stencils, typewriter and gestetner to an electric typewriter to an IBM Selectric with changeable type balls and hot wax rollers, to a linotype machine, to a Macintosh computer.

Many of the women who were members of the IMAGES Collective or contributors went on to become prize-winning authors and artists, household names in the Kootenay Arts communities: Rita Moir, Caroline

Woodward, Luanne Armstrong, Paulette Giles, Sandra Hartline, Ann Swanson Gross (Dec-83-p6; Sept-84-p17), Penny or P. Emily Youngreen, Monica Carpendale, Leni Normington, Rachel Yoder. Donna Macdonald wrote articles on women's situations from all over the world ( Sept-85-p6-7; and Rita Moir was writing about the despicable Free Trade Zones where women were working under armed guards in the Phillipines (Sept-85-p14). Today Grans for Grans are working with African grandmothers to improve the lives of children. It's a continuum, sad to say, but we continue to learn and grow and teach each other how to build a better world.

Last Fall, while I was writing the timeline for the Nelson Women's Centre's 36<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, I explored some of the old IMAGES, and realized that so many of the issues we dealt with at the time are still quite current today. More women are struggling with the same issues, and there is a gap in resources and places to discuss what they are going through. Young women are facing many of the same challenges that we did, but there is no public forum or consciousness raising groups in which to define them and discuss potential solutions. So, thanks to the BC 150 Heritage Legacy Fund, and the West Kootenay Women's Association we are able to bring you 19 years of Kootenay women exploring these issues and taking action. Over 170 women worked on or contributed to the paper during those 19 years. This project is a tribute to all of them.

Many of our themes and stories are expressed again today in projects and initiatives alive and well in the hearts and minds of Kootenay women.

We will be hearing from several of them today.