

# Common Ground

SPECIAL ISSUE

CELEBRATING THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN'S NETWORK PEI

MARCH 2020

VISUAL ART POETRY  
ESSAYS  
etc.



Lady, acrylic on board, 14" x 11"

Rosee Gil, prototype & handwork on Iraq, 25" x 20"



Common Ground - Special Issue - March 2020  
Celebrating the 35th Anniversary of Women's Network PEI

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Women's Network PEI archive



**Women's Network**  
Prince Edward Island

Women's Network Prince Edward Island is a not-for-profit organization that works to strengthen and support community efforts to improve the status of women in our society. Through its work, Women's Network promotes equity using feminist analysis and practice and addresses issues that affect women in the province of Prince Edward Island. The Network provides a forum for the voices of PEI women and opportunities for them to realize power, knowledge, skills, abilities, vision and financial security.

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# Common Ground

## Women's Network PEI

Women's Network PEI is marking 35 years of incorporation this year. There is much reason to celebrate!	2
Women's Network: Past, Present, Future	3
Projects: Economic Empowerment	4
Projects: Raising Awareness   Building Strength   Finding Solutions	6
Projects: Leadership	7
Projects: Research   Education   Consulting	8
Projects: Youth Engagement	10
Projects: Seniors Engagement	11
Celebrate Island Women	12

## Essays / Articles

<i>Anne McCallum</i>	19	Creating Common Ground
<i>Becka Viau</i>	22	Accessing Silence (Through Active Listening) as a Radical Feminist Practice
<i>Emily Van Toever &amp; Sam Petrie</i>	33	Women Building PEI
<i>Lauren Roi</i>	26	I saw your walls come up
<i>Michelle Harris Genge</i>	27	Remembrance and Action
<i>Michelle McCallum</i>	36	Eve's Café
<i>Stephanie Douglas</i>	28	The Terminology of 'Equality' in the Language of Feminism is Inherently Racist
<i>Stacey Dunn</i>	37	Comedy + Confidence & Friendship = Joy

## Stories

<i>Beti Andric</i>	40	Ankas
<i>Natalie Pendergast</i>	38	Getting an Abortion in Moncton

## Poetry

<i>Anonymous</i>	25	My Journey
<i>Deb Barrigan</i>	11	Still Visible
<i>Jennifer Platts Fanning</i>	24	And Circled the World
<i>Kathryn Nazim</i>	35	The Soft Ones
<i>Kendi Tarichia</i>	30	Black Magic
<i>Laura Grace Harwood</i>	32	Women are Trees
<i>Linda Stewart</i>	26	Admission
<i>Mari Basiletti</i>	31	Lady Hemlock's Monologue
<i>Megan Dorrell</i>	24	Small
<i>Nicola Lewis Kemp</i>	34	Defining a Woman
<i>Shelby Jackson</i>	34	The Mirror
<i>Tara MacLean</i>	33	No Man's Land

## Visual Art

<i>Becka Viau</i>	<i>back cover</i>	The Sovereign Uterus
<i>Beti Andric</i>	24	Hear Ye
<i>Dale McNevin</i>	21	Common Ground December 1993 Cover
<i>Jason Alward</i>	29	...still? (cartoon)
<i>Jessica Chapman</i>	35	Little Hands
<i>Kelly Caseley</i>	31	Becoming
<i>Marion Copleston</i>	25	Erin
<i>Mari Basiletti</i>	20	Pine at Milford Lakes
<i>Mari Basiletti</i>	27	Untitled
<i>Megan Dorrell</i>	<i>front cover inside</i>	#MeToo
<i>Pam Atkinson</i>	<i>back cover inside</i>	Untitled
<i>Silver Frith</i>	34	Lifeline

This anniversary edition of *Common Ground* was made possible with the financial support of the Interministerial Women's Secretariat's (IWS) annual grant. The Secretariat promotes the legal, health, social and economic equality of women and is mandated to partner with Island women's organizations on projects that promote the status of women and develop programs and services that benefit women living in Prince Edward Island.

In 2019, IWS funded *Still Visible – Bringing Senior Women Together* project that included an 8-week program for Senior Women and a 1-day Senior Women's Leadership Gathering. Thank you to the Interministerial Women's Secretariat for their continued support to Women's Network and other women's organizations across PEI.

# Women's Network PEI is marking 35 years of incorporation this year. There is much reason to celebrate!

By Sandy Kowalik

During the 1980s, a small group of determined PEI feminists was directing their great energy into building many of the Island's women's organizations, including Transition House Association, PEI Rape/Sexual Assault Crisis Centre and Women's Network. Every aspect of a woman's life was impacted by institutional and personal inequality and misogyny. Things needed to change.

The very idea of feminism was met with hostility. For example, in 1982, when writer/publisher Libby Oughton and artist Hilda Woolnough mounted The Island Women's Art Festival, one (anonymous) male columnist wrote:

"For years, women's libbers have marched the streets waving their placards and chanting their empty-headed slogans condemning so-called male chauvinism. They've wasted no opportunity to raise their squeaky little activist voices in raucous protest against any social or business group of more than three men that dared exclude females from its ranks. Yet, despite their everlasting and tiresome whining about equal rights, women don't mind a touch of bare-faced discrimination when it suits their purposes". (Happy Harry, *The Journal-Pioneer*, December 2, 1981)

These words and the fact that a mainstream newspaper would print them are strong indications of the climate of the times.

Undaunted, Women's Network forged ahead. From the beginning, WNPEI aimed to empower women through the recognition of women's achievements and potential, and through listening to and providing a forum for women's voices. Common Ground magazine was one of the first initiatives and ran for 15 years until funding was cut. I came to WN, first as an illustrator and writer to the magazine and soon joined the Board of Directors. I found my pack.

Throughout the mid-1980s and into the 1990s, Women's Network also coordinated a PEI Women's Festival, with a bit of funding from the former department of the Secretary of State. With a part-time coordinator and a robust volunteer committee, this annual event mounted workshops, brought in speakers and entertainers, and focused on issues of importance to women's equality.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful things that the Festival provided was a safe and supportive space to be oneself freely. Women could talk and laugh and

hug and kiss and eat and drink together. And dance! So many of us love to dance! And sometimes women would dance together, sometimes even touching. And sometimes the women weren't heterosexual! In 1993, this led to the Festival funding being cut, and while it was no longer possible for WN to continue mounting it, a small band of volunteers kept it going for several years.

Women's Network has faced dark times and funding cuts many times, and much credit must go to the staff and boards who have creatively evolved the organization.

From its inception, WN has understood that for true equality to exist, women must be represented in decision-making bodies, must have bodily-autonomy, financial security, freedom from violence and opportunities to realize power, knowledge, skills, and abilities. Recent projects and programs continue to expand our understanding of the inequalities that still exist and work to overcome them. I am thankful to all the women who have kept this vital organization going all these years.

Happy 35<sup>th</sup>! ■

Who's Who at Women's  
Network PEI in 2020

## Board of Directors

Judy Herlihy  
*Board Chair & Treasurer*  
Randell Duguid  
*Vice-Chair*  
Andrea Surich  
*Secretary*

Angele DesRoches  
Farahnaz Rezaei  
Sandy Kowalik  
Melissa Smith  
Tamara Steele  
Tara MacLean  
Charley Hill  
Jeana MacIsaac

## Staff

Jillian Kilfoil *Executive Director*  
Jaime Griffin *Director of Programs*  
Kate Dempsey *Program Manager*  
Jill Olscamp *Lead Facilitator*  
Lauren King *Co-Facilitator*  
Amy Clerk *Administrative Officer*  
Megan Dorrell *Youth Programs Coordinator*  
Claire Byrne *Program Support*  
Becka Viau *Project Coordinator*  
Pam Atkinson *Project Coordinator (on parental leave)*



### What we've done in the past

Women's Network PEI has survived and thrived for thirty-five years. Over these three and a half decades, we have had the privilege of working in the community and advocating for changes related to equity and inclusion. Many feminist organizations have not survived for as long as Women's Network. The biggest reason why we have been able to remain open is the creativity and loyalty of our supporters. Many people, and not only women, have supported and engaged with Women's Network for over a generation.

### What we are doing now

Since the Network's formation, our projects and activities have been changing as the landscape and the issues on which we work shift. While the methods of operation have been transforming, the values and the mission of the organization have not. We base our work on an Intersectional Feminist Analysis and advocate for positive changes in our society—especially those that reduce inequalities amongst genders and traditionally marginalized communities.

The capacity of Women's Network PEI

has ebbed and flowed over the years. Currently, we are experiencing a period of growth after two decades of austerity. This growth is exciting and allows us to expand the reach of our work, deepen our analysis and grow the number of people working in the sector in PEI.

Women's Network PEI continues to work collaboratively with a broad group of stakeholders and partners.

Grassroots partnerships are key to creating the social changes we envision. We are a member of the PEI Coalition for Women in Government Steering Committee, Justice Options for Women Steering Committee. We are a member of the Working Group for a Livable Income and have a representative on the Board of Directors of the Community Sector Network of PEI.

In addition to working collaboratively with numerous coalitions and committees, we partner with organizations and stakeholders in all projects and programs we implement. We work closely with the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, East Prince Women's Information Centre, PEERS Alliance, Women Building PEI, Family Violence Prevention Services, PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, and many more important groups that share our values.

### What needs to be done in the future

We have seen a great deal of change over the past 35 years, but many of the issues remain the same and there is still a great deal of work to be done to create equity in our communities, homes and society. At this time, there is an increased awareness of social justice issues, and that helps us advance our endeavour and push for changes. This includes working towards universal childcare, universal basic income, comprehensive sexual health education in all schools in PEI, modernized child support system, increased support for survivors of gender-based and sexualized violence as well as increased investment in prevention programs that tackle toxic gender norms, healthy relationships, consent and many other foundational topics. We continue to advocate for these changes and support grassroots mobilization to effect meaningful change. ■

*Read about key projects and accomplishments of Women's Network PEI on the next several pages.*

# ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Women's Network PEI has a successful history of developing and delivering strength-based programs to support women to transition from poverty to a sustainable livelihood. Our programs are offered to participants at no cost and are open to women on social assistance, on EI, working less than 20 hours a week or with no income. Potential participants must be out of school for a least 1 year. The *Women's Economic Empowerment* Programs support women to identify transferable skills and explore various career and employment opportunities.



## Trade HERizons

Trade HERizons (2010-present) is a career exploration and college preparation program with a focus on exposure to trades and technology careers, enhancing essential skills, career exploration and personal development. Participants experience hands-on learning opportunities with Holland College, meet mentors and tour with industry employers, enhance life skills, and focus on labour market research, resumes, interviews, math and team building.

## Propelle

Propelle (2016-present) is a life skills and employment readiness program with a focus on jobs where women are underrepresented. Propelle focuses on confidence building, conflict resolution, group activities, learning styles and overall wellness by following four pillars—Personal Development, Employment Readiness, Career Exploration and Community Engagement. Participants hear from guest speakers, employers and mentors in various fields and tour Holland College to explore various programs and job opportunities.

## How can employers get involved?

### Host a Worksite Visit

Promote your business and trade or technology by hosting a tour at your worksite for program participants.

### Be a Mentor or Guest Speaker

Encourage women to consider training in your trade or technology by being a guest speaker or mentor a woman through her apprenticeship or training.

### Hire Women in Trades or Technology

Invest in your business by hiring qualified women as apprentices, Red Seal tradespeople or certified technicians.

[wnpei.org/Contact-Us](http://wnpei.org/Contact-Us)

# A Breakthrough for Island Tradeswomen

In March 2017, Women's Network PEI released a statistical forecast that showed impressive movement toward gender equality in the trades on PEI.

Research and first-hand evidence had long indicated that the face of poverty in PEI was female. Traditionally male jobs tend to pay more money. In response to that reality, in 2010, Women's Network PEI developed the Trade HERizons career exploration program in partnership with Skills PEI and the Interministerial Women's Secretariat. The goal of the program was to increase the number of women in trades and industrial technology occupations on PEI. Since the program's launch and up to March 2017, more than 120 women had completed Trade HERizons and Holland College's enrolment rates for women in trades and industrial technology programs more than doubled.

At that point, we wanted to ask how long it would take to reach equal numbers of men and women in the trades on Prince Edward Island.

In 2009, only a few women worked in the Prince Edward Island skilled trades and industrial technology sectors. With such low numbers, the sector was projected to see equal numbers of women and men working in the trades in 276 years. Thanks to a shared effort, spearheaded by Women's Network PEI and its programs, in 2017 the province was on track to see that happen in just 45 years.

Grace Lore, a Ph.D. candidate in Political Science at the University of British Columbia, did calculations for Women's Network PEI based on enrol-

ment numbers in trades and industrial technology programs at Holland College. What she discovered is remarkable. Ms. Lore's calculations indicated that in 2009, gender equality in trades was 276 years away. After only seven years of Trade HERizons programming, Women's Network PEI has lowered that target to 45 years.

At Women's Network, we knew we were making strides but those numbers were well beyond our expectations. It was very exciting to see the hard work paying off in such a big way.

Reducing the time it takes to achieve gender equality from eleven generations to one and a half takes many hands. Since we started this project, we have had amazing support from the whole community.

~ Sara Roach-Lewis,  
former WN Executive Director

Both the provincial and federal governments have funded this work. Holland College provides hands-on learning experiences for all our tradeswomen. Local businesses are hiring women, hosting tours and working with us to reduce barriers in the workplace.

Most importantly, Island women have taken up the challenge of exploring careers in trades. Being a tradeswoman is not for the faint of heart. While these numbers are encouraging, we still have a long way to go. Women entering the trades are trailblazers and continue to experience serious challenges as they develop their careers. While many people support them and creating the conditions for their success, they are truly the ones doing the hard work.

PEI women still need Trade HERizons. We shared this great news with all the stakeholders, and we continue to build on it. With the perpetual, sustainable investment, PEI could lead the country and see gender equality in trades in 25 years. ■



# RAISING AWARENESS BUILDING STRENGTH FINDING SOLUTIONS

## Strengthening our Feminist Foundations

The primary objective of the *Strengthening our Feminist Foundations* project (2019-2023) is to strengthen our internal processes and ways of working.

This will allow us to better share our promising practices with similar organizations that are smaller and younger. We will improve and solidify our Board governance model, Financial procedures and policies, HR and strategic planning.

In addition to working internally to strengthen our processes, we will also create a community of practice that strengthens the sector in PEI.

## Working Group for a Livable Income

Women's Network PEI is involved in many committees and collaborations, including the Working Group for a Livable Income.

The Group was formed in 2003, and it comprises of ten community-based organizations, interested individuals and is hosted by Cooper Institute. The Working Group advocates for living wages and eliminating poverty through Basic Income Guarantee, higher wages, and better working conditions in general.

The working group has been active in PEI and in collaboration with groups across the country advocating for Basic Income Guarantee in Canada.

There is an increased awareness and interest to implement Basic Income Guarantee in Canada beginning in PEI. We continue to advocate for these changes.

## #ItStopsHere

The goal of the *#ItStopsHere – Street Harassment* project (2018-2019) was to reduce the prevalence of street harassment and violence in PEI by increasing the public's knowledge and understanding of the issue faced by specific populations, particularly young women, trans women, and gender nonbinary folks. We need to ensure that all forms of violence are addressed and that we take street violence as seriously and all other forms of violence. Women and many gender-diverse folks change their routines, patterns and activities due to the lack of street safety. This project will enhance the prevention of street violence against vulnerable populations in PEI by increasing our understanding of the issue and educating the general population about its impacts on targeted individuals through focus groups, online surveys and research. From there we will create a campaign *#ItStopsHere* to end street harassment and violence in PEI. We will produce an online and print campaign that will be distributed in Charlottetown.



**#ItStopsHere:  
Preventing Street Harassment and  
Violence in PEI**

# LEADERSHIP

## Engaging Island Women for Political Action

The *Engaging Island Women for Political Action* project (2017-present) was created to address the under-representation of women in democratic institutions in Prince Edward Island. The goal of the project was to increase opportunities to overcome barriers and empower women to take political action at the provincial level in Prince Edward Island. The project addressed barriers to women's inclusion in political parties by providing leadership training to 100 women and working directly with political parties to identify opportunities for women's advancement.

Political parties participated in two half-day collaborative facilitated sessions to support and identify opportunities to increase women's engagement in various levels of party activity. In addition, each political party had the opportunity to support up to 20 women in their party to participate in a leadership academy, which will increase their ability to bring their skills to party work.

## A Bold Vision

When 23 men met in Charlottetown PEI in 1864, their collective thinking and visioning ultimately led to the formation of Canada.

We wanted to know, what would 23 women envision for our country for the next 150 years?

In 2014, selected from more than 200 nominees, 23 aspiring and established leaders contributed to an anthology, participated in a Women's Leadership Conference and collaborated on a shared vision for Canada's future.

Women's Network PEI partnered with four women's organizations in the province of Prince Edward Island to undertake this ambitious project of historical significance.



Seated around the Confederation Table at Province House in PEI in a recreation of the famous Robert Harris painting of the Fathers of Confederation are 2014 Bold Visionaries. Clockwise from top right: Kluane Adamek, Crystal Fraser, Nazanin Afshin-Jam MacKay, Lana Payne, Kim Campbell, Shelagh Day, Becka Viau, Bonnie Brayton, Carolyn Bennett, Jessie Housty (standing), El Jones (standing), Maria Mourani, Eva Ariak, R Irene d'Entremont, Hazel McCallion, Pamela Palmater, Catherine Potvin, Natalie Panek, Eman Bare, Mina Mawani (standing), and Margaret-Ann Armour (standing). Missing from photo, Libby Burnham. Photo by Brian Simpson.

# RESEARCH EDUCATION | CONSULTING

## It Takes a Village

With the financial support of the Department of Women and Gender Equality of Canada, Women's Network PEI has created *It Takes a Village* project (2017-2020) and has been working on issues related to childcare.

This work includes advocating for updates and improvements to the wage grid for Early Childhood Educators. Childcare continues to be an issue faced by all Canadians. PEI is no exception. Women and families still face issues with affordability and access to adequate services.

The lack of access to childcare can lead to economic barriers for any workers, but especially women who often cite this issue as a barrier to accessing certain types of employment, employment training and other types of education which would increase their economic security and prosperity. Having access to affordable and reliable childcare is necessary for women to break cycles of poverty. We would like to know more about what are the gaps and barriers that continue to persist in PEI and how we can work together to close those gaps. Through research, community consultations and individual case studies we want to gain a better understanding of the barriers that women face in PEI.

This project ties into *Ignite!* — the program we offer to businesses and organizations. Among other components of *Ignite!*, we created a self-assessment workbook for employers to help them develop supportive workplaces.



SPARK DISCUSSIONS  
THAT MATTER  
IN THE WORKPLACE.

### Employers, are you ready?

Successful employers have recognized that employees' needs have changed. A flexible work program makes a company more attractive to employees, and in fact, these types of environments are often considered the most important factor when Canadians are looking for a new job.

An environment where management sparks meaningful discussions with employees and understands that work and personal life are connected is one that will see the benefits of ignited employees who are motivated to exceed expectations. When employers work together with their employees to meet individual and business needs, everyone succeeds.

### We Can Help

The Ignite! program is for any business, start-up, NGO, or government department and lays the framework for your workplace to be both successful and supportive. By working together, we can help develop a planned initiative that allows your employees to take care of themselves and their lives. While growing their dedication and loyalty to your organization, they will be increasing their productivity and commitment to a job well done.

### Obtain a Certificate

Let us provide you with everything you need, and you can become a recognized Ignited Employer. You'll receive some marketing materials to help you tell your story of creating a supportive environment for your team. Getting started is easy. From there, we can help you develop a plan that is unique to your workplace. Using our simple checklist, you can be confident that your program is optimized and working for you. After that, you will be recognized as an Ignited Workplace!

[wnpei.org/Contact-Us](http://wnpei.org/Contact-Us)

### Torch

The program we titled *Torch* (2016) was a course for women working in the non-profit /voluntary sector who had an interest in developing their leadership and management skills. Preference was given to women working in organizations that support the improvement of the status of women, particularly to emerging leaders. The program included a 15-week course and the development of an ongoing learning community and peer support group within the cohort.

The program included very practical advice for managing a non-profit organization as well as both guided and self-directed opportunities to explore and develop as a community leader. The pilot course was offered with full scholarships for every participant with funding provided by the PEI Interministerial Women's Secretariat.

## Training for Justice Workers and Other Stakeholders

The *Training for Justice Workers and other Stakeholders – A Survivor Led Initiative* (2019-present) project will bring survivors of sexualized violence, survivor advocates and justice workers together during Victims and Survivors of Crime Week for a survivor-led training on the question of “What is justice in the context of sexualized violence?” It will include survivors of violence, survivor advocates, and justice workers. The trainers will be an expert panel of local survivors who will receive facilitated support leading up to, and after the event. The event will provide an opportunity for participants to identify innovative ways for justice systems to respond to sexualized violence in PEI. Survivors will be supported to develop and share key learnings/curriculum about what justice means from their experience as survivors. This work is already in progress and goes beyond the scope of the project, which supports a growing interest in PEI to identify opportunities for justice in the context of sexualized violence.



### Paths to Prosperity

*Paths to Prosperity* (2012-2015) was a project designed to plan, develop and implement a community response to poverty. The project engaged many stakeholders: low-income women, community groups, government, employers, and many others, in order to create a collaborative model to support Island women and men living in poverty to transition to a sustainable livelihood.

As part of this project, with support from the City of Charlottetown, Women’s Network PEI organized an exhibition titled *‘Our Reality’ Living in Poverty on PEI: A Photo Exhibit*. The exhibition opening event took place on March 20th, 2014, at the Confederation Centre of the Arts Concourse.

All of the women involved in the photo exhibit took part in an eight-week community engagement skills-building program. The photo exhibit is the final aspect of this training.

With very basic instruction in photography, composition and design, the participants ventured out to capture images of their world. These images, combined with minimal text, help give voice to the reality that many low-income people live every day in PEI.



*Time for Change* - photo by Regina Younker, a Paths to Prosperity participant. The photo was exhibited at the *‘Our Reality’ Living in Poverty in PEI* photo exhibition at the Confederation Centre of the arts.

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

## It's All About Youth

Through a grant by Canadian Women's Foundation, *It's All About Youth, Healthy Relationships for Youth* (a.k.a. It's All About YOUth, IAAY) was developed and piloted by Women's Network PEI and Family Violence Prevention Services over four years in four schools on PEI (2012-2016). Since then, the program has been delivered across the Island continues to be offered on an annual basis until today in more schools.

This project will enhance the prevention of violence against women in PEI by providing valuable education to youth, both boys and girls, about healthy relationships using a made-in-PEI curriculum developed using best practices in engaging youth and violence prevention. The curriculum, including a facilitator's guide and student workbook, was developed in the first year of the project and adapted over four years of programming based on the experiences of facilitators and evaluation from students, administrators and teachers. The curriculum includes healthy vs. unhealthy relationships, interpersonal boundaries, feelings and communicating, conflict vs. disagreements, bullying/cyber-bullying, media literacy, communicating assertively, self-esteem and confidence. Additionally, the program covers sub-themes such as critical thinking, I Statements, different types of abuse, media and the music industry (and their effect on our perceptions of relationships) feelings and consent. The workshops have been highly positively evaluated by youth, teachers and school administrators.



## Youth Hub

The Hub PEI (2019 - present) is a Speakers Bureau, the format for engaging youth created by Plan Canada and first launched in Toronto, Ontario. Women's Network PEI received funding to be one of six pilot sites implementing youth hubs outside of the Toronto area. The Speakers Bureau/Hub provides a platform for young people across Canada who are passionate about advancing gender equality and girls' rights. The youth of all genders are welcome to join.

The Hub PEI is a place for youth to speak their mind, explore topics that matter to them, and to connect with like-minded youth; explore issues that they are passionate about in a group setting while working on their public speaking skills, confidence building, and leadership potential; and have an opportunity to present on topics of

interest in a public forum that is comfortable and safe. The Hub participants engage in conflict resolution discussions and communication training. How it Works - The Hub PEI meets monthly on the first Wednesday of the month at Women's Network PEI offices. Food is provided during meetings and travel support is available if that's a barrier for any youth to participate.

## Girls at Bat

The *Girls at Bat* program (2019-present) is designed to engage girls ages 12-17 who exhibit an unhealthy, sedative and non-active lifestyle. According to the 2015 ParticipACTION report card, only 59% of girls ages 3-17 participate in sports. Additionally, if a girl does not participate in sport by age 10, there is only a 10% chance she will be a physically active adult. Supporting youth to discover a love for the sport and encouraging lifestyle change greatly impacts their wellness, healthy lifestyle and reduction of chronic disease as an adult. When offered as a free program, *Girls at Bat* is available for all youth, regardless of their income or social status. The program provides its participants with a support network through enhancing peer-peer relationships, by connecting youth to services in their community and by engaging healthy role models. It also pro-

vides opportunities for physical literacy skills development; physical literacy skills are proven to lead to the increased physical activity later in life. Although not listed as a partner, Women's Network PEI works very closely in partnership with schools to conduct intake and to identify risk factors that can be addressed in the program. By engaging youth demographics by the school, there is a greater opportunity to build protective factors to a larger population for good health now and in the future. While the program is open to all youth, specifically intaking and engaging inactive girls who are identified to come from lower-income families can have positive effects on mental health, unhealthy behaviours and supports the resilience and health development.



# SENIORS ENGAGEMENT

## Still Visible

The *Still Visible: Bringing Senior Women Together* initiative focuses on creating a peer-support-based network of senior women to strengthen their leadership skills.

Self-identified women ages 55 and up came together to explore gender, leadership and ageing. The group meets weekly over a period of three months in the winter 2019/2020 exploring the topics of interest and co-developing a Senior Women's Leadership Festival.

This group is for self-identified women, which includes transwomen and gender non-binary and genderqueer folks.



## Still Visible

By Deb Berrigan

These women that surround me.

Grey-haired, steely jawed, resolute and diverse.

Clear eyes dancing as they share stories and a cuppa,

Fine spider lines etched in weathered skin - lifting them up with smiles.

Their passionate words and flashing eyes, advocating truth...for justice...for friends.

Being used up – Not washed up...has changed them and I can **see** their halos glowing.

Still Visible.



# Celebrate Island Women: the fabulous annual fundraising event for Women's Network PEI

It all started in 2016 when the Board of Directors of Women's Network PEI organized its first major fundraising event. The money raised was to help fill the gaps in the project-based funding and keep the operations running smoothly year-round. Most importantly, it was to keep the dedicated and knowledgeable staff employed with fewer interruptions.

The idea behind creating a signature annual event was not just to raise the ever-needed funds, but also to boost awareness of the WN programs and projects, and elevate the organization's profile in the community. At the same time, the Board wanted to use the opportunity to celebrate Island women and their accomplishments, hence the title.

The first event in November 2016 was epic and more successful than anyone had hoped. The final tally was over \$15,000! This would not have been possible without headliner Irish Mythen—one of the Island's most successful musicians—who spontaneously and generously offered to auction off not one, but three house concerts that evening.

Each fall since, the event has grown in scope, popularity and fundraising gain. It now provides an annual opportunity for emerging and established feminist Island artists and entertainers to share the stage and a chance for community supporters to come together and celebrate the accomplishments of Island women and Women's Network. Sponsors, donors and volunteers lead by the WN Board of Directors ensure that the event continues to be a great success year after year. Irish Mythen remains a supporter, for the last couple of years in the role of emcee.

## Thank You!

At Women's Network PEI, we hope that the *Celebrate Island Women* event goes on contributing to the organization's stability for many years to come.

We extend a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who has donated their time, talents, sponsored the event or attended—your support is key to our success and sustainability.



**Becka Viau**—an award-winning, nationally and internationally recognized multidisciplinary artist, art educator, curator, and community organizer—is also an eager Women’s Network PEI supporter. Her organization BECKA VIAU & Associates specializes in project and event development, management and coordination, and offers art and culture-focused consulting and mentoring for communities, all the while servicing emerging and established artists looking to refine their professional approach to and knowledge of the industry.

Becka had a central part at the original fundraiser. in 2016—she produced a piece of art, live in the lobby on the evening of the event, which was then auctioned in the intermission. In 2018, Becka’s organization was one of the major sponsors for the fundraiser.

Becka is a passionate feminist and so is her daughter Meike, pictured here together at the 2018 *Celebrate Island Women* event.



At the 2017 *Celebrate Island Women*, we honoured our founders—**Ann Sherman, Eileen Brown, Heather Irving, Joan MacFarlane and Judith Bayliss**. Besides founding Women’s Network PEI and serving on the original Board of Directors, these women have been and still remain advocates for feminist and other social justice issues in various roles and capacities. Campaigning for women on many issues locally, nationally and internationally, individually they have been involved and supported organizations and groups like the Premier’s Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention, PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, AIDS PEI, Anderson House, Community Legal Information Association, PEI Council of People with Disabilities, PEI Humane Society, National Association for Women and the Law, PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada, Transition House Association, and Rotary.







## Sponsorship Opportunities

**Calling all Trendsetters,  
Champions, Heroines, Allies and  
Friends**

Individuals, businesses and organizations are invited to support our next fundraising effort by donating money or in-kind supports, buying tickets for low-income women who otherwise couldn't afford to attend, or donating items for the basket raffle or silent auction.

Choose from various levels of sponsorship based on your capacity and the perks we offer at each level.

Look for the information on our next fundraising event *Celebrate Island Women* in the fall, on our website and in the media.



[wnpei.org/Sponsors](http://wnpei.org/Sponsors)



Photo By Patricia Bourque

Among other dignitaries at our fundraisers, the Honourable Antoinette Perry, Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island, has been a regular. It has become somewhat of a tradition that Irish Mythen makes her feel very welcome by giving her a warm hug from the stage at the end of the evening. Irish did the same gesture at the Music PEI Songwriter of the Year event in 2020 (pictured here).

### A message from down under from our friend Irish Mythen

*As we are working on this publication, Irish is on a tour in Australia. Here is a message she sent to us when we told her what we were doing.*

Being part of such an incredible event makes me very proud. The work they do [at Women's Network], the tireless hours they put in to further the opportunities for women and non-binary people is amazing. If I'm not on tour when it happens again, I have absolutely committed to being part of the fundraiser.

Seeing first hand the changes that the folks at Women's Network have made in people's lives made me want to stay involved.

I am so proud to call Prince Edward Island home. My partner is from here and I have the privilege of being a part of her wider family. That feeling of welcomeness and belonging is an island trait. I've always felt at home here. I go around the globe telling people about PEI. The last 24 months have seen incredible personal highs for me. Playing the biggest festivals in the world solo with my guitar and PEI flag. I've been nominated for awards that now run to double figures. My partner asked me to marry her. We have a wonderful group of friends. I love where I live. PEI has given me so much and I feel honestly lucky to be here.



Photo By Lisa MacIntosh

# Irish Mythen: A Rebel With Many Causes



Born in County Wexford, Ireland, a prolific singer-songwriter since her teens, Irish Mythen has lived on several continents and performed all around the globe. She moved to Prince Edward Island in 2007, where she now happily resides with her partner Randell Duguid and beloved dachshund Dyson.

Even though she'd already been stealing hearts everywhere and creating a solid fan base worldwide with her excellent songwriting, a mighty voice, witty humour and grand personality, it wasn't until she moved to our little speck of land in the ocean that her music career really took off. Two EPs and three albums after, she is now set to perform at the 2020 JUNO Gala Dinner & Awards.

In her songs and her actions, however, Irish is not just a musician. She is a rebel who doesn't shy away from confronting those in power whenever she has a chance and reason, a person who deeply cares for humanity and speaks (or sings!) up whenever she sees injustice. Women's Network PEI is just one of the many organizations that benefited from her generosity and justice for women only one of the causes she's passionate about.

The themes in Irish's songs include caring for the homeless (*The Piano*), calling for accepting and embracing refugees (*Let Them In*), and even solidarity with our neighbours south of the border who are presently living an unfortunate political reality (*Be Still, Dance*). She wrote her song *Bravery* for PEI schoolchildren when she toured Island schools for an Anti-Bullying Day and didn't stop

there. Sometime after, she did a series of school visits while on tour in Australia with the same theme. *Bravery* is now a hit that inspires many to stand up for themselves. In Irish's own words, "... [the song] has since become so much more. We need an ongoing conversation about suicide, bullying, depression, mental health, mindfulness, and resiliency. I am filled with gratitude when I play this song live and the audience sings it back into the world."

Through her success, Irish Mythen has become an ambassador for Prince Edward Island, but she has not forgotten her roots, and will often bring up the struggles of Irish people throughout history in her songs and during her performances. Even if specific to Ireland and its people, the themes are often broad and deep and go beyond their geographical inspiration - her song *If We Had Built the Wall* talks about the conflict in Northern Ireland but is so relevant in today's politics anywhere.

Irish Mythen was at Browne's and stood up and sang this song (*The Old Triangle*). Bottles of Irish whiskey rattled on the shelves. We all had tears in our eyes, we were so moved by her performance.

*Browne's Irish Marketplace  
Kansas City, Missouri*

*Little Bones*, the title song from her newest album inspired by true events that took place in Ireland, speaks to a much broader topic of the importance of the separation of church and state. Irish's mighty acapella rendition of *The Old Triangle*, Dominic Behan's song about life in Mountjoy Prison in Dublin, with which she often closes her shows, will poke those in the audience who happen to be of Irish origin right in the heart but will cause goosebumps for anyone who hears it.

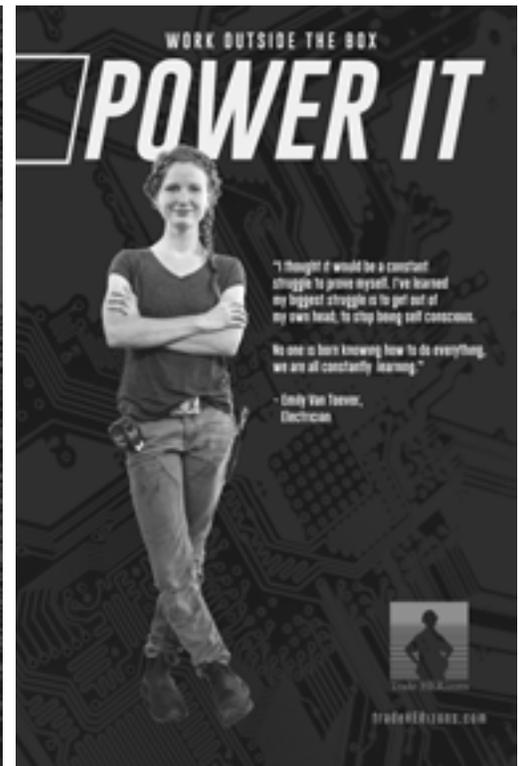
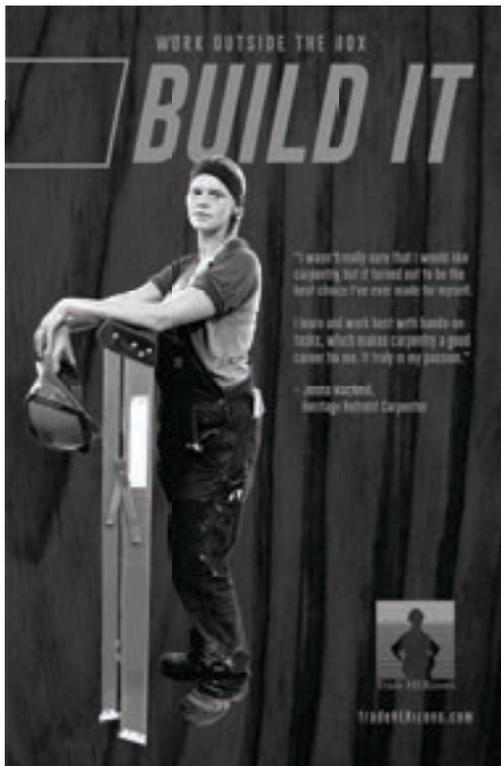
Many Prince Edward Islanders will agree that we should consider ourselves lucky that this marvellous artist and avid activist chose our province to be her home. At Women's Network PEI, we wish her all the best in her life and career and hope she continues to be part of our community for many years to come. ■



*Irish Mythen has two EPs and four albums to her name. Her exciting recent career includes opening for Rod Stewart here in PEI, supporting Melissa Etheridge on her Australian tour, performing at the Sydney Opera House, performing on the main stage at the Bluesfest festival in Australia, and closing the Philadelphia Folk Festival. Her self-titled album Irish Mythen won her an East Coast Music Award for roots album of the year in 2016.*

*Her latest release, Little Bones, gained her recognition around the globe, including a 2020 JUNO nomination for Contemporary Roots Album of the Year, seven Music PEI 2020 nominations and two wins — Touring Artist of the Year and Roots Contemporary Recording of the Year, and a Canadian Folk Music Nomination for Solo Artist of the Year.*





## Are you a woman and you:

...are between the ages of 22 and 45

...have completed grade 12 either through high school or through a GED

...have a desire and aptitude to work in trades and technology sectors

...have lived on PEI for at least 3 months

...are either a Canadian citizen or permanent resident

...are on EI, working 20 hours per week or less, or on social assistance or have no income

...can commit to full-time programming

...are ready to make a change in your life through exploring new career options

Check out the Trade HERizons — a career exploration and college preparation program with a focus on exposure to trades and technology careers, enhancing essential skills, career exploration and personal development.

Experience hands-on learning opportunities, meet mentors and tour with employers!

Enhance your life skills and learn about  
labour market research, resumes, interviews,  
math and team building!

**[wnpei.org/Trade-HERizons](http://wnpei.org/Trade-HERizons)**

# Creating Common Ground

By Anne McCallum



In late September 1981, when I was six-and-a-half months pregnant with my second child, I responded to an intriguing ad in *The Guardian* for a part-time editor of a new PEI publication, as yet undeveloped and unnamed. Its purpose was to create a forum for the diverse voices of PEI women; to empower women by recognizing their achievements and potential; to raise awareness about issues around gender equality, and to facilitate communication among women's organizations.

The bold women behind this brave new venture were founding members of the Women's Network Project Committee

(later Women's Network Inc.) To my immense surprise and joy, they hired me to help turn their vision into a reality! I hoped they didn't regret that choice when on October 17, a week before I was to start the job, my son was born prematurely. I shouldn't have worried. In the true spirit of feminist solidarity, they first gave me flowers and then gave me all the support and encouragement I needed over that challenging winter. As my tiny baby flourished, so did Women's Network's plans for our budding magazine.

We launched it in March 1982 to celebrate International Women's Day. At the

national level, Bertha Wilson was making history as our first female Supreme Court Justice. The federal government was finally patriating our Constitution following a triumphant women's lobby campaign that forced politicians to entrench gender equality with no override provisions. Locally, Anderson House had recently opened, and plans were underway to create the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre. There was zero access to abortion services anywhere on PEI, but for a short time, we had a Planned Parenthood office in Charlottetown. On the domestic front, many Island women still identified themselves using their husbands' first and last names, not their own.

In the spirit of inclusiveness, we named our new PEI women's publication *Common Ground* to emphasize the common ground that women of all ages and backgrounds shared, and for 14 years, we published a 32-page issue every two months. I served as Managing Editor for 13 of those memorable years. All of our talented writers and illustrators were volunteers. In addition to celebrating PEI women's strengths and accomplishments, *Common Ground* acted as a key communications tool for women's groups, especially for organizations that sought to effect societal change. The magazine helped build a sense of community and shared-purpose long before the invention of the world wide web.

Here are just a few of the organizations whose work we regularly profiled: Women in Support of Fishing; the Disabled Women's Network; Women in Support of Agriculture; National Association of Women and the Law, PEI Chapter; the East Prince Women's Centre; Advisory Council on the Status of Women; Native Women's Association; Immigrant Women's Association and many, many more...

When I recently reviewed some of the earliest *Common Ground* issues, I wondered what today's young feminists would think of them. I feared they'd find them too cautious in tone and limited in scope. Certainly, by modern standards, their content now seems tame, but to us, it was ground-breaking. We took great pains to celebrate women's traditional family-building roles alongside their career-based successes. We were initially cautious around hot-button topics like abortion and same-sex relationships. I'm not sure we dared use the f(eminist)-word at first because we didn't want to alienate traditional women's groups who were working hard to strengthen the status of women but who found the word offensive. But after a few years, we began to set those concerns aside, and the content grew more explicitly feminist.

In each issue, we highlighted women who were knocking down the gender barrier to carve out rewarding careers in non-traditional areas – these were the stories that I loved best. We shared books and movies on topics related to women's health and empowerment; we published first-hand accounts from women who faced and surmounted incredible obstacles to realize their full potential. In every issue, we published women's creative writing. We reported on critical aspects of the national and international women's movements. And we forged strong, caring bonds with each other.

...it surprises me, when I look back almost four decades, that the topics we wrote about in our early issues of *Common Ground* are still so relevant today.

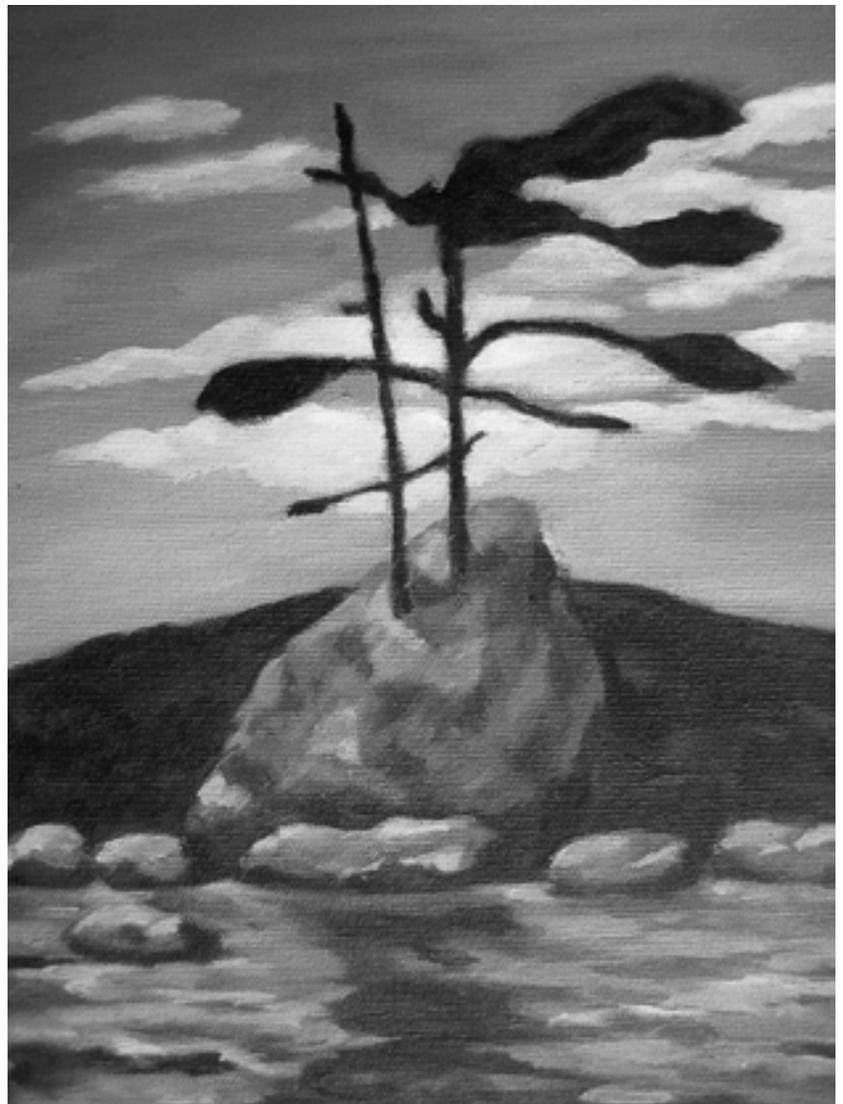
I have always appreciated how privileged I was to work in such a creative and respectful environment surrounded by remarkable women. They were proud and strong and determined to change our institutions, our laws, and our interpersonal behaviours so that women would have the same political, social, and economic rights as men. To some extent, we suc-

ceeded, but it surprises me, when I look back almost four decades, that the topics we wrote about in our early issues of *Common Ground* are still so relevant today. In fact, the following random selection of headlines address, in many ways, the same four priorities that Women's Network still focused on in 2019—Empowerment, Justice, Education, and Health:

*Lobbying a Success Story (How PEI women helped ensure that gender equality rights were entrenched in the Constitution); Fishing Women Unite; Outstanding Women in History; Safe to be a Rapist; Not a Love Story—A Film about Pornography; Daycare Budget Not Enough; Workplace Realities (the gender wage gap); Toeing the Fine Line between Motherhood and Career; Schoolgirls Still Traditional in Careers; Getting Physical—Developing Pride in our Bodies...*

Although most of these issues still require our ongoing attention, they no

longer need a printed magazine as their forum. The strong networking and awareness-raising role that *Common Ground* played in the 80s and 90s has been taken over, more than competently, by newer technologies. Besides, the magazine was just one of the many tools that Women's Network used to strengthen the early women's movement in PEI; in particular, the annual women's festivals and numerous forums and skills-building workshops organized by my co-worker for ten years, Dianne Morrow were incredibly effective. But for nostalgic reasons, I'm delighted to see Women's Network bring *Common Ground* back to life as part of its 35-year celebrations. It generates fond memories of those heady days when the women of my generation believed we could create a different world, and in some important ways, we did. ■





Cover illustration for the December 1993 issue of *Common Ground* (Vol. 12, No. 6). The artist was Dale McNevin, a well-loved illustrator from Charlottetown. Dale created and generously donated dozens of original drawings to accompany *Common Ground* articles in the early 90s. The women depicted here were volunteer writers, staff, Editorial Committee and Women's Network board members at the time. They are (left to right, back to front): Nancy-Marie Arsenault, Joanne Ings, Eliza-Jane Wilson, Alice Crook, Laurie Murphy, Dianne Morrow, Nadine Smith, Anne McCallum, Katherine Clough, Anne Mazer, Susan Pepin, Betty Henderson, Joy Shinn, Irene Novaczek, Jean Ginn, Masie MacLaine, Debbie Berrigan, Lee Bartley, Catherine O'Bryan.

# Accessing Silence (Through Active Listening) as a Radical Feminist Practice

By Becka Viau (2014)

*“Listening, openheartedly and asking opening questions can often unlock the areas that have been tightly bolted down by fear and social pressures.” ~ Fran Peavey, Heart Politics*

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When I started to create the experimental documentary *Access*, I had just experienced a miscarriage. The pregnancy was unexpected.

I was deep into my master’s degree, and honestly, I wasn’t sure that I could handle being pregnant, supporting a family or having a child. I felt isolated, not knowing who I could trust with my confusion. Who would listen even? I had looked into my options on my own and saw a doctor multiple times. I scoured the internet for any local source of support, yet, on PEI, I could find none.

I stood barefoot in the grass and cried. I held my face down in my pillow and cried. I felt powerless and alone with the pressures that a culture of silence had placed on my body. The weight was heavy on my mind, yet I couldn’t confide or seem to trust even the closest of my friends.

In the end, the pregnancy terminated. And I was still alone.

I wasn’t sure what to do with myself. I had seen the ins and outs of ‘standard care’ for missed and incomplete miscarriages, and the way the system treated me was cold, hushed and secretive. I was left emptied. I felt silenced without ever really feeling as though I had the choice to speak.

At the same time all of this was going on, I was reading *Silence, Feminism and Power: Reflections at the Edge of Sound*, a collection of essays edited by Sheena Malhotra and Aimee Carrillo Rowe and a couple of Foucault’s writings - *Birth of the Clinic* and *Message or Noise*. I had stumbled into these writings and essays through my research into the documen-

tary form, activism and apparatuses of knowledge and power. Serendipitous, perhaps, but ultimately the combination of experience and academia led me to consider the power of listening or audition as a radical feminist tool or practice. A place to claim authority over my own body and advocate for the agencies of others. A place for me to reconnect, and once again remember my centre of self-authority.

I could get into metaphorical clichés about the female being related to the natural, and the body being related to nature. However, as I see it, feminism is about bodies and their right to exist, to be visible and to have power over themselves. Be that through their thoughts or their actions. And a considerable institution and discourse that controls the knowledge, visibility and possibilities of bodies is that of medicine.

According to Foucault, the individual or the singular body/subject is the privileged object of medical practice. Truth in medical discourse is thus the result of allowing the body to reveal itself in empirical experience. Empirical method, technique and its instruments present the medical practitioner the exclusive power to examine and bring bodies into knowledge and rationality through their gaze. The medical practitioner uses many different techniques and methods to exert their gaze upon individual bodies, but undoubtedly the medical gaze is exercised through the senses.

Foucault argues that the visual dominates the empirical experience of medical knowledge. That haptic and olfactory experience, along with audition, remain in a subservient position to vision in the

realm of medical knowledge/power – or the knowledge/power of the individual body. However, it can also be argued that the only way to truly visually reveal the workings of the body is to open it up and look. This type of visual understanding can only truly be experienced post-mortem, and as a result, I am left to conclude that discourse about the body that relies on vision as the dominant sign is a discourse not for the living at all.

Audition as an apparatus of medical knowledge, however, relies on a living body to function, for a dead body or an invisible one doesn’t make any notable sound. I, for one, consider feminism as a practice and as a theory to be living, continually changing, never static ever-evolving and troublesome. My feminism exists to uncover the possibilities of being, to transform and dismantle power systems that dominate, control, and silence my body and the bodies of others. My feminism’s focus on agency and communication, both of which rely on the capacity of action, of being seen and heard, of being recognized.

For a sound to be recognized, there must be a source of the sound, which brings into question the notion and action of speech. In an essay titled *Between Speech and Silence: Reflections on Accountability*, Ann Russo acknowledges speech, talking, making yourself known and demonstrating your knowledge through language to be often considered as signs of ‘real’ engagement, leadership and contribution in many middle-class feminist, queer and social justice organizations. Yet, she also states that the cultures created in speech or auditory centred groups “privilege those most able to demonstrate their



powers of knowledge and expertise, and those who can command authority.” This focus on action through speaking up and speaking out or awareness-building reproduces power lines formed by systematic and structural oppressions and privilege even when the stated goal is to dismantle and transform these structures.

Having a voice is essential when one thinks of being silenced or when one considers the power of being heard; however, I also believe it is vital to consider one’s situated voice and its connection to visibility – an apparatus of medical knowledge and power of the body. Starting from this perspective, I feel it is crucial to embrace listening as a more transparent feminist approach to action, for listening is less apt to perpetuate power structures and systems when done actively.

Listening is often related to being silent. When one is listening, one is not speaking; hence one is silent. However, being silent is not at all, like being silenced. Silence forced upon another is an act of oppression. But, deliberately

choosing to be silent could be considered an active form of resilience and resistance. The political impact of being deliberately silent can be noted throughout history through acts of defiance and protest, amongst others. This is why I question our custom denial of silence’s revolutionary characteristics. Why do we continue to imagine silence and domination to exist solely in the same category? In *Resistant Silences*, Christine Keating refers to silence as an apparatus that can be used to reject, witness against and temper modes of domination. It is only in a world that degenerates silence that it is difficult to ask people to exercise silence as a radical practice.

Once one considers silence as an active form of resistance to modes of domination and structures of oppression, it is not a far leap to then consider the possibility of listening as a similar active practice. However, it can be difficult to truly, actively listen. For it is not about making space, which implies ownership or privilege to be relinquished (currently a very trendy concept.) Active listening is about acknowledging spaces that al-

ready exist, but due to oppressions and modes of domination, they have been rendered and kept invisible. It is about shifting power dynamics and revealing knowledge. According to Ann Russo, active listening implies an openness to a more collective process, one in which the most privileged are not at the centre, and one in which our ideas and ourselves are open to modification, change and transformation.

I particularly like the idea of shifting the locations of authority, power and knowledge to promote agency and empowerment. Of shifting the authority from making oneself visible through the act of speech to actively listening. To deliberately undermining that presumed entitlement is at the centre of the conversation. To reject the compulsion to speak in universals and to actively relinquish the power of determining the direction of the conversation and agenda. Active listening is now, for me, a focal point of feminist resistance and is the point from which I approached the experimental documentary *Access*.

To conclude, I ask you now to witness, open up possibilities through radical feminist action via the documentary. ■

Follow this link to the films:

*Access #1* [vimeo.com/57465750](https://vimeo.com/57465750)

*Access #2* [vimeo.com/80559035](https://vimeo.com/80559035)

Note: *Access* is an ongoing project and is not complete, but instead is a journey that may never be fully articulated.

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# And Circled the World

Jennifer Platts

There was a girl  
With green eyes like gems,  
Reflection of a crow within,  
Which flew into her eyes.  
The two as one grew wings  
And circled the world.

Clawing red dirt,  
A fresh, open wound,  
Their beak drew forth a snake.  
The three wormed under the earth as one  
And slithered under the world.

Coiling round a fish  
Their body of three did squeeze.  
Gills fluttered,  
Tail swept,  
Water cascaded,  
As one they swam round the world.

Jaws clamped,  
Teeth sank,  
Devour pink, juicy flesh,  
The mighty beast did purr,  
And they bound round the world.

Transformation complete,  
Metamorphosis profound,  
The girl inside urged to burst free  
From her fur, scale, skin, feather cocoon.

The feline leaped out  
From the fishes gapping mouth.

The fish's slick body writhed  
Coursing out between the fangs of the  
snake.

Out of the crow's throat came the reptile  
Clamped down the side of the crow's beak.  
The snake slid forth from its bill.

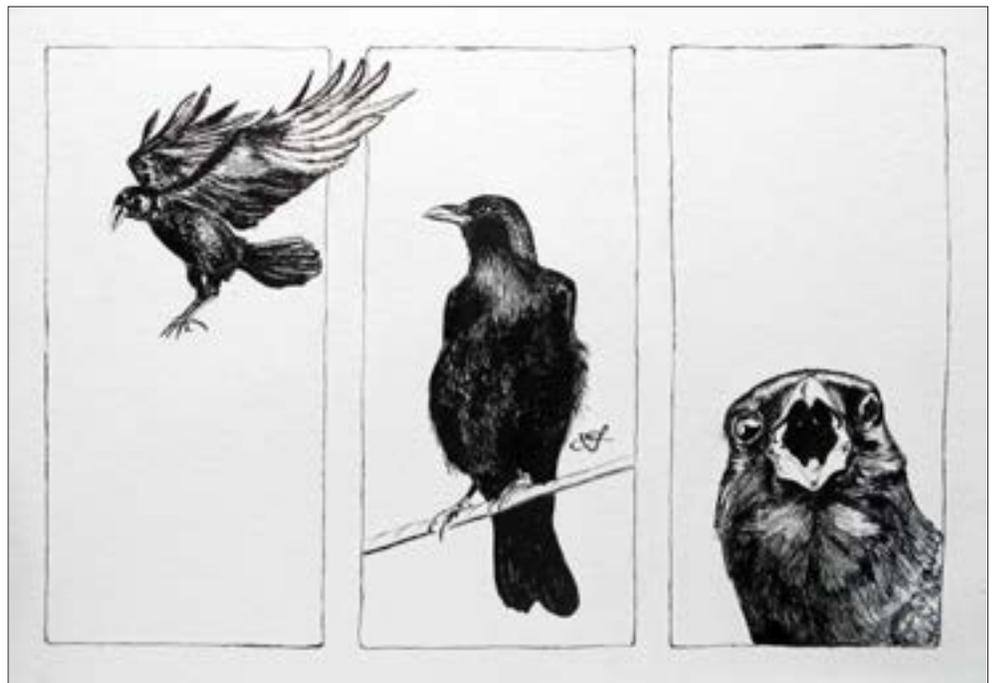
She blinked and batted  
Her long eyelashes.

Feathers swooped from her eyes.

Left as one  
She carried on,  
Perception cultivated,  
And the world circled the girl.

i am forever trying  
to make myself  
smaller  
knees tucked  
under chin  
trying to contain  
as little space  
as your words do  
under pressure  
I dream only white  
enough space  
to stretch out in

md



# My Journey

Anonymous

Can't remember when it started  
Can't remember when it stopped  
I just know it happened

A little girl so scared  
No one to turn to for fear  
Was this love of family?

Escape, escape, as much as I can  
The forest, schoolwork, sports  
Visits, travel, run away, NOW

Time to leave home  
I have nothing to function with  
I am not ready for the world

I do many things, succeed  
Something is missing, emptiness  
I do not know any better

Finally, "incest" is whispered  
In the dark of the night  
Between sisters on a healing journey

No, that is not possible  
Yes it is, you KNOW  
Oh my God, what do I do?

So much pain, so much anger  
Who am I, why this to me?  
Do I want to live or die?

The pain is so great  
Death seems a haven  
But I want to LIVE

So much hatred inside  
I cannot speak to him  
Going home is too painful  
I believe he knows my pain  
One day his heart explodes  
I do not have to face him anymore

What someone cares for me?  
Yes, there are good friends  
Who want to love and nurture you

What about my family?  
They are not ready for this  
Heal yourself, the road is rough

Is it possible to heal  
From so much pain  
Anger so deep in my core?

The path is a long one  
A lifetime of healing  
Am I worth the trouble?

Friends say "call me day or night"  
I cannot burden you, no, no  
Who wants to see me cry?

True friends see you through  
They give you hugs  
Lend an ear to your pain

I feel good today  
It may be possible to heal  
I will give it more time

Oh no, the pain returns  
What do I do, I do not want to be alone  
I need a friend, I have friends

I feel good more of the time  
But some things trigger the pain  
Will it ever end?

This is my journey  
My spirit has chosen this  
Why, I'll never know

But yes, I am healing  
I am a beautiful woman  
Worthy of love and respect

I am worth all this work  
We all are worth it  
Because we are all beautiful women



# I saw your walls come up

By Lauren Roi

“I saw your walls come up,” my partner says to me. She is holding me, gently stroking my hair. I am weary and lay heavily in her arms, hesitantly back in my body after escaping it when the danger overwhelmed me. I dissociated, fleeing as the old trauma patterns took over, patterns that saved my life and my spirit as a child. I am 29, and for the first time in my life, I carry the hopeful assuredness that another way of being is possible. That another world is possible – one in which we turn to *repair* to strengthen relationships, heal harm, and resolve conflict.

For people who grew up in loving, secure families, repair is typically learned by watching their parents and other family members navigate conflict. For those of us who didn’t have those early safe environments, the tools for repair need to be learned elsewhere. Theories in books or counselling (both of which can be inaccessible) aren’t the best means for learning repair – we need the practice of relationship. Being in a relationship with a survivor of childhood abuse is hard. It is often in our most intimate relationships that we test the limits, waiting for the friend or lover or mentor to mess up and prove to us that love is never unconditional, lashing out when we feel the threat of broken trust or abandonment — turning reliably to the skills that allowed us to survive childhoods of disconnection and abuse – even when those skills no longer serve us, trapping us further in cycles of harm. Repair is impossible when my nervous system has gone haywire, caught up in a fight-flight-freeze-fawn response.

I travelled to Palestine this August. “Everything is dialed up here,” I wrote in my journal after a 40-degree afternoon

spent outside in a refugee camp “the heat, the hospitality, the grief, the conflict”. I spent time on both sides of the wall, experiencing the restriction of

and sometimes a weapon or a wall going up is the only tool we have available to us. Sometimes it means you’ll make it out alive. The trouble with weapons is that once you’ve wielded one, there’s no laying it down without fear of what the other might sling back. The trouble with walls is once you start to build them, there’s nowhere to go but up. You start looking for bigger weapons, adding razor wire to the top of the wall, and before long, there’s blood on your hands.

There’s a fear response when people have felt powerless or survived terrible abuse, where we get stuck in trying to prevent what happened from ever reoccurring. In my relationships, this has led to walls going up to avoid harm – often preventative, often at the slightest detection of potential harm. On a larger scale, this can look like militarization and an obsession with zero-sum security that is won at the expense of others. Rather than building a new world, this keeps us stuck in patterns of the old, perpetuating cycles of harm.

“Security will never be achieved through military power,” Zoughbi told us over dinner, back in Palestinian territory and without armed soldiers at every turn. Security – safety – is achieved through the cultivation of trust, mutuality, and belonging.

Repair opens up the possibility of new life. Many of us lack the skills due to intergenerational trauma, colonization, racism, homophobia, transphobia. It’s a skillset I’m actively working on because I see the need repeated at every scale. A wall might seem necessary to our survival, but it’s the strength of our relationships – the ability to mess up and take risks and always be held in love – that make life worth living. ■

## ADMISSION

by Linda Stewart

I love the domestic arts.

Baking  
fresh peach pie.

Gathering  
freshly laundered linens.

Washing  
pans and bowls  
after a tray of muffins  
are slid into the oven.

Growing  
my own basil  
even if it threatens  
to take over the entire kitchen.

I wish everyone  
in the world  
could live like this,  
without fear,  
without brutality.



movement as we got turned away from a checkpoint on our way to a Shabbat service and conversation with a Rabbi at a Synagogue in Israel. The dehumanization of our friend at that checkpoint (Zoughbi, founder of Wi’am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre) made it hard to see the irony.

I know the danger involved in repair. As a child, I learned the threat of violence,

# Remembrance and Action

By Michelle Harris Genge

On December 6, 1989, I was around the same age as the students who were killed at L'École Polytechnique de Montréal. Maybe some of you reading this were, too. Perhaps you experienced the same foggy haze of scared, sad confusion. Primarily, I remember thinking that this sort of thing didn't happen in Canada. Mass murders took place in other countries far, far away. It happened in war-torn areas that weren't safe. Not here. Never here. Canada was a peaceful place, full of friendly, warm people.

These were the pre-internet days when you got your news from papers and magazines and *Compass* at 6:00 pm. Growing up, I don't think that there was a lot of space dedicated to exploring misogyny in any of the news sources. The thought of someone killing people because of their gender didn't compute. It simply didn't make sense. But I also don't think that I gave it a lot of analysis. I didn't make a lot of connections between people who I knew who were date-raped/sexually assaulted/touched inappropriately and their gender. And hmm ... yes, I guess if my youthful brain ever did a bit of a deep dive, I would have realized that these things exclusively happened to girls and women I knew.

But these weren't the things I think that I thought. What I do remember considering is that this could have been me who was lined up and shot. I was a woman, and I was starting university. These women were my peer group, and this was more than a little unsettling. They were me. I remember thinking that each of these students decided what to wear that day. She went to her clothes drawer, picked out her underwear and socks and wondered if her shirt matched

her pants. Maybe she was going to wear the grey sweatshirt, but then decided otherwise and left it on her bed to be put back later because she was late for school. Maybe she was anxious about an assignment that day that she didn't finish yet. Maybe she had a date that night that she was excited about. Maybe she said something unkind to her friend and was hoping to meet her in the school hall to apologize.



I remember my uncle spoke in church around that time, and he was speaking as a father to a daughter around the same age as the murdered students and me. I looked around at how upset everyone was, and it hit me that there were levels of empathy that expanded past my age group. We were all feeling this. And it hurt.

December 6th came and went for many years and then on December 6th, 2001, I became a mother to my

daughter. So then the date took on a new meaning - a day of joy. A day that I celebrate every year. But it's a complicated celebration, especially in my line of work where I am involved with violence against women prevention initiatives. And so I now know the statistics. I know that Canada isn't a safe space for everyone; it never was. Women in Canada experience violence every day. And I know that many, many people are working hard every day to prevent this violence but sometimes it doesn't feel like it is making a lick of difference. And other times, there are bright rays of hope that things are getting better. Those are the good days that keep people going.

And I hope so deeply that we will move towards the complete eradication of violence against women. I want it for many reasons, but one of them is unabashedly selfish. I am now approaching the age where my daughter will be the same age as the students were when they were murdered. **It has moved from I am them to she is them.** She's going into an engineering program next year at university. I can't ever imagine her picking out her clean socks for the day, making sure that they match and going to school and getting lined up to get shot because

of her gender. I can't imagine a text from a friend that is never answered because something horrible happened.

December 6th is a day of remembrance. It is an important day. We all have a role in violence prevention. First mourn, then work for change. And we need to do this every single day.

For all of us. ■

# The Terminology of ‘Equality’ in the Language of Feminism is Inherently Racist

By Stephanie Douglas

Over the course of the past 40 years, a few men across the decades have accused me of being a Feminist, and once upon a time, not that long ago, strong women were considered feminist. While finishing my B.A. Honours in Philosophy, in my early 40s (2002-2004), it was young white women who would call me a “Pinko-Commie-Feminist,” whatever that means - I have never figured it out.

Funnily enough, I have never labelled myself a feminist and never will until the language and the structural racism that underlines this particular “ism” has changed. Sadly, I don’t foresee this happening in my lifetime unless there are fundamental shifts and a willingness to seriously deconstruct the language, the ideology and the foundations on which feminism was created. Feminism was made for White Middle-Class Women - Black Women were never a part of the initial movement because Black Women in the 70s and even now were “Not Wanted on the Voyage.”<sup>1</sup> We still aren’t wanted on the voyage, and neither are Brown Women, Middle-Eastern Women or Mi’kmaq Women. Why? Because the language of female-led organizations or female-focused political organizations and their Boards of Directors, committees, and accompanying Women’s Conferences still use the word “Equality.” As I say this, I can almost see people scratching their heads and saying, “what is she talking about? Equality is what women have been fighting for!” Let me explain:

Unfortunately, ever since the 70s (and way before, when women fought for the vote), feminism has continuously said: “we want to be equal to men.” But, as far as I’m concerned, feminist organizations and White Women have mostly achieved that. They are the upholders of the status quo, and the status quo is White Privilege and White Power.

In 1981 when I was 19 years old and waitressing, I had this awesome button that I wore to work every day. It took women a lot longer to understand the meaning of the button than it did for men, and both would look uncomprehending, bemused and puzzled. My button said, “Women Who Want to Be Equal to Men, Lack Ambition.” I have never understood why women wanted to be equal to men. To be equal to men is to perform in the same power-tripping, controlling, privileged way, and to be exclusive and inaccessible to other women. In fact, to be Equal to Men, White women have done the same thing to women of colour as men did to women: exclude them, make them feel uncomfortable, unwanted, unwelcome, and inferior. Women’s organizations that are all white, but say, “hey, applications are open to anyone,” are saying the same thing men said about opening up medical or law schools to women for the first time and then essentially dismissing and excluding them from the table and the ‘real’ conversations. Women weren’t truly invited to the table from the beginning, they were an after-thought. Just like women of colour are not at the tables from the beginning on PEI - we are an afterthought that white women in charge or “leading,” never get around to.

The problem is language. Unless we work to understand language and how language forges the paths people take, and unless it is truly considered, thought about, analyzed, and assessed frequently, and work is done to make the correlations between language and participation, it will continue to be the problem.

Equality means being the ‘same as.’ Women have become similar to men in the processes they use, the language they use, the exclusion of other women, the expectations to perform and to present like White-Middle-America Men in politics, business, and NGOs. This concept of “Equality with men” still underlies

feminism, white women who claim to be feminists, organizations that label themselves feminists or as having a “feminist framework.”

I have never, ever wanted to be equal to White Men of Privilege and Power. Yet, this is the message from white women and the organizations and companies they run, and the political parties they are a part of. Because let’s face it, neither the Feminist movement of the ‘70s nor the mainstream contemporary Feminist movement today sure as hell isn’t seeking Equality with Black and Indigenous Men, and the attendant social issues they must deal with, let alone Equality with Black or Indigenous women who are at the bottom of the social ladder!

What I want, for myself and for all other women, especially women of colour, women of visible diversity, economic diversity, and people of gender and age diversity is Equity.

Merriam-Websters defines **Equal** as: “of the same measure, quantity, amount, or number as another. Identical in mathematical value or logical denotation. Like in quality, nature, or status. Like for each member of a group, class, or society.” So Feminism’s striving towards “equality” is a striving to be exactly like men.

On the other hand, **Equity** is totally different, and I have always been an “Equitist,” never, ever an ‘equalist’. Merriam-Websters defines Equity in part as “Justice according to natural law or right specifically, freedom from bias or favouritism.” My personal favourite definition is: “a body of legal doctrines and rules developed to enlarge, supplement, or override a narrow rigid system of law.”

The “White Male” systems (Patriarchy and White supremacy) have always been rigid, narrow, exclusive, biased, and lacking in freedom. Feminism has always had a certain implicit or explicit mantra, and that has been, let’s get “In” first be-

cause then we can change the systems from within. However, women wanted to be equal, and instead of changing the rigid White Male systems they adopted them and altered them slightly, but neglected to examine their own hierarchal and dysfunctional methods that tend to run rampant in most women-led organizations. They remained incredibly racist, exclusive and unsafe for women of colour. This is particularly true of PEI where the most established organizations are still pretty much exclusively White. Where the attitude continues to be “anyone can participate,” which is so untrue! Some other women of colour have been way smarter than I’ve been over the course of their lives. Many, and in certain places most women of colour self-select out of political organizations, women’s organizations, Boards of Directors and Committees because they know as a Minority, they will remain a Minority within most organizations and if they do participate, their survival plan is “Head down, Smile, Stay Under the Wire and don’t speak up.”

I never got that memo. So, I worked and volunteered and joined organizations that were in the non-profit sector which tend to be community-based organizations and those tend to be mostly female-led and consist largely of white female employees. I was often the only woman of colour in most of the workplaces, Boards of Directors, and committees I was part of. I tried to be the voice of women of diversity and instead was shut-down, dismissed, demeaned, brushed aside, given titles like “The Angry Black Woman,” condescended to, and sidelined. All I received for being the one person of colour in these “Women Equal to Men” environments was trauma.

No matter how much I speak-up, explain, or write about it, PEI’s female/feminist organizations and political parties refuse the change the conversation. The conversation is still the one where women of colour are not a part of the process from the beginning, and they aren’t a part of the process from the beginning because White Women continue to refuse to do the work needed to ensure women of Colour’s inclusion;

the work of Cross-Cultural understanding and communication. The status quo environments are not safe for women like me - Black Women and Women of Colour. And since the processes haven’t changed, the language hasn’t changed, the “White-Male-Middle-America” style that these organizations were built upon and exist upon haven’t changed. It is not and will never be enough for organizations to say they are open, they need to do the WORK - and that is the work of going to women of colour and non-white-European culture and building up trust. It is the work of ensuring the invitations to the table are made in person, face-to-face and that we, Women of Colour are part of the process of any program, organization, political movement, group, Board of Directors from the beginning.

Women-led organizations need to ask themselves every day, “WHO IS ABSENT FROM OUR TABLE.” ■

*‘Title of a Timothy Findley novel.*



# Black Magic

I am made of bronze, supple, sun-kissed skin  
I'm like a sweating fanta you haven't drank since childhood on a muggy August night  
I am the emotions you don't even know exist.  
You see, I was healed by my ancestors songs after your words cut too deep  
You hung my spirit out to dry  
They flooded me with oceans, rivers and lakes of magic past

The legends before taught me balance,  
They carried crowns of blessed water to quench my thirst  
Balance: So no matter how much you spit at my head  
This crown will never tip

My tight curls, versatile, bold, obnoxious  
Your Medusa? Never. My head will never go to your king  
My sexuality is mine and mine alone  
My mother, her mother and those before them created a salve to protect me from your drool  
My ancestors understood petty  
They knew all you would see their daughters as, were places to dump your dirty secrets

So

They made me with every single thing you, your daddy and your forefathers fantasize of  
I am the spell they cast on your sons  
I am the rising sun  
I am the setting moon

I am a Black King;  
Drenched  
Soaked  
Dripping  
In my ancestors magic

~ King Kendi

# Lady Hemlock's Monologue

By Mari Basiletti

Long ago I was a tiny seedling  
So small and fragile  
You could have snuffed me out  
With one of your footsteps.  
But you are too young  
To remember that time.  
There were thousands of us then,  
And I grew –  
A sapling into a tree  
Nourished by the singing stream  
Where I lived in the grove  
Down the moist ravine.  
I have seen many seasons pass  
The growing rains of spring  
The warm heat of summer  
The cool nights of fall  
The winter winds and blizzards  
I have stood before all.  
For centuries  
Creatures have huddled  
Beneath my green canopy.  
You, too, may rest here

Feel my strength and peace  
And know not fear.  
Now there are fewer of my kind  
Many of us fell to axes and saws.  
But I still stand  
Down the moist ravine  
By the singing river  
And I am not afraid.  
See me now  
My trunk strong and tall  
My branches lacy and graceful  
Forever green  
I was born without a name  
You may call me Hemlock.  
Oh I know there are machines  
I feel the vibrations  
In my spreading roots  
And my top boughs quiver.  
I am calm  
I feel no fear.  
I stand in the moist ravine.



# women are trees

by: laura grace harwood

women are often compared to flowers

delicate  
defenseless  
to sit like a potted plant  
in the corner of the room  
quiet  
content  
for the viewer's pleasure  
the strongest thing about her  
her sweet scent  
which lingers  
from nose  
to nose

women are not like flowers  
women are trees

once just a seed  
planted in hope  
nurtured and pruned  
by a world hoping  
one day  
she would bloom so beautifully  
she would take a man's breath away

women are trees  
ever-growing  
each day  
her age  
it shows  
in rings  
around her eyes  
each marking  
her battles  
her wounds  
her growth



it shows  
in rings  
around her mouth  
each marking  
her laughter  
her joy  
her growth  
her bark

it's rough  
little things  
always picking away at it  
yet she grows

women are trees  
strong  
strong enough to stand tall  
seldom wavering  
as they weather some of  
the darkest storms  
life has to offer



By Sam Petrie and Emily Van Toever

Back in 2014, both Emily Van Toever and Sam Petrie discovered that they were, in fact, two of the only women in a PEI trade school. Emily was enrolled in the Construction Electrical program and Sam the Precision Machining program. After discovering their shared interests, they quickly became friends. They had noted early in their friendship the rarity of finding another female in the trades. Emily, coming from a background in the sciences with a Bachelor of Science degree, found it difficult to find work and decided to try a career as a skilled tradesperson. Similarly, Sam struggled to find consistent, year-round work and figured that the trades would be a path to more reliable employment.

After graduating and working in their chosen trades, both Sam and Emily had become mentors for other women looking to pursue employment as tradespeople. As mentors, the two women realized how much of a need there was to promote the skilled trades to women. Not only to promote but to help build retention. Often when a woman tries their hand on job sites, they are met with many obstacles such as stereotyping, sexism, mental and physical abuse, limited options for workwear, insufficient childcare options etc. These obstacles frequently lead to women being discouraged and ostracized on the job.

In 2018 Emily and Sam decided to do something this; Women Building PEI was established as a Facebook and Instagram group. Status as a registered Not for Profit organization soon followed, and the group continuously grows in popularity. The aim is to act not only as a support group for each other but also to identify ways to make the future in the

trades more sustainable and welcoming for female workers. Women Building PEI uses its online platforms and hosts meetings with other tradeswomen to collect information useful in developing strategies on how to better provide community support and services. They've also acted as an intermediary for employers seeking skilled workers in addition to helping newcomers to PEI make connections with companies with a need for workers in various skilled trades.

Women Building PEI has many goals for future programming. These include facilitating hands-on, mentor-led workshops for learning skills and building confidence in a workshop environment. It has been recognized that workshops are an essential way to connect women that have been able to successfully succeed in the trade's environment, with women just starting in the field. Working with those experienced women will provide an opportunity to learn strategies for coping with toxic workplaces as well as offer a supportive environment to develop and discuss skill sets necessary to their respective trades.

The group was created to help the visibility of tradeswomen in the community. To be recognized as a legitimate answer to help the inevitable trade worker shortage. And the goal for Women Building PEI, well, it's to become obsolete! To get to the point where we don't have to prove that we're good enough, but for people to understand that we always have been. ■

facebook.com/womenbuildingpei  
instagram.com/woman\_building\_pei

## No Man's Land

By Tara MacLean

I am no man's land  
Once they laid claim to me  
Staked their territory  
Tore me apart, ploughed through  
Pristine surfaces  
Dismantled my temples  
And secret altars  
But now I am no man's land  
They dug their foundations  
Built their own dreams brick my brick  
until  
I couldn't breath beneath them  
Or see my own trees  
Pulled from the roots  
And I was supposed to be grateful  
But I am no man's land  
Mined without consent  
They took my jewels  
Minerals, metals  
But they did not go deep enough  
Because I was protected  
I was protected at the core  
I am his no more  
I am no man's land  
I am shore  
And ocean and more  
I am mountain and stream  
And every scream  
My ancestor's dream  
And still he thinks he can build upon me  
But I am no man's land  
I have been in the trenches  
Soil and blood and bone  
And this is where I raise my village  
This is where I make my home  
I will dig into the dirt with bare hands  
And broken nails  
This is where I'll bury my children  
This is where I'll plant my future  
How I'll tell my tales  
Here in no man's land  
I have worn his collars  
His tiny shoes  
Corsets and rings  
And thumb screws  
But I am awake  
And I cannot be taken  
The ultimate iron maiden  
I am no man's land  
I dare you to cross me

## Defining a Woman

By Nicola Lewis Kemp

Motherhood is expected,  
fertility always assumed.  
She with an inhospitable uterus  
is a woman still.

He who is not himself,  
a woman she will become.  
My ovaries that no longer work,  
a woman still I am.  
To define us by our bleeding or breeding  
is unjust and demeaning.

## The Mirror

By Shelly Jackson

The mirror has two faces  
I look in and I look out  
I thought I knew just who I was  
But now I live in doubt  
On the outside the woman; strong, confident and smart  
On the inside the little girl dying of a broken heart  
I have to break the mirror to save the child inside  
Yet all I do is stand here  
For another day I've lied.



# The Soft Ones

By Kathryn Nazim

I used to hate my softness.  
How my belly would ooze  
over the waist of my jeans,  
my chin folding double.  
In the mirror  
naked  
I saw a great doughy expanse of flesh.  
I longed to be lean and leggy.  
Firm and toned.  
Instead  
I was curved like a figure eight  
with lots of extra me to loathe.  
Just before you came along  
I'd gotten into the best shape I'd been  
since I was a teenager  
when I spent my winters whittling the ice with my skates  
and my summers pumping my legs like pistons down the  
soccer pitch.  
Back when my metabolism was high and my asthma was  
absent.  
This time around, to slim down  
I diligently did downward dogs  
pushed myself to plank  
three or four nights a week  
in a steamy, heated room  
and for the first time in years  
I felt strong.  
I looked strong.  
I looked in the mirror  
and for the first time in my life  
I didn't feel the urge  
to look away.  
And then, a month later, I got pregnant with you.  
I pudged up pretty quickly too.  
I was only nine weeks or so  
when I discovered that the new pair of jeans I'd bought  
the *perfect* pair  
the pair that hugged my curves  
and skimmed my ankles just right  
no longer fit.  
My body was becoming the vessel  
that would bring you into this world.  
Fashion was no longer its concern.  
Though initially sad to lose my slimness  
I became glad for my prior softness.  
As the months went by, where I once saw flab  
now I saw room to grow.  
My hips, ever wider than I liked,  
became the sturdy foundation  
upon which my body built you.  
My ample breasts  
always a source for unwanted attention  
would now serve their true purpose: to nurture,

to feed, to comfort, to cushion the child to come.

My stomach has never been flat  
and the suppleness of my skin meant  
my stretch marks were minimal  
as I expanded ever outward.  
My thinner friends found their flat abs  
gave way to deeper stretch marks  
that etched canyons into their bellies.  
My fat was, in fact, my saving grace.  
Who knew I'd learn to love it?  
Now, when I hold you in my lap,  
or when we share a bath  
you delight in the squishableness of my belly.  
You pat my fat happily, giggling as it jiggles  
grabbing my thick rolls in your tiny hands with glee.  
Little do you know that that it used to be  
the armour that protected you  
from all the ugliness and danger of the world.  
What once protected you  
now comforts; a bump or a skinned knee  
brings you to me,  
yearning for my soft embrace,  
the safe harbour to your intrepid, delicate vessel.  
These days I wouldn't trade  
my cushioned softness  
for all the taut, toned edges  
and angles you could offer.  
For you too, are soft.  
Newly minted, jelly legged  
you stumble into my lap  
and squish your soft face into mine,  
cheeks pillowing against each other.  
Your tiny body melts into my arms  
as if it remembers a time  
when we two were one,  
inhabiting our soft space together.  
No, I would not trade this for all the world.



# Eve's Café

By Michelle McCallum

The holiday season of 2019 is unfolding in its usual glitz and anxiety. Like most people in Prince Edward Island, I celebrate Christmas. I get a wreath and tree, buy presents, belt out carols over a few rum and eggnog. Sometimes I fool myself that I am actually celebrating Yule and Winter Solstice, and even the very post-modern “Festivus” – anything really, to try to distance myself from the mainstream, ugly commercialized festival that celebrates a religion that isn't mine. Except I do actually celebrate Christmas. I have always been like this – wanting to set myself apart from the plain, the boring, the bland. Magic was and is the thing that I most desire in life. I identify as a seeker of sorts – setting myself apart and defining myself in opposition to my own culture. Badass. Punk. Bohemian. Feminist.

Nothing like the folks of the PEI community I grew up in and around...

Over the last few years, I have had a rude and much-needed awakening as I came to realize just how white, middle class and privileged I am. I am not some edge-dweller, suffering under an oppressive and calcified patriarchal structure. I am doing quite well, thanks. Quite comfortable.

While this realization has come in waves – some gentle, swirling softly around my feet – and others a tsunami of shock – the waves still come. I am grateful for them now, for all the gentle educations and all the frustrated call outs. I do my best now to seek self-education, look for my blind spots, and interrogate my discomfort.

I have had to let go of many constructed identities in this process, mostly because they were predicated on white supremacy and cultural appropriation. My love of crystals, sage, oils and incense, feathers, exotic textiles, religious texts, exotic food, costumes (!), home décor items – all designed to construct my vision of myself as a global citizen, mystical, well-travelled, educated, and cultured.

But my signalling this identity was really only for other people to determine I was not “just a butcher's daughter from Dunstaffnage, PEI” but myself exotic and interesting.

I took other people's objects and cultures – and sometimes sacred things – and made them my identity. Not cool.

What I have discovered is that I am indeed a butcher's daughter from Dunstaffnage, PEI. Which is a good and fine thing to be. And that while I have my limitations, I have a responsibility to the world around me to behave as a force for good.

I am 52 years old, a mother and wife, a professional – and what the kids are now calling a “Karen”. “Okay, Karen” is a symbol of the failure of my beloved Gen X to actually accomplish much more than display withering apathy and smug dismissal of our parents' incredible arc through life with their unflinching Boomer belief in themselves and their goodness. We would have none of that thank you sir. We know what's up. Nihilism is where it is all at. Can't fool us.

Except we fooled ourselves.

We were, and remain, angry – we never quite pulled off the cool nihilism that we performed so well for the media. But now our anger is misdirected to store clerks, Millennials, and yes, somehow the system that we continue to prop up.

When I wrote *Eve's Café* in the mid-nineties, I was so impressed with myself and my peers. I was challenging the second wave. Those older feminists seemed so inflexible and joyless (they weren't). I laugh so much now how incredibly annoying I must have been for the many, many women who mentored me. I was a brat. I was all *Fuck the Patriarchy* and *Riot Grrrr!*, *DGAF*. Combat boots, baby doll dresses, Bikini Kill, Wicca. Sadly – it was just another constructed identity that I moved on from once I decided to be an earth mamma/hippie instead.

Almost 25 years later, I've become more authentic. I still love many parts of my constructed identities, have found pieces that resonate with who I really am. I am at rest in my heart and soul.

Now, I mentor, engage, coach, encourage lots of folks in my various roles and it is incredibly rewarding. Much more rewarding than trying to prove I'm cool. Some of the folks I engage with are brats, much like I was. Which makes me love them more. And I am still learning too – especially from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ folks who have such incredible patience with me. Thank you.

This Eve is now middle-aged. And better for it. Congratulations to Common Ground and Women's Network PEI – you've given me much and I hope I have contributed equally over the years. ■



Photo by Beth Johnston

*Michelle MacCallum worked with Women's Network from 2003-2016 as a project manager and Executive Director. She had previously written a column “Eve's Café” in Common Ground in 1995 and served on the Board of W/N in the early nineties. She is still a bit of a brat.*

# Comedy + Confidence & Friendship = Joy

By Stacy Dunn

Comedy is my joy – I perform improv and stand-up. I feel confident and strong, being involved in a male-dominated environment. I like going to comedy open mics where the ratio can be two women to 10 men; or four women to eight men per show. I remember the hilarity of a new mother's set. I would rather laugh than cry over a stinky diaper, too.

Better to laugh than cry is my mantra. Comedy helps me express frustration, over-explaining my disability to strangers. I am not an inspiration by solely crossing the street. I would recommend stand-up to any woman dealing with any aggravating issue. It's great therapy.

The WITTY Mama improv troupe, in which I took part, held a four – week stand-up comedy boot camp in 2018. Over 20 women from various backgrounds wrote and performed their own material. Great laughs and togetherness filled our practice room. Half of us took our jokes to an open mic after the boot camp was done. It's one of my favourite memories.

Another favourite memory is doing improv at a Women's Network PEI fund-raiser. I admire WNPEI's program Trade HERizons. Dozens of women have gone on to carpentry, plumbing, welding programs and more, thanks to them.

What WNPEI has done for women in trades, it can do for women in comedy. Their comedy workshops could give women confidence, friendship, and a sense of living outside the box.

People will marvel at that brave, funny woman walking across the street. ■







# Hilroy DIARIES

## Ankas

By Beti Andric

Fluid air is soiled with the smell of ozone, the sea is like a mirror, a seagull's shriek reflects from it and tears the turquoise sky. On the horizon, large heavy clouds which served their purpose are now leaving into space. Disappearing. On the surface of the sea an unusual object, as if it just fell there from the sky. Look - it is a small rocky island with a lighthouse, which once upon a time maybe even shone light.

Everything is frighteningly static. Only little whirlpools made by the sea around motionless rocks are showing it is actually water. On the stone gate of the lighthouse it is written in huge, geometrically precise carved letters:

### Ankas, the Witch

The door opened with the eerie sound of grinding of stone against stone. From the darkness emerged a black silhouette of a creature dressed in a black cloak. It was the evil witch Ankas. Her face was not visible. She strode slowly towards the coast and stopped on the highest cliff. Even though there was no wind at all, her long black pelerine fluttered around her skinny body.

She raised her arms towards the sky and looked up. The black hood fell off her head and uncovered her beautiful curly purple hair. She had gorgeous pink complexion, most beautiful face (perhaps just her nose was a little too large, kind of bent, hooked, I'd say), and evil turquoise eyes - the same colour the sky was.

The sea shivered for a moment when her loud laughter roared across its surface - completely evil laughter it was. Ankas stretched once again, and said in some strange language:

"Job well done with the last night's storm! It is time for the morning exercise..."



Ankas started to melt. She turned into a small puddle of black sticky liquid with two turquoise eyes floating on its surface. The liquid started to boil and out of it emerged a large albatross. It flew towards the tower and landed on top of it. After watching the beautiful morning for a while, Ankas started thinking. She noticed morning exercises were not as satisfying lately as they used to be. "Something strange is happening to me. It almost seems I am not enjoying my evil doings anymore. It is not healthy for an evil witch like me to feel this way. Take last night - instead of drowning that sailor in the stormy sea, I saved his life. And what is even worse - I was happy I succeeded. But, when you think a bit deeper, people do enough evil to each other these days, not leaving us witches much to do. And I must admit - it is sort of fun to do good deeds.

The albatross soared upwards into the air, did a few fabulous acrobatic tricks, and then plunged from the height with great speed, turning into a magnificent bright white seagull just before it touched the ground. "What's wrong with me - I never turned into a seagull before. But I feel so good, all in white like this..." Ankas spent the whole day as the seagull. She flew all the time and felt good like she never felt before. She had a feeling she would

wake up somewhere else the next morning. She got bored already, all alone in that wasteland. In the evening, tired from flying, she fell asleep right away, completely forgetting to do her regular evening evil deeds.

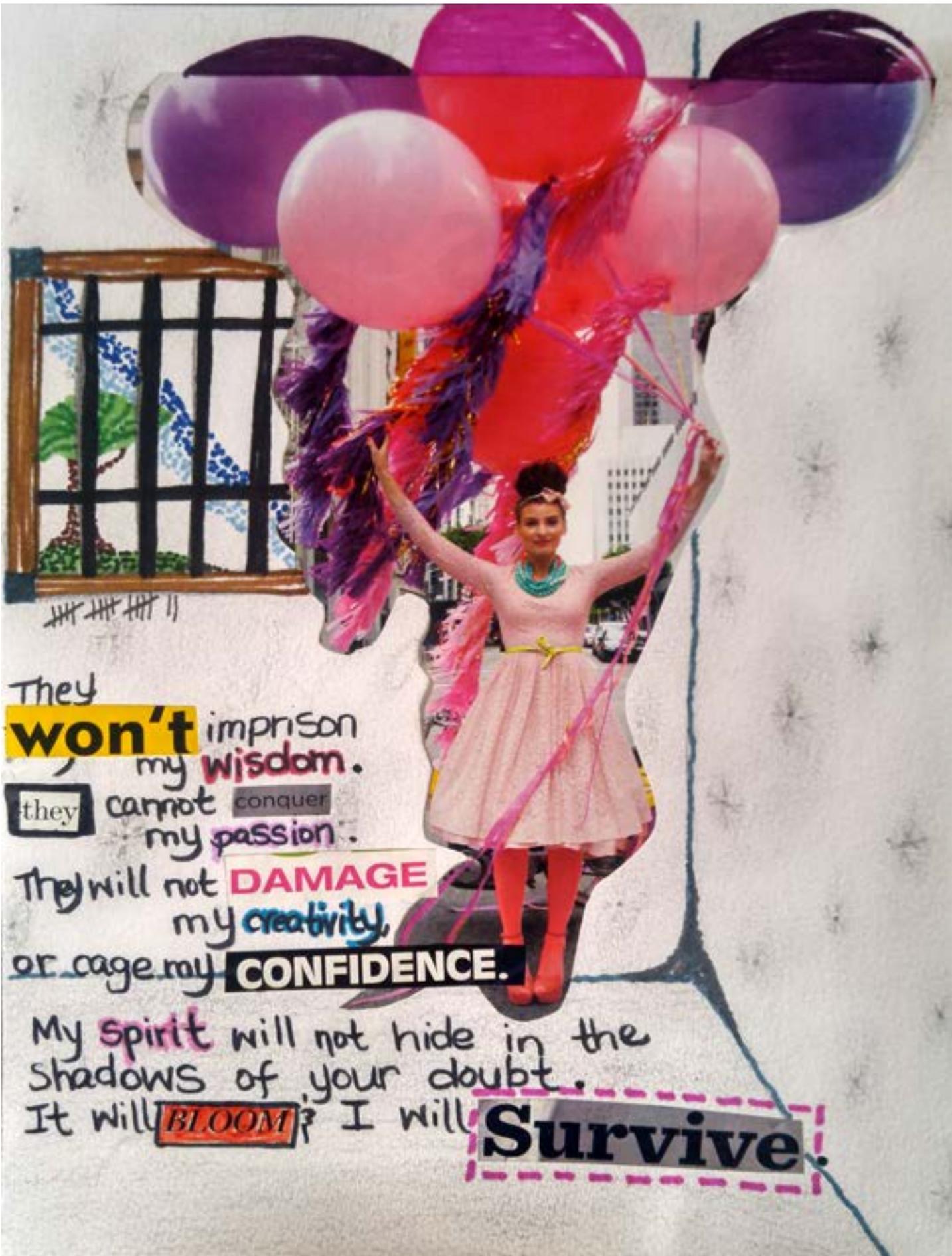
She dreamt most wonderful dreams. Everything was so delightful. All the people were good and lived in love and harmony, and there were only good witches in the world who helped them with everything.

Ankas opened her eyes. The sun was splashing through the window. Everything was weird. "This morning feels so strange", she thought. She ran outside. Her island was not her island any more. Scent of flowers in the air! What a beautiful garden! Palm trees are waving hello with their leaves. Everything is so wonderful! She ran back to her bamboo hut and looked in the mirror. She almost fainted in surprise. Her purple hair now has a completely different shine. The look in her turquoise eyes is warm. There are no evil lines on her face. She is even not wearing her black cloak. She's got a divine colourful dress on. "What's happened to me? Where am I?"

"Welcome to the Island of Good Witches," she heard a voice behind her, "congratulations on such a quick transformation, Ankas!"

Ankas turned around and saw a maiden in the same outfit like her own, a maiden who in fact looked exactly the same like she did. ■

*Beti wrote this story back in high school, in her mother tongue Croatian, in the early 1980s. She translated it into English and read it at one of "Hilroy Diaries"-themed fundraisers organized by Women's Network PEI, circa 2008. Beti arranged her participation in said fundraiser while naked in a sauna with two fellow feminists whom she met for the first time right then and there.*



They **won't** imprison  
my **wisdom**.

they cannot conquer  
my **passion**.

They will not **DAMAGE**  
my **creativity**,  
or cage my **CONFIDENCE**.

My **spirit** will not hide in the  
shadows of your doubt.

It will **BLOOM**? I will **Survive**.

