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For more information please contact the Vancouver/Richmond Mental Health Network, 201-1300 Richards St Vancouver, BC V6B 3G6 Phone: (604) 733-5570 Fax: (604) 733-9556 email: vanrmd@telus.net



Illustration by Rhonda Davis

## Any ideas on the topic?

To some it is a mountain top and a lake to reflect upon. To others it is a magnificent cathedral, mosque or temple.

The next issue of the Bulletin will have spirituality as its theme. Send us your story, your poem, your artwork. We'll pay! Tell us what it means to you, what it is and how it differs from religion.

Stories can be up to 1,000 words and art must reproduce in black and white.

Please submit your work on disc, by email or drop off at our office. Artwork on disk or email should be in jpeg format at 72 dpi.

Vancouver Richmond Mental Health Network  
201 - 1300 Richards St  
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Next deadline is November 19, 2007

### Application for Membership to: VANCOUVER/RICHMOND MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

Cost is \$1.00 per year

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### Return application to:

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Official publication  
of the Vancouver/Richmond  
Mental Health Network

# POVERTY

&

# MENTAL ILLNESS

The Bulletin is the official newsletter of the Vancouver Richmond Mental Health Network; its contents are the opinions of the individual writers and not necessarily those of the Network. This edition was produced by mental health consumer/survivors. It is a vehicle for the expression of concerns and opinions for the enlightenment of all.

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We welcome readers' letters, including those from outside the Lower Mainland. We also welcome inquiries about the Network's self-help groups and other programs.

Contact us at:  
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www.vcn.bc.ca/vrmhn

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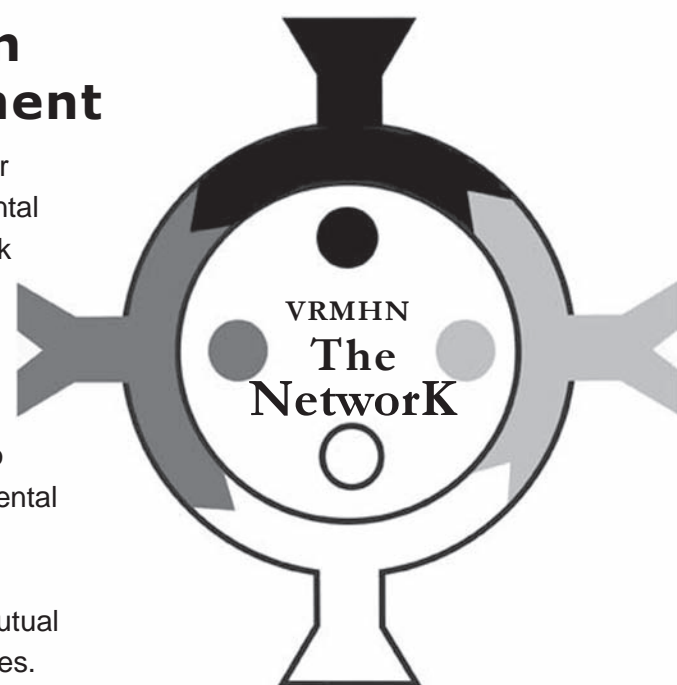
## Network services

The Network offers the following services for consumer/survivors:

- Co-Ed Badminton/Volleyball Group
- Community Education Program
- Expressive Art Group
- Latin American Peer Support Group
- Men's Peer Support Group
- Pan Asian Peer Support Group
- Sacred Circle
- Shakti Peer Support Group
- Women's Peer Support Group
- Yoga Group
- Events and Workshops throughout the year
- Information and Referrals Library
- Mental Health Resource Library

## Mission Statement

The Vancouver Richmond Mental Health Network serves to promote growth and healing of people who go through the mental health system through the provision of mutual aid opportunities.



## EGM

Network members gather at Mount Pleasant Community Centre for the Extraordinary General Meeting to decide on charitable status. Although it had been voted down in the past it has now been approved.



from Page 14

be with myself, perhaps do a little emotional release work, the answers to my money challenges come to me naturally. 'Living more with less' has become my motto. Stuff can tie us down and so can jobs that are not fulfilling our highest purpose. We humans are magnificent, creative beings, yet somehow in our quest for material riches, we have lost track of who we really are. We come to this planet as whole spiritual beings, full of hope and expectancy and we get wounded be-

cause our society forgot about values. We forgot that it is quality of life, rather than quantity of stuff that creates happiness. We forgot that freedom to be who we are is going to bring lasting fulfillment. Master Jesus has been quoted to say, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be yours as well." Maybe when we make the good of all our highest purpose and create the kind of communities that our hearts long for, we will know the prosperity of peace, contentment and belonging.

## A citizen writes to the premier

Dear Mr. Premier,

It is such an honor to have you as a leader in this province. I appreciate the way you make me feel right at home. It's like having a daddy who keeps everything under control. We all have our rations and I'm sure you know what's best for us. After all, I am like a child when it comes to politics and what do children know any way. I'm so glad you're putting all that money in your pocket and protecting it from foolish persons who wouldn't know how to budget and use it properly. Cutting back the welfare checks was a great idea. We might as well starve the people who can't work. What good are they if they can't produce? Then again, there is no point to life if it doesn't support capitalism. It's about time we made things harder for the drug addicts who abuse the system.

They'll probably want to overdose because of their hopeless plight; then we won't have to concern ourselves with them any more. And as for those single parents who have babies to take care of...well...I'm relieved that you don't believe those emotional flakes who tell us that children are our most valuable resource. It's probably great for kids with stressed out parents to be yelled at because it prepares them for the real world. It certainly makes a lot of sense to continue to support jails because angry children do nasty adults make. Might as well keep them locked away so that they won't hurt anybody. That budget cut on educational grants was absolutely brilliant. After all kids go to school long enough. They get their heads stuffed with so many facts in 12 years; it's got to be good for something. Creating a training wage will

be sure to save a lot of money for the national deficit. Why waste all that cash on paying people anyway. Besides, we should be thankful for our many blessings. Think of all those poor starving souls in other lands who we never have to worry about because emaciated men don't make good soldiers... Which leads me to a very important point; I'm glad you are making sure we have a trained army and weapons to kill our enemies. Just knowing this helps me to sleep well at night. My mother always told me that hardship makes us stronger. I am eternally grateful that you seek to empower weaklings like me who are ready to fall upon bended knee in complete adoration.

Sincerely,  
A Devoted Citizen

RH

# PRO\$PERITY

## It's so much more than money

For most of my adult life I have been committed to recovery and for most of my adult life I have lived below the poverty line. Unfortunately, in a capitalistic society, we don't get paid for recovery work. Today, however, I feel wealthy, but not because of the amount of money I have in the bank. For me, wealth has to do with so much more than money. I feel wealthy because through the healing process I have become empowered to create an authentic and meaningful life for myself; I got myself back. I am connected to ME! That is certainly a priceless gift, one that I could not even have imagined when I was suffering from anorexia. Sometimes when I think about how it was when I was obsessed with food, when I was afraid to eat and binging and abusing laxatives and I realize how far I've come, all I can do is be thankful for the fact that I

found the help I needed to heal. I now know that there is a wealth of resources available to me, and that there are many loving supportive people with whom I am connected. For this I am immensely grateful. I read an interesting story from a book entitled *Unveiled Mysteries* by Godfre Ray King. While Godfre was doing business in a town situated at the foot of Mount Shasta, he met a master who demonstrated for him the truth about our supply. Godfre had been drawn to the Mountain because of an ancient legend that spoke of a group of Divine Men called *The Brotherhood of Mount Shasta* and from his travels he understood that most legends have their origin in a deep underlying truth that usually remains unrecognized.

One day while on a hike up the moun-

Story and illustration by  
Rose Heart



tain, Godfre stooped down to fill his cup with some water from a mountain spring. Suddenly he felt an electrical current pass through his body. When he looked behind him, he saw a man who told him that he would give him a much more refreshing drink. So Godfre gave the man his cup and the man returned it to him filled with a creamy liquid. Godfre was surprised to find that when he drank the delicious liquid, it immediately created an electrical, vivifying effect on his mind and body. The man told Godfre that this liquid came directly from the Universal Supply. He explained that this Omnipresent Life exists everywhere about us and is subject to our conscious control and direction and willingly obeys the command of one who loves enough because the entire Universe obeys the order of love.

Our monetary system is really a debt system based in fear. Controlled by the world bankers, the money game was created so that a few can become excessively rich while the masses become slaves to the corporations, digging themselves deeper in debt to this illusory system. This system was created to keep us bound in the illusion that we need money to survive; this creates fear. No one wins when operating from fear there-

fore this system is destined to collapse. There is only so much 'official dollars' floating around, yet Universal Supply is unlimited. We can only know prosperity when we live our life according to love rather than fear. This means experiencing and releasing the fear that holds us back.

From my own experience, the need to maintain health and balance come before the 'need' to make an excessive amount of money. I am learning to be content by realizing that I always have enough. The Universe is a truly loving place and when I trust and obey the guidance of my intuition, I will always have what I need. I now affirm that I always have money when I need it and (you know what), I always do!

When I slow down and take time to just  
*continued on Page 15*

*From the Co-ordinator*

## Charitable status summer's harvest

Well as summer comes to a close, and the remnants are left of the events just past...it was a good summer here at the Vancouver Richmond Mental Health Network. Our Charitable Status has finally been approved after the hard long work of the previous coordinator of over three years, Ron Carten, and then Christie McRae during the appeals process.

Mad Pride this year was amazing, with many talents and advocacy for human rights attributing to this extraordinary event all held throughout the month of July. There was the annual Mad Pride cabaret; this year with the opening of drumming and song, to the closing of poetry and Karaoke. The events had well over 100 totalling in attendance of opening and closing processions. The art exhibition at Gallery Gachet was implausible; there are many a creative individuals under the mental health sector.

Mildred would like to thank sincerely all other co-presenters and all artists, performers, donors and volunteers who dedicated their time and warmth to make this year's Mad Pride possible; and sincere thanks also to Gallery Gachet for providing the venue.

We also hope the members that were able to attend the Vancouver Folk Festival were able to enjoy it. It was a joy to give back to our society and help our members to get the discounted tickets for such an amazing event.



Kristine Stratford

We've had a few new peer support groups open at the Network, with a Cultural Arts group as one of our newest groups, and still in process the Sacred Circle: drumming, chanting, dancing and talking group.

If any of our members out there have any great ideas or experiences with fundraising projects please do let us know, as this is your chance to get involved and become a winning part of our society.

Please also remember, any of your writings or pictures are a great feature that we like to include in *The BULLETIN*. Our next issue is on Spirituality, so if you have anything you would like to submit, please be our guest...your work is worth money, and we do give you a small honorarium for any works submitted and published through our society.

We are currently planning a winter party for our members, so please keep your eyes and ears open in our mail out flyers for our next upcoming events. Thanks for all your wonderful support to us here at the Vancouver Richmond Mental Health Network, we look forward to seeing you at the next coming event; this winter's party.

And for anyone interested in keeping in the loop with current Mental Health issues, Ron Carten, the Networks' previous Director, has created a mental health blog on line, with a link to his current book on Mad and other Essays. The online address can be accessed at: [www.aimstest.ca](http://www.aimstest.ca).

Wishing you all wellness out there in this crazy mad world! ...Until we meet again...  
Cheerio!

*From the President*

## Decision allows Network to develop resources

The journey towards having charitable tax status has not been easy. Ironically, the Vancouver/Richmond Mental Health Network was incorporated as a non-profit society in 1999, for certain key purposes. One such purpose was for the obtaining of charitable status. We had an opportunity to move ahead during the Summer of 2003, but the majority of attending Network members voted against having charitable status.

Times have changed. At our recent Extraordinary General Meeting on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, the "yes" vote was nearly unanimous. We can now forge ahead with the further development of our Network's capacity to provide more to the mental health community. After several frustrating months of dealing with the Charities Directorate in Ottawa, this



Susan Friday

is great news. We were fortunate to have Ron Carten and, more recently, Christie McRae devoting their time and energy towards a solution. We were also lucky to have Pierre Picard as the 'point man' in Ottawa.

I would also like to thank Mildred German and Kristine Stratford for organizing the EGM.

From a financial perspective, our Network can use up to 12 percent of annual resources on political activities, if our income is between \$100,000 and \$200,000. The rest of our resources must be used for

"charitable activities." We can even overspend during a particular year, if necessary, if less money was spent during the preceding one or two year period. In dealing with government and the public, it is important not to blur the line between 'education' and 'propaganda' however, and educational activity has to be more than a mere dissemination of information.

According to Revenue Canada, we retain a good measure of freedom." Representations to elected representatives or public officials are considered "charitable". If we explicitly advocate that a law, policy, decisions of any level of government in Canada (or a foreign country) should be retained, opposed or changed, our activity

*continued on Page 4*

# Poverty steals health, years, serenity

Welcome to our "Poverty & Mental Illness" issue. In British Columbia, there are many resources available for people who have mental disability status such as counselling, assistance in training/education and reduced costs for public transportation. However subsidized housings have waiting lists that go on for years and the price of everything consistently goes up while Human Resources cheques still allocate only \$375 at the most for rent & utilities. If anyone out there actually knows of any place which can be rented for \$375 including utilities without a three-years-plus waiting list, especially in the lower mainland, let us know! The food bank is great still we can only eat so many beans and macaroni and cheeses.

Poverty affects every aspect of our lives including our relationships, our self-esteem as well as our emotional & physical health. Statistics prove that on the whole people who live under the poverty line have shorter life spans than those who live more comfortably. It is no wonder, since it is difficult

to remain healthy when our basic needs are not met and we are constantly stressed about where the next meal or shelter is coming from.



Josanna Savoie

articles & stories is 1,000 words. We also welcome letters to the editor. Without any further ado here's our amazing fall issue!

Our winter issue will be on the topic of Spirituality, what a great topic to explore just in time for Christmas! All submissions must be sent by Monday November 19<sup>th</sup> to [vrn@vsn.bc.ca](mailto:vrn@vsn.bc.ca) c/o the editor or dropped off at the office address on Page 2. Please be advised that article headlines are written after the layout and may be changed without notice. The maximum length allocated for

## Gale's cartoon



## From the Reader

Dear Editor,  
Re: "Parenting important from Day 1," From the Editor, Summer issue.

Since society will unlikely ever force proactive, offspring-desiring people to partake in child-rearing courses, another bill, albeit controversial, would be to include mandatory school courses in psychology that would commence at, perhaps, Grade 8.

Unfortunately, many people refuse to think before they act and procreate without enough time to spend with their offspring, as well as without enough appropriate child-rearing knowledge. Thus, dysfunctional offspring and perhaps future bullies, racists and violent criminals are being created.

Such education should be instituted, especially when considering the fact that a child is vulnerable to dysfunctional thought processes in later years because of even a seemingly small flaw in rearing during his/her first six years of life.

Frank G. Sterle JR.

from Page 3  
will still be within the general ambit of "charitable activities." However, all representations should: a) relate to an issue that is connected and subordinate to our purposes, b) be well reasoned, and c) not contain information that we know is false, inaccurate or misleading.

Regarding the central importance of recovery to consumer-survivors, it can be said

that the legislation pertaining to charitable status can and should be interpreted in the context of contemporary society, rather than legislation from the year 1601, which reflects the reality of old English during Elizabethan times. Thus it may be argued that a good definition of 'recovery' contains the following: A model of mental health that is highly individualized, strengths-based, with a holistic approach that emphasizes hope

and human resilience. It also relies on material supports and opportunities for recovery, including an adequate income, housing, the resources to be well-informed about treatment options and equal and respectful partnerships with supporters. The recovery model incorporates positive thinking, self-directed therapy, self-advocacy, fitness, nutrition, peer support, spirituality and social activism.

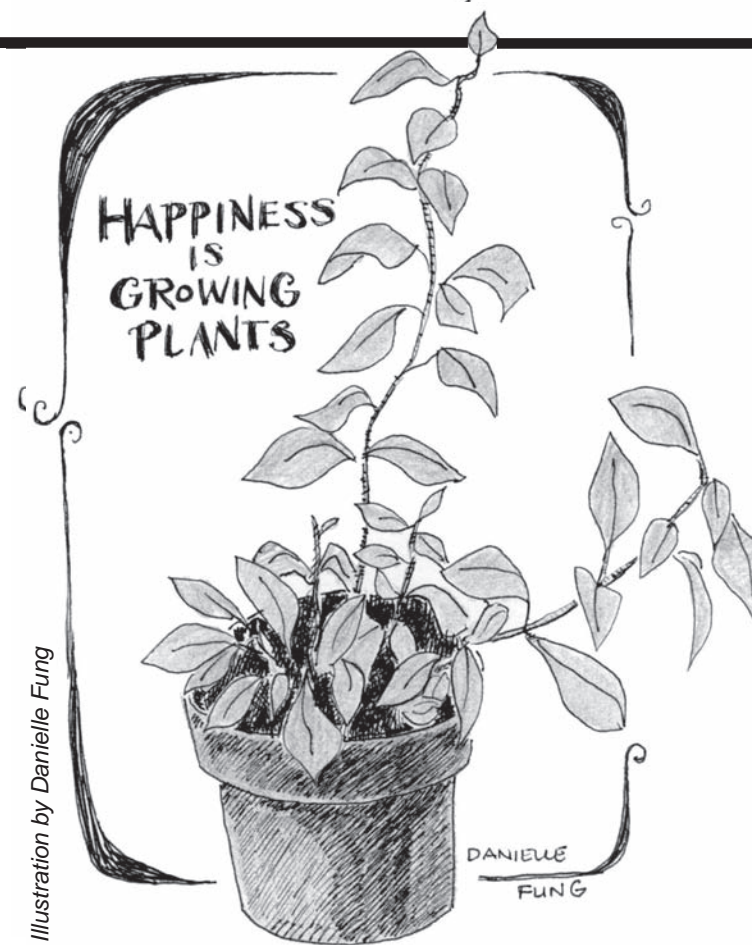


Illustration by Danielle Fung

Sometimes fear seems to eat me up inside  
Sometimes love is so intense.  
Sometimes fear brings anxiety,  
That I can't control.  
This weeping willow mess;  
This anxious vibrating wreck.  
This marshmallow of a human being:  
That melts and drowns and floats and sings and screams,  
and fights and creates harmony within.  
All of you, is all of me.  
Part of you, is part of me.  
Song, dance, rhyme, game,  
...and life.  
We are apart of...  
We are not.  
Whole, together,  
Separate, apart.  
Independent, one.  
Dependant, two.  
Interdependent, me and you.

Kristine S.

## Lows and Highs

I live today  
Taking care of now.  
My spirit moves as it will  
Guiding me to do as I must.

Tomorrow will have its own concerns  
I do not wish to know them.  
Yesterday is done  
Existing only in memory.

This moment I weep in the depths of despair  
The next, I laugh at the absurdity of life itself.  
One moment, I remain still as a moment in Zen  
Another, I create in a frenzy of feeling requiring expression.

How I live this moment  
Is the ultimate sum of yesterday  
And tomorrow will arrive with its' own poignancy  
As inevitably it does.

JM, BScN.

## Give me the darkness

Let me hide  
away from my misery  
Give me the sad songs  
Let me saturate myself in them  
as a comfort to my terrible longing  
the terrible loneliness  
Give me more tea  
Let me continue to pretend it's a healing tonic  
Give me a drink  
Let me numb the pain. Numb my existence.  
I visit loved ones  
they are on the inside. I am on the outside.  
The life I will never have  
flashes before my eyes.  
I am left with only a ghost of myself  
and wish I could offer more  
wish I could give more  
love more  
live more  
I walk on eggshells  
I stand on a tight rope  
waiting for the next tidal wave of emotion  
to come and sweep me away.  
I can't prove this pain,  
which only isolates me  
envelopes me, invisibly.  
I feel a numbed rawness  
a never ending fog that follows me  
a cloak of cognitive confusion  
I've become a shadow of who I once was.  
Will there ever be a true relief.

Sharon Uittenhout

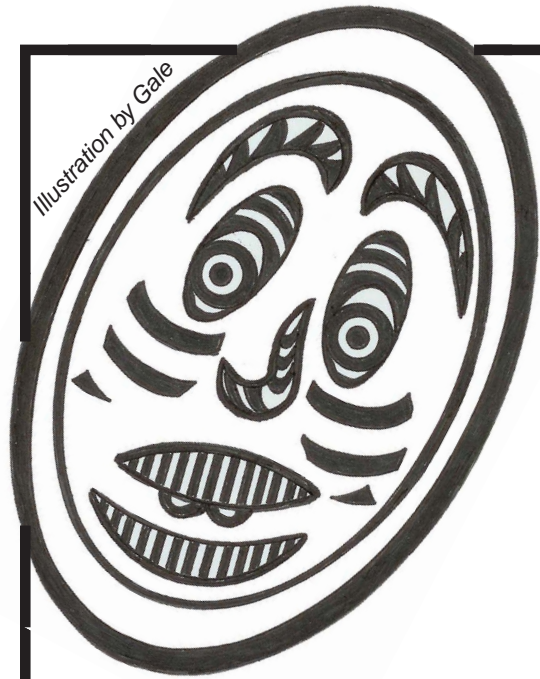


Illustration by Gale

**After it's all said and done**

I don't know what to say.  
 It's hard to see you going down that way.  
 If I could pray the biggest prayer, if I could wave a magic wand.  
 You'd be clean.  
 If I could move the mountains, such as god...  
 You'd be free.  
 The chains that break your heart and have held captive your soul...  
 I'd remove.  
 If I would want this for you, can't you believe that god would want that too?  
 I love you my friend.  
 Not to hurt you or make you pay.  
 Not to judge you or push you away...  
 I love you my friend.  
 We've had our squabbles and our fights....  
 But in the end we are still the best of friends.  
 I love you.  
 I know you have a good heart.  
 You wanted your angel to awaken your heart, to care for your soul...  
 She is there. She loves you.  
 You are not alone; you have just made a very difficult choice.  
 I hope one day you can see how much you have been loved.  
 How good your heart is deep inside.  
 You are loved.  
 Reach out my friend you are not alone.  
 Stop making that choice. To be on your own.  
 Know you are loved.  
 Give that addiction a slap in the face.  
 You are loved.  
 You are my friend...  
 And when you are done...  
 I will be there to the very end.

Kristine S.

**Live Wise**

There is a time of birth  
 A time of death,  
 In between live life  
 With quickened breath.

Sun sets, dawn's rise,  
 These are times  
 To open your eyes,  
 Live lively live wise.

Praise your spirit  
 Lift it high.  
 Each day love yourself.  
 Keep your heart off the shelf.

Take a mate for love.  
 Give birth to a child.  
 Model love and live well  
 And on strife they needn't dwell.

There are paper and lines  
 Authored for decades.  
 Great messages galore  
 For your mind to store.

Step on the sand  
 Hold your face to the wind.  
 Sip from a stream  
 Don't let go of dreams.

Never take a moment for granted  
 Live each day as a gift.  
 Gracefully reap what you sow'  
 Take courage, live what you know.

by Jayne Gale



Illustration by Gale



**30 pieces  
 of copper  
 and the  
 golden  
 arches  
 could  
 be his**

By Frank G. Sterle, JR.

"Spare change?" asked the squeaky disembodied voice. I turned from the bank machine to the source and asked how much he was seeking and for what he planned to use it. "Maybe 30 cents," was his reply, "so I'll have enough to get a Big Mac." He then began muttering to himself.

The appearance of the short, needy man sitting on the tiled bank floor that chilly evening one March didn't convince me of his proclaimed intent for any financial donations. His light-brown hair and beard were unkempt and frazzled. He wore an unclean blue T-shirt and greyish-white sweat pants that stopped at his upper calves, and his stockingless feet were dressed in cheap, worn sneakers. His light-blue eyes seemed unfocused like that of a drunken man, but

continued on Page 6

from Page 5

there was no liquor on his breath that I could detect.

This man, it was clear to me, suffered from a serious mental illness.

I flipped him **a loonies, ???** and "Wow!" was his sincerely grateful reply as I walked out, "thanks a lot!"

It wasn't till some hours later that day, while replaying the event over in my mind, that I realized the blatant inequality of it all: Here was a person with the very least in society seeking food money and shelter in an outlet of an institution which is the nation's most profitable. Collectively, Canada's large banks tend to make billions in after-tax profit.

Canada and the U.S. are dominated by people claiming to be Christian (not that members of other religions are necessarily more generous), we could do a great deal better in spreading the wealth, especially to the mentally ill. Indeed, I, a social conservative with a Christian background, believe that Christ sadly shakes His head when he sees how many "Christians" are neglecting societies most needy. I'd bet that he angers when observing those, e.g. some televangelists, who make a luxurious living

off of Christianity.

Those who are familiar with the teachings of Christ will know that He is as far from being a capitalist as could be: He despised gratuitous wealth and taught that one should acquire only that which one needs to live; also, He was an adamant proponent of his disciples selling their assets and giving the proceeds to the poor, which, I'm sure, included those suffering with a mental illness.

Too large a portion of Christians are capitalistic and somewhat callous towards societies most needy. Some hold the belief that God blesses His people with the right to own three cars, a swimming pool, etc.; that everyone is responsible for him- or herself, and that one only need become a Christian and ask God for what one needs. This despite Christ's teachings that God gives to the needy through His followers; and it's not enough for Christians to give a small portion of their earnings to their churches and then go home feeling they've done their moral share.

Without doubt, capitalist Christians can be enough to make many cynical about the faith. Profound and prolific author Charles Dickens expressed his dismay with such

Christians through his delightfully-sarcastic novel *Oliver Twist*. One of its pompous characters, Mr. Bumble, the head master of a poor house who also professes to be Christian, treats his impoverished subjects with contempt while he feasts on steaks with oyster sauce and porter. And after a starving, homeless man with his wife and large family come to him seeking assistance, Mr. Bumble states indignantly to a colleague: "Give 'em an apron full of coals today, and they'll come back for another the day after tomorrow, as brazen as alabaster." The day after the hungry family man warns that he'll starve to death in the street — an act which Mr. Bumble forbids him to carry out — Mr. Bumble notes that "he went away; and he did die in the streets. There's an obstinate pauper for you!"

I hope we are not returning to such inhumane times as written about by Dickens; however, with the gap between the rich and the poor widening, who knows? What I do know is that more "Christians" — to a large extent, my self included — need to get back to the Christian basics: Care for one another as you'd care for yourself. Or will we revert to "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?"

## Beauty and the Blues

One way to overcome depression is to immerse yourself in beauty, which is everywhere if one takes the time, as artist Danielle Fung suggests, to appreciate beauty wherever it offers itself.

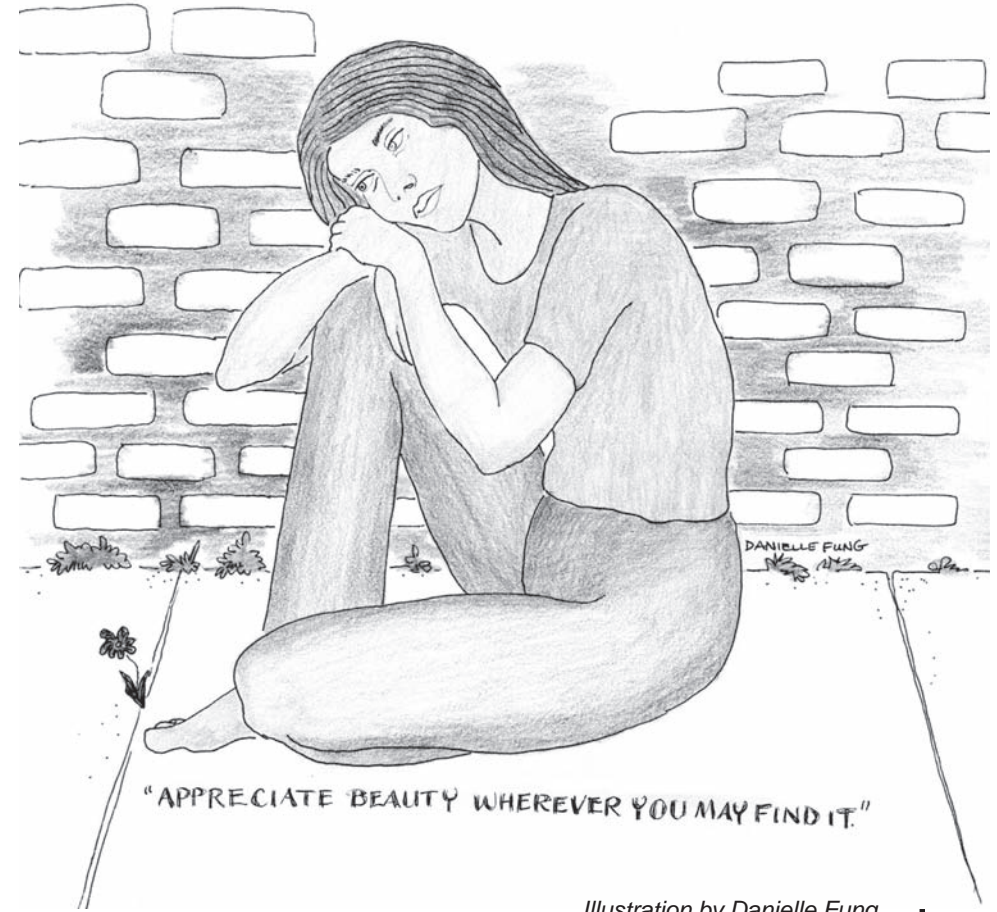


Illustration by Danielle Fung

## Depression a major threat, study shows

From the news services

Depression can be more harmful to general health than many leading physical illnesses. A recent study from the World Health Organization shows that depression had more impact on sufferers than angina, arthritis, asthma, and diabetes.

It is the fourth leading cause of disease burden, a measure of the number of years of full health lost due to an illness. Projections by scientists at the Harvard School of public health suggest that by 2020, depression will rise to become second only to heart disease in terms of disease burden.

On a scale of 0 to 100 (with 0 indicating worst health and 100 indicating best health), sufferers of depression had an average score of 72.9 compared with 80.3 for asthmatics, 79.6 for angina sufferers, 79.3 for arthritis sufferers and 78.9 for those with diabetes, indicating that depression impairs health state to a substantially greater degree than these other diseases.

The study cites "the need for timely diagnosis and treatment of depressive disorders to reduce the burden on public health is imperative. In many primary care settings patients presenting with multiple disorders that include depression often don't get diagnosed, and if they do often treatment is focused towards the other chronic diseases."

Treatment for depression is often not as effective as treatment for other diseases. For example, an article in the *Lancet* Gavin Andrews of the University of New South Wales stated that: "less than 30% of patients receive good treatment with antidepressants, cognitive behavioural therapy and proactive maintenance care. By contrast 80% of patients with arthritis and 90% of patients with asthma receive an acceptable standard of care."

What is depression? The following is the WHO definition.

Depression is a common mental disorder that presents with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy, and poor concentration. These problems can become chronic or recurrent and lead to substantial impairments in an individual's ability to take care of his or her everyday responsibilities. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide, a tragic fatality associated with the loss of about 850 000 thousand lives every year.

Depression is the leading cause of disability and the fourth leading contributor to the global burden of disease. By the year 2020 depression is expected to reach second place for all ages of both sexes. Depression is already the second leading cause of disability for ages 15 to 44 for both genders combined.

Depression occurs in persons of all genders, ages, and backgrounds.

## Editors beat the heat

**BULLETIN** editors Dianne O'Brien, left, and Josanna Savoie pause on an almost hot summer day to savour a triple scoop, while a two-dollar latte offers to wash it down a step or two away.



Photo by Susan Friday

## Head and heel rubs help put best foot forward into autumn energy

Greetings from your Community Education Program Co-ordinator! With fall upon us already, it's with hope that there's still a few sunny days left before the cloud and rain descend, reminding us that yes we are living on a coastal rain forest area which needs plenty of precipitation. But let me not get too far ahead...

Since the last instalment, we've had two successful hands on workshops to share some practical healing techniques with people. The June workshop featured Bliss Prema presenting on Indian Head Massage. These techniques, which are very relaxing and healing, draw on the Aruyvedic medical practices of India and promote community building at the village and small group level.

The July workshop was on Foot Reflexology. Participants paired off and spent quality time with one another. It was one of our best attended workshops ever, partly due to advertising, and a desire on member's behalf to make healing contact with their peers. There have been some inquiries as to whether a follow up group could be organized on a regular basis. This may be the opportunity you've been waiting for to incorporate an alternative healing practice into your wellness plan. Please let me know if you are personally interested in being part of such a group. Call the office @ 604-733-5570 and leave your name and number, or e-mail me at okbobk@hotmail.com.

The Sept. workshop also promises to be a well attended and high

participation workshop. Healer Michael D'Alton will be sharing his energy healing techniques on Friday Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>. He is very busy setting up his formal *Energy Healing School* and we were lucky to book him so quickly.

A segue into this month's topic *Mental Health and Poverty*, there are many serious issues with potent social and economic overtones that could be mentioned, and I have in the past addressed some of these. But for today's Bulletin, let me take another approach and emphasize that Alternative Healing techniques are very proactive, requiring learning new skills, practicing them regularly and sharing with

others, a similar motivation to so-called "psycho-social rehabilitation".

Again I return to the social dimension of this approach, because it doesn't matter for most people how much enthusiasm they begin with, the daily stresses and busy schedules of everyday city living will overpower the desire to practice new skills needing focus and concentration. As with more popular fitness programs which have been studied more formally, social contact and group interest are very effective in keeping people motivated and on-track with their efforts - so it may be a good time to think more responsibly about getting involved in a practice and to collaborate with like minded folks to help each other by getting together in groups to exchange skills.

Till next time, think health!



Bob Krzyzewski  
Community Education

## Women's group up and running

The Women's group met again on August 22 after a hiatus with the new facilitator, Pauline Leah Rankin. It was a lively and productive meeting and many good ideas came from it.

The group has a large membership but it was decided that it would not be divided at this time. This decision would depend on how many women are attending each activity.

The times, and days of the group activities will be varied, so that most women can attend some of the events at least some of the time. Many activities were suggested: cultural events, board game nights, crafts, workshops, restaurants, karaoke and much more. The group should provide things for all the member's diverse interests!

The Network's Women's Group is intended to be a combination of socializing and peer support. Please contact Pauline Leah if you are interested. Leave a message at the Network office: 604-733-5570 or email [vrnhnnetties@gmail.com](mailto:vrnhnnetties@gmail.com).

## Services still free but rent goes up

Community support groups are expanding and the Society is growing! While this is certainly good news it also means we are running out of room and urgently need funds to help us expand our facilities.

Some facilities are already overcrowded and others are approaching that point. Newer, bigger rooms come with a higher cost so we are asking for your help. We therefore welcome donations from our members, their families or others interested in seeing our work continue.

If you are unable to donate yourself, please spread the word to those who perhaps can. No donation amount is too small!

Since 1999 we have been providing alternative therapies, treatments and services to mental health consumer/survivors, services given for free and often not available through the mainstream mental health system. In this we are generously supported by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority but we also need your help!

Vancouver/Richmond Mental Health Network is a registered charitable organization and all donations are tax deductible.

## Pension barely covers housing costs

By Roby Diamond

Mental illness & poverty is a critical topic for all consumers to address and understand. A disability pension barely covers rising costs of rental housing, travel expenses and groceries today. In the 1970s one quarter of your income went to rent; now over 60-70 percent of one's income goes to rent.

Vancouver is changing. I believe that the "mentally ill" will suffer the greatest as Vancouver becomes a city for the rich and upwardly mobile. Homelessness and addiction which plague the Downtown Eastside is not exempt for the mentally ill. In fact getting safe, affordable housing and moving out of a low income neighborhood is very challenging for many consumers. I have come across great prejudice and stigma when looking for housing. Landlords want to know how you get your income and if you tell them you are on a disability pension and you are a person with schizophrenia or bi-polar it will almost guarantee omission and you won't get that place to rent. So the alternative is to lie and personally I don't like lying.

Homelessness and poverty are not personal choices, just like "mental illness" is not a personal choice. If, like myself you are a recovering addict, a woman of color and diagnosed with a mental illness, there are huge obstacles to overcome and poverty is one of them. I believe that Vancouver is going to become so unaffordable that people are going to move out to the suburbs to Surrey which do not offer the same kind of subculture opportunities as the East side of Vancouver does, not at this point at least. Maybe the downtown east side of Vancouver will change so dramatically that only impersonal concrete monstrosities of glass and steel will be left to grace the landscape.

However, I also wonder if it is only the poor that get reduced to a neurotransmitter? In the psych wards of BC one sees the poor, the addicted and the homeless. Not only are

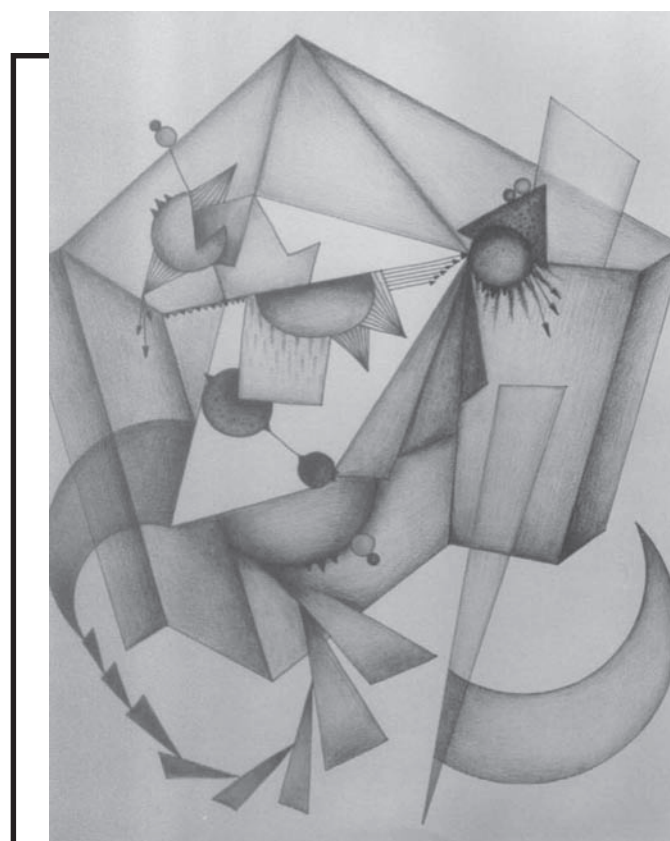


Illustration by Sora You

## Winding your way home

Follow the staircase to artist Sora You's futuristic geometric condo.

the rich treated differently, they have more options in the kind of therapies available to them. Herbal remedies, vitamin therapy, psycho-analysis, acupuncture, massage and other healing arts are often expensive and not covered by our basic medical plan.

There is much injustice and discrimination towards those who do not have the income to defend themselves against maltreatment. It is a sad state of affairs when you wake up and realize that if you had a million dollars in the bank your opportunities for mental wellness would be met as opposed to being treated like a growth in a chemical lab.

I'm not against psychiatrists; however the

reality is that many psychiatrists come from privileged backgrounds and don't really have an understanding of how to relate to poverty issues. For instance you might be at your wits' end feeding three children and an insensitive psychiatrist might say, "You're manic, better up your meds!" This is precisely why organizations such as *Vancouver/Richmond Mental Health Network* are so valuable. They don't bury their heads in the sand, but truly offer support to those in need.

Basically, when it comes to mental illness & poverty; if you've been there you have a right to talk about it, if you haven't shut up and listen.

## Poor assured of place among us

The poor will always walk among us perhaps this is the natural order of things. But is it the natural order to project one's own fear onto a poor or street person panhandling? Is it natural to hate what one fears?

This is part of the balance that is and always will be. The meeting of halfway when it comes to fear is the only crack in the veil. If one lives their entire life in fear and loath of being a poor person, can they really live authentically?

Do the rich enjoy the caviar all the time?

When they are sad, melancholic, grief stricken or become unable to maintain their lifestyle, do they feel worse or better than the poor? Imagine being say Paris Hilton; do you think her money helps her in any way except to shelter and feed her? Does one who has 'everything' really feel or do better than one who does not?

Our need to rely on one another creates a feeling of Unity with each other. Love and compassion grow from sharing and that is much more powerful than money.

Michelle McCann

# Why are we always busy?

By JM

What is the need our society has to go, go go? What would it be like to live without schedules, with no deadline, and to appreciate the time we are living now? Living with a calendar completely filled with things to do- whether essential or fun- can be overwhelming. When a person is also employed and raising a family as most people are, it can also be exhausting.

Sometimes I needed busyness or work to cover my need to achieve inner or outward importance. Often busyness was an indication of my disorganization and ineptitude from personal problems e.g. my being a workaholic and a person who cleans to perfection. My home was the cleanest when I experienced loss or disappointment.

Spontaneity can be both exciting and calming. Imagine being involved in a chore or project and being telephoned, or better still being visited by a friend who invites you out for lunch. If you are spontaneous, you drop everything and have lunch with your friend, enjoying the moment, knowing inwardly that your project will still be there for you when you return.

Another way of experiencing spontaneity is to awaken wondering what the day will bring to you or what you will bring the day. Will it bring pleasant chats with strangers, will it bring a precious moment with your child or special friend, or will the telephone ring with some news?

We can move from activity to activity with no plan and be in each one as it happens. Everyone ought to consider taking one day now and then to do absolutely nothing. They could read, listen to music, watch television, meditate or just sleep. Taking an occasional day to relax can help us think less about the next item on our agenda and stop us from feeling that we have to be constantly doing something.



Sandra Yuen MacKay has been a regular contributor to *The BULLETIN* over the years as a writer and as an artist. Here she offers both with a story titled *Where I Live* and illustrations titled, clockwise from bottom left, *Silent Woman*, *Suzanna the Gypsy*, *Jacques the Artist*, *The Crawler* and *The Winner*.



# Simple pleasures all I ask

Where I live isn't spacious or fancy. In fact, it can be so claustrophobic that it can give me a headache. There are openings and walls but no floor or furniture. Having no decoration or ornaments makes it a plain place to live. However, the build-up of garbage crowds out what I want to bring inside. There's too much confusion.

Once the FBI showed up and I bolted for the nearest window to jump out. I yelled and screamed out of fright, but they didn't care. I believe they are still watching me now.

At times, loud noise or people talking outside keep me awake. I hear music playing or cars honking. I bury myself in a pillow and try to blank out the sounds.

Other times, my overbearing mother carrying all her baggage

enters my home and I scream at her to get out. I remember how it was when I lived in a house with her and how relieved I am to live away from her now.

I look through my eyes to see the world. I speak to others but they don't always respond. I hear news on the radio but I don't really care about what's happening in the world. When a stranger knocks or wants to pull down a wall and come in, I'm often afraid and hide.

Sometimes life passes through my space like scenes from a movie and I experience it in a detached way, like it's happening to someone else. I try to remember celebrating birthdays or happy occasions when I was young, but memories are eclipsed by loneliness and my mind is foggy.

When too many things fill my head it's hard for me to sleep. When paranoia fills my head I want to escape. There are so many portals in my skull but I feel trapped. With no one to talk to, I live alone in my mind.

I wish I could afford a better place but it's hard to uproot and move without money or support. I think I'll tough it out. The neighbors are around but none call on me.

However, when I stand by the window and breathe, there's lots of fresh, clean air. Every morning, the sun still rises. And if I wait until night comes, I can hear the rat-a-tat-tat of the rain outside and dream of living in a new home with cable tv, a backyard and a puppy dog of my own.

Simple pleasures are all I ask.

