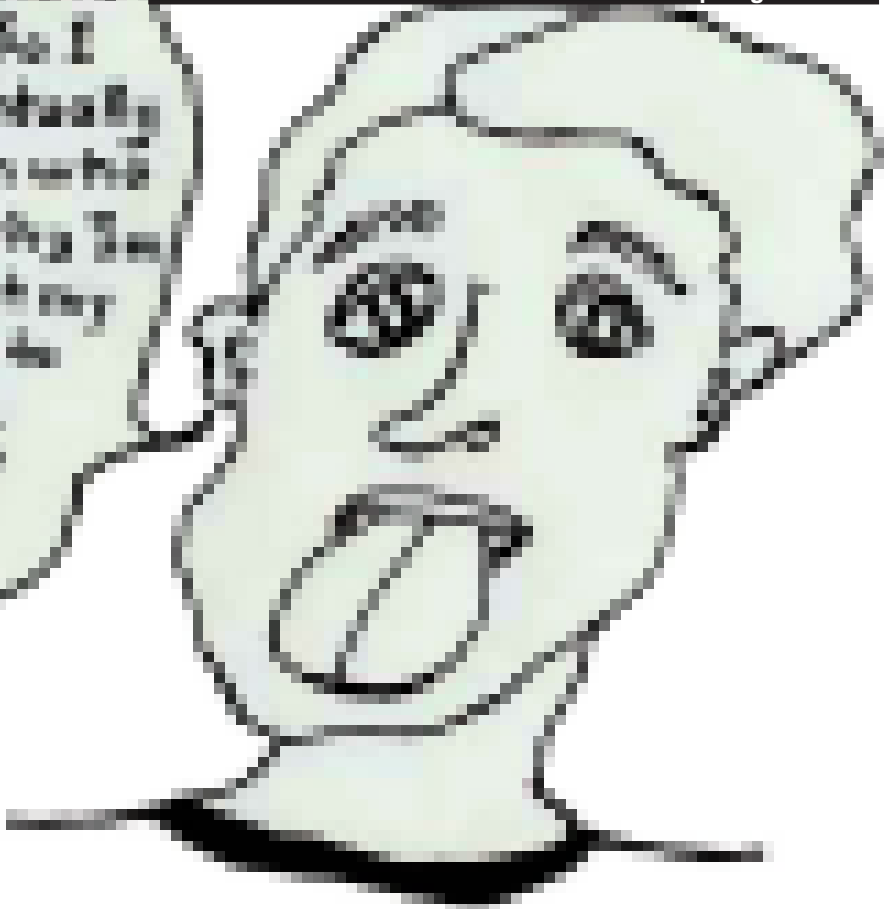


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**THE  
BULLETIN**  
Vol. 12 No.1 Spring 2007

I don't have  
medication. So I  
figure eventually  
some person will  
ask me why I'm  
not taking my  
medication. I've  
been to  
hospital 3 times.  
What do I do?



Why  
I'm not taking  
my  
medication  
I've been to  
hospital 3 times

*Official publication of the  
Vancouver/Richmond  
Mental Health Network*

For more information

# THE BULLETIN

Vol 12 No 1

Spring 2007

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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**Cover art:** Jayne Gale

**Contributing artists:** Jayne Gale, Sandra Yuen Mackay, Susan Friday, Rose Ananda Heart and others.

**Photography:** Susan Friday

**Advertising:** 604-733-5570

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.

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www.vcn.bc.ca/vrmhn

The Vancouver Richmond Mental Health Network acknowledges the support of the Gaming Commission of British Columbia and the Vancouver Coastal Authority.

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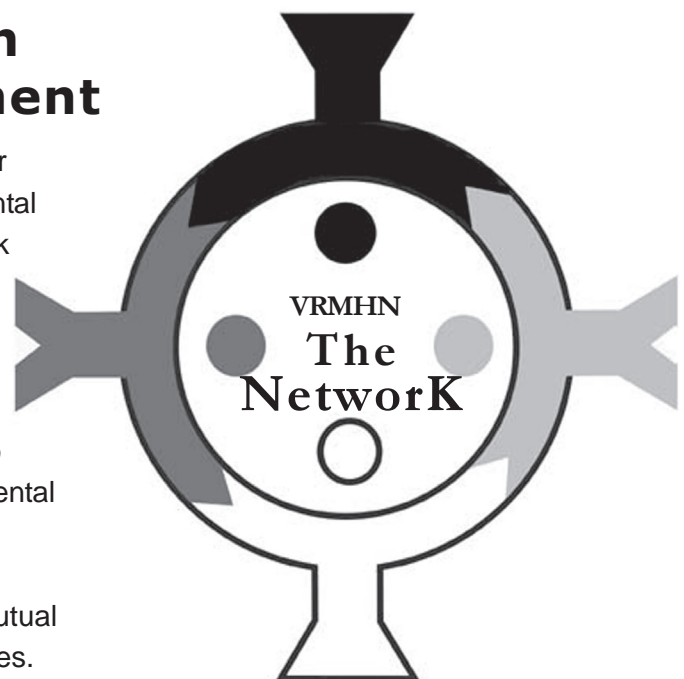
## Network services

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
- Song Circle
- Shakti Peer Support Group
- Women's Peer Support Group
- Yoga Group
- Events and Workshops throughout the year
- Information and Referrals
- 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.



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## From the Co-ordinator

# Network busy planning events

Hello, hello! My name is Christie. I am the new Interim Coordinator replacing Ron. I'm really enjoying my time here at the Network. I am learning a lot, and meeting some really great people.

As you have already received flyers and invitations in the mail, you know there are many upcoming Network events. With the help of two board members Steven and Susan, you may have noticed, we actually had one of our upcoming events, Elly Litvak's play, posted in the latest edition of the West Ender.

Within the span of only a few weeks we have worked hard to present Elly Litvak's play and the Annual Spring Celebration less than a week apart. Then Jocelan's Public Speaking Speech Craft course begins, and there are Bob's monthly Community Education events to look forward to. I sincerely encourage all Network members to come check out at least one of these great events. Just give me a call at 604-733-5570 if you would like more information.

I have created a new Network resource; a current events' binder with mental health related opportunities including seminars and workshops is now available at the Network office. This binder is full of great mental health related information about community events and professional development opportunities. If you are in the area, stop by the office and check it out!

Now down to the nitty gritty details of what else is going on: All Network peer support self help groups are functional at this point, with the exception of the Music

Group, the First Nations Sharing Circle and the Conversation Café. Most self help groups in operation are always looking for new members.

As far as much needed funding, I am happy to report that our request for a one-time-only grant from Vancouver Coastal Health was approved. Cassandra Freeman, our fundraiser, has been working on corresponding with Van City and is drafting a grant proposal to get extra funding for our community education related events. Annual funding from the Gaming Commission for The BULLETIN has also been approved, and the formidable Josanna Savoie has been hired as our new Editor for the newsletter.



**Christie McRae**

The Network is busy in preparation for fiscal year end. With tax season requirements met and an annual report being compiled, I am busy collecting data and statistics.

Thanks for taking the time to fill out the annual Satisfaction Surveys we mailed to you. We have collected, inputted and tallied your written feedback and submitted them to Vancouver Coastal Health to ensure your recommendations and feedback is heard. There were some wonderful comments and it appears that overall the Network is on the right track!

---

## From the President

# Spring ushers in many VRMHN changes

Yes, it feels like it's been a long winter. Once again, the Network is going through a transition as spring begins. I would like to thank Ron Carten for his timely assistance, resourcefulness, strength, and the many achievements he accomplished as our Co-ordinator. In particular, I would like to express my thanks to Ron for his perseverance regarding the issue of charitable status.

Your grace under pressure and good humour will be remembered! I would also like to thank our new office Coordinator, Christie McRae, for the energy and enthusiasm she brings to her work. We very much look forward to working with you. Our new editor,

Josanna Savoie, is ready to bring her expertise, which include a degree in Language & Literature & English Instructor's Certificate, to the upcoming issues of the Network Bulletin. Welcome aboard!

Our financial standing is very good, and we are fully prepared to make progress for the upcoming year. We have renewed our annual membership with



**Susan Friday**

the Canadian Coalition of Alternative Mental Health Resources and I am glad to announce that I have been elected Treasurer for the National Network for Mental Health. The NNMH continues to make progress and will soon mark its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As the only non-diagnostic mental health organization that is national in scope, we have a great ally in the NNMH. ([www.nnmh.ca](http://www.nnmh.ca))

Regarding the housing situation, I took note of the recent article in the Georgia Straight (March 22- 29, 2007, pg.17). MP Libby Davies was "stunned" and responded to the new Federal Budget by saying, "It was the most glaring omission of a very basic

*continued on Page 4*

# Support and action needed in fight

This month's issue is on Advocacy & Activism; Oxford dictionary describes advocacy as support or argument for a cause; activism as vigorous action to further a cause, so the two are closely related. We all need support and to fight for our rights from time to time and hopefully the following articles relating to experiences and ideas on advocacy & activism will be interesting and uplifting to you.



**Josanna Savoie**

Your articles, poems & art work are always welcome although we cannot promise to publish all submissions due to lack of space.

Our next topic will be on parenting. Although we like to receive some articles on our related topic, it is not necessary for all submissions to relate to the topic. The deadline for our next bulletin will be Friday June 1<sup>st</sup>. Send via e-mail if possible to [vrnhn@vcn.bc.ca](mailto:vrnhn@vcn.bc.ca) c/o the editor. Make sure to include your e-mail address and telephone number in case we need to contact you.

Special events:

Jocelan Caldwell's Speechcraft; a program of Toastmasters International: Learn to public speak for free April 12th through May 17<sup>th</sup> 6 to 7:30 p.m. Location to be announced.

For more information or to register for upcoming events please call the Network @ 604-733-5570 or e-mail [vrnhn@vcn.bc.ca](mailto:vrnhn@vcn.bc.ca).

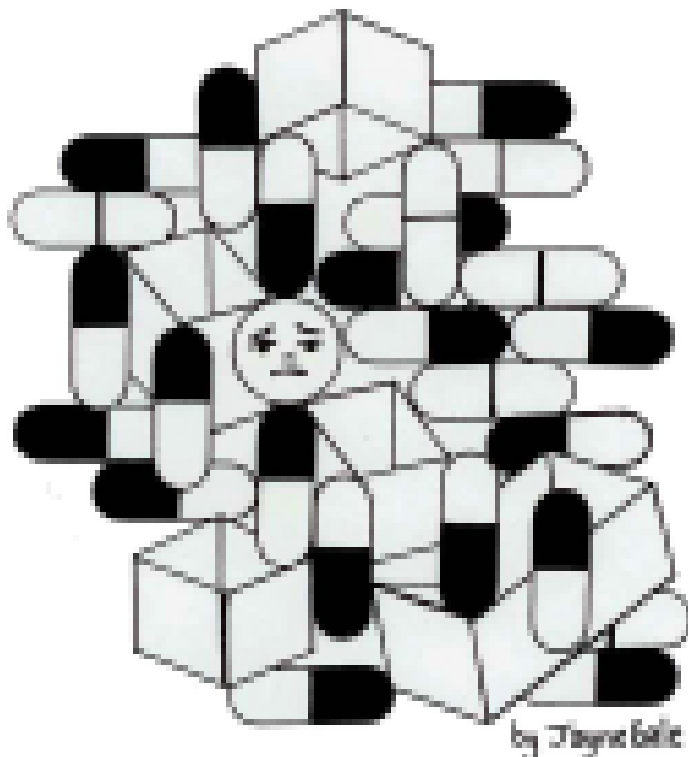


Illustration by Jayne Gale

**Know which meds you're taking. It's your right to ask.**

## An advocate is...

The word Advocate comes under many headings like ally, supporter, legal counsellor but what does it all mean?

An advocate is a person who pleads or acts on behalf of another person's interests or needs. What is pleading all about? Basically the Advocate is putting forth an argument to represent the interests of another person or group.

An Advocate is one who will take up a cause on behalf of a person or persons usually to defend their rights. Or they may intercede on their behalf in a specific matter. Interceding simply means the Advocate will speak or represent a person on their behalf who is having difficulties or is in trouble.

The Advocate may mediate on behalf of the person. This simply means the Advocate will try to find a compromise or clear up any misunderstandings between two parties so they may come to an agreement both sides can accept.

– Jayne Gale

*continued from Page 3*

human right. It's not a lack of fiscal capacity – it's the lack of political commitment." She pointed out that big businesses were given \$9 billion in corporate tax cuts.

After waiting for several months past earlier deadlines, it is good to finally see funding for the Canadian Mental Health Commission. In the recently released 2007 Federal Budget, the Harper government has made a commitment to spend \$10 million over the next two years, and \$15 million per year, start-

ing in 2009-10. A comprehensive national mental health strategy is expected to be one of the outcomes. Senator Michael Kirby will lead the Commission.

Since the first graduating class of Peer Specialists received their certificates down in Georgia in December 2001, a real ground swell of enthusiastic response is growing here in Canada.

It is only a matter of time before peer support workers and specialists will be involved within all levels of the service delivery sys-

tem. They will improve the system by bringing along their unique perspectives of "having been there" and what it is that makes recovery possible.

We need to reclaim the word "recovery" for ourselves. It is also quite clear that our post-modern society stands to benefit from recovery, since the level of thinking that created the initial problems cannot be expected to solve those problems.

We see that fresh perspectives are required.



# Stripped of rights, dignity and jailed for being sick, in the name of the law

Modern medicine is wonderful. Just as the cancer survivor who has had a diseased organ removed and is leading a full and active life; or the person who hops, skips and jumps after a badly mangled limb has been set and mended. But the science isn't perfect and the administrators and practitioners are often less than compassionate and understanding. Sometimes they are ill-informed, particularly in the area of mental health. It is in this area that advocacy and activism are most needed. Perhaps no story illustrates this better than Jessica Yorke's account of abuse and degradation as related in her essay, *Pushed Into the Darkness: How people with mental illnesses are treated punitively*, a real-life nightmare nobody should have to endure.

By Jessica Yorke

Waking with my face on a cold concrete floor. Raising my heavy eyelids to see that I have been locked in a cell. There is little light, only that which is peeking beneath the giant door. I can hardly stand the stench of my own urine and feces filling my nostrils because of no toilet facilities. Darkness was creeping around me like a stranger. My body and mind riddled with frantic feelings of extreme nervousness, due to side effects of unknown  
see **MEDICATION** on Page 6

# Eviction noticed stunned tenants into action

By Avital Moses

One afternoon our resident manager came to our door and handed us an eviction notice on behalf of our absentee landlord, the gentleman who owns the building.

We were stunned. Our manager actually thought that we were causing a leak in the suite below by taking showers with the shower curtains open. And even more shocking was that the building's plumber had told her just that.

In the month preceding the eviction notice we never knew when the manager would charge up to our apartment after one of us had taken a shower, touch the slightly damp floor and exclaim "See? It's wet!"

We seemed to be savages who didn't know what the shower curtain was for. If we weren't so concerned with the invasion of our

privacy we likely would have viewed the whole thing as comical.

A couple weeks after the eviction notice at 11:30 pm she showed up at our door desperately trying to staple a notice restricting our use of the parking lot. It was like we weren't even living there from her perspective and she wanted us to know that.

We noted all her irrational actions and decided that we needed help. We thought that perhaps the landlord was putting a whole lot of pressure on her to solve the problem.

At some point, we called the Kettle Friendship Society. They were wonderful. They told us to write down everything that was happening. They met us in a coffee shop and went over our case and they came to arbitration for support.

## **MEDICATION** continued from Page 5

medications given to me before. I have lost all track of time.

Soon memories flickered like a film through my head. They became clearer as my mind lifted to consciousness. The recent events up to this incarceration became evident. My wrists throbbed and my body ached because of being pounced on by police as if I was an outlaw who had committed a heinous crime. I was confronted by the police and became frightened. My first reaction was to run, and then I was tackled down to the ground and handcuffed. I was picked up by the scruff of my neck and was manhandled into an ambulance. I was laid out with a blanket over me covering my face and head. I raised my head and a strong man's hand covered my face and with force pushed me down.

On arrival at the hospital I was forced to strip naked in front of male security guards, dressed in a flimsy cotton coverlet and injected with an unknown medication in my bottom. Any words that I uttered were completely ignored. Then I was locked in a double door seclusion cell. I can still hear the locks slamming tight. I was left with nothing but a mattress, humiliation and an enormous feeling of degradation. (Slowly my head became infested with lice.)

I sat up against a wall in this seclusion cell trying to fight the medication. I thought of jail cells as being luxurious in comparison (the ones with toilets). I knew that I would be perceived as being hostile, difficult, one not to be trusted, listened to or easily reckoned with. This thought devastated me because I knew I was a good person, but when I opened my mouth my words would fall upon deaf

In the meantime, we noticed that the tiles in our shower were old and in disrepair. In fact, merely pushing on some of them would bring water to the surface.

We got smart. We got a Polaroid camera and we took pictures of the rotting tiles inside the shower.

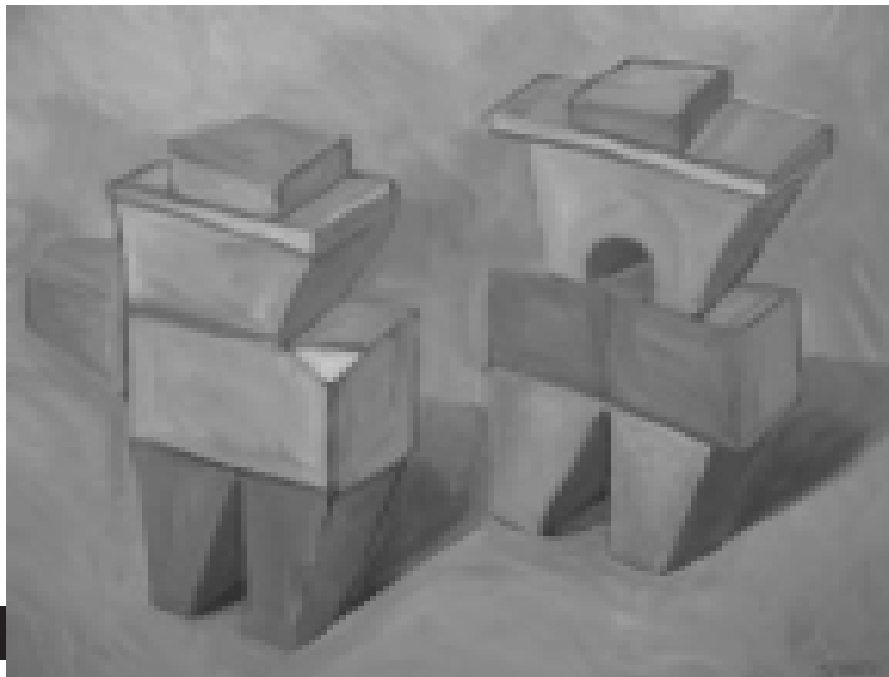
To make a long story short, the arbitrator, who coincidentally was having a bathroom repair issue in his home told the manager to repair our shower and squashed the eviction notice.

What likely helped was the manager's contention that the year before we had a party where we poured beer down the vent in the bathroom. Why would anyone do that?

Funnily enough when the repairs were see **DONE** on Page 7

ears. Then the room seemingly got darker as did my discomfort. I waited, on edge in the filthy room.

A beam of daylight snuck through the steel shuttered window and opened my eyes. I knocked on the cell door saying politely, "Can you please come and help me?" My voice sounded intense with the echo. I longed for the moments when a warm-hearted friend would open their door upon my knock. Hours went by and no one came. My credibility soon evaporated after repeated attempts to get help. Without hope and an utter feeling of loneliness, I fell to my knees in despair. How do I get out of here? I thought loudly. Inside, my heart felt as if it would burn a hole through my cotton frock. I've seen horror movies not quite as good as this. I felt that I had been assaulted, raped of my human see **RIGHTS** on Page 7



Illustrations by Sandra Yuen Mackay

**DONE** continued from Page 6

done, the leaking still continued every few days. A reputable plumber was hired and he identified a leak in the pipe below our bathtub. Our problems were over for now.

Since then there have been two more leaks in the suite below us. But the manager has changed her tune. She now works with the assumption that it is no longer our fault.

Just when we thought things were going well our landlord decided he was going to raise the rent each month by about \$70. I called an advocate right away. They sent us a form letter with the amount that landlords could charge every year at that time without being challenged to go into arbitration.

At this point there was no way I was going to send the letter to the manager and cause more problems. I simply sent it with glee directly to the landlord knowing full well that no arbitrator would approve a \$70 increase per month in a building that was in such obvious disrepair.

In his letter back to us the landlord begrudgingly agreed that \$70 per month was a lot in one go and charged us a \$35 increase per month for one year. And yes, he has increased it since then.

We find ourselves in a tough situation, though, living in a spacious two-bedroom on the one hand but on the other living in a building that is actually sinking into the ground. Should we stay or should we go?

Perhaps when the condo directly across the alley from us starts being built, we'll start packing. Like the woman said "you know Jane, if its not one thing, it's another".

In the meantime it's very comforting to know that there are advocacy counsellors at The Kettle, MPA (Motivation, Power and



**Perhaps the new condos won't look like these, but then the architects likely don't have artist Sandra Yuen MacKay's imignation**

Achievement Society) and the First United Church who can help bigtime with exasperating situations.

Just a few months ago my Canada Student Loan was forgiven due to my disability. It was a lot of work to apply for that and I don't know if I would have done it without an advocate taking me through it step by step.

*Avital Moses lives in British Columbia. Another organization that can be helpful with problems with landlords is the tenant's rights coalition (604-255-0546) [www.rto.gov.bc.ca](http://www.rto.gov.bc.ca) or [www.tenants.bc.ca](http://www.tenants.bc.ca). The tenants' hotline is (604-660-1020).*



**RIGHTS** continued from Page 6

rights and free will, left in a cell no better than a neglected animal's cage.

I was then drugged, to a zombie-like state. It felt like my brain was bloated; it took all my strength to utter a word. Side effects were uncomfortable and many times sleeplessness would be prevalent. Sleep was all I wanted to do, to escape my misery; yet with the medications it was impossible.

I now must muster up the strength to recover from not only my mental illness but also the 'treatment'. I have been going through this process for 26 years – getting sick and running from help because of fright. I would flee when I became ill to avoid the hell of hospitalization. I was going at it alone. Why would a sick person be treated like this? Excuse the slang but in my search of a good shrink, I have met many psychiatrists who

prescribe drugs and never listen.

My psychiatrist did not listen when I pleaded with him, explaining my present medication stopped working. I sought a second opinion at a mood disorder clinic. (I knew there had been excellent advances in new medications). There a psychiatrist strongly recommended I go on a new drug. I was excited but my psychiatrist would not prescribe the drug for me. I had the enormous task of finding a psychiatrist to prescribe me the new medication. In the process I became ill again and was hospitalized. The psychiatrist at the hospital did prescribe me the new medication.

I received new medication and was treated with respect. This was a turning point in my mind. I knew that I must accept my mental illness. Then the wheels started to turn for me. I got help from a specialized team. The

team included two psychiatrists (who listened!). I also have dynamic support from a nurse, recreational therapist, occupational therapist and a place where I can learn writing, art and social skills.

I have become passionate about improving 'treatment' for the mentally ill. I envision that the term 'mentally ill' will become more like neurologically ill and 'mental illness' will be treated with the same care as cancer or cardiovascular disease.

Now because of motivation from my support team, I am using my scars and experience to bring about change. I am beginning to meet mental health professionals to discuss improvements that will benefit patients, caregivers and police. I feel free because I am being heard. I have the feeling that my life is truly beginning. I have turned the corner to stability, which is more precious than gold.

*Gardens, pigeons, crows, creepy crawlers*

# Feathered version of Sally's heaven a sure sign there's no faking in pigeon hell



Illustration by Jayne Gale

I know it's spring in Vancouver because whole families of pigeons are congregating on every slanted roof in my neighborhood, reminding me of my plunge into pigeon hell.

I was living in an attic a few years ago with sunshine beaming through one window and out the other. It was cheap and I soon found out why. Pigeons: right above my bed on the roof, doing it non-stop. You remember Meg Ryan in that erotic deli scene from "When Harry Met Sally"? I had about a dozen of the feathered equivalent above me; except they weren't faking it.

Determined not to let these sleazy squabs drive me out, I decided to research what people did to get rid of pigeon pests until I found the answer. At the library, I found a poop load of articles about miserable humans like me all around the world.

In one story, a man across the border was caught by police on top of his attic roof with a rifle, shooting at pigeons on his neighbor's roof. Apparently pigeons are faster than bullets. Though my heart went out to him I decided to look for something a little less drastic.

A group of bureaucrats in Ottawa sprinkled the ledges of one of their buildings with corn coated with hallucinogens. The next day the street below was full of screeching, squawking, swooping pigeons crashing into people, buildings, sidewalks and undoubtedly humans. That experiment was nixed.



By Cassandra Freeman

One year, Parisians managed to capture a few thousand pigeons, no simple feat in itself. A convoy of trucks drove well outside the city limits and then the birds were let go. And guess what? The birds came back the very next day, well before the trucks did.

The people in Paris might just as well have copied the founding fathers in Bayonne, N.J., who passed a law forbidding any unlicensed pigeons from flying over the city. So far there have been no pigeon arrests or convictions.

Finally I found a win-win situation for humans. It involved an alcoholic pigeon and a well-known restaurant near the beach called Red's. The restaurant left its' windows open in the summer and the pigeon would fly right through, land on customers' tables and sip their wine when they weren't looking. The management finally caught the tiny wino and took him to a very nice wildlife sanctuary where he could sober up and learn to socialize with other birds for a change.

I called Wildlife Rescue. No, they were not

going to get up on my treacherous roof, catch pigeons and take them to the wildlife sanctuary. I called my friends. No, they were not going anywhere near the roof and they had also never heard of the birth control pills for pigeons the French had just supposedly invented.

I was in despair until I discovered a classic story by Montreal writer Josh Freed, who won a war against about 50 fierce pigeons. They took up residence on Freed's balcony so he slathered the deck with Vaseline. The next morning a few pigeons were skating on his deck. He found a broom and aimed right for the dominant hen of the flock only to find himself moments later flat on his back, covered in Vaseline.

That night Freed and his brother sealed up the entire balcony with an immense quantity of piano wire. They couldn't get out anymore but those determined pigeons couldn't get in either – or so they thought. All that night dozens of screeching pigeons bashed their wings against the piano wire.





Illustration by Susan Friday

## ... it must be spring in Vancouver

The dominant hen simply bounced up and down on the wire until it broke. By the end of the weekend the balcony looked like a prison camp ripped apart by its inmates.

Ultimately, they trapped the pigeons out again with about 1,500 feet of tough black netting. After a day of screeching from the neighbor's roof, the flock broke up and found other houses to nest in.

Suddenly, something in my brain screeched even louder than my pigeons. My landlord used to work in construction. Surely he wouldn't mind putting some chicken wire over the areas where the pigeons were nesting? And that's what happened. The next day the pigeons put on a great show, flapping and even slamming into the attic windows. And then the next day they were gone and my sanity was back.

I now live deliberately in an apartment building with a very flat roof and wonder how other people are coping with the most tenacious birds I have ever met.



Illustration by Jayne Gale

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# *If I were President*

*Poem and art by Rose Ananda Heart*

If I were president  
The money would be spent  
on healing the Earth Mother  
on healing one another  
No more funds for war  
equal distribution  
No more rich and poor  
poverty's solution  
A just society  
the main priority  
Promote equality  
where there's stability  
Caring leadership  
No more power trip  
Plenty for all  
Follow love's call  
No more dollars spent  
on contamination  
This hurts all of life  
an abomination  
Brainwashed by the lie  
of scarcity and fear  
Clean up the mess we've made  
Make air and water clear  
The earth reflects our heart  
ripped and torn apart  
Wounded by the knife  
Breathe the breath of life  
The fire purifies  
Hearken and be wise  
Now's the time for action  
Stop looking for distraction  
Treating only symptoms  
without dealing with the root  
An unhealthy tree  
cannot bear good fruit  
An unhealthy planet  
wasting away  
The price is very high  
the one we all shall pay  
The day is growing late  
As directors of our fate  
Do not hesitate  
no longer can we wait

Be still and close your eyes  
Take time to visualize  
a world of Peace and Love  
See great visions of  
prosperity and plenty  
A time when we can be  
the creative selves we are  
where every one's a star

The rules they are oppressive  
The taxes they are too  
Of land we are possessive  
The home of me and you  
We need to start sharing  
We need to start caring  
It is our responsibility  
to create a new reality  
The trees are crying

The animals are dying  
No one wants  
to live here anymore  
The children are weeping  
Wake up from your sleeping  
Take the key  
and open your heart's door  
All nature gives us clues  
It's up to us to choose  
Look into the heart  
that's been torn apart  
Heal with all your tears  
Shake out all your fears  
Find compassion in your soul  
for all living things  
for those that have fur  
for those that have wings  
We need all our sisters  
We need all our brothers  
to stand side by side  
We need all our fathers  
We need all our mothers  
Begin working together  
Bridegroom and Bride  
Within this leadership  
there's loving partnership  
No more hierarchy of authority  
All creatures have a say  
Reason's natural way  
So vote for ourselves  
Vote to have peace  
Treat all with respect  
Then all wars shall cease  
Vote for the earth  
Vote for new birth  
Vote to have life  
Freedom from strife  
We've created the mess  
Now create a solution  
Resound a loud, Yes!"  
To end the pollution  
Open our eyes and we shall see  
The land of the brave  
The land of the free!



# Carbohydrates, lack of sunlight, hormones recipe for the blues

This spring has arrived without much colour to celebrate; the clocks have moved to Daylight Savings Time, and as yet, most of my friends are still suffering from SAD, (Seasonal Affective Disorder). This is more than a complaint of moodiness or “the blues”, as conditions that are masked through everyday behaviors, do their damage often before the “host” recognizes a health condition, and does anything constructive about it; in other words it’s too late for prevention, and the condition has entrenched itself often with adverse secondary, or systemic conditions that are even harder to remedy.

This condition which affects so many people in ‘the Pacific North west’ was reported tangentially in *The Scientific American*, some years ago, in an article entitled “Carbohydrate Consumption and Depression”. A map of North America was presented with “carbohydrate consumption” mapped onto the surface. It was a telling, and dramatic correlation between decreasing hours of sunlight and increasing carbohydrate consumption, underscored with unavoidable weight gain, particularly in the belly and hips.

Do you wonder why you suffer from weight gain, or possibly food addictions? It may have to do with the hormone melatonin, which is produced in the pineal gland, and is subject to “photo-sensitivity”, i.e. the responsiveness to sunlight. This hormone regulates the sleep cycle and particularly delta wave, or deep sleep.

Citing Brendan Frazier, who spoke recently at The Vancouver Health and Wellness Show, and who is a Tri-athlete who has sponsored the development of a line of vegan whole food nutritional supplements, he noted that deep sleep,

measured by Delta brainwaves, (1-4 cycles per second, the slowest brain wave state possible), is when we experience the most healing and rejuvenating effects of sleep. He said it’s as if time slows down with the slowing brain wave cycles, and we almost see a reversing of aging and the normal effects of time and gravity on the human body.

This state is very valuable and being is worth cultivating for our well being.

However, it is a metabolically sensitive state. Sugar, and many other foods, and additives undermine its production.

This is a serious matter for people who live in a rainy climate who are sensitive to depression, due to lack of sunlight.

The recent edition of Psychology Today magazine (April 2007) reports that the link between insomnia and depression is so significant that it may be useful as a predictor of who

will suffer from adult depression, because, what is typically regarded as a symptom of depression is almost as likely to be the cause. You may have to read the article yourself to grasp the logic, but if you’re another “night owl”, you probably are not too surprised.

I am advocating for more activism, a type of Health Activism that includes more responsibility for ones’ own state of health and for a sustained focus on healthy solutions and a healthier way of being in community. This may include a hardier effort at investigative journalism, and self –study than was previously deemed necessary and certainly more training and practice in communicating within groups to form the needed support groups, and action networks that are also necessary to motivate personal and social change.



**Bob Krzyzewski**  
Community Education  
Co-ordinator

## Mental health consumers Bill of Rights

- We need to be accepted and welcomed, respected and valued as human beings.
- We deserve love, hope and more than mere tolerance.
- We need to have our talents recognized.
- We have to set our own goals.
- We should have hope for meeting realistic expectations.
- We must learn that we can change, we can contribute, we can recover.
- We need services for our basic needs, warm human contacts, independence and free choice, and security in our environment - external and intrapsychic.
- We deserve equal pay for equal work and freedom from exploitation.
- We need to be a partner in determining our treatment. We are the most experienced about our “illness” and have a valid - even expert - point of view.
- We must participate in mutual information sharing with our providers.
- We have the right to be assertive, the right to voice our opinion without retaliation.
- We have the right to choose, a right to say ‘No’, a right to be “non-compliant” about drug/treatment options we disdain. If we fail, let us fail; don’t let the mental health system fail us.
- We have a right to recovery; we have a right to the same quality of life as the rest of society.

**The next issue of The BULLETIN will have Parenting and Mental Illness as its theme. Please send us your stories, poems and artwork on your experiences or opinions on the topic by email, on disk or hard copy. Addresses appear on Page 2. Stories should not exceed 1,000 words; art has to be suitable for reproduction in black and white; and poetry is, well, within poetic licence. Deadline is June 1st. Not all submission need be on the topic**

# BUZZY BEAR AND DICK THE ELK



By Jayne Gale

"Yo Dick!" said Buzzy Bear.

"What's up?" replied Dick the Elk lifting his antlers off the bark of a tree.

"I think I need an Advocate," Buzzy Bear shook a fly off his ear, "and I think you do too."

"What do we need an Advocate for?"

"Well between the hunters, forestry, pine beetles, and urban growth we'll soon run out of sustainable food and living environment," Buzzy Bear explained.

"Gee, never looked at it that way," said Dick the Elk.

"Well it's time you did, besides that these big companies think nothing of polluting our fishing waters for profits you know?"

"You're kidding, that bad eh?"

"When it comes to humans Dick you never know what they'll do," snarled Buzzy Bear.

Dick the Elk shuttered then said, "But don't they have people too who are starving and being squeezed out by their

own urbanization?"

"Sure they do, that's my point Dick!" snorted Buzzy Bear, "those people need Advocate's too, because humans just don't care about the poor or the different. They treat dogs and cats better than they do a lot of disenfranchised people."

"Wow, it must be nice to be a dog or cat then," Dick the Elk said dreamily.

Buzzy Bear retorted, "I'll say, food served in a bowl, water set out in a bowl, a cozy warm bed at night, the love of your owner, they get a sweet deal. No point thinking we'll get a break like that Dick; we're like the poor people just wild life to the haves, we're a have not."

"Oh, my goodness!" Dick the Elk felt frightened.

"Don't go getting all edgy on me Dick," Buzzy Bear said, trying to be calming, "Let's go see the Wildlife Conservation Officer and see if we can get an Advocate too."

Dick the Elk shook his mighty antlers up and down in an affirmative nod saying, "I'm right behind you Buzzy."

## Cheaper old drugs as effective or better than new ones, study finds

Doctors are prescribing expensive modern drugs for people with schizophrenia that are no better than cheaper medicines which have been used for decades, according to research by Britains leading psychiatrists.

The researchers compared first generation anti-psychotic drugs with the second generation introduced in the 1990s and found no clear benefit in taking the newer drugs despite them costing at least 10 times more. The findings are opposite to the widely held belief that the newer drugs have fewer side-effects.

The psychiatrists say in the Archive of General Psychiatry that previous research, which

heralded the newer drugs as a lifeline for people with schizophrenia, was funded by the pharmaceutical industry and theirs is the first independent assessment of the drugs.

"We undertook the study thinking that we would show that misgivings about the previous data were unfounded," said Sharon Lewis of the University of Manchester, who led the research. "To our horror we found that the old drugs are no worse than the new drugs and in some cases they were statistically better."

The psychiatrists followed 227 patients who were considering changing their medication because it wasn't working or was having too

many negative side-effects. They were randomly assigned either the first generation "typical" anti-psychotics or the second generation "atypical" anti-psychotics and assessed over a year.

After a year the quality of life score was 53.2 for those on the first generation of drugs and 51.3 for those on the second generation drugs. "We were so certain we would find exactly the opposite that we went back and checked the data," said Professor Lewis. "But it all suggested that careful prescribing of first-generation anti-psychotics, at least in the context of a trial, is not associated with poorer efficacy or a greater adverse effect." *Copyright Guardian News*



By Sandra Yuen MacKay

# Consumer to advocate a satisfying journey

When I look in the mirror, I don't want to see myself as a liability to society. I want to be productive and accomplish something in order to gain self-respect and self-esteem. I spent years trying to fit in, to live the life of a so-called healthy person. But frankly, I couldn't keep up. The stress of work was too high and the medications too sedating. I fell through the cracks because stress triggered symptoms, I lacked energy and concentration and finally, I had to quit my job.

I worked through a lot of anger and disappointments in my life. But it was partly self-imposed. I had a desire for perfection, would not tolerate flaws in others or myself, and was impatient and unrealistic.

My delusions of being perfect, famous, highly esteemed, rich and intellectually superior were my mind's answer to a poor self-image based on self-stigma and my rigid unforgiving attitude. Then something changed. I began to mature. I attended groups at the West Side Mental Health Team to learn about anger management and recovery. I learned to speak in a group setting. I took some classes at the Art Studios and taught a creative writing group there. These steps didn't happen overnight., but the progress I made gave me great satisfaction.

No longer did I need to depend on delusions and fantasy to feel good about myself because my reality improved. I had success with my art, sold some of my paintings and published some writing. Art and writing, which began as therapy, became part of my identity. When people ask

me what I do, I say, "I'm a writer and an artist."

Also I found myself in a situation where I could encourage others; instead of myself needing attention and help, I could give understanding and insight to those that had similar experiences with mental illness. Along the way, I've given talks on my recovery to people in and outside the system. My role changed from consumer to advocate.

There are several generalizations I notice about people with mental illnesses. Many smoke or used to smoke for self-medication. Thankfully, more attention has been given to helping consumers quit.

Also people with mental illnesses often can't get up early in the morning, because the medications are sedating. We may gain weight and develop diabetes, which are side effects of atypical medications. We get depressed when the weather gets cloudy and rainy. We sincerely want to improve our situation but at times feel helpless and disempowered. Often we have low self-esteem and may feel uncomfortable in social situations. We don't have a lot of money; many of us are on government benefits. We can't get a decent job because stress will only make us more ill. We would like to be purposeful and do things that give us pleasure and make us feel good about ourselves. These generalizations don't apply in every case, but many do fit these descriptions.

So what can the mentally ill do well? We can crack jokes about mental illness and the system. We have creative ability. We respond

to the right type of care and therapy. We smile when someone recognizes us for who we are. Together we can pull together to effect change in the system for the better. We can aid each other because we've suffered in similar ways and dealt with similar issues. We need to help ourselves as a community jointly with families and mental health providers.

Despite problems because of politics or lack of funding, overall I think mental health providers in BC do the best they can with the tools they have. However, that's only my experience. Everyone's story is different.

But imagine a city where we run our own programs. Funded much the same way other health programs are funded, we'd make our own rules, offering the right and access to medications, housing, food, clothing and fair treatment. Rehabilitated members of the program could counsel others on the road to recovery. When one of us has a setback, he or she would get support not criticism. We could build a rehabilitation centre where we could play badminton, swim, attend free classes, have coffee and talk to people with similar experiences. People who work at the centre would all have a diagnosis and earn more than minimum wage.

But even if none of that happened, I think it's important that consumers have a voice regarding innovations and programs in mental health services. Joining together and being aware of what's happening in mental health at all levels, makes us better advocates to improve the care we receive.

There's a saying, "If you haven't got your health, you haven't got anything." If we look at mental illness as a chemical imbalance, it loses some of its stigma. Schizophrenia is a physical impairment visible in a brain scan.

We have a responsibility to our own health, to set boundaries, to listen to warning signs and catch symptoms before they get out of hand.

Wellness is about how we live day by day, how we survive in a turbulent world, and that goes for anyone not just the mentally ill.

By talking about your own journey, you inform others about what it's like to live with schizophrenia, depression or a bipolar disorder. You can, as I did, cross the bridge between consumer and advocate.

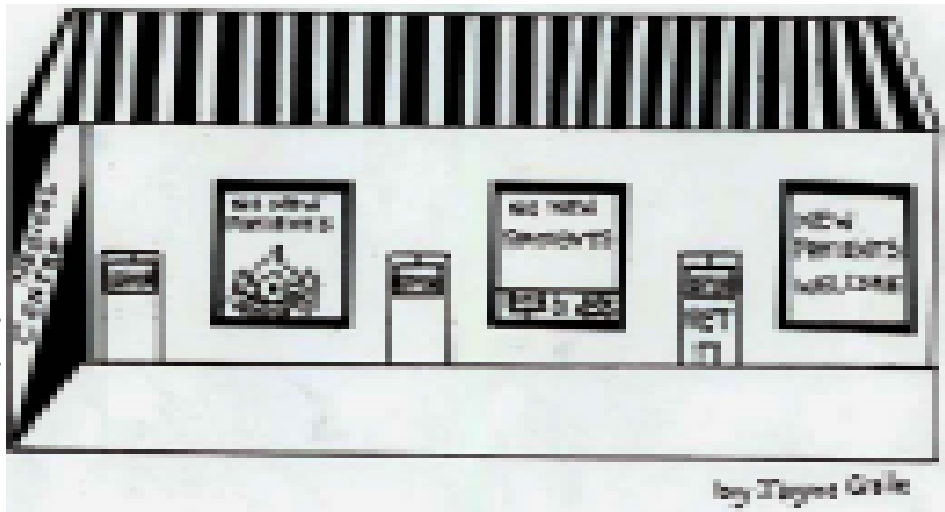


Illustration by Jayne Gale

by Jayne Gale

# Depression, fears diminish

By Stanley Popovich

## with a fresh outlook

**W**hen your fears and depression have the best of you, it is easy to feel that things will not get any better. This is not true. There is much help available in today's society and the best way to deal with your fears is to find effective ways to overcome them. As a result, here are some techniques a person can use to help manage their fears and anxieties.

You never know when the answers you are looking for will come to your doorstep. Even if the thing that you feared does happen, there are circumstances and factors that you can't predict which can be used to your advantage. These factors can change everything. Remember: we may be 99-percent correct in predicting the future, but all it takes is for that one percent to make a world of difference.

Challenge your negative thinking with positive statements and realistic thinking. When encountering thoughts that make you feel fearful or depressed, challenge those thoughts by asking yourself questions that will maintain objectivity and common sense. For example, you're afraid that if you do not get that job promotion then you will be stuck at your job forever. This depresses you, however, your thinking in this situation is unrealistic. The fact of the matter is that there all are kinds of jobs available and just because you don't get this job promotion doesn't mean that you will never get one. In addition, people change jobs all the time, and you always have that option of going elsewhere if you are unhappy at your present location.

Some people become depressed and have a difficult time getting out of bed in the mornings. When this happens, a person should take a deep breath and try to find something to do to get their mind off of the problem. A person could take a walk, listen to some music, read the newspaper or do an activity that will give them a fresh perspective on things. Doing something will get your mind off of the problem and give you confidence to do other things.

Be smart in how you deal with your fears and anxieties. Do not try to tackle everything all at once. When facing a current or

upcoming task that overwhelms you with anxiety, break the task into a series of smaller steps. Completing these smaller tasks one at a time will make the stress more manageable and increases your chances of success.

Take advantage of the help that is available around you. If possible, talk to a professional who can help you manage your fears and anxieties. They will be able to provide you with additional advice and insights on how to deal with your current problem.

By talking to a professional, you will help yourself in the long run because you will become better able to deal with your problems in the future. Managing your fears and anxieties takes practice. The more you practise, the better you will become.

The techniques that I have just covered are some basic ways to manage your fears and depression, however your best bet is to get help from a professional and not to lose hope. Eventually, you will find the answers you are looking for.

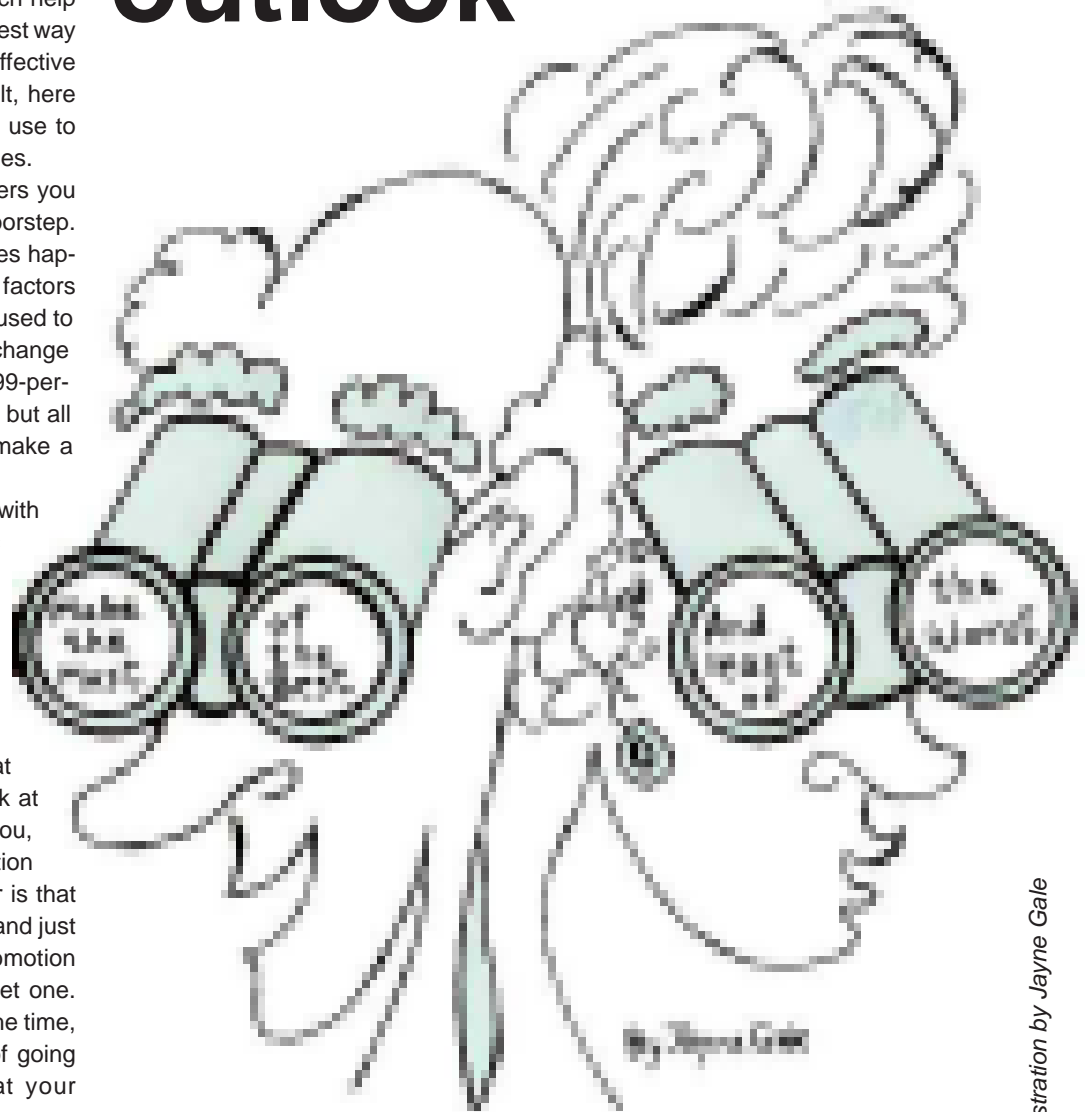


Illustration by Jayne Gale

# Workshop at work



*Artists workshop co-ordinator Alice Lee, above, gets her hands dirty too as she leads busy artists like regular BULLETIN contributor Jayne Gale, left, while Gloryian Chernochian, right, takes a moment to smile for photographer Susan Friday and below, a keen observer checks out techniques*



## Nightmares and Dreams

To lay down to sleep to wake,  
Having slept and dreamt nice dreams.  
Not awakened by your own voices screams  
Afraid to lay down, afraid to sleep  
Too tired to sleep, too confused to shop  
To cook, to eat and to clean.  
These things are simple to those who don't see  
As we hide away unable to eat, sleep or pee

Thank your lucky stars  
If you don't even have a clue what I mean.  
Compassion, education, help, acceptance, love, understanding  
A slice of each of us makes up the We, if it scares you why?  
Mental illness is not a scheme, don't be afraid  
It's not contagious and not as bad as it seems.  
The most brilliant minds, artists, compas sionate  
Intuitive beings all with a message, a pathand a dream.

*Michelle McCann*

# p o e t r y

## Loneliness

Loneliness grips at me  
At my Throat  
At my Voice  
At my Body  
The Loneliness is so bad  
I want to do the old behaviour  
Cutting Arms  
Though really  
I don't want  
To go there  
So I'm left  
With a pit  
In my Stomach  
And Throat  
I need my Spirit  
Whole again  
The Tears come easily now.

*Pam Murphy*



## Soft Raindrops

The Starfish Danced  
In my Vision  
The Pine Trees  
Whispered in my Ears  
The Eagle spread its Wings  
Above my Head  
And the Winds blew Soft Raindrops  
On my Brow

*Pam Murphy*

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

Cost is \$1.00 per year

( Please print):

Name (First) \_\_\_\_\_ Name (Last) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: (Suite #) \_\_\_\_\_ Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Telephone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Return application to:

Vancouver Richmond Mental Health Network, #201 – 1300 Richards Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 3G6