



**THE**  
**BULLETIN**  
Vol. 12 No.4 Winter 2007-08

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

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*Illustration by Rose Ananda Heart*

# THE BULLETIN

Vol 12 No 4 Winter 2007-08

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.

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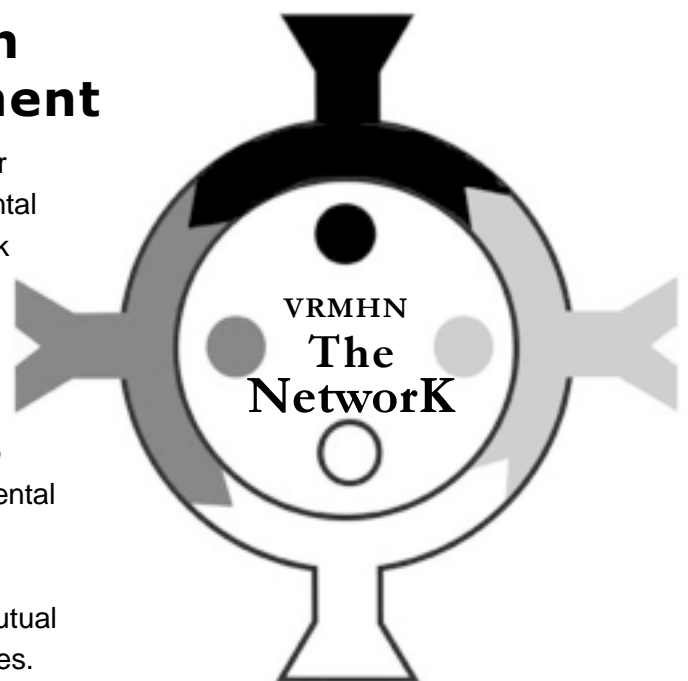
## Network services

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
- 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.



# Challenges pile up at VRMHN office

Hello fellow Network Members. I hope all our members and others are having a graceful transition into our well known 'rain-forest' wet season we call Vancouver winters.

It has been a challenging fall season here at the network office. After the fall issue of The BULLETIN deadline, the coordinators went straight into AGM preparations and functioning. With non stop priorities such as statistical deadlines, updates to the website, charitable status criteria, organization fundraising projects & proposals in October, leading to an overdue Audit in November. More preparations included the organization of the Winter Party and EGM, Name Change priorities, the Satisfaction Survey deadline coming up December 1st and The Gaming Application due at the end of the wonderful month of November. It is no wonder that one of the office personnel has chosen to take a hiatus from network duties.



**Kristine Stratford**

The executive office position at the network is no small feat, at most, is accredited for high functioning individuals and most notably respectful of 'burnout' syndrome.

Helpers have been put to task for much needed office support with duties such as: cleaning, maintaining and reorganizing the file systems (which were still in disarray from last years office location move), office errands, website maintenance, flyers & mail outs, the winter party preparations, and helping with statistical data collections. Also, the difficult task of the gaming application was prepared by our wonderful office support and

secondary fundraiser Barry Hames. Many MANY thanks go out to all our wonderful office support, The BULLETIN deliverers and many other noted volunteers, such as: Kathleen S, Kerri G, Gloryan C, Patti, Nick S, Ruby D, Karen D, Igor S, Gerald, Nadine, Frank S, Susan F, Diane T and our newly recruited contract office support Judy...for much needed organization and support; as well, to anyone else I may have forgotten that has truly helped in maintaining a team spirit & office support environment. And many thanks to those that had offered support but to which I was not able to access their particular resource abilities for one reason or another. You have all showed incredible team support and warm encouraging recognition of the demanding responsibilities encumbered with the role that comes with the duties of Network Office Coordinator.

For any members wishing to look at the network finances, the constitution, policies & procedures, or the societies act, our fiscal responsibilities, & our schedule A requirements as laid out by Coastal Health, please feel free to do so by making an appointment with the office coordinator to see these documents at the office.

May you all have a peaceful winter season – embraced with love, joy, abundant prosperity & serenity in this difficult season approaching of the 'conditioned' material overtures of festive 'giving' in a world gone obsessed on material up-man-ships....

Please remember that what you have to offer is enough, whether it is presence of mind, a listening ear, or a loving word gestured from your heart. All you are is ENOUGH. From the Network coordinator wishing you a warm heart felt Christ's day of birth and miracles – known in our spoken language as Merry Christmas.

# Year's end brings new beginning to Network

Seasons greetings and happy holidays. We are ending the 2007 year with a new beginning, so to speak. Our winter party coincides with the EGM (Extraordinary General Meeting) on December 9<sup>th</sup> when the membership will choose one out of two short-listed names, so we can create a special resolution to change the name of our society. I am confident that we will make the right choice and that the name we choose will reflect our values, mission and Network purposes, and also be a name that will convey a sense of personal pride when we tell others that we belong to our society. Our web site looks



**Dianne Thurston**

great! It is functional and inviting while enjoyable to visit, so please have a look at it and give us your feedback.

I would like to thank all the people who have worked on or contributed to our web site upgrade. Kristine

Stratford, our Coordinator, has supervised the website upgrade and design layout, and was responsible for the editing, illustration and

content. A big thanks to Karen Douglas for website development and design. I'd also like to thank Cassandra Freeman and Susan Friday, our Vice Prez. and Treasurer, for their research and helpful suggestions. And again thank you to Susan Friday and Marilyn Blanford for contributing photos of original artwork to our web site. Please contact the Network if you would like to have your artwork considered for a future art web page.

Our fundraisers, Barry Hames and Cassandra Freeman have been busy working on different projects. A grant application

*continued on Page 11*

## From the Editor

# Names stay the same; roles juggled

We had our AGM (annual general meeting) in September and the members came up with some new names which could be considered for our Network. The final decision will be made at our next meeting December 9<sup>th</sup>. It will be held at 388 West Broadway @ Yukon St @ 2pm.



**Josanna Savoie**

The members of the board remain the same with some changes in positions;  
DIANNE THURSTON; President  
SUSAN FRIDAY; Vice- President/  
Treasurer

Douglas Hagerman; Secretary  
TIM PYLYPIUK & Richard Dixon; Directors

Our topic for this issue is Spirituality. Spirituality is defined in the Oxford Canadian dictionary as “not concerned with matter, relating to the human spirit or soul, concerned with the sacred or religious”.

Spirituality is hard to define as it can have a different meaning for everyone. To some it may mean going to a particular church while others feel that connecting with nature or their higher self such as in meditation is their spiritual vehicle. We

thank the writers who shared their personal experiences with us and hope that they will be inspiring to all readers. The BULLETIN has a spiritual keepsake on the back cover of this issue. Cut it out, stick it to your frig, or frame it and hang it over your bed., whatever. It is a beautiful piece to live by.:

Our next topic will be “Relationships & Mental Illness”. We would like you to share with us your experiences concerning how your particular mental illness has affected your personal relationships. Articles on gay/lesbian relationship issues are welcome. Deadline for submissions will be Monday February 25<sup>th</sup>. No double spaces please.

Keep in mind that headlines are written after the layout & may be changed without notice.

Check out our website for information on various groups the Network is supporting.

We now have PayPal on our home page & can give out tax deductible receipts for anyone who would like to make a donation to the Network.

You are welcome to send a letter to the editor to share your thoughts and feelings about the articles in our bulletin. Our Network’s contact information is on page II.

Hope your Christmas season will be a happy one!

## From Gale



## From the Reader

Dear editor,

Homeless shelters and fiscal assistance for the poor are fine and dandy — but are they enough?

Those who are impoverished have a great nemesis in prominent news-media figures who are fiscal conservatives and social liberals. Such ideology is replacing the polarized left- and right-wing

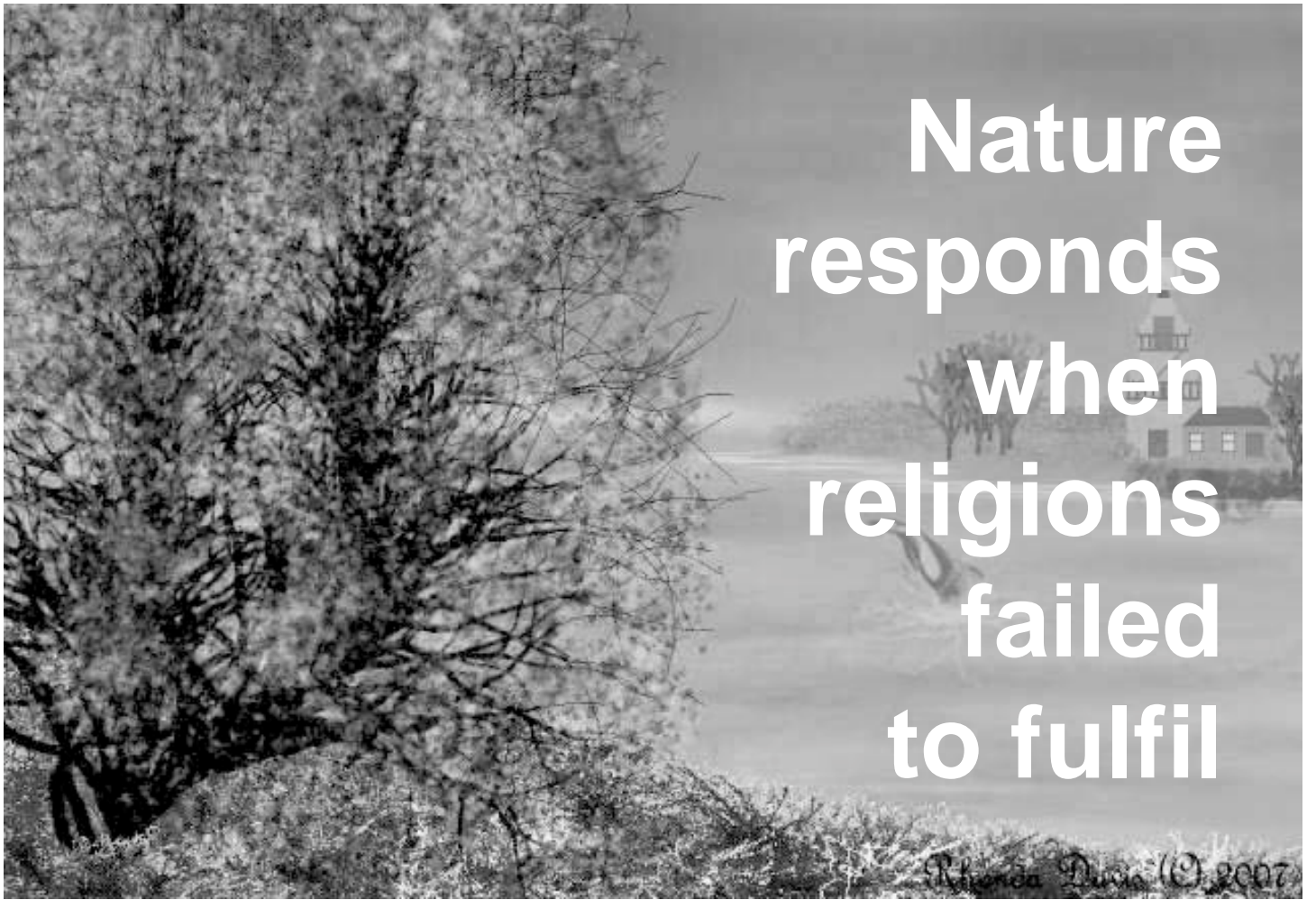
camp in not just the news-media, but society in general — all of which translates into “welfare” and “social services” becoming dirty words.

Although B.C.’s current government allows seemingly-token disability social assistance increases, it allows cuts in other areas, such as eye-doctor-care funding; and whenever there’s any cuts in the social

safety net, our government knows that society is, at best, apathetic towards whether or not any ‘welfare bum’ receives accessible eye-doctor care.

In its fundamentalist form, this ideology basically translates into the survival of the richest and the fully employed.

Sincerely,  
Frank G. Sterle, Jr.



# Nature responds when religions failed to fulfil

Illustration by Rhonda Davis

By JM

I have had a long and interesting spiritual journey. It began in the late fifties when I was a child of nine and read my Gideon's Bible which I was given two years earlier at Sunday School. (Perhaps I would have read my Bible sooner, but I did not know how to read). I found it very comforting.

As a child I attended both Catholic and Russian-Orthodox Church masses, which I found to be quite arcane as they were held in languages I did not speak nor understand.

After I graduated high school, I began my search for a church. I called the endeavour searching for a "religion". I attended a number of Christian services, a different one every Sunday. I still possessed my Gideon's Bibles and read them.

Then I learned about Islam. I went to the Mosque in the city I lived in at that time and I decided that this was the religion for me, with its exact guidelines for living. I agreed with them. I embraced Islam by saying, "I believe in One God and that Mohammed is his Prophet." I believed in the five tenets of Islam: The Declaration as above, praying five times a day, giving alms (charitable donations), the Pilgrimage to Mecca (birth-

place of Mohamed) when possible, and fasting during the month of Ramadan (9<sup>th</sup> month of the Muslim year when fasting is observed from sunrise to sunset). I was a Moslem for two and a half years, but slid away from my belief following my separation from my Moslem husband.

Now I visited with Jehovah's Witnesses who introduced me to the concept of Jesus dying on the cross as a ransom for all humankind. Although I had read my little Sunday School Bible, I had not understood that *this* was what it was about.

Just as I was about to convert to their faith, a woman I met at work involved in "the Lord's recovery" invited me over for dinner. She and her group helped me to understand their "happiness in the Lord" and I, desiring the same happiness, converted to their faith! I lasted all of two weeks; I simply could not accept some of their concepts.

Subsequently, I became a sceptic. I took up "La Danse Orientale; it felt like a religion to me. For years, I lived to dance. I practiced constantly and engaged in the choreography of my dances.

I then discovered the Unitarian Church. Upon entering and seeing the banners along

the wall with the symbols of the major world faiths, I knew I belonged there. The symbols of Islam, Zen, Christianity, Judaism, and other faiths were there. There are many paths to universal love. Unitarianism does not profess to have found the Truth; they are still searching for it. They avoid dogma, appreciating wisdom from all scriptures and philosophies. They believe everyone is equal, they are humanitarian, and all voice their opinions with freedom.

Later during studies at a community college, I met a practitioner of Science of Mind. We exchanged ideas and I sometimes attended Science of Mind services. The philosophy is based upon the concept of our thoughts shaping our minds and subsequently shaping what we are. I don't disagree with these concepts; however I don't find them to be that helpful.

The book "When God was a Woman" and "The Dead Sea Scrolls" were also influential in my spiritual search.

Today I still engage in "La Danse Orientale" & the Unitarian church, but I find nature to be my greatest comfort as I walk in the park among the trees along the river.

# Root to crown chakras determine life's balance



By Rose Ananda Heart

The word chakra comes from Sanskrit and means wheel or disk, as the charkas are commonly experienced as spinning wheels of energy. The location for each chakra corresponds to seven central nerve ganglia branching out from the spinal column. The first chakra is found at the base of the spine, the second chakra is found in the lower abdomen above the genitals, the third chakra is found at the solar plexus, the fourth chakra is found at the heart, the fifth at the throat, the sixth at the brow and the seventh chakra is found at the top of the head.

As we ascend upwards through the chakras, from the root to the crown, we move through the developmental stages that will support either balance or imbalance in our energy, depending on how well our needs are met in each stage of life. When life presents us with hurts that go unresolved, the charkas become imbalanced, creating an excess or a deficiency in our

energy. We either increase our energy to cope with a difficulty or we decrease our energy in order to get away from the problem. Excess is created by over compensating and deficiency is created by avoidance. Over time these defenses get 'hard-wired' into our chakra system and they begin to exhibit their patterns unconsciously. By working with the chakras individually we can re-evaluate our current responses to life and bring our chakras back into alignment.

The root chakra is associated with our physical identity and our existence on the earth. Its developmental phase occurs from the womb thru the first year of life. If all goes well, we will have a strong sense of belonging and feel safe and secure as a human being living on earth. As we move into the second year of life, we are ready to further explore our world, and our second chakra begins to form. At this point we enter into the element of water, as it represents the free flow of feelings and our emo-

tional identity. If our curiosity is honored and we feel affirmed in expressing our feelings we will develop a strong sense of autonomy. Chakra three begins to develop in the third year of life. At this stage our social world is expanding, and we can handle simple responsibilities as part of our community. At this point we enter the stage of ego identity, where our will is being developed and we are learning to take some initiative in our life. Fire is the element of this chakra, representing our ability to transform our reality according to our will. If all goes well we will develop healthy self-esteem and the courage to take charge of our life.

The fourth chakra takes us into the fifth year of our life on earth. The health of this chakra is related to our ability to keep our hearts open and experience warm, loving, authentic relationships with others. The element associated with this chakra is air. At this stage we are ready to move beyond

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By Jayne Gale

## Connection with the universe also serves as link to others

Spirituality is a sense of connection with something greater than ourselves. I feel the *Universe* is my guide, a metaphysical presence greater than myself. I also feel a connection with the rest of the world through the metaphysical powers of the *Universe*. It is as if there is a collective intelligence, energy and force beyond my knowledge yet within my belief that creates the circumstances, the lessons and out comes I and others need in our lives to learn and progress on the path of spiritual growth and wisdom.

I have often experienced universal phenomena through the synchronization of events and thoughts with others.

My belief is we have a continuation of life beyond death and are re-born many times to live out our spiritual journey. I feel my personal journey in this life or in any life I've previously experienced, and in any life that follows will be about gaining inner self wisdom, peace, clarity, and ultimately a completeness of the spiritual being through liberation of human qualities. These qualities might include things like human characteristics (as an example one's moral views), but the goal is to become spiritually pure reaching a place of divinity and ultimate joy.

Spirituality I found cannot be housed in a book or a building rather it is a state of one's own beliefs. Our deeds, our actions and philosophies affect others as they affect ourselves. Like a mirror what we put out

whether positive or negative is reflected back to us. We are given the power to create our own destiny but it is how we exercise and believe in this power that sets our limits or provides our ability to create new paths to the future.

Each time we experience life we are given the opportunity to grow spiritually, to become attuned to the, *Universe*, to accept the lessons provided, and to be open to growing in wisdom and enlightenment.

Namaste

*(NAMASTE MEANS: I honour the place in you in which the entire universe dwells. I honour the place in you which is of love, truth, of light, and of peace. When you are in that place in you, and I am in that place in me, WE ARE ONE).*

from Page 6

our ego identity and develop an authentic social identity, providing that all has gone well. We can experience greater freedom as our world expands beyond ourselves and our personal feelings and needs. The throat chakra begins to develop in the eighth year of life. This chakra is connected with the element of sound, and our ability to communicate our feelings and our thoughts authentically. This chakra represents our creative identity. If all goes well at this stage of development we will feel respected for our creative individuality. We will know that when we speak we are being heard.

Chakra six, also known as the brow chakra, develops during adolescence and is associated with the element of light. This chakra is all about using our imagination to visualize our desires, as well as the ability to trust our inner knowing, our guidance and our intuition based on what our bodies are telling us. This chakra represents our archetypal identity, a blue print for the psyche that gives us insight into our purpose for being on the planet at this time. Last but not least, is the chakra found at the crown of our head. This chakra is all about consciousness, which acts as the operating system in our computer. This chakra develops throughout life as our consciousness is formed according to our experiences and insights. The element associated with this chakra is thought, representing complete freedom. No one can control

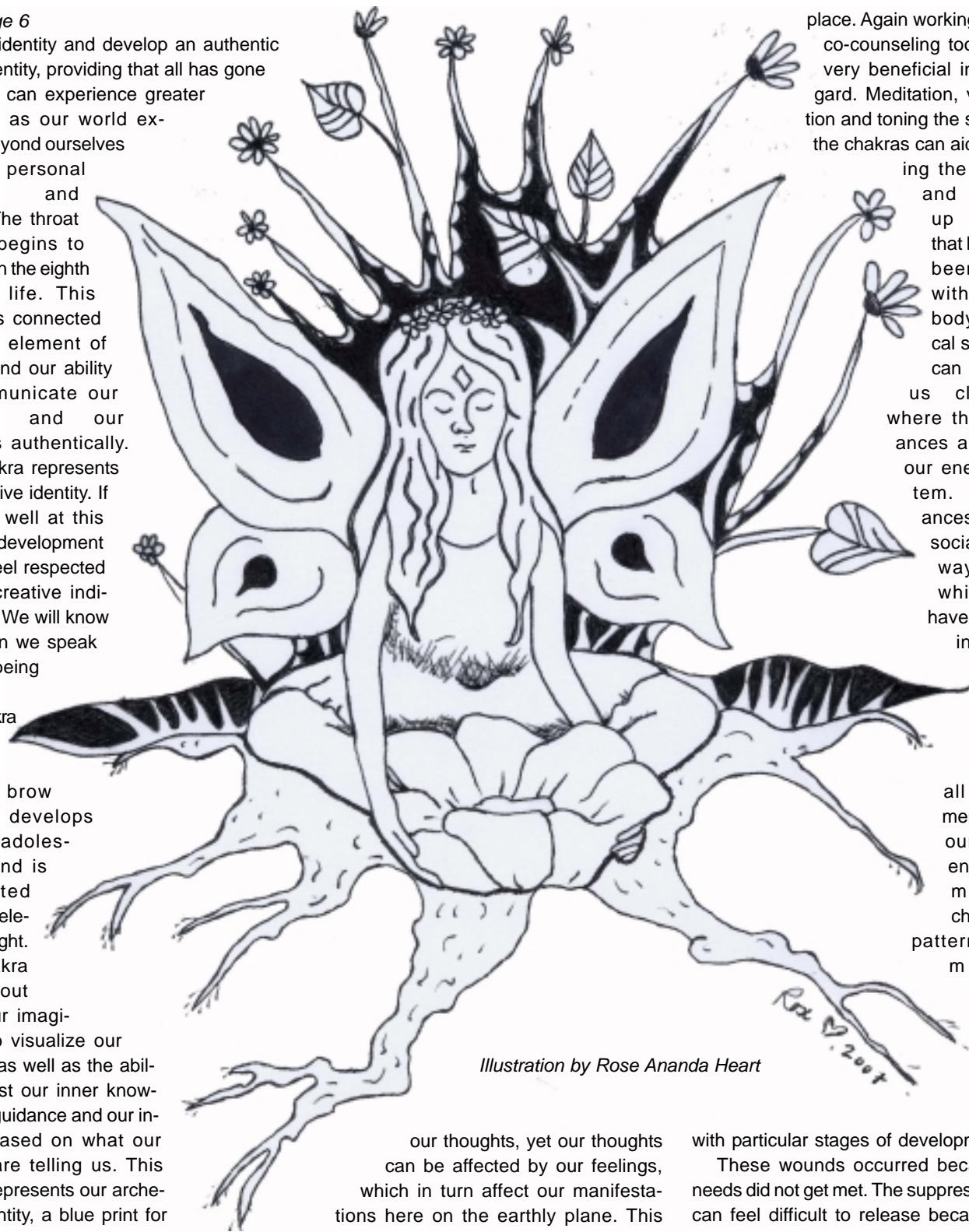


Illustration by Rose Ananda Heart

our thoughts, yet our thoughts can be affected by our feelings, which in turn affect our manifestations here on the earthly plane. This chakra, related to our universal identity and our spiritual connection to our source, brings us enlightenment and the experience of bliss.

Working with each developmental stage can be helpful in our recovery and re-emergence. We can be hurt at any stage along the way, and by observing our patterns, we can find out which chakras are out of balance and we can release the emotions that our holding the imbalances in

place. Again working with the co-counseling tool can be very beneficial in this regard. Meditation, visualization and toning the sounds of the chakras can aid in aligning the chakras and bringing up feelings that have long been held within the body. Physical symptoms can also give us clues to where the imbalances are within our energy system. Imbalances are associated with ways in which we have suffered in our upbringing, for the body holds all the memories of our experiences. The more chronic the patterns, the more deeply we have been wounded in association

with particular stages of development.

These wounds occurred because our needs did not get met. The suppressed hurts can feel difficult to release because it involves fully experiencing our pain. What is essential for recovery is the release of pent up emotions held within the feeling body. John Bradshaw, a pioneer in the recovery movement, calls this the forgiveness process. Premature forgiveness, however, will only serve to support the denial and suppression of our true emotions. With gentleness and compassion for ourselves, we can return to a place of balance and the complete re-emergence of the authentic self.

# **BULLETIN**

## **artists a hit at MPA exhibit**



An amazing event was recently held on September 29<sup>th</sup> at the Ironworks Studio in Gastown in celebration of consumer's artworks that had been juried by a panel of experienced artists and selected to be shown for the MPA Art Auction & Juried Art Show.

This was the second annual Art Auction to celebrate 36 years of success at the MPA Society that also coincided with National Mental Illness Awareness Week October 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>.

Art displayed and lit in the rustic atmosphere of the Ironworks Studio was accompanied by a live jazz duo, flowing champagne creating, non-stop appetizers and a happening ambiance for any art connoisseur. To further tickle the crowd's fancy later in the evening a trio of trained mental health consumers each did comedy stand up gigs on stage sending ripples of laughter throughout the cavernous rooms.

The art to be auctioned was created by mental health consumers and special invited guest artists including: Lincoln Clarkes, Xwa Lack Tun and Wendy Scog. Another artist of note showing a number of pieces was Leaf Evans who had recent articles in the Sun paper and Richmond Review chronicling Leaf's story of surviving depression through his art.

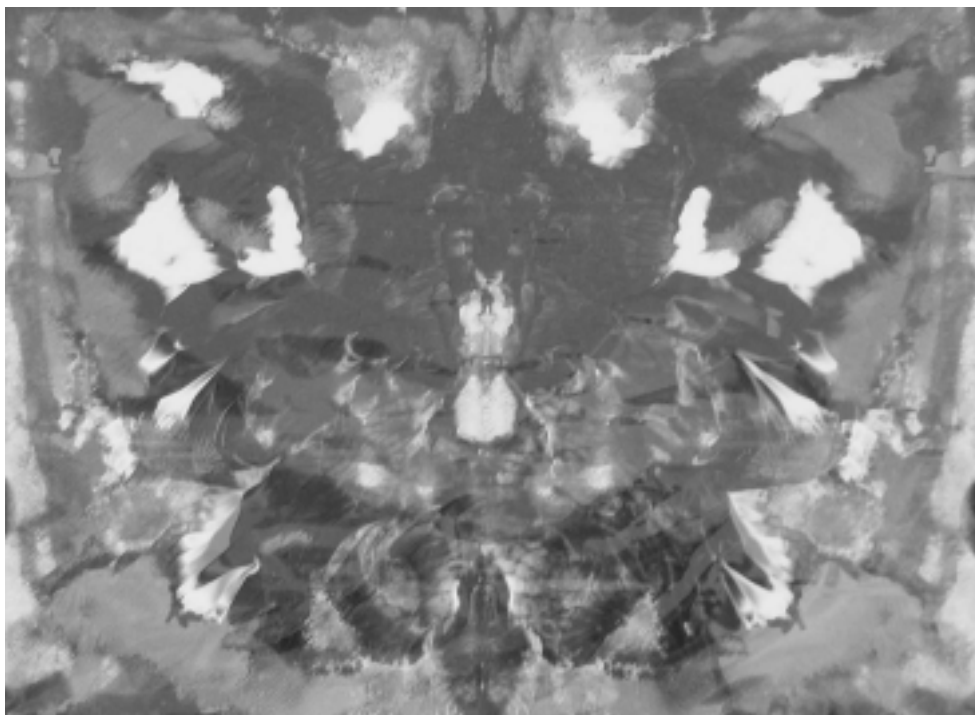
Art was displayed at the show by Gale (Jayne Gale) and Sandra Yuen Mackay who are both contributing artists and writers to the Bulletin. The Bulletin is proud of their achievements in being selected by the jury of the MPA Society and the success of hav-

ing their art displayed for the Art Auction. Before we focus further on our two artists we would be remiss in not explaining a bit more about the MPA Society and how the annual event comes about and its purpose.

MPA is a short form for motivation, power and achievement. The MPA Society was founded in 1971 by ex-mental patients who wanted to organize and create support in their community to provide mental patients with services and programs through housing, advocacy, court services, a drop-in centre and several other programs. To date they have successfully provided services for

over thirty five years' to people with mental health issues.

The Art Auction is a fundraiser for the society that is now in its second year and is organized and overseen by the MPA's Director of Development, Lynda Kennedy. Lynda and her resources were able to bring in corporate sponsorship and attract a large group of people to help sponsor the success of the fundraiser. They were also able to set up an experienced group of artists who juried the artwork of over twenty artists who were all mental health consumers for selection of pieces for the Auction itself.







**Sandra Yeun's offerings on the right and the left reflect a spiritual connection with nature and life underwater ... or maybe she's shopping for dinner,**

**while below are Gale's butterfly and flower faces. No surprise to BULLETIN editors and readers they were hits. We knew that!**



The consumers worked extremely hard to create art that took many forms, styles, and some very obvious talent. The walk through of artwork for the guests started in the foyer and followed into a second large room with dramatic rustic walls as a setting for many pieces, then the guests were drawn into a third room where another two walls of many beautiful pieces hung as a feast for their eyes.

Our first artist Gale is an active contributor to the Bulletin. Gale provides artwork and cartooning under her artist name, Gale. She also provides article pieces and poetry

under her writer's name, Jayne Gale. We've asked Jayne to provide us with a short piece on the process of selection and the pieces she put in the Art Auction, as well as some insight to her creative process.

'Initially I put in five pieces to be juried, two ink pieces and three acrylics. It was a bit nerve wracking waiting to see if they would take my pieces but in the end the jury took my three acrylics so it was a very exciting experience. The first acrylic was called Faces & Flowers which appears to be flowers yet if you look at it for a while you start to see many faces among the flow-

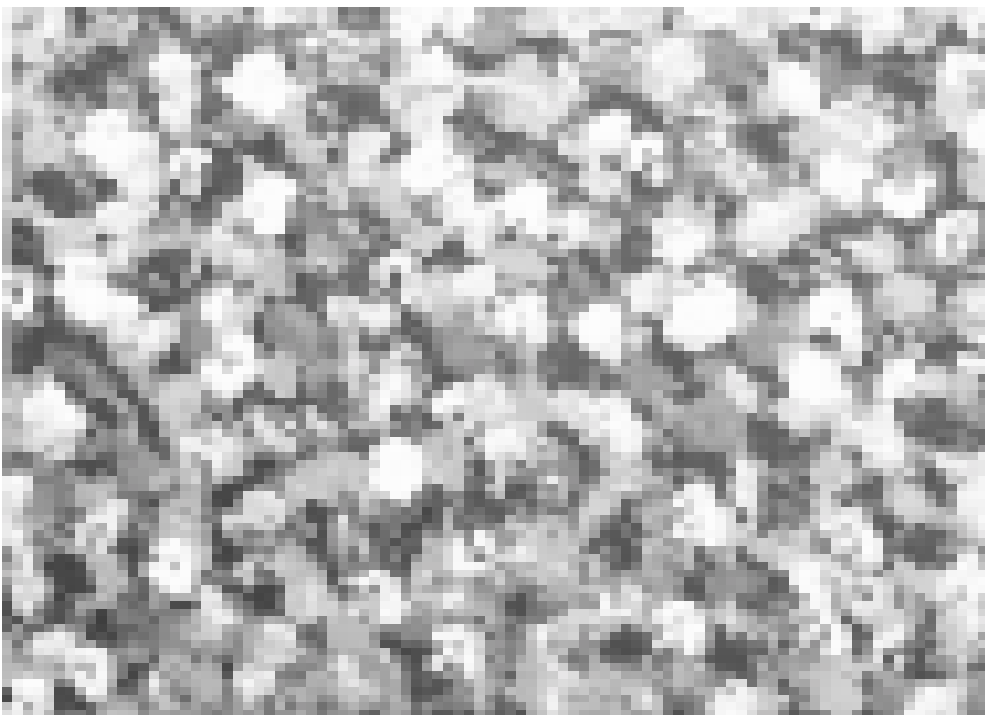
ers. The second piece was called Lustre Horizon in Blue and I am at a loss as how to describe it. My third piece is called the Violet Butterfly and is indeed an image of a butterfly that is violet but the painting has many textures to it made by a method I created where I use no brushes and I tend to show only a few people the way it's done.

My form and style of work changes frequently so as to continue exploring and retaining freshness to the art work. For the most part I am a self taught artist. I do attend an Expressive Arts Group once a week which is fairly loose in structure giving me the freedom to work on anything that takes my interest. The greatest gift I have given myself in my artwork is no boundaries.'

Our second artist, Sandra Yuen MacKay, is another active contributor to the Bulletin providing artwork, poetry, and articles.

Sandra's piece was a large acrylic painting entitled "Riviera" capturing the orange glow of the evening sky and the dapples of light reflected off the water. She's influenced by the colour techniques used by Henri Matisse and the Fauves. In this painting, the depiction of boats at dock and a curved horizon were influenced by expressionism. When asked about her creativity, Sandra says, "I do it because I love it. It's part of my life's journey toward wellness."

Both of our artists received many compliments on their artwork, the uniqueness of their styles and their talent. The Bulletin is very proud to salute both Gale and Sandra.



# Spirituality integral to balancing act of gifted person



By Michelle Lea McCann

I am a practicing psychic, channel, reader of tarot as well as many other forms of divination. I am the weekly astrology columnist for my local paper the *Powell River Peak*. I have specifically tailored sessions in my home for private clients.

I also am experiencing the tightrope that is rapid cycling bipolar disorder. So many abbreviations and labels have been put on me I could be a filing cabinet. Diagnosed as ADHS (attention deficit hyperactive disorder) since at nine years of age, I have had innumerable amounts of manic “episodes”. Most were wonderful magical adventures, others wilder than you can imagine all usually ending in exhaustion from running around “telling people things.” Then the obligatory psychosis that comes from a mind that has been running like a computer for months on no food or sleep. On and off medication it was the most depressed times in my life and I looked like a fatter and calmer version of someone named Michelle. It’s all part of the experiences I needed to have, and do still but to a lesser tragic degree and each lesson comes with clearer significance. Spirituality has helped me realize I am the choreographer of the whole cyclic aspects of my life; always have been I just didn’t know it, so my energy was

split and still is. With escoterism I have found the missing link to in sane or insane, finally. It’s so clear and obvious now I am a little pouty that yes I am and always was a psychic, and yes there is a price to pay. But when I look at it dispassionately I laugh at how hilarious the whole script is, the characters, and how I could have never thought /would have created a more interesting, wild and dangerous existence. But like the child so lost in the story on the screen she yells out in fervour “He’s behind you run!!!!”

I still do take a cocktail of meds but now I take precautions. Spirituality is integral to the balancing act of the touched person. We have many terms and labels for what is usually based on little more than others’ ignorant personal perspectives rooted in either antiquated paranoiac ignorance or still stagnant stigmatic ignorance and paranoia. If you look at the people in history who have made the strongest impact in a creative way, they were the ones capable of original thought. Most were touched by the Divine, closer to the Veil and the light which is too bright for some of us yet barely seen by others. Most of us are so extrasensory perceptive it is of help to us to see so quickly that we can easily strengthen the bond between here and there. It’s not as hard as

pretending to belong here without acknowledging there, that’s the hard part usually practicing being a person. The day to day is the illusion, that is the truth, and thank god, we are not the same, it is harder for us because the gift is so extraordinary and powerful its just that we didn’t or just have not realized how much power we can have over our lives. At some point, one realizes that being sick does not mean we have to fall into the groove made by those who bravely came before us and we don’t have to hate it, we can channel that energy into magic. The “real” world with all it’s dimensionally challenged, the big lie feeding a fear-based society propagating soullessness. We are the ones that are at the parentheses of the old paradigm, the ones that we have been waiting for. The great shift or the quickening the new paradigm of quantum physics meets spirituality (not dogma). Its East meets west a New Age fusion of many spokes leading to the same centre. The vibrations infusing us with the light and ability for true growth individually as well as collectively. The Collective Unconscious personal empowerment is gaining momentum just like a manics flight up or a depressive’s digectory down. We are interdimensional beings and are able

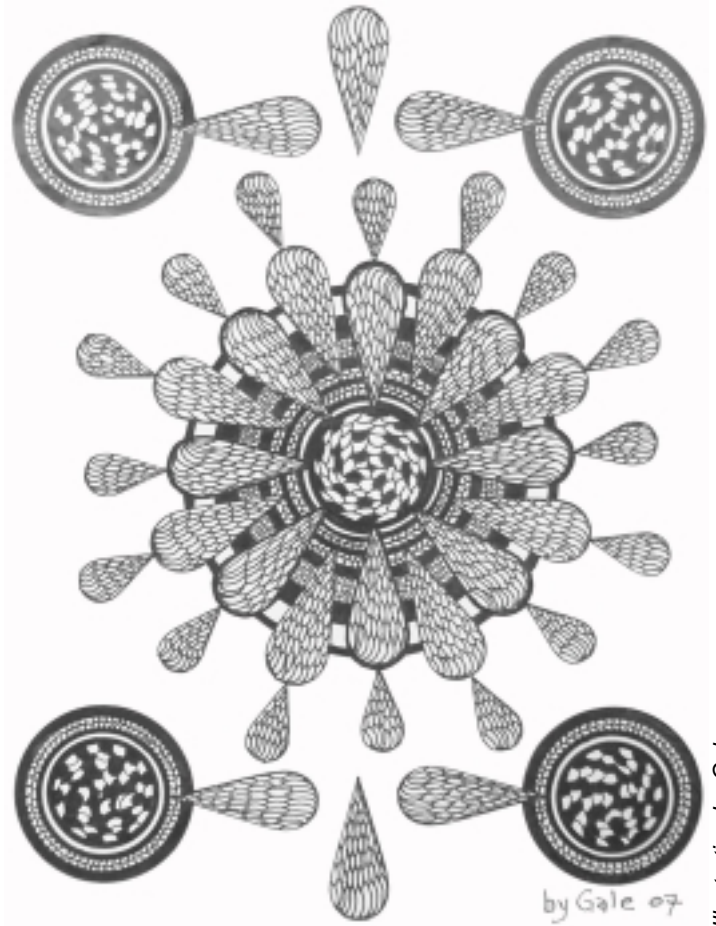


Illustration by Gale

# Positive outweighs negative, but it's all in how one sees it

Greetings everyone; it feels like a stormy time, as evidenced by the tragic and controversial media coverage of the terrible and avoidable death of Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski, at Customs Entry at Vancouver International Airport. I can only feel how shocking it was to his Mother, and encourage full public investigation and restriction of taser devices by trigger happy security guards, police, or immigration inspectors, etc. One could get heartily discouraged at such incidents, but I practise Yoga and adhere to an ancient viewpoint, which suggests that reality is an interaction of opposites, which maintains some kind of metaphysical balance, intrinsic to the condition we

find ourselves in, i.e. rebirth on this physical plane, so to the extent that this is true, there are also lots of good things being reported in the media which are important to notice. I would like to draw your attention to some of these items.

The first being an award made to Dr. Abraham Hoffer Phd., founder of Orthomolecular Psychiatry, for \$250,000, from the Centre of Integrative Medicine. This well deserved and overdue recognition, made on behalf of the founders, was given by Dr. Andrew Weil, vocal exponent of complementary medicine, who remarked that this money was awarded in recognition of the fact that doctors' careers suffer greatly for supported alternative healing modalities. He further remarked that B.C. is farther behind than many other provinces, including Alberta, where their university has a foundation for the study of alternative medicine.

Other reports that are significant include the long negotiated settlement with the local residents of East Hastings to locate the new facility for the North West Mental Health team at the corner of Slocan and Hastings Street. Another article quietly noted that last year's hotly debated building of a dual diagnosis facility on Fraser Street, has in fact resulted in the 30 bed facility being run without difficulty or unrest in that neighbourhood.

A dearth of articles on mental health topics, too numerous to mention are supported by adjunct areas of reporting. These include neuro-psychiatric conditions, e.g. dyslexia, alzheimer's and ADHD, as well as a concern for environmental pollutants including arsenic in water wells in the Fraser Valley and test results of NDP MLA Gregor Robinson's family who all tested extremely high in heavy metal and air borne pollutants despite being raised in very healthy environments physically.

I would attest that doesn't bode well for the rest us, especially on limited incomes, however the whole climate of concern does forebode well for the future. Speaking of which, our future Community Education Workshops are addressing these issues regularly and we are about to post our announcements on our revamped website. Please look us up in the New Year.

Best wishes for lots of fun and self care over Christmas and New years.

Namaste.



**Bob Krzyzewski**  
Community Education

to choose any reality we wish to co-create. If we feel depressed so what? We should let others know let them share your burden to teach them. If you are mentally touched (ill) its time to open up to Spirit your source energy. Trust and unconditionally we must first ourselves Love and know we are the chosen healers. How could we know with out experience like ours' we wouldn't be very good at helping others at some point with their emotions. If you are still in the life of hard knocks school so am I and it just gets easier some of the time. The high is as high the lows as low but the older I get and the closer to the Divine I am finding life to be in a constant state of gratitude no matter my mood at that moment. Spirituality has strengthened my connection with my highest self and becoming aware I can co-create my every second of my reality. We are all magicians and extremely creative intuitive human/angel hybrids with angels and guides all around us. Take a look back at how many times you should not have survived, or didn't want to and yet here you are still here. Here to fulfill a purpose.

Love and Light

from Page 3

to purchase computers for staff was sent. We also have our name on a list to receive some free computers for Network member use.

Barry and I have attended an ENP (Enterprising Non-Profits) orientation session with the aim of learning about social enterprise and how to develop and run a business for the Network, in order to generate revenue for our society and maybe even provide employment, training and/or work experience for our members. Cassandra researched and submitted a list of things that we needed to do or change to reflect our new charitable status along with many suggestions for the women's safe house project.

Following our name change, our pursuit of funding will also include a Planned Giving/Legacy section for people who would like to make a bequest to the Network. We are also looking at the idea of doing a fundraiser concert next year.

We are looking for dedicated volunteers who have very good communication skills, both spoken and written and who could dedicate three or four days a month for up to a year to help with the women's safe house project and the Networks' social enterprise business project. Our networks' mailing address, website & tel # is on page II.

**Humour,  
spirit,  
love,  
and a  
most  
powerful  
presence**



**serve as  
antidote  
to much  
emotional  
distress,  
anguish**



By Cassandra Freeman

**W**hen I was only ten years old the spirit of my paternal grandmother appeared in my doorway just as I was falling asleep. It was the day of her funeral, and looking back it seems to me that she had come by to see if I was okay.

At the time I just accepted her presence as normal, but then my mother's family is from the Middle East and India where such experiences are accepted as everyday fact. I also grew up with a mother who came from a religious Jewish home and taught me to see God's presence in everything.

Years later in my early thirties, after coming off tranquilizers abruptly, I had an impulse to throw myself into a busy street. That's when my Jewish mystical education kicked in.

Believe it or not the thought that flashed through my head was "what if God sends

me back as a frog?!" My belief in a life after death was sufficient to stop me. Suicide seemed pointless if you were going to have to come back again anyways. Being in trouble with God did not seem like a good idea either.

I have never really defined what I mean when I say "God". To this day I am confused. But it doesn't seem to matter when you have intense spiritual experiences that tell you that everything is now and that now is a good place to be.

The first time that happened I was dancing ballet, the love of my life as a teen. In the middle of a dance step I suddenly let go and just for a few moments lost my ego and felt as one with the universe.

Time lost its meaning. From my perspective it was both an ecstatic state and perfectly normal. It was also an all encompassing moment that all the artists I know have experienced.

If that experience was madness, I hope to be mad several times in my lifetime!

Spirituality for me has also meant silent communication with spirits, something that the women in my family have done for centuries. It's a psychic connection, a communication that can come with a lot of emotion and often with a message as well. It's not something you volunteer for – it simply happens when someone you know dies.

I remember living in a small attic in Vancouver during my thirties again and crying my heart out about something I no longer remember. Suddenly there was another presence in the room; it was the spirit of my good friend's father, the day before his memorial service.

He had brought that sense of ecstasy with him this time. He was free of pain, free of the kidney dialysis he had to endure every

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three days. He had a message for his family, which will remain private, but he also had a message for me.

I thought it was pretty cocky of him but then when he was alive he always had a twinkle in his eye so it was well within character. The message was almost identical to a song by the Vancouver based band Trooper.

The chorus goes: 'we're here for a good time, not a long time, so have a good time; the sun can't shine every day!' It was a powerful wake-up call by someone who knew all too well the perils of staying in a depressed state.

At about the same time I met my future husband. Falling in love is so much better than any anti-depressant could ever be. And the best part is that it has no side effects except a sudden loss of interest in chocolate. We were both aspiring comics who felt quite strongly that God had a sense of humor.

After our second date I was falling asleep when suddenly a huge sign like you would see on the highway flashed in my head. It said "I FOUND HIM". It was both frightening and exciting. I didn't sleep for the rest of the night.

But it helped to have relatives who could see almost immediately the spiritual bond between you and your now "nice Jewish boy" boyfriend.



Illustration by Gale

Almost as soon as my maternal grandmother met Irwin, she started asking me questions like "where is your husband tonight?" and "is your husband coming for Friday night dinner?" When the most powerful psychic in the family assumes that you have found your match, you take notice. In honor of my grandmother we were married

in a Middle Eastern synagogue a few years later.

I recently went to a new age mystical synagogue on Yom Kippur, a day when everyone who even looks Jewish prays for communal forgiveness. I knew that one of the rabbis there, as well as being completely humble, had a kick-ass sense of humor.

I remember feeling completely grounded, standing with a few hundred other people; listening to funny, profound stories and singing with the congregation in complete harmony.

Suddenly I felt like I was standing in a hall full of angels. Everything looked brighter and there were incredibly positive, humbling and overpowering vibes that encompassed the whole room. Rather than risk a heart attack I asked my spirit guide silently: "What is this"?

She replied: "you are stepping into God's energy and you can do that anytime you want. God is everywhere and God is always accessible"; just like my mother told me.

If I had never been there, I would not have believed it. I'm not exactly the most religious person but it seems that if you are open to it "the Force" can be with you. Now I just have to find the right "portal" to step into that energy where everything is positive, in the present moment, and where heaven is brought down to earth.

## New OC, art instructor spur group back to action

It was a slow beginning this year with a late start of October 15<sup>th</sup> instead of early September due to hiring difficulties in finding an Occupational Therapist from the Richmond Mental Health to run the group.

However, with a new O.C. on board, Suzanna, and a good dollop of enthusiasm the group is in full swing with a four week tour of pottery under the supervision of EI, our Wizard of Clay.

EI has taught the Expressive Arts Group at least one if not two sessions per year throughout the years. Fortunately for the

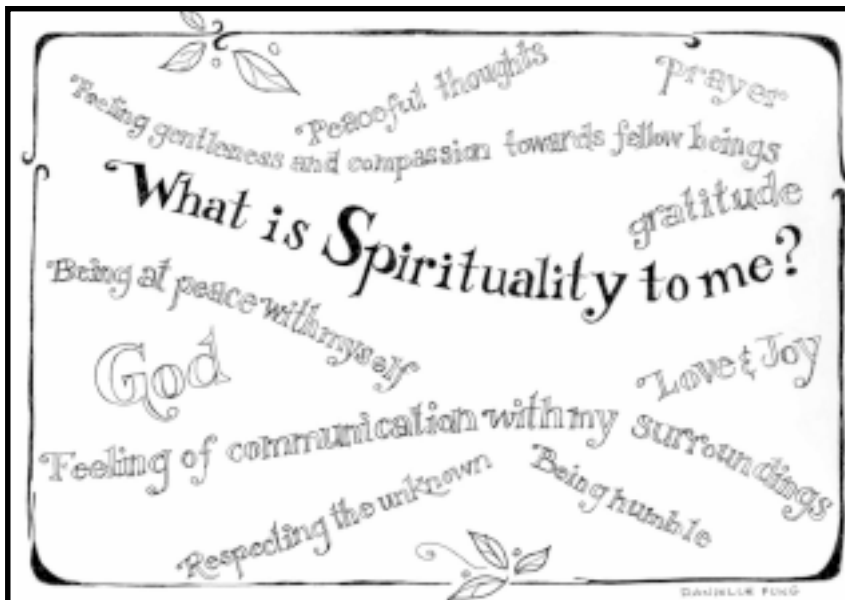
group EI is a skilled and versatile teacher with great ideas and just the right touch of support to make everyone feel like they can really accomplish something special, and they do!

In addition to our new O.C., Suzanna, we are pleased to welcome aboard a very fine artist, Bernadine Fox BFA, who is replacing our very dear Alice Lee.

Bernadine has a very warm personality putting consumers at ease quickly. She will have much to offer the group as she has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Emily Carr, has

studied art in other institutions, also taught drawing and painting, and currently has many of her works displayed in locations throughout the lower mainland. For anyone wanting further information on Bernadine's artwork check out her website at [www.bernadinefox.ca](http://www.bernadinefox.ca).

Both Suzanne and Bernadine have varied and impressive backgrounds that together will offer all those in the Richmond Expressive Arts group a major boost of support in providing a space where they can explore their creative and artist sides.



# Poetry

## DESTINY

In a field of sunlit daisies  
 feeling cozy, comfortable and lazy;  
 I reached up to the blue-bright sky  
 pulling down a fluffy cloud passing by.  
 On the cloud I laid my head  
 and settled into my golden bed.  
 Here I lay under heaven's grace,  
 taking my last breath and turning my face.  
 Before I floated away from where I slept,  
 my body to the earth is kept.  
 Now beyond my soul is free,  
 life on earth is no more for me.  
 Here in this world of glory  
 is the best part of my story.  
 My life continues, it does exist,  
 the love of life I cannot resist.  
 For I am born and born again,  
 to carry out the destiny of women and men.

Jayne Gale

## A New Day

Today is a new day  
 A day of gift  
 A day of laughter  
 A day of hope  
 a day of promise  
 Promise written in the new dawn

Caring, sharing, faith and growth  
 Let's look to the sunlight  
 And not the dark of the night.  
 Let's look for pretty things  
 The freedom of wild horses  
 The magical essence of the unicorn.  
 White and pink fairies  
 A rainbow,  
 a pot of gold!

Song and dance  
 A glitter in your eyes  
 A prance in your movement  
 In your stance  
 Be jolly be free  
 Don't let the world steal away glee.

Kristine S.

## God(dess)'s Job

This frozen  
 Emotion locked inside  
 Wasted, basted  
 Tattered, maimed...  
 Policing fragile remains  
 What do you do when a loved one is...  
 Is....  
 You don't know...  
 There's not word,  
 you cannot see.  
 That loved one is locked inside  
 So deep down wounded  
 Troubled tortured  
 You see it on the other side.  
 You say come over here...  
 No response...  
 Come play with me,  
 I love you, I miss you  
 But none can see, blank stares look at me.  
 The tatter lies,  
 Frailty.  
 Pain deep in side...  
 Locked – Frozen.  
 The pain of a dicey sour foreboding reality.  
 How do I see...  
 Goddess – how do I see...  
 Thru all the pain, heartache  
 Suffering and misery.  
 Thru all the hatred, guilt,  
 Shame, anger, betrayal,  
 war, fear, trauma,  
 Desolation, degradation,  
 Humiliation, torture,  
 Violence, anger, rage  
 Unjustified, shattered broken,  
 Demoralized,  
 Starved, vacated society.  
 How do I anchor in love, peace,  
 Justice, kindness...  
 when my heart is being holstered,  
 anchored out of me.  
 Dissected and opened  
 with a knife so clear and sharp...  
 Butchered to be sowed,  
 to a vacant debilitated society.

Kristine S.

## Poem of exposition

by Ruby Diamond

Spirit is not an abstract concept you find in a written document somewhere along your travels. It is not sitting in an ashram repeating the word One over and over again. It is not competing for power and prestige and all those things which bring confusion and fear.

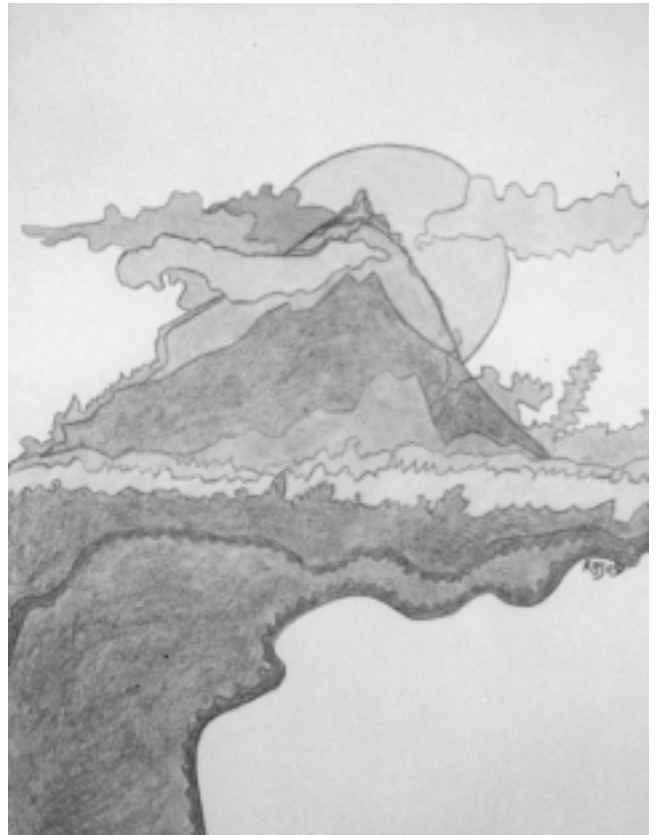
Spirit is the very act of living: the art of inspiration. The divine energy in a secret stream or maybe the way the moon looks tonight.

The Creator creates.  
 This is Its nature.  
 It holds this Earth, this Orbit, this Sun,  
 AND  
 US.

For me, Yeshua is the living God and for this I am eternally grateful. I make no apologies for my belief. Spirit, God, Universe, Higher Power are all words to describe the same Supreme Being. It is in quiet reflection and prayer that I connect with Yeshua. This God connection is a wonderful, peaceful experience: a peace that passes all understanding.

One day we will all return back to the dust of the earth. And what will we have taken with us? Nothing material: only our deeds, our words, our actions. I tend to see God as a co-conspirator in my life. When I put away my list and just let the day be, when I help others and clean house, amazing things happen. It is not that I am a good person, it is that God is good. Kindness, Love, and Compassion: these are the qualities of Spirit. Do not throw your pearls before swine. I must remember to always be humble. And it feels good to make someone laugh.

# Faith – when not seeing is believing



*Illustration by Rose Ananda Heart*

Faith doesn't grow on trees. It's something you need to cultivate. Invisible to some, miracles happen everyday. The sun rises and sets, there is intelligent life on our planet and if we look up at the stars we can see the handiwork of a higher power. Civilization has evolved blurring the line of what defines God and how people worship. His mere existence is brought into question.

Faith doesn't come up in sessions with my mental health worker or psychiatrist. Spiritual counseling must be found elsewhere.

There are a great number of people out there who deny their own spirituality. God gave us life and the bodies we live in but many treat their bodies irresponsibly.

We continue to deplete the ozone layer, pollute our oceans, cut down forests, waste valuable resources, over fish, kill wildlife and litter the streets. Our environment is decaying while politicians make choices based on economics not logic.

We fight among ourselves and in other countries. Ironically, if our goal is peace, why do we send out young soldiers with weapons to fire on demand? We fear nuclear war and world annihilation but still bombs exist. Where is faith in all of this?

God gave us a conscience for a reason. We must realize our mistakes and shortcomings.



**By Sandra  
Yuen MacKay**

We must get our priorities straight and act with a clear mind, open heart and awareness of environmental concerns and the responsibility for the welfare of all people. Governments who cater to private interests plague us. Where is democracy? True leaders need to work for the common good, not just line their own pockets or use their power to repay corporate backers.

Where is faith in a world of greed and propaganda? If you look closely you might find faith in your heart. Hopefully, deep within you, your spirit still knows innocence, love, joy, purity and harmony. If you can express genuine compassion and respect for others and yourself, you are one step closer to spiritual wellness and balance. If one could set off a chain reaction of love and acceptance that spread through families, neighborhoods, towns and cities, think

of the impact it would have on this country.

Don't get caught up in futile worry or bickering. Our greater responsibility may lie beyond the confines of our daily routines. One goal is to solve the homeless and drug addiction problems and give people food, clothing and a place to sleep. Other objectives could be lobbying for increased funding for mental health research or building more effective support systems with input from consumers. To go to bed at night, not angry, but with a prayer of hope and affirmation cultivates spirituality.

Many times in the past, He knocked on my door but I didn't answer. I locked myself away from Him because I didn't comprehend why He allowed my suffering. My friend said, "Sometimes we don't have all the answers. But God has a plan for your life, Sandra. Do not doubt Him."

I need to make an effort to live harmoniously and participate in life. That could mean trying new things or making a call to an old friend I haven't seen in awhile. By connecting with others, we live fuller lives and thus our spirituality can grow, empowering us with the strength to fight mental illness, courage to deal with other problems and ability to aid others. By trusting a higher power, one's burdens may be lifted. Faith and hope may guide us. Joy is our reward.

# Desiderata

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste,  
and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible, without surrender,  
be on good terms with all persons.  
Speak your truth quietly and clearly;  
and listen to others,

even to the dull and the ignorant;  
they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons;  
they are vexatious to the spirit.

If you compare yourself with others,  
you may become vain or bitter,  
for always there will be greater and lesser persons than  
yourself.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.  
Keep interested in your own career, however humble;  
it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs;

for the world is full of trickery;

But let this not blind you to what virtue there is;  
many persons strive for high ideals,  
and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection.

Neither be cynical about love,

for in the face of all ardily and disenchantment,  
it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years,  
graciously surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune.

But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings.

Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline,  
be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe  
no less than the trees and the stars;  
you have a right to be here.

And whether or not it is clear to you,  
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God,  
whatever you conceive Him to be.

And whatever your labors and aspirations,  
in the noisy confusion of life,  
keep peace in your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams,  
it is still a beautiful world.  
Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

Photo by Teresa Higgins