

## A THUMB-NAIL SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE HEALTH COLLECTIVE

Fall 1971; A woman angry about the treatment she had received from her doctor ran an advertizment in a local woman's paper inviting other women to meet and discuss their health care experiences. The group met to discuss frustrations and to develop alternative courses of action. They wrote a questionnaire which solicited information about doctors and which became the basis of the Doctor Directory.

Spring 1972: the group began to use a house known as A Women's Place, where birth control counselling, abortion counselling and referrals, self help clinics and work on the Doctor Directory was developed over the course of the following year.

March 1973: again in a new location the newly named Vancouver Women's Health Collective continued its work on Birth Control and Abortion counselling, Self-Help clinics and referrals. A Health Information phone line and public speaks and workshops were added to the list of activities. The self-help clinic for a time operated out of Seymour Health Clinic until a group of doctors there decided that they disagreed with the political context of the H.C. work, and the clinic relocated.

Spring 1976: Federal funding was cut and provincial funding became the main source of income to the H.C., finally becoming core funding in April 1978.

Summer 1977: the Health Collective moved again to 1501 West Broadway, where it remained until December 1984. In January 1978 services were shut down for several months while the Health Collective workers reassessed the emphasis and direction of their work. Later that year the Centre reopened with a new focus. Educational work became the mainstay of the work, and the clinical services became a less important part of the Health Collective. Diaphragm and Cervical Cap fitting as well as self-help workshops continued but less often. Women began to develop more workshops and speaks which were presented to the community. The educational work encouraged women to take charge of their own healthcare rather than encouraging them to go to a comfortable centre where someone else could take care of them.

1978 - 1982: A health Series was developed which encouraged new women to join the Health Collective and to conduct research on a variety of topics. Some of the topics covered included: The Health Care Industry, Psychotropic Drugs, The Politics of Birth Control, The politics of Cancer, Ovulation Method, Menopause, Video Display Terminals, PID and more. As the information was collected and researched it was organized and filed into what has now become an extensive Information Centre.

August 1983: The provincial government cut Health Collective funding by 100% with only one months notice. Over the next months the Health Collective survived entirely on the labour of volunteers. Emergency Grant from the City of Vancouver and private donations helped keep it going financially.

January 1984: A large grant from the Health Promotion Directorate of Health and Welfare Canada was granted to the Health Collective. Four women were hired to produce information and present workshops on Breast Health, D.E.S., Cervical and Vaginal Health, P.M.S. and Menopause. The work done on the grant was considered by the Health Promotion Directorate as a model, and the grant was extended to allow the workshops to be presented across the country.

In addition to the Health and Welfare grant the Health Collective has received grants from Employment and Immigration, Secretary of State and the Ministry of Health. All funding has been project specific and does not provide core funding for the organization.

December 1984: The Health Collective moved to its current location at 888 Burrard with the assistance of the City of Vancouver Social Planning Department. The City negotiated an agreement with the buildings owner whereby the Health Collective pays the operating cost of the space.

Spring 1985: First Issue of HealthMatters the Health Collective quarterly publication came off the press. HealthMatters keeps readers up-to-date with Health Collective news and with current health issues.

Spring 1986: The H.C. launched an extensive Fundraising campaign geared to known supporters and to the public at large. Over \$11,000 were raised.

#### OUR CURRENT STATUS

On October 10th 1986 the only government funding the Health Collective currently has expires. Four women, Annette, Anne, Shirley and Maggie have been working on a U.I.C. top-up programme since March. Their work has been largely focused on the development of the information centre and on outreach development.

There are three grant applications pending

1. Secretary of State grant to develop a community committee on Immigrant women's health needs and to write needed health information into easily read fact sheets.
2. Job Development (Employment and Immigration) Grant to allow some H.C. work to be computerized and to employ women to work on the production and marketing of HealthMatters. This grant if approved will also cover some of the administrative needs of the Health Collective. Only women who have been on Social Assistance for over 8 months are eligible.
3. Health Promotion Grant (Health and Welfare) to fund a series of pamphlets and booklets on Fertility and Infertility issues. This material will form the basis of workshops on Women's Reproductive Health and would be presented to women in B.C. Alberta and the Yukon.

The Health Collective has made a commitment to hire Barbara Mintzes and Maggie Thompson out of its savings, for a period of 20 weeks beginning in October 1986.

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