

D.E.W. DROP IN

Downtown Eastside Women Do Drop In

The Newsletter for the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

September 2003

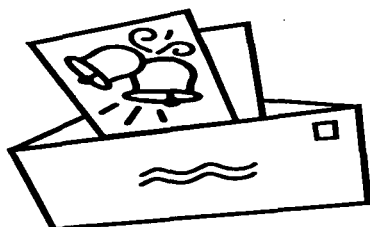
Free



INSIDE:

- Intake at DEWC
- Aunt Dee's Column
- Job Shop— Getting Back to Work— Are you Ready?
- Poetry and Prose— Voices from the DES Poetry Group
- Tell Your Story on Co-op Radio
- Getting Off Welfare— A Letter

Downtown Eastside Women Do Drop In



UPDATES FOR SEPTEMBER

Beginning in September, the Centre will have a new Intake Schedule.

The new schedule is as follows:

DAY	TIME	ON INTAKE	BACK-UP ON INTAKE
MONDAY	10 am – 12 noon	Liza	Michelle
TUESDAY	10 am – 12 noon	Christine	Liza
WEDNESDAY	11 am – 12 noon	Cori	Michelle
THURSDAY	10 am – 12 noon	Mitra	Carol
FRIDAY	10 am – 12 noon	Carol	Christine

What this means is that the Intake Office will be open during these hours for women seeking assistance and/or information for various reasons such as housing, welfare, counselling, detox, shelter and health clinics. During this time the woman on Intake can assist in making photocopies, providing resource information, making phone calls and providing referrals. If appropriate, women may be referred to another staff person in the Centre. If appropriate, women may also be referred outside the Centre. The following is a description of some Centre positions to offer a clearer picture of some of the services available.

❖ Legal Advocacy Program

The goal of this program is to make legal advocacy, information and resources available to women of the Downtown Eastside in an easily understood and accessible manner.

❖ Legal Advocate: Liza

She can help women with legal problems. This means:

- Welfare problems
- Child apprehensions and/or agreements with Ministry of Child and Family Services
- Problems with the law
- Legal battles with another party
- Power of attorney
- Legal rights
- Employee and tenants rights
- Small claims court

❖ **Stopping the Violence Program**

Stopping the Violence program provides self-help, and facilitated support groups to aid women who are facing violence as a part of their everyday lives. This program offers cultural and spiritual support and healing for First Nations women in a safe environment.

❖ **Stop the Violence Counselor: Carol**

She can help with support and counseling for women who are experiencing or who have survived violence. This means:

- Support and counseling for battering, sexual assault or child sexual abuse
- Anti-violence information
- Crisis grant applications

❖ **Victim Services Program**

The Centre's Victim Services Worker offers support and assistance to women that have been victims of a crime. These services include help with reporting a crime, emotional support for the victim, accompaniment to court and referrals to other programs and services.

❖ **Victim Services Worker: Mitra**

She can help women against whom a crime has been committed. This means:

- Providing one to one counseling
- Providing emotional and administrative support
- Accompanying women to various agencies, court, police, doctor, etc.
- Assist in filling reports and doing paperwork
- Getting information and referrals for women
- Provides WCB Criminal Injuries representation

❖ **Mental Health Program**

This program provides counseling and support to women with mental health issues. It also offers self-help and facilitated support groups and workshops on a wide range of topics.

❖ **Mental Health Advocate: Christine**

She can help with welfare issues, disability issues, appeals and filing paperwork and filling out forms. This means:

- Crisis counseling-one to one
- Disability
- Alcohol and/or drug
- Help finding housing
- Welfare

❖ **Outreach Program**

The Outreach Worker position offers transportation and support in hopes of bridging women to the appropriate services. Outreach primarily works with women with health issues and any barriers to receiving service and takes referrals from health care professionals, but also advocates, counsellors, and other service providers. Outreach also assists in connecting women to resources, including harm reduction education, safe sex options and self advocacy.

❖ **Women's Outreach Worker: Cori**

She can help with offering support, information and resources. This means:

- Providing accompaniment and transportation to various agencies
- Getting information and referrals for women
- Providing emotional support



AUNT DEE'S GARDEN OF YOUR DAILY LIVING

ASK AUNT DEE

Our Aunt Dee is overflowing with good things much like a full garden...she is full of healthful ideas and information that nourish the heart, soul, body and mind. Aunt Dee has gardened for years. She believes in planting *peas* of mind, heart and soul, *squashing* gossip, indifference and grumbling, and in *thyme* for friends, family and each other. She also believes we should *turnip* for service and to help one another, and prays that each of us is able to *lettuce* be faithful, kind and patient and really there for one another.

At eighty-three years young she still leaps and bounds around the garden and can plant, weed, and water those rows with the best of them. But nowadays, she's also on another mission. She wants to offer all that she knows. Aunt Dee just shakes her head and complains, "It seems like nobody takes time to learn about the gardening of their daily life anymore."

We're delighted to share our Aunt Dee with you. She's agreed to answer any questions you might ask about the goings on of the Centre. Please submit any questions or comments you might have to the Newsletter file posted on the board near the front of the Centre. Aunt Dee is looking forward to it. This month Aunt Dee has chosen to respond to several complaints she has heard circulating throughout the Centre.

"Laundry is confusing! "

Laundry has not been available for some time now. The Centre is apologetic for this lack of service to women but is unable to provide it at this time due to cost. The machines continually break down because they are not equipped to service a Centre with a membership of 150 to 300 women a day. They are regular household machines. The Centre would like to purchase industrial machines when and if we are able. In the meantime the continual repair costs cannot be paid. Again, our apologies.

"Why are some evening groups having problems?"

It seems that as of late some women in evening groups are choosing to disregard Centre Guidelines. The same Guidelines that are in place during the day are in place during the evenings at the Centre. This means that behaviour such as verbal fighting, disruptive behaviour, harassment etc. will result in immediate barring. Many women come to the evening groups seeking support in a safe environment and are being denied that experience when these behaviours occur. It must be understood that women will be asked to leave immediately for such behaviour and will not be

welcome back for at least a month to any evening group. This is also true for women who dine and dash.

“The Asian women are taking all the free food!”

Let's clear this up. It is true that there are one or two Asian women who tried to get extra food. These women have been spoken to about one serving per woman. But it is NOT TRUE that ALL Asian women do that. This kind of stereotyping will not be tolerated in the Women's Centre.

“There are too many Asian women who come to Christmas dinners or Harvest dinners. They've never used the Centre before. Why are they coming to our dinners?”

First of all, there is a population of elderly Asian women in the Downtown Eastside. Most of them live by themselves in rooms above the grocery stores in Chinatown. A lot of them are in their seventies, eighties or even nineties! They are the elders in the Chinese community. I think we need to ask ourselves what kind of services does the Women's Centre offer to these women before we say they don't use our services. We do not have any language interpreters. The only service many of these women are able to fully participate in is the Chinese Speaking Women's Group that meets once a week for an hour. We always have enough food at the big dinners. Maybe we can try harder to understand each other and have respect for all elders.

“There is too much gossiping among volunteers about women in the Centre and about other volunteers.”

This issue has been addressed with volunteers at different Volunteer Meetings. The importance of working as a team and not “badmouthing” women has been the focus of this discussion. We try very hard to focus on giving each other basic respect, in the work we do and the people we are. At the same time, I also know that gossiping happens. I would appreciate that you come directly to Michelle, the Volunteer Coordinator and explain exactly what has happened.

“Some volunteers get all the shifts!”

I have heard that a certain couple of volunteers always seem to get shifts. To address this problem the volunteer schedule for September will be lacking blank space for volunteers to fill in their names. This is so that shifts can be scheduled in a way that is fairer to all. Any volunteers who have objections or suggestions to the September schedule can speak with Michelle, the Volunteer Coordinator. If a volunteer does not show up, the shift is up for grabs. It may seem like some volunteers always get the shifts, but the reality is sometimes they are the only ones who are around and show up for shifts regularly.

“Why do the volunteers have first dips into the donations?”

Clothing Room Volunteers can get 10 items (just like everyone else) before or after their shifts. However, volunteers are not supposed to put stuff aside for themselves. So, if it happens, you need to let Michelle, the Volunteer Coordinator, know verbally or drop a note in her folder. Volunteers work very hard to keep the Centre running daily but problems with happen along the way and we need to communicate to solve problems together.

I am open to hearing more about what you have to say about the Centre. You can drop off your questions and comments in the Newsletter folder on the front bulletin board. You can also attend the weekly Women's Voice Thursdays at 1:30 pm. Thank you for reading this.

Getting Back to Work: Are you Ready?

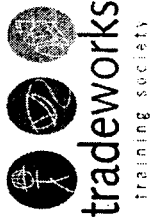
Many women who have been out of the paid work force for a while begin their journey back to employment by wondering, “Am I ready to go back to work?” This is an important decision and there are some issues to consider before you progress along this path.

“Am I ready to go back to work?” One of the first things to think about when asking yourself this question is whether the rest of your life is stable enough to allow you to focus on a job search, and to get and keep a job. First you need to make sure that your basic needs will be looked after. For example, do you have a stable place to live and secure access to food? Do you have childcare for your children? Do you have clothing for interviews and to begin work? Do you have transportation to get to and from your new job? These concerns may seem overwhelming, but they are often easily dealt with once identified. In many cases, these issues can be addressed with the help of programs such as The Job Shop, or through other agencies in the community. Many agencies can assist in your job search by providing access to these basic needs.

Another area that should be addressed before beginning a job search is your health. At The Job Shop, we often compare the job search to a roller coaster ride, with ups and downs that can sometimes be quite stressful. It is important to maintain good physical and emotional health so that you can manage this ‘ride’ more smoothly. In terms of your physical health, getting a check-up from your doctor, and making sure you have all the information you need to manage any health challenges that you have, is a good first step. It is also very important to make sure that you are in recovery from addiction to drugs or alcohol before you begin looking for work. Dealing with an addiction and working through the first few months of recovery is a difficult challenge, and one that demands all of your energy. This should be your first priority. After you have dealt with this challenge, beginning a job search and making strides forward in changing your life and your lifestyle can often be helpful in boosting your confidence, morale, and aiding in your continued recovery.

Once concerns related to basic needs and physical health have been addressed, you are well on your way to answering “Yes!” to the question “Am I ready to go back to work?” Next month’s article will explore a few more issues to consider as you continue to move forward in this journey.

Marla Simlett is a counsellor at the Job Shop, at Tradeworks Training Society. The Job Shop supports residents of the DTES in their return to work. Call for more information (604-253-9355).



NEED A CHANCE TO PROVE YOU'RE
READY, WILLING & ABLE TO WORK?

Get the **BREAK** you deserve!

Find out what your next step needs to be.
Call to attend the Job Shop Info session.

604-253-9355

Program funded by HRDC



Human Resources
Development Canada

Développement des
ressources humaines Canada

new START

13 Week Bridging Employment Program for Women

Are you on employment assistance & are you dealing with violence/abuse issues?

Self Management/ Awareness

Self esteem issues, domestic violence, appropriate assertiveness, stress management, team building, and goal setting/development and communication skills.

Career Exploration & Job Search

Employment readiness skills, job retention, future job market, resume & cover letter, 3 weeks of work experience placement, interview techniques, and active job search.

Educational Upgrading

General Education Diploma (GED Grade 12 Equivalency) exam preparation; effective reading, writing, and math skills; college counselling/planning.

Introduction to Computer Skills

Basic computer skills with an introduction to Windows 98, MS Office 97, Email and the Internet.

Certification

WCB First Aid, Self-Defence, SuperHost, FoodSafe and Serving-It-Right.

1691 East Pender Street @ Commercial Drive
Call 604.215.4344 or Fax 604.215.4340

Next session starts September 2, 2003
\$100 Monthly Transit Allowance Available!

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S CENTRE
 302 Columbia Street, Vancouver
 604.681.8480

**LUNCH SERVED
 DAILY AT 12:30-1:45**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 1:30 Beading LABOUR DAY STAT HOLIDAY CENTRE 12-5	2 2:00 Self-Care 2:30 Resumes 5-8:30 Women's Health Clinic	3 1:30 French Group 2:00 Crochet, Hairstyling, Writing Group & Raffle	4 1:30 Women's Voice	5 10:00 Sewing etc.	6 1:30 Dreamcatchers 2:00 Video
7 1:30 Library Literatecy 2:00 Hairstyling & Video	8 10:00 CWS 12:30-3 Street Nurse 1:30 Beading 2:30 Literacy 5-8 Organizer's T.	9 2:00 Self-Care 2:30 Resumes 5-8:30 Women's Health Clinic	10 1:30 French Group 2:00 Crochet, Hairstyling, Writing Group & Raffle	11 1:30 Women's Voice	12 10:00 Sewing etc.	13 1:30 Dreamcatchers 2:00 Video
14 1:30 Library Literatecy 2:00 Hairstyling & Video	15 10:00 CWS 12:30-3 Street Nurse 1:30 Beading 2:30 Literacy 5-8 Organizer's T.	16 2:00 Self-Care 2:30 Resumes 5-8:30 Women's Health Clinic	17 1:30 French Group 2:00 Crochet, Hairstyling, Writing Group & Raffle 5:00 Harm Reduction	18 1:30 Women's Voice	19 10:00 Sewing etc.	20 1:30 Dreamcatchers 2:00 Video
21 1:30 Library Literatecy 2:00 Hairstyling & Video	22 10:00 CWS 12:30-3 Nurse 1:30 Beading 2:30 Literacy 5-8 Organizer's T.	23 2:00 Self-Care 2:30 Resumes 5-8:30 Women's Health Clinic	24 1:30 French Group 2:00 Crochet, Hairstyling, Writing Group & Raffle	25 CENTRE CLOSED	26 10:00 Sewing etc.	27 1:30 Dreamcatchers 2:00 Video
28 1:30 Library Literatecy 2:00 Hairstyling & Video	29 10:00 CWS 12:30-3 Nurse 1:30 Beading 2:30 Literacy 5-8 Organizer's T.	30 2:00 Self-Care 2:30 Resumes 5-8:30 Women's Health Clinic		28	29	30

REGULAR PROGRAMMING

Chinese Women's Group (CWS) -Open to women whose first language is Chinese. The group will focus on cultural awareness, advocacy, and social events.

Creative Writing Group-Read and write poems and prose.

Hairstyling—Get a haircut or learn some new styling!

Library Literacy – Readings, crafts, literacy activities, and preparing the new library.

Literacy Workshop – Working with books, themes and word puzzles. Learn while having fun!

French Speaking Group – Open to women whose first language is French. The group will focus on advocacy and social activities.

Nutrition and Health – Eileen, the Dietician, is back to answer all your questions. Look to the daily board for days and times.

Resume Workshop – Create your own Resume with the help of Eemina.

Self-Care Drop-In – Focus on your own care and happiness for 30 minutes each week. Check out what Julie has to offer each week!

The Street Nurse, Christina, comes by every Monday sometime between 1-4pm to give you information on all kinds of health issues.

Women's Voice – Meets to give feedback about the Centre. Your opinions and ideas are needed!

ARTS & CRAFTS WORKSHOPS with materials supplied

Beading with Denny - Every Monday, 1:30 pm.

Crochet with Freeda-Every Wednesday, 2:00pm.

Fabric Arts with Freeda- Every Friday morning, 10:00am.

Dreamcatchers -Every Saturday at 1:30pm.

Expand your skills and share stories with other women.

EVENING PROGRAMMING

Organizer's Training (ELP) –Monday from 5-8pm. Learn to facilitate and organize anti-poverty rallies and develop political strategies around various poverty issues.

Battered Women Support Services- Support for women experiencing violence. Usually Tuesdays from 5-8:30pm.

Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Group –Takes place every second Wednesday from 5-8pm. Everyone welcome.

Music Jam- Sing and play instruments with special guests.

Women's Health Clinic-Ongoing—59 West Pender.

SEPTEMBER/2003 ARIES:

Something which has been lost or hidden may come to light now. Secrets, long-buried feelings and desires, or skeletons in the closet could be revealed. This is also a time when you can easily go to extremes. You become deeply involved in, and even somewhat obsessive about, whatever you are doing. Driving yourself beyond your limits can be destructive now. You are optimistic, hopeful, and forward-looking at this time. You can see connections and possibilities you may have overlooked before. Now is a time for communicating your enthusiasm, sharing your plans and dreams, and also being more receptive to others' thoughts and points of view. Contracts, negotiations, and business dealings of all kinds are favored now.

Taurus:

Impulsive purchases based on an emotional urge are not recommended at this time. You are apt to splurge on something which later on turns out not to suit you at all. The temptation to override budget or dietary limits is also quite strong, but short-lived. Imagination, fantasy, and the desire to escape the immediate environment are stimulated. Dreaminess, nostalgia, or moodiness may be hard to resist. You are fascinated by the mysterious now. Unsolved or puzzling problems and the hidden or behind the scenes aspects of a situation interest you most, and you delve and probe until you discover the truth. An interest in psychology or other peoples' secrets comes to the fore. You enjoy spy, mystery, and supernatural stories.

Gemini:

You are at cross purposes with the people in your environment who are most able to benefit you. You tend to come on too strong, to be oblivious to others' needs and intentions, or to act inappropriately now. You feel an urgency to take positive steps to achieve your goals, but be certain that you are not overstepping yourself, as this can cause considerable enmity at this time. Your physical drive and energy level are high now, and you can accomplish a great deal fairly easily. You are inclined to take the initiative or to strike out on your own, and you are likely to be successful at what you attempt at this time. Because you assert yourself in a positive manner, a leadership role or an opportunity to do something you have wanted to do on your own is likely to be offered to you.

Cancer:

You are more prone to vexation and aggravation right now, especially in traffic or in some area of your life that you are trying to get ahead in. Accidents due to trying to force a situation, ignoring safety precautions, hurrying, or anger need to be guarded against. You are apt to feel that you have no outlets or means of expressing your anger or aggressive impulses, and right now that is probably true. Standing your ground and insisting upon your rights or your position only leads to unnecessary friction and bad blood, with no clear winner or loser emerging. Either transcending or letting go of your frustration is really the only way out at this time.

Leo:

Your usual routine is likely to be disrupted now, either by "freak" accidents beyond your control or by your own impatience with the status quo. Sudden unexpected events and breaking free of confining situations and relationships are very likely. You are optimistic, hopeful, and forward-looking at this time. You can see connections and possibilities you may have overlooked before. Now is a time for communicating your enthusiasm, sharing your plans and dreams, and also being more receptive to others' thoughts and points of view. Contracts, negotiations, and business dealings of all kinds are favored now. You are in harmony with the people in your immediate environment. There is a sense of ease and of flowing with, rather than fighting against or resisting, what is going on around you. Therefore, you have more energy and more fun at this time.

Virgo:

What occurs now makes you more aware of what you need, feel, and want in your relationships. If you are unhappy in your personal life, this is brought out now, and you'll need to face what is causing your dissatisfaction. Differences in personal style, tastes, and ways of expressing affection may emerge. You also feel amorous and loving and, if your personal life is going well, this is a time to really enjoy and appreciate it. Expect last minute changes and adjustments, poor timing, or an annoying glitch in anything involving papers, contracts, appointments and meetings, or previously scheduled engagements. You may have to reword a proposal or in some other way adjust your thinking or way of communicating in order to come to an agreement. Nervous irritation and/or mental exhaustion could result.

Libra:

Your friendly concern for others and your willingness to meet people half way benefits your career, reputation, or public image at this time. This is a favorable time to socialize with people you have professional ties with since the positive feelings you generate now are likely to be an aid to you in the future. Beautifying the place where you meet the public and an increased concern about your own physical appearance are also brought out now. At this time you put extra energy into thinking about and organizing your work and professional life. Decisions you make at this time are likely to work out well, as you are clear and objective. Gathering information regarding your career or long-range goals is also favored.

Scorpio:

Your mind is serious and you are able to concentrate on work that requires patience, attention to detail, and precision. Practical concerns dominate. It is a good time to learn practical skills, do your taxes, organize your files, and take care of business. You'll want to avoid light social conversation or trivialities that distract you from your work. There is much activity; you move rapidly from one thing to another and a hectic, somewhat stressful pace is likely. Many errands, phone calls, letters which require a response, and other "busywork" is on the agenda. A minor but rather tense confrontation is likely.

Sagittarius:

Agreements, contracts, and joining your efforts with others will work out very much to your advantage now. A friend or person in authority may offer help or present an opportunity which will benefit you now or in the future. Also, you will reap rewards later for the generosity and aid you extend to others at this time. Positive feelings and inner harmony engender smooth and comfortable relations with others at this time. Your intuition or gut feelings are apt to be right on the mark. Acting on impulse, changing your usual routine, improvising and using your intuition rather than following a prescribed, logical way of doing things is called for now. The tempo of your life accelerates now. Expect a rather inconstant, unpredictable, but interesting time.

Capricorn:

Relaxation, enjoyment, and pleasure are emphasized now. This is not a time to push yourself or to be involved in activities that require intense competition or a great expenditure of energy. Cooperative, harmonious personal and professional relationships are more important to you at this time. You feel like socializing and being friendly. Communications are excellent now. You come across clearly and present yourself articulately. Public speaking, interviews, and other transactions with the public are favored. Conversations you have at this time go smoothly, and an agreement can be reached.

Aquarius:

Relationships with others are harmonious and stable now. Someone older than yourself, more experienced, or in a position of authority is likely to assist you now in the things that are important to you. Government agencies and businesses also respond positively to issues and ideas that concern you. This is a good time for any communications with authorities or persons of social prominence. You are feeling confident and the serious-mindedness and maturity of your communications is appreciated by others. You have a greater rapport with others now, especially on issues that deeply concern you. Others seem less superficial and irresponsible to you, and you feel greater respect for them. Actually, others haven't changed as much as it would appear; you are better able to communicate with others and see the more mature side of their personalities.

Pisces:

You are disinclined to stir up trouble or cause unpleasantness of any kind at the moment. Relationships are thus apt to be smooth, but this may well come at a cost to you. You may be at peace with others and at war with yourself; you may go along with something now that you will kick yourself for later. Choose your company carefully. Spending time with those you truly trust and enjoy should be no problem. Positive feelings and inner harmony engender smooth and comfortable relations with others at this time. Your intuition or gut feelings are apt to be right on the mark.

Blackout puts privatizers and deregulators on hotseat

FirstEnergy fallout may have political implications for deregulation crusaders like George Bush and Ernie Eves

FirstEnergy, the Ohio company at the centre of last week's massive power blackout, has a long record of safety, operational and financial problems. It also has close links to the Bush administration in Washington and a history of spending big on political lobbying while taking shortcuts with the public.

The company failed to report a shutdown two hours before the blackout last Thursday. The reason? It was not legally required to do so. Thus, other utilities remained blindsided when they might have taken action to prevent the biggest blackout in North American history. Now FirstEnergy is scurrying for cover and so are politicians everywhere, not only those directly connected to it, like George Bush and Dick Cheney, but those indirectly associated with the blackout by virtue of their unbridled advocacy of privatization and deregulation. In a single, dramatic stroke, the blackout switched off the power on 50 million North Americans and switched on a debate about the future of electricity and who should own and control it - government or private enterprise.

Ontario Tories vulnerable

Ontario's Tory government is especially vulnerable, after allowing the Ontario power system to deteriorate and playing politics with it all the way back to 1995, when Mike Harris was first elected. During his final months as premier in late 2001, Harris announced plans to sell Hydro One, the transmission grid that delivers electricity across Ontario. It would have been the largest privatization scheme in Canadian history.

But the Tories ran into a major problem when the courts, in a case filed by the labour movement, ruled that the province had no legal authority to sell off the utility. Ernie Eves, who succeeded Harris, tried to salvage the deal for the government's private sector friends by introducing legislation permitting the sale of 49% of the utility. But he was ultimately forced to call off the deal and Ontario's hydro crisis has continued to escalate while the government drifts, concentrating more on his own re-election plans than solving the province's urgent problems. Finally, the issue exploded last week in Eves' face, and in the face of privatization hawks everywhere - up to and including those in the U.S. White House.

\$1,044,807 in political donations

In 2002, FirstEnergy gave \$1,044,807 to political parties — 70% to Republicans and 29% to Democrats — the 10th-largest amount contributed by an energy and natural resources company and the sixth-largest amount contributed by an electric utility, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. FirstEnergy spent another \$2,259,975 on lobbying in 2002. In June, Peter Burg, the CEO of FirstEnergy, hosted a fund-raiser for Vice President Dick Cheney, raising \$600,000 for the Bush re-election campaign.

(Anthony Alexander, president of FirstEnergy, was a member of the Bush administration's transition team when George Bush moved into the White House in January 2001.)

ABC News topped its national newscast Monday night with a report that FirstEnergy, based in Akron, cut back on workers who maintain its transmission lines and that its Ohio nuclear plant was shut down last year because of serious violations, including a hole the size of a football in the top of the reactor vessel.

'Given a pass by regulators'

A petition to shut the reactor down was filed by Ohio Representative Dennis Kucinich, long a fierce critic of FirstEnergy and now a Democratic presidential candidate. "In order to protect their stock position, they've made shortcuts on maintenance. They covered it up and they were given a pass by regulators," Kucinich says. The same thing happened with the transmission lines that failed, he added. "They've got a transmission system that's long been in need of upgrading, and they haven't."

FirstEnergy owns seven subsidiary utilities in Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. It was formed in 1997 from the merger of Akron-based Ohio Edison, the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. and Toledo Edison. In 2001, it acquired General Public Utilities, which owned Pennsylvania Electric Co., Metropolitan Edison near Reading, Pa., and New Jersey Central Power and Light. The company has more than four million customers and ranks as the fourth largest privately-owned utility in the United States with annual revenues of \$12 billion.

Profit first, safety second

"The mentality of the FirstEnergy senior management [is that] they place a higher regard for profit and power production than the safety of the public," says consumer lawyer Howard Whitcomb, a former FirstEnergy senior manager and a longtime critic of the utility. FirstEnergy officials complained Monday that the blackout resulted from a "very complex situation far broader" than factors within its own facilities. But that did little to quell the rising furor. The company remained the central focus of an intensive investigation into the crisis. "... on the shores of Lake Erie, hours before the blackout, a cloud of ash and a big whooshing sound spewed out of the three chimney stacks at FirstEnergy's Eastlake coal-fired power plant as it shut down," the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported. "Why the 680-megawatt plant went off line is still not clear The ash blanketed cars, homes and picnic tables in the village of Timberlake."

One thing is certain: before the dust settles, FirstEnergy is going to have a lot of explaining to do, and so are a lot of politicians on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border.

Web posted by NUPGE (National Union of Public and General Employees): 19 August 2003

Spring

By Carol C. Cardinal

*Spring you Danced across my Sight
with your Beautiful Flowers + Fashions.

*You Danced across my Heart with Happy Expectations this Summer ahead.

*You Danced across my Warm Skin with your Cool Winds from the Ocean.

*You Danced across my Memory with Coloured Visions of Springs Past, Joy Full Springs!

*You Danced around me to Remind
me to Be Happy + to Live.

*You Leave me Glad + very Optimistic.

*You Dance across my Heart Forever.

*You Leave me Glad to Be alive.



Linda is back to work with the women of the
Downtown Eastside Poetry Group!

Every Wednesday at 2pm from
September 3 to October 8... here at the Centre.

All Women Welcome!

Record your stories!

In association with The Carnegie Theatre
Workshop and Co-op Radio*

Let your voice be heard!

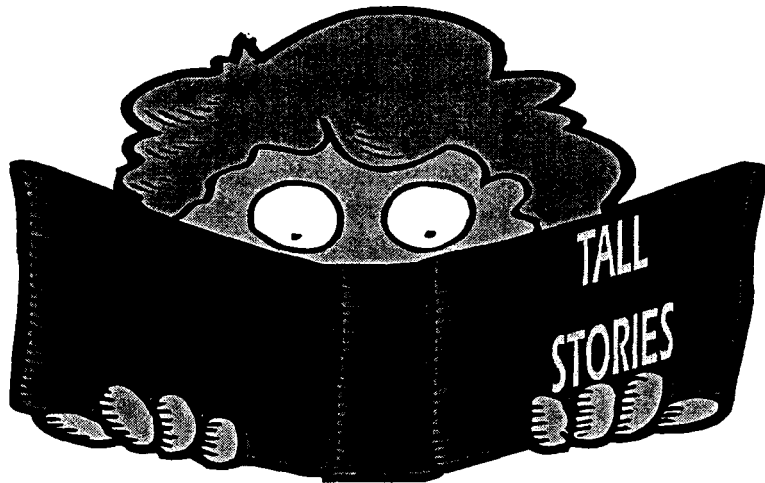
Let your voice be heard!

Tuesdays between 10:00-11:00am

Poem

Play

Short-Story



15-25 minutes in length

~May be aired on co-op radio~

Contact Erin or Katrina for further details

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of Carnegie Community Centre

*In association with Theatre In the Raw

At The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre: 604-681-8480

GETTING OFF WELFARE

So, here you are. All your life you have been self-sufficient and now you find yourself in this place. Feeling a little ashamed, perhaps? Voices whispering in your ear, "What's the matter, loser, can't you find a job?" No, not yet? Well, while you wait, let me tell you about some of the experiences that are coming your way.

Never been treated as if you were a despicable liar? This service is provided at intake and with each subsequent visit to your local Ministry office. Ask your case worker.

Never been denied basic healthcare or banking services before? This will happen automatically once your source of income identifies you as a welfare recipient. Try to remember that after the first tooth rots in your jaw, any future abscesses won't hurt nearly as much. And once you start losing teeth, you won't much want to be seen anywhere in public, let alone a bank, so the two problems tend to cancel one another out as time goes by. Be patient.

Never smelled bad because you couldn't find a place to wash? It will come. It may even begin to amuse you to offend the noses of polite company. In any event, you won't find many other sources of amusement in your price range. Remember this when passersby curse you for being lazy as you sit on the sidewalk with nowhere else to go. It will help to ease the sting.

Can't understand welfare legislation? In fact, this is not really a problem. Your case worker probably doesn't, either, and anyway, the legislation is changed so often that if you just wait a few weeks none of it will apply to you. This is the beauty of the system.

Troubled by untreated mental health problems? Don't be concerned. Poverty will weaken your ability to cope with reality so much that you eventually won't be able to grasp the seriousness of your own situation. Poor nutrition will accelerate this process.

If nothing else, remember that there is one service the BC government provides with no questions asked. If you die on the street your body will be promptly removed and cremated. Something about the idea of having decomposing bodies lying out on the street seems to prompt immediate action. You'll have finally found your way off welfare. Rest easy, old friend, your troubles are at an end.

"Submitted anonymously to *Sound*, a magazine for social justice in Kamloops BC."