

# Notes From The Underground

A FREE PUBLICATION

## TRANSGENDER AWARENESS THE TIME IS NOW

### They Are Everywhere!

By Margo Ross

That is correct, it seems that every time you turn on the TV, Radio or open a newspaper there is some mention or focus

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on the emergence of transgender people in society today. In a ongoing research review for 1998 transgender individuals, gender dysphoria and transgender issues have been included in 400 television episodes, over 300 radio shows or spots were the transgender issue or behaviour was either discussed or portrayed. This is in addition to hundreds of articles in the newspapers, magazines and text media.

True, not all of these portrayals have been accurate or positive. But, in an overall review, the vast majority of presentations, did not paint transgender individuals as weird, sick or psychiatrically deranged people. They were most often presented as some what on the fringe people who had a need to dress-up, act like or be the opposite gender to that of their biological designation. True, there is still an enormous need for increased educational awareness to be completed. However, we must pause and realize that this

increased focus is NOT just the product of the rising-up transgender community alone.

What does this pattern mean to the community as a whole? What does it mean to you as an individual transgender individual? If the experiences of the members of Gender Mosaic over the past year is an indicator and one must be cautious to make leaps of faith based on limited experiences, the truth is that for most part transgender members of GM who revealed their complete personality to others have met with support, tolerance and at the low end zero reaction. No, this is has not been the case in every situation, for there have been the targeting of our members in the media as experienced by several of our DND members.

This new reality of focus raises several key questions to the members of GM, not the least of which is how will this pattern affect my personal decisions. We the transgender community

need to decide how to encourage and continue the growing public awareness with a focus on accurate portrayals and facts. At the same time we must always be mindful of the vulnerability of each member, for it is not the right of the community to OUT another by accident or design just to advance the overall cause. But, it is important that you realize that we are truly standing on the edge of a mountain of information, growing public awareness and curiosity and there will be slides, it is for us to carefully but endlessly take advantage of this moment and achieve an unheard of level of public acceptance.

## Notes: From the Presidents

### Diningroom in Downtown

#### Hull, Quebec.

Its Winter already, the leaves have fallen from the trees, winter is here and some snow is frozen to the ground. So at this time I want to wish everybody a Happy Holiday and a New Year of piece love and compassion for all Transgender, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexuals folk. And to the strait community too.

**SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL**

Gender Mosaic was represented

this year in the AIDS march thought the streets of Ottawa Sept 27 and the team of T,L,G,B pride committee reps raised over \$1000.00 for Aids awareness and financial support. I believe that \$75000.00 in pledges were donated to the Aide Committee Of Ottawa. Thanks to those people who supported me in the march.

Transgender Tapestry issue #84 had Gender Mosaic their feature support group written by Christina C. a member of Gender Mosaic. Her full page article about Gender Mosaic (page 12) covered all of the special events that we provide in the nations capital. Lynn's transsexual support group, Michelle Renee's Transgender Law Reform Task Force for Canadians, Christina's Spiritual Circle and other weekly events going on in the Ottawa area. Thanks Christina for your informative and valued work in all that you do.

The Thanksgiving dinner was a success again and I want to thank Linda, Lynn, Catherine, Margo and Teddy for taking the time to care and helping with this huge event. I had several comments about the servers wearing black skirts and white tops and how professional we all looked. This year we served about 175 people and all the food that was left over was given to the Living Room, a

drop in centre for people living with Aids, provided by the Aids Committee of Ottawa. I got a chuckle of one old gentleman who kept going thought the line up several times with a new plate telling me it was or a sick friend, or a buddy on the street who couldn't make it, or his wife died and he had not eaten since her death. I think he had plastic lined pockets in his coat. After the dinner a ballroom dance couple had everybody on the floor teaching the Ramba, Tango, Waltz and the Fox Trot, most of us had two left feet and my partner Ashley put up with me as we danced the classics. My two left feet were wearing the right high heel shoe. All in all it was fun and the community saw Gender Mosaic again being visible and participating in Community events.

In a special note: On behalf of the members of Gender Mosaic I want to thank Michelle Renee editor of NFTU for putting out a superb news letter during her time as editor. Michelle Renee dedicated her time to finding just the right article from transgender folk, to be a part of NFTU's history and in keeping the tradition of past editors. From its conception in March 1989 Notes From The Underground is still published on a regular bases and Michelle Renee became a part of its history. We wish you success in your new challenge and your

future.

We are now transferring the editor's responsibility to Margo, Gender Mosaic's first VP. I believe that she has done this sort of thing before but not in a Transgender zeen. Welcome Margo to the list of fine editors. Your reputation and leadership is a plus in your new editors job of NFTU.

Elections are in February and if you want to run for office we will have an elections officer to take your name if you wish to run for any position on the executive.

On the last note for the year there is a few people that I want to thank personally. To Margo Ross: Margo tries her culinary cooking, and serves wonderful tasty food at the group discussion meetings. And its her appartment that has allowed people to gather and share inner thoughts, with groups like Lynn's TS support group, Christina's Healing Circle, the GM discussion group, each event is special to the people who attend.

To the executive of Gender Mosaic: Margo, Michelle Renee, Lynn and Sharon, for being there for the group. To Linda A., Chirstyn and Chase for being part of the outreach folk, sitting at info fairs and answering questions to those

that asked. To Julee for making that fantastic Gender Mosaic flag, which was unveiled at our 10th anniversary party. To the members of Gender Mosaic for allowing me to be your leader. Happy Holliday Greetings...Joanne.

## Survey Results

By Lynn Nicole Lefevre

Thank you to everyone who returned their Gender Mosaic survey over the past two months. The Executive now has a long list of ideas to consider. The following is a brief summary of the survey results.

Over 60 surveys were sent out, and 17 were returned. It quickly became clear that we need to ensure there is a presentation or discussion planned for each and every social. If a presentation is canceled for some reason, then an open discussion would be a good alternative. *"Possibly based on questions or opinions of others."*

It also became clear that the most least liked part of GM socials is politics. The best comment on this was *"When I hear that some members of the group have put their personal agenda before the interests of the group."*

Suggestions for presentation and discussion topics included: SRS,

couples support, FtM, youth issues, therapists, our rights, wigs, fashion, makeup, colours, passing, voice, self confidence, relationships, transition, health services, sexuality, spirituality, poetry and short story readings, true T experiences, employment, and more!

Comments included *"We should have members (one per social) make a presentation on themselves (sharing live experiences and learning from each other)."* and *"We should be tracking the major seminars and literature themes appearing at major gender conferences and then attempting to replicate those topics locally."*

As for GM's involvement with other groups such as Pflag, Pride, Lesbian Week and others, the response was mostly favorable - 11 Yes and 4 No.

One of the Yes responses was *"I think that in order for any one group in Ottawa or any other place for that matter, to thrive and evolve it requires help and support from other like-minded groups. No matter who established the group."*

One of the No responses was *"I believe there are many hetrosexual crossdressers who are looking for support, but do not want to be identified with the gay/lesbian community"*

Many suggestions were made on how to better promote GM. The majority focused on placing discrete ads - either in campus and GLBT publications, or in mainstream media. It was also suggested we ensure that GM literature is available at places where Transgendered people might look or call. This includes places such as Wilds, Apexx Video and the various crisis and GLBT hotlines.

The locations for the socials and discussion groups were overwhelmingly approved. The one minor concern is that the social location could get crowded if we have more than 40 people show up.

The dates for the meetings seemed to have the approval of the majority as well. Some suggestions were made that it might be better if we moved the discussion group meeting to another week (such as the 4th week of the month) and possibly another day. One suggestion was made that the discussion group be held on a weekly basis so there would be more continuity.

There was only one comment received about the meeting time for the social - that it was "*about an hour early.*"

The question on additional meetings resulted in some good responses. Most focused on a

youth group and included comments like "*Some members seem to forget what it's like to be a teenager, and may not treat the youths problems with the respect it deserves. It should be headed by at least 2 mature understanding members.*" and "*A youth group sounds like a really cool idea. It would have to have some way to take away the appearance of corrupting the morals of youth, though.*"

Additional suggestions included "*I would also like to see a beginner's workshop held, 3 or 4 times per year.*", "*Occasional dinners/evenings out in local restaurants.*" and "*How about shopping trips?*"

Everyone agreed that the existing fees are more than fair as long as GM can cover it's costs with them. There was also unanimous agreement that if someone could not afford the annual fee or any event fees that consideration should be given to waiving it. It was also clear that no strings should be attached to the sponsorships. One of the most succinct comments was "*We should not let finances stand in the way of access to support.*"

Last, but not least, are some insightful comments that were included with the survey...

*Gender Mosaic has been, is & always will be a support group for the Transgender people. It is*

*time to get back to this and never mind wanting to raise money or whatever for the Pride."*

*There was much said about the group, that wasn't all that complimentary, when GM decided not to promote or support Making Scenes due to some of the content. In the words of one of the people I talked to, it made the group look "prudish." GM is fairly well represented in the community, however when you think about it, the "Official" representation of the group, by name, isn't that great... I think that we could take great strides in moving forward the T movement if we put our minds to it. More involvement, means more exposure, means more members, means better reputation, which in turn means more members.*

*"We need more integration of the transgender community with non-transgender society. There should be an opportunity for this type of "mixing" at least once per year. A "Gender Bender's Ball" that encourages everyone, not just TG folk, to have fun with gender might be an idea. Also participation in town hall type meetings where TG folk participate in debating issues or just meeting regular folk would be a good idea. This type of experience should not be limited to the GLBT community but wide open to all with an open mind."*



Thank you once again to all those who returned the survey.

## PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE

by Anne Strang

Child of mine,  
I ask myself  
What does it mean to be a  
parent.  
An unborn heartbeat.  
A newborn's velvet skin.  
Wide-eyed toddler discoveries.  
First-day tears at school.  
Christmas plays, music concerts,  
field trips.  
Dirty socks, car pools, sleep  
overs.  
Letting go in the teen years.  
Saying good-bye for school  
away,  
And hugging at homecoming.  
Coming out and going on.  
All this we have shared, and  
share still.  
I loved the child. I love you still.  
Daughter -- the words are mine;  
the thoughts are shared by your  
Dad and I  
in harmony. Happy birthday.  
Love Mom and Dad.

**\* A SMILE CREATES  
A POSITIVE RESPONSE  
JUST WATCH WOMEN  
AS THEY MEET \***

## A Response to the Sun

**By Christina C, Director Policy  
Development Canadian Task  
Force for Transgendered Law  
Reform**

Education by the media can legitimize profitability and the attendant odour of sensationalism. I cannot fault your wish to sell newspapers, but in your front page coverage on Nov 7th of Sgt. Sylvia Durand's struggle with her transexuality, you have missed a valuable chance to educate.

Your reporting falls far short of telling the whole story and, consequently, the whole truth. The sources that you quote represent extremes on the issue of transgenderism and, although I acknowledge the opinions presented, they are misinformed. The prime source your reporter failed to consult was the transgendered community itself. As one voice in that community I would like to set the record straight on a few issues.

It is always difficult for the government to make choices on which services will be provided or not provided, and those in need must each receive fair consideration. Your point that the Department of National Defence must also address the needs of Veterans and other deserving members of the Armed Forces is well taken, and I applaud your efforts to raise awareness of these issues in the

public eye. However, Sgt. Durand's needs are not of lesser importance than those of her fellow soldiers.

Transgenderism is not a life choice. It is a naturally occurring state of mind, which a certain portion of society is forced to deal with. For some of us, that means transitioning to a gender role that does not match our biology at birth. Seeking medical help to align our bodies with our interior selves is a legitimate way of dealing with the large and intimate struggle we face in the day to day rhythms of our lives. It is an enormous challenge to honour an identity that does not easily fit the polar extremes of maleness and femaleness that society proposes. As we struggle to find a balance between our biology and our inner sense of ourselves, we often become casualties in a world that does not tolerate what it knows nothing about. Most, if not all of us, battle suicide because, too often, it seems the only option.

For Sylvia Durand, who has the courage to face her truth in the most public of ways, suicide is not an option. It is no surprise that she would want to serve her country to the best of her ability. Transgendered people have a proud history as leaders, teachers, facilitators and healers. That history is not well known and is not well communicated within a patriarchy that is more

concerned with power over individuals than with nurturing humanity. Thousands of transgendered people serve their communities in Canada and around the world, though the fear of reprisal often forces us to hide our true identities.

It is not the role of the press to poison the judgment of the public. A newspaper must be held accountable for articles that feed misconceptions which, in turn, contribute to oppression, hatred and possibly even the death of individuals. Your coverage of the issues surrounding Sgt. Durand, makes a marginal attempt to present a cross-section of views but regrettably its tone falls short of concealing the contempt of the author. Transgendered people are as deserving of respect and compassion as any other human being.

Your article falls dangerously close to a violation of the human rights of an individual and of an entire community within our society.

## CKCU Commentary Sept 19, 1998

A Queens University historian Don Akenson in his book "At Face Value" states that Canada's first female member of parliament from 1871 to 1887,

was a transvestite who posed as a man. John White, a Tory member of parliament was in fact Elizabeth McCormack White. A lesbian cross dresser who eventually married another woman and raised eight adopted children. White was born an Irish Protestant in Northern Ireland in 1832. She was big boned, broad backed and strong, bearing a strong resemblance to her brother, who was a year older. She emigrated to Canada in 1846, her brother died and she took his name and assumed his identity. Settling down near Belleville Ontario she joined the orange lodge and entered local politics. In 1871, she decided to run for Parliament and won the seat of East Hastings in Ontario, and became a loyal supporter of the Tory government of Sir John A. MacDonald. Canada's first

Prime Minister. Was John White really a woman? "The known facts of White's life fit the hypothesis, but the reality can never be known and that's just the point: in a culture where most historical records were kept by males, it is very difficult to get the true stories about women's lives."

## Transsexual Journeys

**By Lynn Nicole Lefevre**

Welcome to the Transsexual Journey. In this edition, I will be expanding on issues surrounding therapy.

As most of you know by now, in order to receive hormones, SRS, and other cosmetic surgeries, Transsexuals are required to receive approval from qualified therapists. The rules surrounding this are spelled out in the "Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders" (also known as the SOC).

This is a highly contentious issue, as many therapists are seen as power hungry gatekeepers with little or no added value. Most Transsexuals feel that they have the right to make decisions based on informed consent. Only Transsexuals know what is right for themselves, and they resent anyone who puts unnecessary roadblocks in their way.

Unfortunately, most doctors adhere to the SOC which forces Transsexuals to receive the approval of one therapist before receiving hormones and two therapists before proceeding with surgery. This means in addition to dealing with all the issues of being Transsexual, one also has to find some qualified, understanding, caring and knowledgeable therapists to approve the decisions we make.

On a more positive side, a good therapist can help you understand what path you need to take, and guide you along it. The key is finding a therapist who is knowledgeable about Gender Identity issues who you can feel comfortable working with. Remember, if you are not comfortable dealing with the therapist you are seeing, then find another one.

So how do you find a good therapist? The best place to start is with a local support group and their members. Many will have a list of recommended therapists, and group members will likely have personal experience dealing with them. Ask them what their experiences have been and how the therapist has dealt with various issues.

Once you have a list of potential therapists, it's time to make an appointment with one. The initial meeting should be used to determine if you are comfortable dealing with the therapist, their support staff, and the office setting. In other words, is this someone you will be able to divulge your innermost feelings to, and do you feel confident that they understand your needs and can help you along the path you choose.

Some questions you should ask a therapist at the initial meeting include:

- Are they licensed?
- What training and degrees to

they have?

- What experience to they have dealing with Transgendered people.
- Do they know the difference between Transsexuals and Cross Dressers, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity?
- Do they follow the Standards of Care? If so, how closely?
- How may Transsexual clients have they helped, and how many have made it through to SRS.
- What is the minimum time/number of visits before they would be comfortable writing recommendations for hormones? For SRS?
- If they are not covered by a health plan, how much do they charge?
- Do they require psychological testing? If so, approximately how much will it cost?
- Do they know the local support groups?
- Do they know local Endocrinologists, Electrologists, Voice Therapists, etc.?
- What do they do to keep up-to-date in issues surrounding treatment of Transgendered people? Do they read information on the internet, attend conferences or seminars, or interact with other Gender Specialists?

In the end, only you will know if the therapist is the right one for you. It may take some time

before you are completely comfortable dealing with them, so be patient. Also remember, if you end up with someone who tries to "cure" you, RUN away from them as fast as you can!

This article is the third in a series that will be exploring the Transsexual Journey. If you have any topics you would like to see covered in future columns, please feel free to email me at [lynnlefevre@geocities.com](mailto:lynnlefevre@geocities.com) or write to me at Gender Mosaic's

address. For those who are looking for additional resources, visit my web site at: <http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/5735/>.

## U p C o m i n g Events

- GM Monthly Meeting January 1999
- General Meeting and Election of Board of Directors in February 1999
- GM Support and discussion Group second Wednesday of each month at Margo's
- TS Support and discussion Group contact Lynn Nicole Lefevre
- Partners Support and discussion Group contact Louise

- Healing Circle see Christina
- CKCU 93.1 FM on the 3rd Wednesday of the month" The Transgender Edition - Voices out of the closet" 6:30 pm
- CHUO 89.1 FM 1st Monday of the month dialogue about transgender issues- "Definitely not straight radio" 6- 7 pm

## Local Gm Experiences

- \* They said it can be achieved but not yet, Not so to date three GM members are working full time in the designated gender identity;
- \* When you need to renew you OHIP coverage you do not have to revert back to your designated birth gender, it is possible to get service and a new card while presenting in your accurate gender identity although OHIP may not change the M/F identification;
- \* Transgender women have been identified by Woman's Place as potential members who have been historically discriminated against by both men and women. If you chose to join remember that the

acceptance process is a fragile one which requires mutual respect.

**THIS IS YOUR SPOT TO SHARE HOW THE WORLD TREATED YOU, WHAT WENT RIGHT AND NOT SO RIGHT - SO GET YOUR EXPERIENCES TO ME!**

## Next Edition February 1999

A Special Focus on Disclosures

Here is your chance to share your reasons for disclosing, who you chose and why and pause to look at why the disclosure process is significant within the Transgender community. Get you experiences and thoughts on this topic to me for the next newsletter.

## Triple Echo

**Editor Teddy Michaels  
Box 163 478 Rideau St,  
Ottawa, ON, K1N 5Z4**

This first edition publication is now available and it provides one more opportunity to increase your knowledge of transgender issues while also moving outside safety of the Gender Mosaic format. Like all first editions it deserves a look and initial support for it is

all too easy to say there is nothing out there for us it is much harder to fill that void.

## Executive Committee

President: Joanne Law  
First VP: Margo Ross  
Second VP: Michelle Renee  
Secretary: Lynn Nicole Lefevre  
Treasury: Sharon

## Gender Mosaic

P.O. Box 7421 Vanier,  
Ontario, K1L 8E4  
770 - 1945  
Email [gender\\_mosaic@geocities.co](mailto:gender_mosaic@geocities.co)

Gender Mosaic would like to thank all of the people who participated in public speaking opportunities, radio presentations, co-facilitated groups and assisted our current and potential members as the increased their comfort as transgender people and their partners.

## SAFE PHONE NUMBERS TO CALL IN AN EMERGENCY

**Sexual Health Centre -**  
613-234-4641  
**Distress Centre Of Ottawa**  
613-238-3311  
**Ottawa Carleton Police**  
613-230-6211



**Victim Crisis Unit**

613-236-1222 x 5367

**Hate Crime Unit**

613-236-1222 x 5867

**Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre**

613-562-2333

**HIV Testing Ottawa Carleton**

613-563-2437

**HIV Testing Outaouais**

1-800-463-6066

**Sexual Assault Support**

613-234-2266

**Gay Line**

613-238-1717

**Youth Services Shelter**

613-789-8220

**Women's Emergency Shelter**

613-237-4669

**AIDS Sexual Health Info**

613-563-2437

**Monthly Meetings Topics**

- January GLB Round Table Discussion
- February General Meeting & Elections
- March Make-Up and Colours
- April ideas drawn from the survey and your input

**IN MEMORY**

A dear friend which I have known for almost 10 years passed away. Diana Coltridge died January 2 1999. at the age of 29. She joined Gender Mosaic in its

early years and took an interest, and became a visible transgender voice. Diana held several executive positions as Vice President, Treasure and Secretary in the early years. She became involved with the Arts community as an talented and accomplished water colour artist having several public viewings of her paintings. She became involved with the Pride Committee in the early 90s. Diana also took an interest in the Aids Community of Ottawa and became a caring worker in the fight against Aids. She was a friend to those that met her and I was honoured to be one of her friends. Diana was the kind of lady that you could not forget, her long legs, size 12 body, powerful stride and 4" pumps were a common sight, walking through the Rideau Centre and down Elgin Street, to the Arts Council in the Byward market area of Ottawa. Diana you will be missed dearly by your family and friends.

Rest In Peace

