

To begin we would like to express our gratitude to the women of *Canadian Woman Studies* for giving us the opportunity to share who we are. In particular we wish to express our gratefulness to two of these women — Liz Brady, Managing Editor, and Fran Beer, Board member and Book Review Editor.

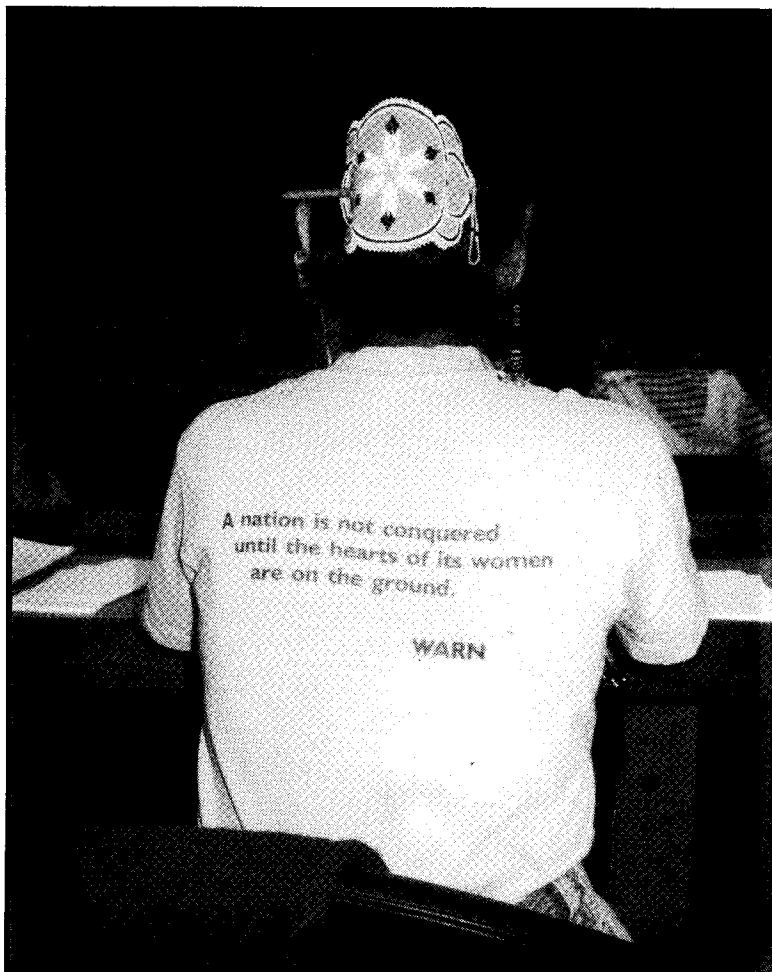
We cannot express all that these two wonderful women meant to our process. Our collective interaction left us all touched and changed by the experience. To Liz and Fran we express our heartfelt gratitude and offer our prayers for peace in all your relations.

What follows is Indian, Inuit and Metis women sharing who we are. It is representative of the diversity found amongst us. In the journal we look to the past, present and future and in all directions around us.

You will be exposed to those directions we follow. There are those common amongst us: east, south, west and north.

There are additionally directions of the sky-world, Mother Earth and the direction found within.

When we were first approached to participate in an issue on Native women, there were mixed reactions. We were excited and yet suspicious, at the same time. There was acknowledgement that this was a good vehicle to permit us to represent Native women in a good way. We did not get too concerned with labels — Native, Aboriginal, First Nation, Metis. We thought we must somehow communicate that it is necessary that Native women be listened to with a different ear. We do not want to be judged in the context of non-Native values and institutions.



What follows are our own perspectives of ourselves. The editorial collective set out to cast a wide net, inviting aboriginal women from all directions to participate. In doing so we advance the “real Indian, Inuit and Metis.” There is no one single or predominant type, group, national identity amongst us. In preparing this issue we learned to blend our experiences and perspectives.

An integrated approach resulted. The four parts of our individual self — physical, mental, emotional and spiritual — are often spoken of. We are looking for balance and harmony. These are often represented by the many circles in our work. Our recognition of how cyclical our life is.

The editorial collective shared other common directions amongst us as well. We had a common vision, to produce an issue of *CWS* by and about Native women. We had knowledge through our own teachings, life experiences and contacts. We truly did want to be honest and share those things

which are our own. We required the strength and will, self-determination and gratitude to be able to do it.

Like our contributors, we came from all walks of life — we are daughter, sister, auntie, mother, grandmother, friend and relative. We exist at the good will of the natural world and of the Great Mystery.

We are reclaiming our pride and traditions. We are asking for opportunities to practice our culture. To transmit the braiding of our past, present and future into terms others can understand and respect.

As we begin to raise ourselves up we look to life without alcohol, drugs, where families are strong and well-grounded. A life where everyone has a place in the circle.

