

lowed by the founding of National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC).

Everywhere in Canada women were agitating for changes in the laws and for policies that recognized women's contributions. The Murdock case in Manitoba, in which a female farmer lost her rights to her farm, galvanized women in Manitoba and every other province to fight for marriage rights, pension rights and employment rights.

The important leadership roles played by June Menzies, Flora Macdonald, Kay Sigurjonsson, Madeleine Parent and Laurell Richie are well documented here. They have their say and tell fascinating stories about how women, young and old, middle class and working class, came together to form NAC in 1972.

Before this, the 1970 Abortion Caravan was the first national action for the Women's movement in Canada. Women from the east, west, and centre traveled to Ottawa to protest the 1969 abortion law. At that time, a botched abortion was the number one reason for emergency hospital admissions in Canada. Under the 1969 law, a woman needed a letter from a psychiatrist get a legal abortion. Three hundred women and men marched on Parliament and garnered a lot of press attention for the issue. Rebick interviews a number of women who were a part of the Abortion Caravan and they describe the internal organization of the group and its actions, including an eventual meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau.

The women's movement in Quebec took a different route. The Quebec government legalized abortion, in response to pressure from women, in 1976, 12 years before the rest of Canada. French feminism influenced Quebec feminism just as American feminism influenced English Canadian feminism. Interviews with Ghislaine Patry-Brisson, Monique Simard, Michele Stanton-Jean and Francine Pelletier give a rich flavour of the uniqueness of Quebec femi-

nism with its mix of union women, academics and activists.

Child care was a central demand from the beginning of the women's movement. Toronto women started co-operative child care centres and Rebick interviews the idealistic founders. One of these daycare centres, the Devonshire, lasted 30 years. In 1982 a national day care conference took place in Winnipeg, organized by day care activists, calling for a universally-accessible daycare policy. From this came the basis for the Canadian Daycare Advocacy Association.

Violence against women was still hidden in 1970, but by 1975, the silence had been broken as women empowered themselves to be more honest. Women's centres, rape crisis and women's transition houses brought the shameful subject into the open. Rebick interviews feminist activists across the country, who were instrumental in opening the first rape crisis centres. Across ideological lines, women in Toronto organized the first International Women's Day Coalition in 1977-78.

Labour and professional organizations worked on behalf of women. Union feminists themselves warrant a chapter on their own and rightfully so, with riveting interviews with organizers. Rebick also documents the painful situation for lesbians in Canada before they joined together to demand their human rights. The role of aboriginal women in Canada's women's movement is given its due. Women of colour rate a chapter as do women and constitutional rights. The Morgenthaler clinics and the pornography wars are well documented, as is NAC and issues relating to pay equity and disabled women.

Rebick concludes with a look at feminism in the 1990s and beyond, including the backlash. Appropriately she ends with a chapter on fighting poverty and violence. In an epilogue, Rebick examines the new global feminism. This book belongs in every Canadian library, whether high school, college or university, as

an important part of our history, witnessed by those who lived it.

*Sherrill Cheda is a second wave feminist and a retired librarian who loves literature.*

## **UNDERSTANDING ABUSE: PARTNERING FOR CHANGE**

Mary Lou Stirling, Catherine Ann Camerson, Nancy Nason-Clark and Baukje Miedema  
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004

### **REVIEWED BY LENORA SLEEP**

This book provides an overview of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Research, one of five regional, collaborative community-based research centres across Canada that first received funding from the federal government in 1990 following in the wake of the Montreal Massacre and the resulting public outcry. The book begins with the origin of the Centre, its evolution, and then describes the different models of collaboration and the rewards of facilitating and fostering research teams. The remaining chapters highlight several of the research teams, their unique structure and research initiatives, all of which focus on the issue of family violence and take place within Atlantic Canada.

This book provides valuable statistics and a wealth of information on family violence in the context of the military culture, transition houses, the law, the work-place and faith communities. It also examines the complexities surrounding the life experiences of immigrant women, women residing on farms and abused rural women. The book ad-

dresses the topic of creating peaceful learning environments while specifically emphasizing the youth population and the role of community stake-holders and schools within this context.

*Understanding Abuse* clearly depicts the tensions and endless possibilities associated with partnerships in the broadest sense, and more particularly with collaboration among the social service sector and academia. It provides a great depth of information about the everyday nuances of collaborative work. The reflections and evaluation summaries shared are particularly noteworthy, especially for communities and academic institutions that may want to embark on similar partnerships.

Most often, academic research on family violence focuses on the compilation of information about the issue within the broader social context. This book illustrates the power of collaborative action research, which moves beyond simply the building of knowledge, to using information to develop and implement strategies to bring about social change. Over and over again it emphasizes that this approach is only made possible with the participation of women who have been impacted by abuse and the community partners who serve them.

The majority of Canadian studies on family violence take place within an urban context. The findings associated with urban research are simply not sufficient when determining and responding to the needs of women living within rural communities. This book is a much needed resource because it offers sound research and insights into the unique challenges faced by abused women residing in rural communities within Atlantic Canada.

Despite the fact that each chapter is based on academic-based research, the writing style and content selection allows the information to be accessible to a general audience. Each chapter is introduced with a poem, which is an excellent way to link the

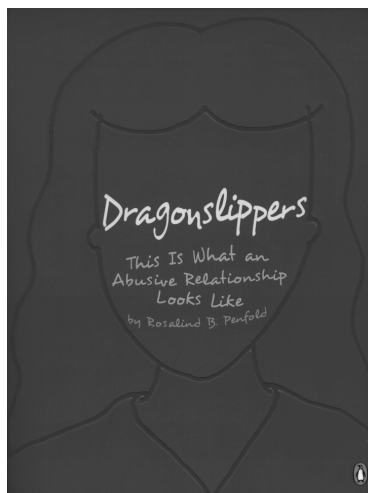
research areas with the real life experiences.

Overall, in a very inspiring and esthetically pleasing manner, this book successfully demonstrates the impact that a shared vision and commitment can have on eradicating violence in communities.

## **DRAGONSLIPPERS: THIS IS WHAT AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP LOOKS LIKE**

Rosalind B. Penfold  
Toronto: Penguin Group, 2005

**REVIEWED BY VESNA ILJIC**



*Dragonslippers* is a graphic memoir of an abusive relationship. The narrator, “Roz,” a successful and independent business woman, guides us through the romantic beginnings of her relationship with “Brian,” a wealthy widower with four children. Roz is (literally) swept off her feet by his overwhelming attention. Brian’s disregard or intentional erosion of Roz’s boundaries by intrusive, premature intimacy has a quality of discomfort, but also excitement and thrill for the woman.

We usually let our boundaries down when we know and trust someone. Such acts bring psychological

closeness. With violation of personal boundaries a false sense of intimacy is achieved. Adrenalin-producing energy, infusing these early and later surprise transactions, has an addictive quality and is a marker in establishing psychological dependency. The stage is set for Roz’s emotional descent. What follows are the escalating incidences of Brian’s infidelity and cruelty towards Roz, children and a family pet. Roz attempts to leave, but always returns, persuaded by Brian’s profession of love and promise of change.

Overwhelmed and at loss for words or explanations, she takes the snapshots of these bewildering events by drawing what has happened. With that, she establishes an objective witness to her experience. Years later she reviews the hidden collection of her drawings. Seeing the whole volume of abusive content of her relationship with Brian leads Roz to understand the magnitude of the abuse, giving her the strength to seek counseling and to break her dependency.

The main contribution of *Dragonslippers* to the literature on woman abuse and domestic violence is in telling the story in pictorial manner. *Dragonslippers* illustrates the progression of the abuse in a relationship, highlighting the actions of the abuser and the effects of the abuse on the partner. Most abused women complain about memory and concentration problems, wishing there would be a way to document, to witness the abusive events, to help them recall and make sense of what happened. Out of disbelief and self-preservation they start to forget, dissociate, repress, normalize, rationalize and self blame.

*Dragonslippers* provides us with much needed visual testimony that has direct emotional impact on the reader. It documents the elusive process of seduction, abuse and depletion of woman’s independent faculties. Visual representations of the abusive episodes, accompanied by crude verbalizations, produce close simu-