

An article in the latest journal of the Canadian Human Rights Foundation newsletter, *Speaking About Rights*, highlights our project, and we have been asked to participate in a summer school on the Culture of Peace at the Peace Research Institute in Dundas, Ontario in July of this year. We have also been networking with Science for Peace's new working group on warring communities and assisted at VOW's training session on Women, Peace and Human Rights in January 2000.

### The challenges of our work

We continue to face many organizational challenges, including a lack of money, resource, and infrastructure. We are also constrained by the fact that Somalia has been shifted off the international agenda since the end of the Cold War. The lack of a central government means that Somalia has no postal service, a fact that makes communications difficult and expensive. The ongoing hostilities in parts of Somalia have also proved an obstacle to organizing. There are vested interests, both in Somalia and in the diaspora, in continuing the war. In the official peace processes, priority is still given to the warlords since they are seen to hold the power. The war has divided people, leading to lack of trust, and even in the diaspora this makes organizing for peace a challenge.

### Moving forward

We have resolved to bring these conflicts to the surface and learn from them, using them as a way to advance our initiative. Without neglecting our differences, we are trying to work in a way that focuses on our commonalities and our priorities. In particular, we want this project to continue to participate in international efforts by women in war-torn areas to bring about peace and harmony among their people. While we recognize that much remains to be done, it is clear from their support of the VSWP project that we are a voice for Somali women and give force to their statement that "enough is enough!"

*Anne Adelson, Amina Sharif Hassan, and Safia Jowhar, members of the group Voice of Women, co-ordinated the project, Voice of Somali Women for Peace, Reconciliation and Political Rights.*

<sup>1</sup>Even the name of the country is contentious. When we use the name "Somalia," we refer as well to Somaliland and Puntland. We use the term "Somali women" as an inclusive one.

<sup>2</sup>A report of the conference can be obtained from Voice of Women, 761 Queen Street W., Suite 203, Toronto, Ont. M6J 1G1, tel. (416) 603-7915, fax (416) 603-7916, e-mail: vow@interlog.com

<sup>3</sup>Voice of Women celebrates its fortieth anniversary in 2000.

### References:

- E-mail correspondence to from UAE, 3 February 2000.  
 "More than 5,000 Ethiopian troops seen passing through Somalia." CNN interactive news, July 15, 1999. Online: <http://cnn.com>.  
 "UN report warns of potential for 'starvation on a large scale'." Somalia: *IRIN News Briefs* 10 August 1999.  
 "Women Power." Private email correspondence from Somalia. January 3, 2000.

## ELISAVIETTA RITCHIE

### Sand Hill

—for Elizabeth Ann Ritchie

"If you get on top of the hill  
 you'll never die," says the child  
 patting sand, damp from a week of rain.  
 "You have to be able to touch the peak."

Around it she builds a wall too high  
 for wingless insects to cross,  
 they keep tumbling back in her moat.  
 She crowns the crest with a feather.

The sun, hidden by fog curling over the shore,  
 enfolding wavering figures in scrim,  
 still pours onto our heads.  
 Observing death waft in quietly,

harming no one yet, I know: in climbing  
 this particular alp I'd only smash  
 the mound to infinite grains of sand,  
 myself to finite splinters of bone.

When we leave the beach  
 all that's left are footprints,  
 finger trails, traces of moat,  
 rays of recalcitrant light.

*This poem was first published by the Potomac Review and later added to the author's collection, The Arc of the Storm (Signal Books, 1998). Reprinted with permission.*

*Elisavietta Ritchie's books include In Haste I Write You This Note: Stories & Half-Stories; Flying Time: Stories & Half-Stories; The Arc of the Storm; Elegy for the Other Woman: New & Selected Terribly Female Poems; Raking the Snow; Tightening the Circle Over Eel Country; and In the Folds of Abandoned Clothes: Thrift Shop Poems.*