



# The Circle

Women's Centre for Spirituality, Activism and the Earth  
at Brescia University College

Fall 2011

Volume XXI Issue 1

## Dancing on a Shifting Landscape

When we first began to explore and then articulate The Circle's theme for this academic year - *Dancing on a Shifting Landscape* - we had no idea how thoroughly we would be reflecting the current energy that is pervading the planet. From the physical to the metaphysical, our world is shifting in profound ways. From the global climate crisis to the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and other countries in the Middle East, to the second crash of the global economy (to name a few), the world is tilting onto a new axis. For many, this is an exciting, frightening and unpredictable time. While some of the changes are undoubtedly good, many shifts are in a state of liminality or flux, and we are not sure of which way things will go.

So how do we navigate ourselves on a landscape that seems to be changing so quickly that our intellectual, spiritual and physical compass is thrown out of whack? How do we ground ourselves on one hand, while finding sufficient balance to dance while the earth moves under our feet?

For our editorial circle, we naturally felt that feminist spirituality can be a beacon or guiding light to help us navigate through the murkiness of our current time, a time that eco-philosopher Joanna Macy has termed "the Great Turning." In our opinion, the global exclusion of women from the political, spiritual, economic and social systems that have governed our world over the last couple of millennia has been the most powerful contributor to all current global crises. Whether the issue is global warming, social inequality, corrupt economic systems or spiritualities of dominance and submission, the oppression and omission of women is integral to each one.

So how is it that feminist spirituality can address such a diversity of issues, many of which are outside of the realm of the sacred? In the words of Katherine Zappone, it is because "feminist spirituality may be simply defined as the praxis [or practice] of imagining a whole world. Such praxis depends on the lived experience of mutually supportive relations between self, others, God and nature." Therefore, because its very nature is so broad-based, engaging both the personal and the political, the numinous and the actual, feminist spirituality has the capacity

recalibrate our systems in order to mitigate the myriad shifts that are occurring simultaneously in our world. To achieve the wholeness to which Zappone refers, must begin first and foremost with the inclusion of women in all aspects of discourse and decision-making.

The very act of honouring women—our bodies, our wisdom and our actions—and resituating ourselves within the centre of these crises has the potential to be the most powerful act of rebalancing in a world that had been knocked off kilter. This power comes from the fact that feminist spirituality demands a full re-imagining and transformation of our human systems rather than a simple

"add women and stir" type of solution. Therefore, women must be wary and vigilant of how we resituate ourselves within dynamics of power. There can be a manipulation of women's empowerment within today's society, where it is frequently portrayed as being able to do what a man can do. But why would we strive for that when we often view the actions of the few select, elite men that dominate



the world and our systems as corrupt, violent, unfair and greedy? Women's empowerment is about being able to engage our own wisdom and undertake our own determined actions and do so freely.

This is the essence of "dancing on a shifting landscape." Our first inclination was to theme the year simply "shifting landscapes;" however, it did not invoke our belief in women's potential to thrive through change, nor signal our power to shift, adapt and create for the betterment of all humanity. So the next time it feels like the world is moving under your feet, sway with the rhythm and begin to dance.





# Down to Earth

## Stories and tips for inspiring action:

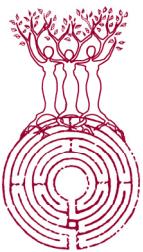
🌱 **O'Sheas, Oh Yeah!** We are happy to share that the O'Sheas Farmer's Market has returned to Brescia for another year. Feel free to pop into the library foyer in the Mother St. James Building for some

delicious homemade bread and pies, in season/local fruits and vegetables, cheese, pickles and much more! The dates they will be on campus are **Tuesday: 11 & 25 October, 8 & 22 November and 6 December.** For more info on O'Sheas: [www.osheasfarmfresh.com](http://www.osheasfarmfresh.com)

🌱 **Time to Howl!** The Alberta tar sands have claimed another victim—the Canadian wolf. The Raincoast Conservation Foundation recently expressed their “appal” at the federal government's proposed solution to curb the drastic decline of woodland caribou in northern Alberta through the slaughter of thousands of wolves. Over the last several years, caribou habitat has been steadily eroded due to the expansion of the tar sands and other industrial development in the region, which has altered the landscape to the extent that it can no longer support the herds. “Clearly, the caribou recovery strategy is not based on ecological principles or available science. Rather, it represents an ideology on the part of advocates for industrial exploitation of our environment, which subsumes all other principles to economic growth, always at the expense of ecological integrity” writes Paul Paquet in an op-ed piece in the UK's *Guardian* newspaper. And although Environment Minister Peter Kent expressed that it “troubles” him that this is what our government deems necessary to solve the problem, he had the gall to suggest that “First Nations in the area may be able to salvage a little something from the cull by selling wolf fur” ([winnipegfreepress.com](http://winnipegfreepress.com)). This federal recovery plan is currently in draft form and

undergoing a 60 day comment period, so please call your MP and howl that using wolves as the scapegoat for poor environmental policy and industrial greed is not acceptable.

🌱 **The Buzz on CETA:** The Destruction of the Sweet Commons...Canada's public services seem such a natural part of Canadian existence that we forget the tireless effort it took our predecessors to construct them so that we could drink in their sweet nourishment. But all is in jeopardy now with a free trade agreement called CETA: the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union (EU). Although it is pending finalization, thus far, nothing has been communicated to Canadians—the details or the dangers. “The close to \$200 billion that Canadians spend annually on provincial and municipal programs, schools, hospitals, parks, security, water delivery and public services, is all up for grabs in this deal,” says Maude Barlow, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians. CETA threatens buy-local policies and positions international corporations at the top of the bidding. It allows corporations to challenge our environmental and social policies when they interfere with trade and fine municipalities for anything that slows the flow of trade. Not bound by court or country, international trade law, once established, is extremely difficult to repeal. What could be more sacred than quality of life for our families and future generations? With CETA, the hives of the Canadian Commons have never been more threatened. Women, it's time to make some buzz! Get educated! Visit [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca) and [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org) Get active and tell municipal and provincial government that you want your community exempt from CETA! Act now, time is running out!



## Our Red Tent Ritual: Celebrating Maiden, Mother & Crone

-written by SophiaHeath on behalf of the Red Tent Circle

The Red Tent Ritual at The Circle, inspired by the Anita Diamant book of the same name, is a late spring gathering for women of all ages. Over the past 4 years we have celebrated the many ways womanhood lives within us and each other. In song and in dance, in story and in remembering, in healing and in joy we honour Maiden, Mother and Crone in us all. We honour our matrilineage, naming the mothers and grandmothers whose names we know, and then the daughters and granddaughters who carry our

stories forward. We dance the labyrinth alongside women heavy in pregnancy one year and carrying their babes the next. Young women connect with elders; grandmothers bring granddaughters to create community through our womanhood and each other.

We are excited that this year we look towards the fulfillment of a long held dream; events to honour each stage of Womanhood. Look for announcements to come where you can join us to celebrate your inner Maiden, another focusing on the Mother within, one for our wise Crone self. Remembering the words of the chant, “Maiden, Mother, Crone in me/All Three in harmony!”, we recognise that these life stages are not only a specific time-of-life but also gives us access to an inner power awaiting our call.



## Noteworthy

- ♫ Have you had the chance to visit **The Circle's new website** that also includes links to our Facebook page, Twitter, Flickr photo-sharing and blog? Stay up to date on our many events and programs, along with other news related to women, spirituality, activism and the earth by surfing to [www.thecircle.ca](http://www.thecircle.ca).
- ♫ The passing of **Jack Layton** was a tragic loss for all Canadians. For women, we lost a voice of and champion for gender equality within parliament. Did you know that Mr. Layton was the co-founder of the White Ribbon Campaign (an org. of men working to end violence against women) in 1991? He felt men "needed to step up [their] efforts in promoting gender equality, and be accountable to challenging the most harmful aspects of masculinity" ([whiteribbon.ca](http://whiteribbon.ca)). In its first year, when the initiative was close to failing due to financial struggles, his solution was to *offer his own home as collateral* on a loan so they could have the funds to move forward with their efforts. The White Ribbon Campaign is a part of the incredible legacy he leaves behind as it has now expanded to 60 countries and is the world's largest effort of men and boys to end gender violence.
- ♫ **Brescia** recently completed a \$31.1 million financing arrangement/loan with Scotiabank to fund the construction of a 300 bed residence and state-of-the-art dining pavilion on campus. Ground will break



## On Our Shelves...

### Miss REPRESENTATION

Documentary (2011)

Writer/Director/Producer: Jennifer Siebel Newsom and featuring Gloria Steinem, Katie Couric, Jane Fonda, Margaret Cho, Geena Davis, Rachel Maddow, Condaleeza Rice, Nancy Pelosi and more!

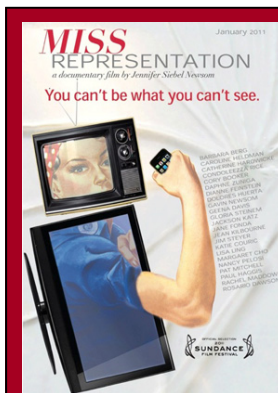
In this provocative, new documentary Jennifer Siebel Newsom highlights the direct impact of the narrow, ancillary and objectified depiction of women in the media and pop culture on influencing women and girls' view of themselves as leaders. With the ubiquity of today's media, women and girls are bombarded with images and portrayals depicting them as not good enough—whether that be in roles of power, in their appearance and in their ability to lead. At the same time, women are often represented within roles that are secondary or subservient to men. This documentary powerfully deconstructs the business of the media and the feelings of inadequacy it can create, especially among young women.

*Miss Representation* includes an impressive roster of women in the media and in politics who share their experiences of life within their professional realms, blending them with footage from everyday teenagers and their struggle to feel valued for more than their body. It also seeks to highlight the importance of women

next spring for a planned occupancy of September 2013. Brescia continues to build upon (pun intended) the rich legacy of environmental stewardship created by the Ursulines by weaving in the latest in eco-technology, green design and sustainability. The dining pavilion, which Brescia hopes will also draw members of our wider community and neighbourhood, will feature a marché-style food service with fresh, nutritious, made-to-order meals that can be eaten in front of a wall of windows overlooking London.

- ♫ We are proud to share that Brescia alumna, **Dr. Margret Chan**, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) has once again been included in the Forbes list of the World's 100 Most Powerful Women.
- ♫ In their "**Global Women's Progress Report**," *Newsweek* evaluated the world's 165 countries to determine and rank "The Best Places to Be a Woman." They looked at five areas that affect women's lives—justice, health, education, economics and politics. Canada ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the world (behind Iceland and Sweden)! We scored top marks (in the 90s out of a potential grade of 100) in the first four categories, however scored dismally low in the politics section (i.e. the proportion or share of women in government) scoring only a 66.9. For more info: [www.thedailybeast.com](http://www.thedailybeast.com)

telling our own stories and in determining our own representations—whether that be in visual media or politically. When *Miss Representation* opened the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year it created a huge buzz and is now being experienced as a "call to action," with screenings, conferences and related events across North America—including here at Brescia!



Join us for a screening of  
**Miss Representation**  
**Tuesday 18 October**  
**@ Noon**

Brescia Auditorium,  
Free Admission & Parking  
A Sophia Series Event  
sponsored by iWIL &  
in celebration of Person's Day



# Upcoming Events at The Circle...



## Open Circle

...ritual, spirituality, activism & the mystical experience of women gathered to reflect on the sacred in our lives.  
Last Wednesday of the month, Merici Lounge, Brescia, 7:30 p.m. Members: free, Non-members: \$2. **All Women Welcome!**

**28 September Dancing on a Shifting Landscape** – Exploring The Circle's theme for 2011-2012 through ritual and discussion. Facilitated by Kim Young Milani

**26 October Ancestor Ritual** —Exploring and harvesting the gifts of our ancestors as we journey back in time, returning to the present with an intuition of their wisdom and experiences. Facilitated by Lorenna Bousquet-Kacera

**Feelings & Fibres—Creative Knitting Workshop Series**  
with Fibre Artist Ardath Finnbogason-Hill  
**Every Other Thursday beginning 13 October 2011**  
(13 & 27 Oct., 10 & 24 Nov.), 6:45 pm- 8:45 pm  
Held in The Circle Women's Centre at Brescia  
Circle members: \$85.00, Non-members: \$95.00

### Miss Representation

In celebration of Person's Day,  
The Sophia Series & iWIL present  
a screening of this provocative, new documentary:

**Tuesday 18 October, 12 Noon**

Brescia Auditorium, Free Parking & Admission

Info: [www.iwil.ca](http://www.iwil.ca) or 519-432-8353 ext. 28385

*Featuring Gloria Steinem, Katie Couric, Jane Fonda,  
Margaret Cho, Geena Davis, Rachel Maddow, Condaleeza  
Rice, Nancy Pelosi and more!*

**The Art of Developing Our Stories Evening Workshop**  
with Louise Fagan

**Tuesday 18 October & Tuesday 25 October**

7:00 pm - 9:30 pm

Held in The Circle Women's Centre at Brescia

Cost: Circle Members - \$90.00, Non-member - \$100

Class size limited to 8 people

**The Four Powers: To Know, To Will, To Dare, To  
Choose Silence - a One-Day Workshop**

Facilitated by SophiaHeath Wodin

**Saturday 29 October, 10:00 am—3:00 pm**

Members \$60.00, Non-members \$70.00, Brown Bag Lunch

**Signs Out of Time: Discussions on the**

**Sacred Feminine - Evening Series**

Facilitated by Wendy Valhoff

**Every Tuesday in November (1, 8, 15, 22 & 29)**

Room 202, Brescia University College

\$5.00 per evening or attend the series for \$20.00

### MORE Than a Book Sale

Books, Art, Craft, Farmer's Market, Live Music & more!

**Saturday 26 November, 10am—3pm**

Brescia Auditorium, Free Parking

**Books to donate? Give us a call for arrangements**

### Ritual of Re-Membering

Commemorating the Montreal massacre  
and all victims of gender violence.

**Tuesday 6 December, Noon**

Brescia Auditorium, Free Parking

**Visit [www.thecircle.ca](http://www.thecircle.ca) for full details.**

## Save the Date! Here is what is coming in 2012!

17-19 February 2012

**Brigid Festival, "Rooted & Reaching"**

Thursday 8 March 2012

**An Evening with the Food Network's "The Spice Goddess," Bal Arneson**

Thursday 17 May 2012

**An Evening with Ami McKay, Bestselling Author of *The Birth House* & the forthcoming *The Virgin Cure***

Sunday 3 June 2012

**Red Tent Ritual: Celebrating Maiden, Mother & Crone**

## September is The Circle's Membership Month! Join or renew today!

The Circle is a centre, a space, a collective that is entirely unique. We are where women of all faiths or no particular faith can gather to explore spirituality through our own experiences, longings, visions and perspectives. At a time when religion is often the cause of such discord in our world, The Circle embraces differences rather than using them to separate us, we bridge rather than divide. The Circle is also where the spiritual and the secular can meet, shifting the personal to the political and back again. As our vision statement expresses, The Circle creates "power for transformation and change."

The Circle is co-creative and therefore we need your support to continue providing this important space, our programming and our resources to our community.

**Please fill out the enclosed slip and become or  
renew your membership today!**

By doing so, not only will you help to ensure the ongoing existence of The Circle, but you will receive: a subscription to *The Circle Newsletter*, free Open Circles, a discount on all other programs and access to The Circle Resource Library.

**For more info: [www.thecircle.ca](http://www.thecircle.ca) & click "Membership"**