



OBITUARY

Sheryl Anne McInnes (1943–1998)

Sheryl McInnes, an advocate for multiple births and many other social issues, died on 20 October 1998 after suffering a heart attack on 15 October. A celebration of Sheryl's life was held on Sunday, 25 October 1998 at St Andrew's Centre, Edmonton, Canada. Sharing their memories were her daughter, Karen McInnes, members of the Sociology Department at the University of Alberta, the Edmonton City Councillor, Michael Phair, Sheryl's life mate, Maureen Irwin and many friends. Following the service in Edmonton, her daughter Jana took Sheryl's remains to Lethbridge where her children held a small service and scattered her ashes in the coulees she loved so much. Afterward, Dr Roderick D Fraser, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Alberta wrote Maureen informing her the University flag had been lowered for two days in Sheryl's memory.

Sheryl McInnes was born in Hamilton, Ontario, on 15 September 1943. Sheryl is survived by her same sex spouse, Maureen Irwin, her mother, Eileen Thorn of Victoria, British Columbia, sons Kenneth (Shyanne) and Sean, daughter Karen, twin daughters Lisa (Calvin Conner) and Jana (Chris Cavilla) and grandchildren, Christopher and Meagan, Brendan and Cody.

In 1962–64, Sheryl attended the University of Toronto studying rehabilitation medicine. In the 1970s and 80s Sheryl did the research and design for a number of publications about multiple births, one being *The Impact of a Multiple Birth on the Family – International Survey (Canada; USA)* in 1979–80 and the follow-up impact study (Canada only) in 1985 and 1989. She also did the research and writing for the books, *Breastfeeding Twins, Triplets and Quadruplets* (1982, Chicago: Centre for Study of Multiple Births), *Twins in School, Special Delivery*, and *The Death of a Twin*. In 1993 she wrote a report on *Women and Poverty* for ASWAC. Sheryl also had a number of articles published in magazines and newsletters on various topics pertaining to women's issues.

Sheryl was the founding President and Executive Director of the Parents of Multiple Birth Association of Canada (POMBA). From 1977–1981 she ran the

Multiple Birth Resource Centre from her home in Lethbridge. When POMBA affiliated with similar international organisations such as the International Society for Twin Studies and the International Genetics Society her world travels began. She presented papers at their various Congresses in Washington, DC, Israel, London, Amsterdam and Rome. As a result of this work, she was given the Alberta Achievement Award in 1982 and a Canadian Achievement Award in 1988.

Sheryl's activist career covered many years. In Lethbridge in 1990 she was the co-ordinator of the Feminist Action Collective, and the office co-ordinator of the Women's Resource Centre/ Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, Lethbridge office. She was a founding member of Gay and Lesbian Association (GALA/LA). In Edmonton Sheryl was on the Board of Directors of ASWAC (Provincial), GALA and GLCCE. She was the editor of *Womanspace News* and a volunteer at the Women's Resource Centre at the University of Alberta.

In 1991–92 Sheryl was the store manager at Common Woman Books. In 1992 she was the public relations assistant to the Break the Cycle Foundation where she researched child sexual abuse and wrote position papers for the tour. In 1994 Sheryl was the Staff Administrator of the Alberta Common Front where she researched, wrote and prepared material on the social issues caused by provincial government cutbacks.

In 1991, she was the first Womens' Studies graduate at the University of Lethbridge when she completed her Bachelor of Arts (Great Distinction). It was during this time that she abandoned the status of student and began to consider herself a scholar. She obtained her Master of Arts Degree in Sociology at the University of Alberta in 1996. At the time of her death she was a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Alberta specialising in gender studies. Her Millennium Project was to defend her PhD thesis.

From 1994 to 1998 she had done research for Dr Susan McDaniel, the Womens' Department Faculty of Extension, Faculty of Nursing, and Dr Gurston Dacks. She had been a teaching assistant in the



department. At the time of her death, Sheryl was excited about her work with Dr Douglas Aoki, working as his Sociology 301 teaching assistant on 'Sex and Film'.

Sheryl was well known not only in her native Canada, but also in the international community

through her work with multiple birth organisations and societies. She is fondly remembered and will be greatly missed.

Linda P Haddon
POMBA Canada President