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NEWSLETTER - VOLUME IX- No. III – March 2008

Giving Birth with a Midwife?

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Over the past few years you may have heard that a friend or acquaintance used the services of a midwife during her pregnancy and for the delivery of her baby. Who are midwives? What training do they have? Is it safe to give birth with a midwife? Where do they work? Do I have to pay for their services? Can I give birth in a hospital with a midwife? Is a midwife the same thing as a doula (birth accompanist)? The answers to these questions are still vague in many people's minds, and so I'll attempt to clarify them for you.

Historical Survey of the Profession of Midwifery in Quebec.

Even if it is an emergent practice in Quebec, when you think about it, midwifery is probably one of the oldest practices in the world, if not the oldest! Let's go back to the time of the early French colonists in Quebec. The first midwives of New France were simply women who were called upon when other women gave birth. These women were chosen because of their qualities of heart and spirit. Their role was not only medical and social but also psychological. Under the English regime (1760) midwives continued their work and were considered the keepers of a special family event. Their profession was legally recognized until 1847. The creation of the College of Doctors in the same year resulted in the control of the practice of midwifery by physicians, and with it a restricted field of practice. Midwives were not allowed to form a corporation and so, beginning in this period, they began to slowly disappear in Quebec.

It was in the 1970s, in part because of Quebec's women's movement, that there were increasing demands around childbirth issues as well as a general questioning of obstetrical practices. Giving birth was no longer something that a woman had the power to do, but rather a medical act. At the beginning of the 1980s regional conferences as well as a national caucus permitted 10,000 people to come together to demand that the practice of midwifery be reinstated in Quebec. The group of women who had been asking for a rehumanization of birthing practices had always associated midwifery to their principal objectives. Because of this, in 1990, the National Assembly of Quebec instituted a pilot project, in part with the idea of evaluating the effects of this practice. This project demonstrated the safety of the practice, a less frequent use of medical technologies and obstetrical interventions (cesareans, forceps and episiotomies), a reduced number of perineum tears, as well as a lower number of premature births and low birth-weight babies.

The Midwife Profession is Finally Recognized and Legalized in Quebec!

In 1999 the practice of midwifery was finally officially recognized in Quebec and a professional order (OSFQ) was created. The only recognized and obligatory training program required to enter the profession was also instituted: the 4-year bachelor degree at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières.

The midwife's practice includes care during the pregnancy and labour to the delivery and 6 weeks after the baby is born, in situations where all goes well. The midwife can prescribe all the necessary medical exams and tests of a normal pregnancy. She can consult with or transfer her client to a physician if something "abnormal" occurs during the pregnancy, labour or delivery. The midwife is trained to know when something is not going as

it should. In the case of an emergency, the midwife is authorized to give medical treatment as well as any medication necessary to stabilize the situation until medical intervention arrives. She thus receives the same training as a doctor to respond to obstetrical and neonatal emergencies and possesses the necessary supplies, whether the birth is occurring at home or in a Maison de naissance.

Why Choose a Midwife?

Maisons de naissances are an integral part of the public health network via CLSCs and so midwife services are entirely covered by Medicare.

A woman and her partner choose to be followed by a midwife because of a variety of aspects of the midwife practice philosophy. What a midwife has to offer is, first of all, an approach based on respect for pregnancy and birthing as physiologically normal processes of significant meaning in the life of a woman. Delivery and birth belong to the woman, and the role of the midwife is to accompany her on her path, the way she desires and in respect of her values, her culture and her personal needs. The midwife adapts to the woman, her family and her environment and not the reverse. The midwife encourages the woman to make her own choices as to the care and assistance that she would like to receive as well as the way in which they are dispensed. Midwives consider that the promotion of health is of the utmost importance and so they dedicate as much time as possible to the woman and her family. Midwives engage, as part of the philosophy of their profession, to respect the client and her family, regardless of their particularities or differences. Because of this, a lesbian couple should expect a midwife to be open and respectful of the type of family that they are creating. That being said, it is also very acceptable and accepted to ask to change midwives if one doesn't feel comfortable with a midwife, for whatever reason. It's nothing to be ashamed of. Giving birth is a unique event in the life of a woman and her partner, an intimate time, a moment that is sacred. And so a relationship of confidence with one's midwife is essential.

The Choice of Where to Give Birth

Midwives respect a woman's right to choose who follows her pregnancy and delivers the baby as well as where she gives birth, within the practice norms of the order of midwives of Quebec. Midwives can thus help a woman give birth in her home, at a *maison de naissance* or even in a hospital. That being said all midwives work in *maisons de naissances*. They will travel to your home or to the hospital for the big event. As for hospitals, some *maisons de naissances* have not as of yet concluded agreements with hospitals (Mont Joli et Nicolet).

And the Accompanist (Doulah)?

A birthing accompanist (or doulah) is someone who shares the same vision as a midwife, of pregnancy and birth as natural processes. Doulahs offer support and their presence to a woman and her family during her pregnancy, birth and the post-natal period. The accompanist is present during the delivery, regardless of who delivers the baby or where it is born. Her role is not of a medical nature but rather as a psychological support for the family. Unfortunately the services of a doulah are not covered by the public health system, and so families must cover the expenses themselves.

In Conclusion...

A midwife is thus a healthcare professional for which pregnancy, birth and the post-natal period are healthy, natural and normal. Women possess all that is needed to bring a baby into this world and care for him or her. Midwives are there to accompany and support a woman and her family through the marvelous process of giving life. A midwife's continuous intervention allows her to follow the physical, psychological and social aspects that are unique to giving birth. Because this is a "new" profession in Quebec it is still under development. Another 10 new *maisons de naissances* (in addition to the 8 that already exist) will come into being in the next 10 years in different regions of Quebec. Watch out for them as they come up near your home, or maybe even become involved in one of the various groups that advocate for their development.

For more information, visit the site of the *OSFQ (Ordre des sages-femmes du Québec)* or that of the *Ministry of Health and Social Services of Quebec (MSSS)*. Or you can get more information at your *CLSC*.

For comments or questions, don't hesitate to contact me: johanne.pepin@uqtr.ca

Interested in writing for our newsletter? Send your articles at any time to info@aml-ima.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8

News Briefs: December - March 2008

Montreal and Quebec News

December 6, 2007 (Montreal) The information, support and help-line *Gai-Ecoute* and its partner the *Fondation Emergence* are proud to announce that their president Laurent McCutcheon has received the Rights and Freedom Prize 2007. This prestigious prize is given out annually by the Quebec Human Rights Commission to a person, group or organisation that has shown remarkable social engagement in the domain of human rights and freedoms.

The prize was an occasion to celebrate the twenty-five years of commitment of Laurent McCutcheon of *Gai-Ecoute*. Listener on the help-line for many years, he was well-placed to understand the variety of problems that gay people confront. He became president of the organisation in 1982 and helped it over the years to become one of the most used and well-known help-lines in Quebec. He then started up the *Fondation Emergence* and in 2003 initiated the first thematic *Day Against Homophobia*. The 17th of May became the International Day Against Homophobia, a day celebrated in over 40 countries.

January 17, 2008 (Montreal) The dates of the LGBT pride celebration have been confirmed by the City of Montreal. **Pride will begin on Thursday August 14th and end on Sunday August 17, 2008.** The **community day** will be held on Saturday August 16th (hours to be determined). The **pride parade** will take place during the day of Sunday August 17th 2008 (hours to be determined) and travel from west to east between Guy and Sanguinet. The details of whether the parade will happen along Rene Levesque or Ste-Catherine will be confirmed by the City of Montreal.

Canadian News

December 20, 2007 - The Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, has announced that Bill C-14, an amendment to Canada's citizenship laws passed earlier in the year, will go into effect December 23, 2007. As of December 23rd Canadians who adopt children abroad will find it easier to have their newest family members become Canadian citizens.

For more info please consult:

<http://cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/releases/2007/2007-12-20.asp>

January 9th 2008 Canadian transplant programs will no longer harvest organs from the bodies of gay men who were sexually active, *CBC News* has reported.

The new regulation by Health Canada, which technically went into effect in December, excludes men who had sex with men, injection drug users, and other groups they consider high-risk. Many health officials in transplant programs throughout the country were not aware of the new law.

The new law also requires that transplant officials must interview family members of the donor during the screening process.

"We'll be asking about things like travel, history of infectious disease, whether [the donors have] been in jail -- that puts you at increased risk," Peter Nickerson, director of Transplant Manitoba, said to *CBC News*. "Have they been an IV drug abuser in the past? Have they had tattoos? There's a whole list of questions we go through," he added, one of them being sexual orientation and activity.

Levy estimates that the new regulation will mean that seven out of every 100 potential donors will be excluded, while approximately 4,000 Canadians are on organ wait-lists.

GAY MARRIAGE- A TIME LINE

(Skip over this section if you've had enough on marriage)

Please note: In the United States the marriage debate has gone completely out of control!!! There are initiatives for and against marriage in almost every state. Because of this it would be impossible to cover it all in the context of a newsletter. An excellent coverage of the news in the States, however, is available on the web site of the *Human Rights Campaign* in their marriage center: www.hrc.org/marriage/

A well-organized table of the state-by-state progress can be found if you click on "States with Anti-Gay marriage laws" within this site.

We will still continue to cover general American stories related to the debate.

November 19 (Toronto, Ontario) The Anglican bishop of **Niagara**, in southern Ontario, gives his approval to allow clergy to bless same-sex couples who have had a civil marriage. Gay marriage has been legal in Canada since 2005.

December 13 (London) A same-sex couple who had a civil partnership in **Britain** wins a protracted battle with the Spanish government to have their union recognized. **Spain**, which legalized gay marriage in 2005, recognizes same-sex marriages from the other EU countries where they currently are legal - the Netherlands and Belgium - and from Canada and South Africa, had until now deemed UK civil partnerships "uniquely British". The Spanish government has now agreed to recognize civil partnerships.

December 18 (Budapest) Hungary's left-of-center coalition government passes legislation giving same-sex couples many of the rights of marriage. The Registered Partnership Act goes into effect in January 2009. It allows gay and lesbian couples to register their relationships and recognize partners as next of kin status. The law also provides guarantees for joint tax filing, decision making in health care, and assure inheritance, social security and pensions rights. It does not, however, allow same-sex couples to adopt or undergo fertility treatment, nor does it allow couples to share a common surname.

December 19 (Montevideo, Uruguay) President Tabare Vazquez says he will sign legislation making the country the first in Latin America to allow civil unions. The law will allow same and opposite-sex couples to form civil unions. Couples must have been together for at least five years and sign a registry. They would then receive pension, inheritance and parenting rights.

January 7 (Dublin) Same-sex couples who were married or had civil partnerships in countries where they are legal will have those unions recognized in **Ireland** the government announces.

The Irish government says that legislation to be brought in this spring to create civil unions will provide for the recognition of those unions performed in other countries. Whether the couples were married or had civil partnerships they will be considered civil unions the government says.

January 22 (Stockholm) As the **Swedish** government prepares to take up legislation that would allow same-sex couples to marry a new poll shows the idea has the support of 70-percent of the electorate. Like most European countries Sweden allows civil partnerships. Under a law enacted in 1995 same-sex couples have most of the rights and obligations of marriage to gay and lesbian couples who register. But it did not provide for

adoption or access to fertility treatments. The proposed legislation would create gender-neutral marriage, allow churches to perform ceremonies, provide same-sex couples with the right to adopt children and allow lesbians to have artificial insemination.

January 30 (Madrid) With just over a month before **Spain** goes to the polls the Socialist government's same-sex marriage law is causing barely a ripple in the campaign.

When the law was passed two years ago the conservative opposition Popular Party joined the Catholic Church and condemned the move. Now there is scant mention of opposition, no doubt the result of polls that show same-sex marriage has broad acceptance.

January 30 (Prague) In the year-and-a-half since civil unions became legal in the **Czech Republic** fewer than 500 gay and lesbian couples have registered. The law allow same-sex and unmarried opposite-sex couples to register their partnerships with authorities to have inheritance and health care rights similar to those granted now to heterosexual married couples. The law, however, does not allow marriage or adoption of children by same-sex partners.

February 7 (Havana) Taking up Raul Castro's invitation to speak their minds without fear of reprisal, more **Cubans** begin publicly complaining and challenging government policies on everything from gay rights to limits on Internet access and travel restrictions. Leading figures call for change: Culture Minister Abel Prieto says that he supports gay marriage. Cuban lawmakers are considering a proposal to allow gay marriages, though its progress in the legislature's closed-door sessions remains unclear.

International News

December 21, 2007 365Gay.com (Katmandu) In a landmark verdict aimed at legitimizing homosexuality, **Nepal's** top court has ruled that the government must create new laws to protect gay rights and change current ones that might be tantamount to discrimination, an official said.

The Supreme Court issued the order in this conservative Himalayan kingdom after hearing a petition filed by four gay activist groups seeking greater rights for homosexuals, said court spokesman Til Prasad Shrestha.

Shrestha indicated it is up to the government to determine how the ruling should be implemented. It was not immediately clear whether the ruling overturns current laws banning homosexuality or whether the government would be compelled to recognize same-sex marriages.

Homosexual acts are punishable in Hindu-majority Nepal by up to two years in prison.

A government representative could not immediately be contacted.

Sunil Pant of the Blue Diamond Society, the country's main gay rights group, said it was a bold decision by the highest court in Nepal, where homosexuals frequently face harassment, including by police.

"It was an extremely positive decision and a pleasant surprise for us. It would set a precedent for other conservative countries like Nepal," Pant told *The Associated Press*.

January 22, 2008 365Gay.com (Strasbourg, France) In a ruling that could have far-reaching consequences the European Court of Human Rights has said that the exclusion of individuals to adopt children simply because of their sexual orientation is discriminatory and in breach of the European Convention of Human Rights.

The case involved a woman identified only as E.B. who had been rejected by the French government when she applied to adopt a child. She was described in court documents as a nursery school teacher who has been living with another woman since 1990. E.B applied for approval as a possible adoptive parent in February 1998, but her application was rejected, essentially because of her sexual orientation.

In June 2002, the highest administrative court in France upheld the rejection of her application and E.B. appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, which is based in Strasbourg. The court in a 10 - 7 ruling said that France had acted illegally by denying the application.

The ruling noted that France, like a number of other European countries, allows single people to adopt. The court also noted that there was nothing to indicate that E.B. would be an unfit parent except for France's objection on the grounds of her sexuality.

The woman's attorney, Caroline Mecary, said that the ruling sets a precedent for other countries. "Henceforth, France will no longer be able to refuse approval to an unmarried person on the grounds of their homosexuality," Mecary said in a statement to the media. "The same thing will be true for other member countries of the Council of Europe which allow adoption by unmarried people."

The International Lesbian Gay Association - Europe, and three other European LGBT rights groups were granted intervenor status in support of E.B.'s case.

"Today the court firmly established a principle that administrative officials cannot discriminate against an individual on the basis of her/his sexual orientation in the process of applying to adopt a child," said Patricia Prendiville, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe.

February 12, 2008 *The Advocate* - Gay and lesbian couples in **Israel** will be allowed the same adoption rights as heterosexual couples, the Israeli government has announced.

Prior to Attorney General Menachem Mazuz's announcement, the government had not allowed gays to adopt children through the Welfare and Social Services Ministry's Child Welfare Service. For gay families, the child must have been one of the partners' biological offspring in order for his or her partner to adopt that child.

"I welcome the decision," Welfare Minister Isaac Herzog said in a press release. "There is no reason same-sex couples who meet the criteria for adoption should not be able to join the process of adoption and of parenthood. We must adapt to the spirit of the times and the changes that are afoot."

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

UPCOMING MEETINGS

MARCH 2008:

◆ SATURDAY MARCH 29TH FROM 1-4 P.M.

PART 4: Parenting Course: Natural Childbirth YES IT'S POSSIBLE !

Animated by Johanne Cadorette, Nathalie Bisson (midwife) and Lesley Everest (doulah)

The goal of this frank and informal discussion is to demystify natural childbirth and to inform those that would like to have this experience about what resources are available (*maison de naissance*, birth companions, home-birthing, pain-control techniques, etc.). The workshop will be animated by a mom who delivered her child naturally, a mid-wife, as well as a doulah who encourages natural childbirth. For parents and future parents. Bilingual discussion.

Location: CCGLM (2075, rue Plessis, between Ontario and Sherbrooke) (Metro Papineau)

APRIL 2008:

◆ Wednesday APRIL 2ND from 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.

ADOPTION AND FOSTERING DISCUSSION GROUP

Location: UQAM 320 Ste Catherine East (Métro Berri), Room DS-2901

◆ SATURDAY, APRIL 12TH AT 10 A.M.

SUGARING OFF PARTY

On **SATURDAY April 12th 2008 at 10 a.m.**, the **Lesbian Mothers Association and the Papa-Daddy Group** will have a **SUGARING-OFF PARTY** at the **Cabane à Sucre Chalet des Erables**

For the kids and adults there's a full traditional lunch, maple taffee on snow, a General Store, Quebec artisans, mini-farm, magic show, a climbing wall, horse-drawn sleigh rides, a guided tour of the sugar shack, etc.

Our space must be reserved in advance please fill out the enclosed form before March 28th, 2008.

◆ WEDNESDAY APRIL 16TH 7:30 - 9:30 P.M.

PART 5: PARENTING COURSE: A DIFFERENT KIND OF FAMILY

Biological parents/non-biological parents, single-parents, multi-parent families, families with/without fathers...Our families come in many shapes and sizes. A discussion about the roles of parents, fathers/donors and the extended family (grandparents, uncles and aunts, etc) and how our children can benefit from being part of a different kind of family.

Location: UQAM 320 Ste Catherine East (Métro Berri), Room DS-2901

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May 2008:

◆ **WEDNESDAY MAY 7TH 7:30-9:30 P.M.** **ADOPTION AND FOSTERING DISCUSSION GROUP**

Location: UQAM 320 Ste Catherine East (Métro Berri), Room DS-2901

◆ **WEDNESDAY MAY 21ST 7:30-9:30P.M.** **PART 6: PARENTING COURSE: OUT IN THE WORLD: SURVIVING DAYCARE AND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Animated by Karine Igartua

Should I meet with the principal and teachers to discuss our family before school starts? Do the teachers have any training or experience with children of LGBT families? What if my child doesn't want me to be "out"? Parents and a primary school teacher will address questions facing families with children entering or currently in daycare or primary school. The workshop is intended to give parents a forum to discuss this major change in their children's lives.

Location: UQAM 320 Ste Catherine East (Métro Berri), Room DS-2901

BULLETIN BOARD:

◆ **Le Centre des femmes de Rivière-des-Prairies ! 514-648-1030**

Nous sommes ouvertes aux lesbiennes ! Si vous avez besoin de plus d'informations vous pouvez consulter notre site web : www.cdfrdp.qc.ca ainsi que le site de notre regroupement : www.rcentres.qc.ca/propos.html

◆ Ma copine et moi aimerions rencontrer d'autres couples gais(es) avec enfants pour des rencontres amicales. Nous avons 2 enfants d'âge pré-scolaire. Vous pouvez nous écrire à jojo_r_236@hotmail.com

◆ Hello there, my girlfriend and I are interested in meeting other lesbian couples. We have children (1 week out of 2) and are seeking some adult conversation. We are interested in traveling, arts, shows, but mostly good conversation. We are looking for any couple aged from 35-50. Encourage anyone interested to reach us via e-mail. jenny_brodeur@hotmail.com

◆ Bonjour, J'ai 43 ans. Je veux rencontrer quelqu'une sérieuse-d'amour. J'ai un garçon de 7 ans. **Line 514-678-8935**

◆ **L'association des lesbiennes aux femin'elles:** L'Association lesbienne vous invite à ses soirées le premier et le troisième mardis du mois, de 19h à 21h30 au CLSC situé au 411 Hotel Dieu à **Chicoutimi**. Ces rencontres ont comme but de briser l'isolement et s'adressent aux femmes lesbiennes qui désiraient socialiser en compagnie d'autres femmes lesbiennes, afin de permettre un échange positif. Au plaisir de vous rencontrer! Informations: **418-550-2259**.

◆ **L'Écho des femmes de la Petite Patrie** est un centre de femmes qui offre des rencontres pour lesbiennes. Ces rencontres ont lieu les lundis soirs aux deux semaines de 19h00 à 21h30, et sont animées par une personne ressource. Ces rencontres, qui se veulent un lieu d'échange, de ressourcement et d'information, s'intéressent aux réalités et aux conditions de vie des lesbiennes. Les rencontres sont en français. Un service de halte-garderie est disponible avec réservation faite une semaine à l'avance. Le centre est situé au **6032 St-Hubert (métro Beaubien)**. Téléphone (514)277-7445, télécopieur (514)277-1689

◆ **OUTSPOKEN!** is an emerging group who's mission is to create a venue that will enable lesbians in the Montreal area to get together for business and social networking, as well as educational and inspiring events. Our initial focus will be monthly coffee meetings, and once the membership expands, we will add workshops,

supper events and more. Come to our website to get more information. Join our mailing list, and be the first to find out when our first coffee meeting will be. www.outspokenmtl.com <<http://www.outspokenmtl.com/>>

ADOPTIONS AND BIRTHS

- ◆ **Renée Dumas and Annie Caya** are happy to announce the birth of **Lauriane Dumas Caya** born **June 18th 2007**.

MISCELLANEOUS

- ◆ **Traductrices, redactrices, etc:** We are looking for volunteers to help translate this newsletter from English to French. Any contribution (even 1-2 pages a month) would be appreciated. If you are available and willing, **please contact us at: info@aml-lma.org**
- ◆ **Batshaw Youth and Family Centres** is encouraging English speaking and bilingual lesbian couples, and singles, to consider becoming **foster parents**. There are babies, pre-schoolers and older children who are waiting for a foster home. For some the plan will be to help them return to their families. For other children, the plan will be to work toward **adoption**. What a remarkable feeling it is to know you have made a difference in the life of a child by providing a stable, safe and loving environment. For more information, please call, **Rena Rubin, Foster Care Recruiter, at 932-7161, local 416, or send an e-mail to rena_rubin@ssss.gouv.qc.ca**.
- ◆ The **Open Book Library's** collection includes over 5500 books written by glbt authors or by authors who write about our communities. Some of these books are for children and adolescents. We are very proud that approximately half of our collection is in French. Much more information as well as online consultation of the book collection is available at our Web site www.ccglm.org/en-b. We are located at **2075 Plessis** (CCGLM) in the Village. Come visit us! Open Wednesdays and Fridays from 1-8 p.m. (514) 528-8424.

The bulletin board is a free forum for members to communicate amongst each other. If you want to post an announcement in the next issue please send it to us at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8. If you have something to advertise, sell, rent or buy...anything where money must change hands, you can place an ad in the newsletter. Ads cost 20 cents per word.

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 - ◆ **HARMONIE, CROISSANCE, PROSPÉRITÉ.** Produits et services financiers pour les familles en pleines croissances. Hypothèques, Régimes d'épargnes études, Gestion du risque, Protection du patrimoine, Protection du vivant. 20% des honoraires seront versées à l'AML . Sylvie Grenon, Spécialiste en planification générale, communiquez par courriel : sylvie.grenon@londonlife.com ou par téléphone au 514-433-2884