

The healing power of humour and art

BY NAOMI FLESCHHUT

Last Wednesday I found my way to Agricola street, armed with nothing more than a poster entitled "Atlantic Healing Village Conference" and some well-detailed directions to the "tree house".

From what I could tell, this group was all about alternative living — a topic of importance to those of us whose ethics oppose the status quo.

"Sustainable living choices!" "Community support!" "Empowering individuals into action!" These words practically jumped off the poster to entice my normally cynical self into high hopes.

Consequently, as I approached the door, I was hesitant to step inside and risk the possibility of my optimism being shattered. But inside this cosy house I met three women who, despite their amazing ambition and conviction, were still as practical and down to earth as I had hoped.

As my friend and I were served tasty ginger tea and vegan cookies ('vegan' meaning no animal products), Deborah Leo, Lorelei Moloughney, and Nancy Stoddart began explaining how this group was first conceived.

Taking their cue from *The Gesundheit Institute*, an organization hand-built by people critical of conventional medicine that believes in using the alternative healing methods of humour and art, these women liked the idea of living and raising families in earth-friendly co-operatives. In fact, many people across Canada currently live in groups called communes, sometimes growing their own organic foods, supporting grassroots environmental and community movements, and otherwise living in a more sustainable fashion.

So, the idea of an Atlantic

Healing Village was formed.

A place where people will live together, support each other, and pursue healthy, sustainable, alternative lifestyles. Imagine such a place — where children learn respect for the earth and each other by example as opposed to the messages they get from their educations and the media. A close-knit group of concerned, active citizens who work together to find a balance where humans and the rest of this earth can co-exist. It is already happening around the world, so why not here in Nova Scotia?

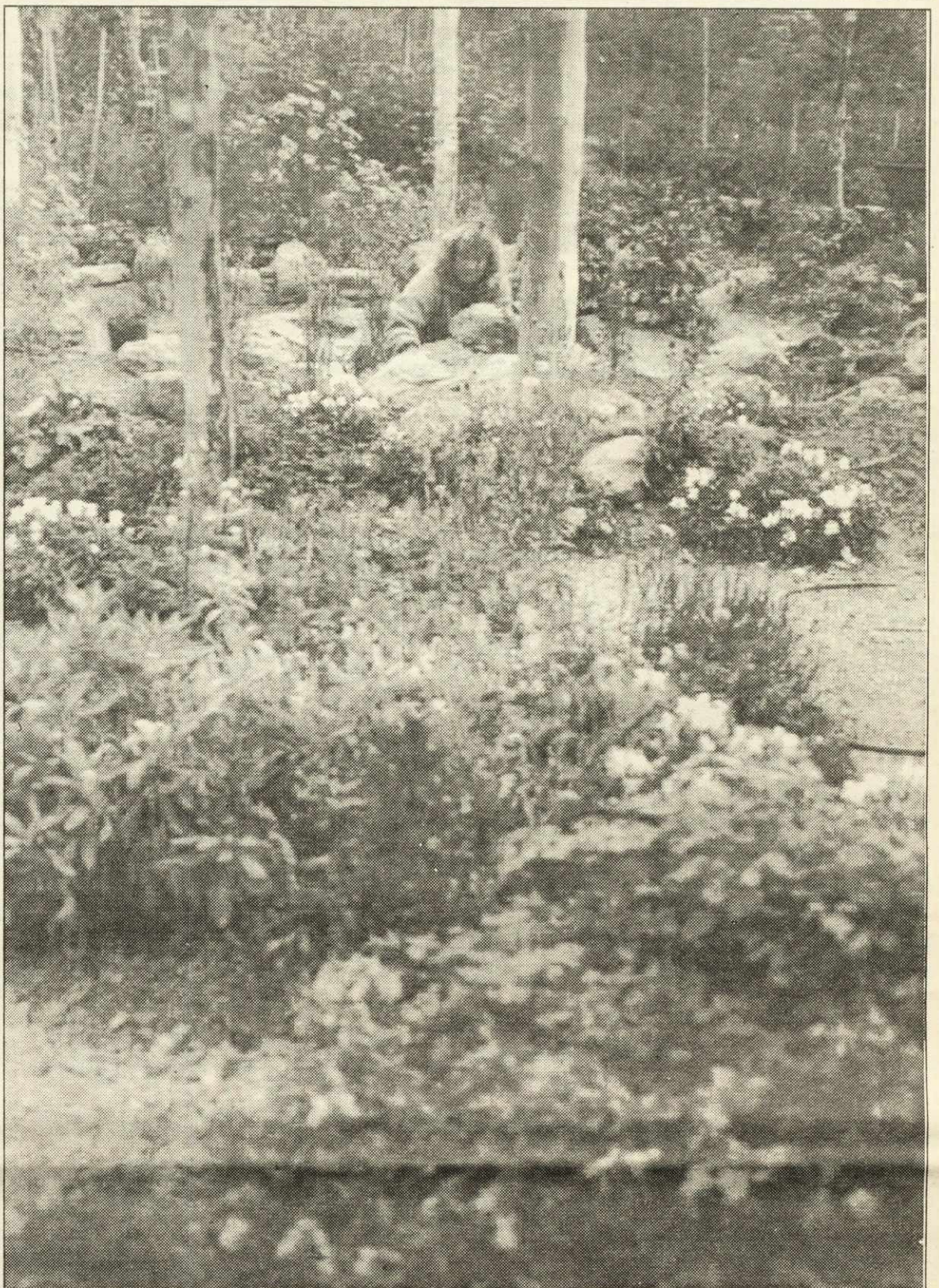
First of all, you need interested people. In order to interest people, perhaps you have a conference. And this is exactly what is first on the agenda of the working group — to create a gathering sometime near the third week of Sept. 1999. It will include interactive workshops on diverse topics such as healing arts, drum-making, shamanism and mask-making. There will be speeches on urban and organic farming, environmentally-friendly living, and alternative medicine.

But it will not be all work and no fun. An integral part of this gathering will be healthy doses of music, dancing, drumming and stargazing beside tents at night.

In order to make this gathering a reality, a cross country tour is planned to network with other communes and find people interested in sharing their knowledge.

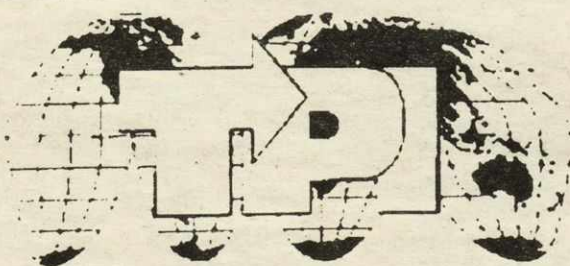
But until the freedom of summer, much organization and mobilizing work needs to be done. So if any of this even remotely sparked interest in your mind, come out to the next meeting on Mar. 22 at 7 pm. The tree house with its tea, cookies and cuddling cat is a great place to spend a Monday night scheming to change the world.

Call 429-0787 or 429-3225 for more information.



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