

Fertile Clay:
Beth Hone, Spiritual Feminism and Women's Transnational Activism
in Saskatchewan, 1970-2000

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Abstract

This thesis builds upon a growing historiography which claims postwar Saskatchewan residents were involved in various health, political, gendered, and feminist activism and desire for change which characterized the second half of the twentieth century. It also joins work which demonstrates the diversity and success of postwar activism, particularly feminism, in Canada's prairie provinces. Through an analysis of the life and work of the artist and activist Beth Hone, *Fertile Clay: Beth Hone, Spiritual Feminism and Women's Transnational Activism in Saskatchewan, 1970-2000* argues that Saskatchewan feminism from the seventies to nineties not only existed but thrived through transnational community building and action. Utilizing a biographical approach, and drawing upon Hone's extensive personal archives held at the University of Saskatchewan archives, combined with oral history interviews and engagement with the art objects created by Hone (held at the Mann Art Gallery in Prince Albert, the Mackenzie Art Gallery in Regina, and in personal collections) this thesis explores Hone's contributions to spiritual feminist community building.

The thesis opens with a discussion of Hone's early life, career, and activism, illustrating how she increasingly became involved in feminist activism and radical faith communities. Hone's access to feminist spirituality resources and community space in her prairie location was made possible through the Unitarian Universalist faith network. Hone was an annual participant in international UU conferences, and brought those teachings, resources, and initiatives back to the prairies. Hone's increased involvement in the feminist Unitarian Universalism movement resulted in her co-establishment of The Lumsden Women's Gatherings which ran from 1986 to 2004. This yearly gathering brought together women from across Western Canada and was an example of a successful, context-specific solution to community-building activism on the prairies. While the Lumsden Women's Gatherings supported a network of feminist activists across Western Canada, this community was connected to a transnational network of women who circulated texts, art objects and ideas and which discussed the intrinsic and vital connections between women's spirituality, community, and power. This case study of Hone's contributions provides a compelling example of how local, provincial, and national feminist networks were forged and how they connected to international ideological currents as well as important evidence of sustained feminist activity in the province of Saskatchewan.

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This process of creating this thesis in many ways began on the steep dirt road I grew up on and around the kind, creative, and inspiring group of people with which I grew up. My neighbours on “Red Hill,” my family and close family friends in the wider community set a precedent for life-long learning, activism, and belief in creating a better community. Many family friends continued to support me during this thesis through kind words, meals, and thoughtful conversations. It is also through my connection to the “Red Hill” community, I began to speak to my narrators. Thank you to all my narrators for generously sharing your time, memories, and collections with me: Betty Donaldson, Joanne Greene, Sandra Johnson, Barbara Mader, and Evelyn Rogers.

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To say this thesis was completed under unexpected circumstances would be an understatement. The shadow of the COVID-19 global pandemic hung over the last handful of months in which I did the final editing and writing on this thesis. Extraordinary circumstances were met with the support of extraordinary people. My parents, Myra and Jack, tolerated many exasperated phone calls and tirelessly cheered me on. Tanner and Sash always had a place for me to kick my feet up, debrief, and laugh. As always, Joel talked me through many of the concepts that eventually made their way into this thesis. Macey and I had nearly daily phone calls through, for her, the final months of a pregnancy and, myself, the final months of thesis both during this pandemic. Many phone conversations with my friends far away, Alex, Kate, and Alyssa, helped make the difficult months of writing much more bearable.

Thank you to my COVID writing group that offered daily support, encouragement, and a space to rant. Key to this thesis’ completion was also my good friend, COVID comrade, and brilliant academic in her own right, Karissa. Our work sessions on the deck, diligently supervised by Oliver, pulled me through some difficult times in the past few months. You are owed, in the least, a quality bottle of champagne.

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Dedication

To my friend, mother-figure and mentor who quietly demonstrated that creating change, both big and small, is often rooted in the building of community through caring actions and thoughtful conversations. I am reminded of Evelyn Rogers' comment about Beth Hone, which I believe truly applies here too: "...sometimes I sort of believe that you see and talk to God and they're right in front of you, but you don't even think about it...you're just darn lucky that you've met them." Thank you for your guidance, care, and devilishly filthy humour for all of these years, Kim.

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List of Abbreviations

CARAL.....	Canadian Abortion Rights Action League
CBC.....	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
LSD.....	Lysergic Acid Diethylamide
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SGC.....	Saskatchewan Gay Coalition
W&R.....	Women and Religion
WCD	Western Canadian District
UU.....	Unitarian Universalist or Unitarian Universalism
UUA.....	Unitarian Universalist Association
UUWA	Unitarian Universalist Women’s Association
UUWF.....	Unitarian Universalist Women’s Federation
VOW	Voice of Women
VWC	Vancouver Women’s Caucus

Introduction



Figure 0-1: "First Dome, Lumsden," Sept. 1977, University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 24, Series 7: Visual Materials - Photographs, Files 1: Photo Album - 50 Photographs.

For those who dismiss Saskatchewan as monotonously flat, the Qu'Appelle Valley might feel like an impossibility. Driving northward out of the city of Regina on highway eleven, after kilometers of road stretched towards the horizon and lined with endless golden lines of canola, the land will suddenly curl into itself. The highway dips and curves down into rolling, yellowy hills bracketed by aspen trees and Saskatoon brush. I grew up just off this highway, in a small town tucked into the elbow of the Qu'Appelle. On a first drive down the main street, Lumsden appears to be a typical prairie town with its own coffee row on a Sunday morning and a hotel that slings drinks but does not rent rooms. During the time of my childhood, Lumsden's streets were full of surprises, if you knew where to look.

Taking a turn down a gravel road, one might spot a valley slope punctuated by angular, metal shapes rising out of the grass. The hilltop above was crowned by the bright-white funnel

roof of sculptor John Nugent's studio.¹ A different route might take one on a climb up the steep road on which I lived, James Street South. Three imposing yellow-brick houses with wide porches guarded the roadside. The abstract painter Agnes Martin lived in one of these houses as a young girl before captivating New York art circles with her stark, gridded canvases.²

Decades before I was born, one of my neighbours, Sandra Johnson, walked up the dusty, gravel roads of James Street South carrying her infant son on her back to greet the street's newest neighbours in 1977.³ Coincidentally, Johnson had already met the new neighbours a few years before her hike up the dirt street. After relocating in 1974 from the highly isolated and remote community of Fort Goodhope in the Northwest Territories, Johnson immediately "came south and got involved in everything" in a bid for much-needed community connection.⁴ One of her many chosen activities happened to be a course in ceramics at the small, independent art studio run by local artists Ann James and Beth Hone located in the nearby city of Regina.⁵ There Johnson came to know Hone as a thoughtful and proficient teacher of ceramics. Subsequently, in 1977, Hone moved up the street from Johnson.

Though she certainly could not have known it yet, Johnson's walk down the chokecherry bush-lined pathway to bring neighbourly greetings would mark the start of a long-time friendship with Hone. There at the new driveway's end she found Beth Hone and her husband Mac Hone diligently working on the construction of a massive geodesic dome. At this time, the dome was only a strange angular skeleton and already an anomaly among the hundred-year-old houses in disrepair and the newer bungalows that lined Lumsden's streets. Yet, the dome's new addition to Lumsden's skyline signalled not only the arrival of the Hones, but a unique addition to the fabric of the town and surrounding area for those, like Johnson, interested in art, politics, and activism.

¹ "John Nugent," *Saskatchewan Network for Art Collecting*, 20 Feb. 2019.
<http://www.sknac.ca/index.php?page=ArtistDetail&id=21#2>

² Klaus Ottman, 2003, "Martin, Agnes." *Grove Art Online*. 20 Feb. 2019.
<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oa0-9781884446054-e-7000054642>; Wall Text, *Agnes Martin: The mind knows what the eye has not seen*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, SK, 2019.

³ Sandra Johnson, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 15, 2019, 10

⁴ Johnson, interview, 4

⁵ Johnson, interview, 4

Hone's Journey to the Valley

Beth Hone retired to the Qu'Appelle Valley at a crucial moment in her life. Born in 1918, Hone had a career as an art instructor, teacher, artist and mother.⁶ Prior to her retirement from teaching, Hone consistently expressed an interest in activism, particularly feminism, through her involvement with the CCF and NDP, Amnesty International and the Voice of Women.⁷ Yet, as her other commitments waned, opportunities emerged to more deeply explore her interests in feminist activism. Beth Hone was active across postwar, second wave, and third wave feminisms and she joined countless other women whose commitment to social justice blurred the lines between generational feminist activism. With age, her interests and focus on feminist activism only seemed to grow and intensify. In her most focused period of activism, she chose to relocate to a small Saskatchewan town. Instead of this being a hinderance, in many ways it appears that her activism thrived in this location. Through her involvement in spiritual feminism, deeply intermingled with her artistic practice, she connected with many other women across Western Canada and North America. Her feminist life in Lumsden created a vibrant community focused on faith, feminism, activism, and art from the seventies through the end of the twentieth century.

I had the good fortune of growing up down the street from Hone on James Street South and learned from a young age about Hone and her peers who worked to ensure future generations of women could experience increasing freedom from sexist and institutional oppression. Despite personal experience, I did not find these stories reflected in conventional provincial histories. That disjuncture, in part, inspired this thesis. Due to Hone's own diligence at saving her papers, her prodigious community work is thoroughly recorded for study. The University of Saskatchewan Archives and Special Collections had the foresight to accept Hone's donation in

⁶ "Beth Hone Obituary," *The Leader Post*, 29-30 April 2011, accessed on 18 Nov 2019, <https://speersfuneralchapel.com/tribute/details/1411/Beth-Hone/obituary.html>.

⁷ For more, see: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 3: Amnesty International; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 86: Regina South-West Constituency – [ca. 1950s]. University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 24, Series 6: Voice of Women; Ruth Wilson, "Slow Changes Predicted: Women Sandwiched Between Etiquette and Folklore," *The Leader Post*, 1 May 1968, 13.

1998, with additions in 2008 and 2012, thus ensuring a route into studying Hone’s perspective in and contribution to Saskatchewan feminism.⁸

Unfortunately, Hone passed in 2011 and therefore could not be interviewed for this project.⁹ Yet, the archival documents she donated can still be combined with conversations with oral history narrators who knew Hone. Both sources together revealed a rich history of a specific niche of prairie feminism. Hone was one of many women who built a lively network across Canada and America which sought feminist political change through developing women-centered religious practices. These women studied the same books, attended conferences, wrote newsletters and many even gathered yearly in Hone’s retirement town of Lumsden. Saskatchewan’s spiritual feminists were not only active in the movement, but deeply connected to a rich international network of likeminded women.

This thesis joins the many existing histories of the Canadian feminist movement as diverse, dynamic, and vibrant in the late twentieth century.¹⁰ Like many women of her time,

⁸ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Finding Aid.

⁹ “Beth Hone Obituary”.

¹⁰ Examples include: Nancy Adamson, “Feminists, Libbers, Lefties and Radicals: The Emergence of the Women’s Liberation Movement,” in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 253–55; Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women’s Movement in Canada* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1988); Lara Campbell, Tamara Myers, and Adele Perry, eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History*, Seventh (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2016); Steve Hewitt and Christabelle Sethna, *Just Watch Us: RCMP Surveillance of the Women’s Liberation Movement in Cold War Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018); Nancy Janoviček, *No Place to Go: Local Histories of the Battered Women’s Shelter Movement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Nancy Janoviček and Catherine Carstairs, eds., *Feminist History in Canada: New Essays on Women, Gender, Work, and Nation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Valerie J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Liz Millward, *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community across Canada, 1964-84*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015); Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005); Joan Sangster, *Through Feminist Eyes: Essays on Canadian Women’s History* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2011); Karissa Patton, “Contraception, Community, and Controversy: The Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre, 1972-1978,” in *Bucking Conservatism: Alternative Stories of Alberta from the 1960s and 1970s*, ed. Leon Crane Bear, Larry Hannant, and Karissa Patton (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2020); Karissa Robyn Patton and Erika Dyck, “Activists in the Bible Belt: Conservatism, Religion, and Recognizing Reproductive Rights in 1970s Southern Alberta,” in *Called to Action: Histories of Women’s Activisms in Western Canada*, ed. Sarah Carter and Nancy Langford (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 197–217; Karissa Robyn Patton and Emily Kaleil, “Building Community and Transforming Knowledge: Histories of Women’s Health Practitioners and Community-Based Health Services in Twentieth Century Alberta, Canada,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 37, no. 29 (Fall 2020); Shannon Stettner, “‘We Are Forced to Declare War’: Linkages between the 1970 Abortion Caravan and Women’s Anti-Vietnam War Activism,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 46, no. 92 (2013): 423–441; Allyson Stevenson and Cheryl Troupe,

Hone grew into her feminist radicalism as she aged. The spiritual feminism which attracted her in retirement expressed itself in Unitarian Universalism and goddesses, but it was a limb of a large international movement of women in the seventies and eighties. Recognizing an interest and need in Western Canada for information about spiritual feminism, Hone and her cohort established a yearly conference, the Lumsden Women's Gatherings. Thus, this thesis presents an example of how women in Saskatchewan actively contributed to the feminist movement by creating networks between generations, activist groups, and regions. Through analyzing Hone's life and work, this thesis argues that Saskatchewan feminism from the seventies to nineties not only existed but thrived through transnational community building and action.

A Dynamic Saskatchewan

Hone was a woman who lived her life in Saskatchewan and actively used radical alternative feminist spirituality to address feminist political concerns. Recognizing Saskatchewan's popular reputation in the twenty-first century as rural, as well as both religiously and politically conservative, Hone's life may strike some as an astonishing anomaly. These characterizations hardly reflect the reality in which postwar Saskatchewan's increased urbanization and improved infrastructure both socially and tangibly linked people to the rest of the world.¹¹ This thesis demonstrates that, in postwar Saskatchewan, Hone was not an exception but in the incredibly good company of many dynamic, internationally linked, politically progressive, and energized people active in the province. Building on the work of scholars who address postwar Saskatchewan, this thesis asserts that prairie people were not on the margins of contemporaneous social developments but were instead active participants and innovators.

One of the most updated overviews of Saskatchewan history, Bill Waiser's *Saskatchewan: A New History*, separates itself from previous works by shifting focus from the provincial elite to the contours of everyday citizens' lives. Waiser also captures the excitement and dynamism ushered in with the 1944 election of the social democratic government led by

"From Kitchen Tables to Formal Organization: Indigenous Women's Social and Political Activism in Saskatchewan to 1980," in *Compelled to Act: Histories of Women's Activism in Western Canada*, ed. Sarah Carter and Nanci Langford, 218-252 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, Forthcoming).

¹¹ Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History*, (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 368-371.

Tommy Douglas.¹² This new government brought with it an ambitious energy and outward focus, which expressed itself, in part, through the active recruitment of national and international expertise. Developments in medicine, infrastructure, economic policy, arts programming, education, and much more were influenced by the ideas of internationally trained experts who came to Saskatchewan because they saw it as a happening place.¹³

Hone became well-acquainted with the positive effects of governmental policy and attitude, particularly in the example of the arts community in which she worked from the fifties to the sixties. Capitalizing on the agricultural and mineral wealth drawn out of the land which resulted in the government surpluses of the 1950s, the Douglas government funded landmark cultural programmes and institutes.¹⁴ An unprecedented level of support for local artists and collaboration with international artists was signalled with the founding of the Saskatchewan Arts Board in 1948, alongside the two University of Saskatchewan affiliated organizations, the Emma Lake Arts Camps in 1936 and the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery in 1953.¹⁵ Funding from the

¹² Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 342-343.

¹³ It is worth noting that Beth Hone's husband, Mac Hone, served on the CCF Education Sub-Committee from 1965-1966. Beth Hone unsuccessfully pursued a nomination as CCF candidate for the Regina South-West constituency in the 1956 election. Erika Dyck, *Psychedelic Psychiatry: LSD from Clinic to Campus* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Stuart Houston and Bill Waiser, *Tommy's Team: The People Behind the Douglas Years* (Markham: Fifth House Ltd., 2010); Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 10-13; Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 344-346; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 86: Regina South-West Constituency – [ca. 1950s]; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 10, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 25: CCF Education Sub-Committee. – 1965-1966.

¹⁴ Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 11-13; Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 363-4, 366.

¹⁵ Modelled after the United Kingdom's Art Council, the intention of the Saskatchewan Arts Board was to provide access to the arts to average citizens. This model of arts funding in the Canadian context is also mired in spreading colonial, Anglo-Saxon, upper- and middle-class standards of taste and culture in the pursuit of a nation unified by taste. For an exploration of these issues, please see: Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008; Frances W. Kaye, *Hiding the Audience: Viewing Arts & Art Institutions on the Prairies*, (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2003); Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts Before the Massey Commission*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Cheryl Avery, "'Incentive to Vision': The Emma Lake Art Camp," *Art Libraries Journal* 24, no. 03 (1999): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0307472200019581>; Houston and Waiser, *Tommy's Team*, 185-190; A.W. Johnson and Rosemary Proctor, *Dream No Little Dreams: A Biography of the Douglas Government of Saskatchewan, 1944-1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 163-165; Gregory Klages, "By Artists, for Artists? Creating the Saskatchewan Arts Board and Canada Council," *Saskatchewan History* 64, no. 1 (2012): 46-47; James M. Pitsula, *As One Who Serves: The Making of the University of Regina* (Montreal ; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 205; W.A. Riddell, *Cornerstone for Culture: A History of the Saskatchewan Arts Board from 1948-1978* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1978), 5; Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 363-364.

Saskatchewan Arts Board allowed the MacKenzie to act as the first gallery in Saskatchewan to host travelling exhibits from across the world.¹⁶ Similarly, beginning in 1955, the Emma Lake Artist's Workshops benefitted from provincial funding and brought in international artists to lead training, like Clement Greenberg, Jules Olitski and Barnett Newman.¹⁷

Beth Hone was well-acquainted with the growing community of artists that flourished with these provincial supports. Her work as an instructor made her an integral part of arts education between 1959-1969 as a ceramics teacher at the University of Saskatchewan's Regina Campus.¹⁸ Many of the Regina ceramicists emerging in the sixties and seventies passed through Hone's classroom.¹⁹ When she and her collaborator, Anne James, established the Hone-James Studio which Johnson and many others attended, they too hosted many international artists with funding from the Saskatchewan Arts Board.²⁰ Hone's art was exhibited across Canada; a significant example was the selection of one of her pieces for Canada's Expo 67 in Montreal.²¹ Due to Saskatchewan's cultural policy and infrastructure, international artists took up residence

¹⁶ Pitsula, *As One Who Serves*, 205.

¹⁷ Avery, "Incentive to Vision," 21; Pitsula, *As One Who Serves*, 206-8.

¹⁸ Julia Krueger, "Prairie Pots and Beyond: An Examination of Saskatchewan Ceramics from the 1960s to Present," MA Thesis (Carleton University, 2006), 92-3

¹⁹ Artists she worked with and taught included: Jack Sures, David Gilhooly, Marilyn Levine, Ricardo Gomez, Victor Cicansky and Joe Fafard. Krueger, "Prairie Pots," 91-9.

²⁰ Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, James Melchert Papers, 1962-2004, bulk 1980-2003, "A Weekend with James Melchert, 1969," <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/weekend-james-melchert-6449>; Gail Crawford, "Manitoba and Saskatchewan," in *Studio Ceramics in Canada* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2000), 183; Kreuger, "Prairie Pots and Beyond", 93; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 34, Series 8: Art- 3 Hone-James Studio, File: 3. Correspondence. - 1970, 1973, Correspondence between Angus McKay and Hone James Studio, 5 October 1970; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 34, Series 8: Art- 3, File: 13. Publicity. - nd, 1969-1974, Flyer for Orland Larson Workshop, October 1970.

²¹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales, File 13: Department of Trade & Commerce [Expo], "An Appreciation of the Fine Contribution Towards the Success of the Canadian Government Pavilion at Expo 67"; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales, File: 14: External Affairs, Catalogue: "Canadian Government Pavilion Expo '67: Canadian Fine Crafts," Montreal QC: 1967; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales, File 13: Department of Trade & Commerce [Expo], "Canadian Government Participation 1967 Exhibition Loan Agreement - Works of Art and Crafts," Beth Hone Lender, 1967. For more see: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales.

in Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan artists were funded for national and international travel opportunities.

The Saskatchewan arts community's position as a place of innovation that people from across the globe sought out is one example of a province-wide trend created by the postwar economic boom combined with encouraging governmental policy. Yet another example is detailed in Erika Dyck's account of Saskatchewan LSD research innovations created through international recruitment and collaboration which was bolstered by governmental policy and a welcoming social environment.²² Postwar Saskatchewan was a place in which people were interested in what was happening outside of the province and sought out internationally sourced resources and ideas to address specific issues within their own communities.

In this social climate, it should be no surprise that activists similarly sought out and created international networks in order to further their political goals. Valerie J. Korinek's work demonstrates gay and lesbian activists not only created transnational networks but created intra-provincial networks between rural communities.²³ This example reflects a widespread trend of prairie activists who perhaps stayed in their rural communities, yet still had an appetite for activist action. Compared to large urban centres like Toronto or Vancouver, small town Saskatchewan did not have a similar surplus of established events, resources, or community gatherings. Yet, this lack combined with motivation and cultural precedent perhaps motivated people even more to reach out and create opportunities in their own provinces and transnationally.²⁴ Additionally, Korinek identifies "prairie norms of volunteerism" and people's pragmatic goal-orientation as essential, shared cultural attitudes which meant a few motivated people could achieve a lot with little resources and a tremendous amount of their time.²⁵ These norms deeply influenced what prairie activism looked like during the mid to late twentieth century.

²² Dyck, *Psychedelic Psychiatry: LSD from Clinic to Campus*, 2-3, 7, 11-12.

²³ Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 9-10, 202-207, 320-326.

²⁴ Dyck, *Psychedelic Psychiatry*; Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*.

²⁵ Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 406.

Hone in Good Feminist Company

When Hone and her husband established their retirement residence in Lumsden, she brought with her experiences of international collaboration and activist strategies. Yet, as Hone went about her life in the domed houses, writing letters in support of abortion rights, sculpting the nude female body, and reading feminist literature in her garden she also likely raised a few eyebrows among Lumsden's established, conservative residents. Regardless of what was whispered over Formica tables at the downtown cafe's coffee row, Hone's lifestyle and values aligned with many other Canadian and international women who shared her interest in feminism. Hone's location in Lumsden, while rural, did not prevent her from connecting to networks of women in the feminist movement.²⁶

By examining Hone's life to draw conclusions about the wider feminist movement, this thesis draws on a long-standing feminist historical strategy of using the specificity of an individual's biography in order to document larger social movements and change.²⁷ Biography not only offers highly specific details on one life lived within the movement, but it also is closely tied to the feminist principle of valuing personal experience as evidentiary, political material. Beth Hone's biography offers a rich, traversable in-route to the Saskatchewan feminist community in the last half of the twentieth century. As many prior historical, feminist biographers have demonstrated, the level of detail gleaned from an individual life can be an invaluable source in a careful analysis of the past.²⁸ In fact, many of the pertinent sources for this thesis are biographies which provide an excellent documentation of the women's movement.²⁹

²⁶ Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 9-10, 320-326.

²⁷ Lois W. Banner, "AHR Roundtable: Biography as History" 114, no. 3 (2009): 579-86; Alice Kessler-Harris, "AHR Roundtable: Why Biography?," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (2009): 625-30, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dss.2010.0004>.

²⁸ The biographical approach also drove the collection of a rich diversity of feminist history in: Nancy Janoviček and Catherine Carstairs, eds., *Feminist History in Canada: New Essays on Women, Gender, Work, and Nation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013). Donica Belisle and myself also employed a biographical approach in order to critique gendered divisions of labour in the academy in: Donica Belisle and Kiera Mitchell, "Mary Quayle Innis: Faculty Wives' Contributions and the Making of Academic Celebrity," *Canadian Historical Review*, October 10, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.3138/chr.2017-0108>.

²⁹ Doris Anderson, *Rebel Daughter: An Autobiography* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1996); Peter Campbell, *Rose Henderson: A Woman for the People* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); Kay Macpherson, *When in Doubt, Do Both: The Times of My Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Daphne Odjig, *A Paintbrush in My Hand* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1992); Rebeck, *Ten Thousand Roses*.

Hone not only remained active in the feminist movement for a half-century, but consistently engaged with key texts, ideas, and issues within the movement. Her biography records one person's experience of changes within feminist activism over a lifetime. As a mother in the postwar period, she became involved in Voice of Women and broader pacifist activities. She also continually engaged with feminist activities and issues, such as reproductive rights, women's labour issues and environmentalism. In retirement, her interest only grew as her available time increased. Hone's energetic involvement in many groups does not make her unique. Instead, she is an example of how many activists were complicated, multi-faceted figures who split their time between many causes and then connected with friends who also did the same. Hone's life presents an interesting opportunity to rethink women's activism as a far more diverse and dynamic occurrence.

To understand Hone's biography, she must be placed within the wider context of the feminist movement. While Hone set up her bookshelves of feminist literature in the studio of her newly built retirement home, she did so as the feminist movement in Canada experienced many exciting developments. To capture the vitality and diversity inherent in the feminist movement of the latter twentieth century, it is essential to historicize the movement. Yet, frequently used categories, particularly the wave metaphor, often do not do this justice. Scholars have already called attention to the potential ineffectiveness of the so-called wave metaphor for feminism as a method of defining the movement's history.³⁰ While Laughlin et al.'s article on this argues that the wave metaphor elides the true complexity of the movement, Joan Sangster suggests that second-wave feminism has been unfairly simplified in historical accounts.³¹

An earlier, yet enduringly useful work by Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail recognizes that the women's movement was ever-changing and diverse because it incorporated many differing interests, disagreements and coalitions.³² Nancy Janoviček also affirms this in *No Place to Go: Local Histories of the Battered Women's Shelter Movement*.

³⁰ Kathleen A. Laughlin et al., "Is It Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor," *Feminist Formations* 22, no. 1 (2010): 76–135.

³¹ Laughlin et al., "Is It Time to Jump Ship?"; Joan Sangster, "Creating Popular Histories: Re-Interpreting 'Second Wave' Canadian Feminism," *Dialectical Anthropology* 39, no. 4 (2015): 381–404, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-015-9403-4>.

³² Adamson et al, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 61-62, 79-81.

Employing Benita Roth's useful conceptualization of the diverse expressions of the American feminist movement as shaped by "race, ethnicity and class", Janoviček adds the factor of "regional disparities" as key to shaping the "strategies and goals" of some feminists.³³ Janoviček successfully demonstrates the context-specificity necessary in her analysis of feminist organizing by documenting Canada's battered women's shelter movement in the seventies and eighties in four communities. The result is the story of five centres, in Thunder Bay, Kenora, Nelson, and Moncton, focused on addressing violence against women, which showcased wildly variant feminist strategies and outcomes due to regional differences in race, class, municipal politics, and interpersonal dynamics.³⁴

Hone's work in Saskatchewan must be placed within the context of other historical work documenting the feminist movement during the later twentieth century. While general studies of feminist activism in Canada are dated, they do exist and provide significant overviews of women's actions.³⁵ General American studies of feminism are also key as the sharing of information across borders resulted in similarities between each respective movement's timelines.³⁶ Perhaps the most helpful studies though are recent works which document specific groups of the feminist movement and therefore demonstrate the complexity and nuance of feminist activism. This thesis picks up on major points demonstrated by existing historical studies: feminist organization around specific issues, inter-group collaboration and the movement of people and ideas across regions.

³³ Janoviček, *No Place to Go*, 11; Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, And White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

³⁴ Janoviček, *No Place to Go*, 23, 62, 79,95.

³⁵ See: Adamson et al., *Feminist Organizing for Change*; David H. Flaherty and Constance Backhouse, eds., *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States* (Montreal, Que: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Jeri Dawn Wine and Janice L Ristock, *Women and Social Change Feminist Activism in Canada*, (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1991).

³⁶ See: Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Carol Giardina, *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women's Liberation Movement, 1953-1970* (Gainesville,.: University Press of Florida, 2010); Michelle Moravec, "Toward a History of Feminism, Art, and Social Movements in the United States," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 33, no. 2 (2012): 22-54, <https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.33.2.0022>; Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*.

One strong feminist focus was concerned with reproductive rights. In the wake of Canada's abortion law reform in 1969, many women were critical of these changes as deeply restrictive and inadequate.³⁷ Recognizing a need for resources and access, women across Canada came up with a variety of approaches, from the McGill University students' creation of the *Birth Control Handbook* to the establishment of grassroots feminist birth control centres in Southern Alberta.³⁸ Perhaps most striking in the history of reproductive rights activism of this period was the Vancouver Women's Caucus' 1970 cross-Canada trek, the Abortion Caravan.³⁹ Hewitt and Sethna's work on the Abortion Caravan offer a particularly useful point in its discussion of RCMP officers' attempts to surveil Vancouver Women's Caucus (VWC) activists. Informed by sexist preconceptions of gender roles and exclusive experience monitoring male-led Old and New Left activism, RCMP officers failed to successfully spy on the Abortion Caravan because their frame of reference misunderstood VWC activists' multiple foci and unfamiliar strategies.⁴⁰ This article provides important context for how the women's movement was perceived and recognized, or was not, contemporaneously. While the VWC successfully attacked oppressive societal structures, their work went unnoticed by the RCMP who only recognized obvious Communist affiliation as a threat and scoffed at "unladylike" behaviour.⁴¹ As this example demonstrates, the women's movement continually faced pre-existing expectations of what activism looked like based on culturally held ideas regarding gender, race, class, sexuality and other identifiers. While this could be a challenge and a detriment, as the VWC activists proved, it could sometimes also be an advantage.

³⁷ Sethna and Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations," 469-472.

³⁸ Patton, "Contraception, Community, and Controversy"; Patton and Dyck, "Activists in the Bible Belt"; Patton and Kaleil, "Building Community and Transforming Knowledge"; Christabelle Sethna, "The Evolution of the Birth Control Handbook: From Student Peer-Education Manual to Feminist Self-Empowerment Text, 1968-1975," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 23, no. 1 (2006): 89-117, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cbmh.23.1.89>.

³⁹ Sethna and Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations," 424, 486; Karin Wells, *The Abortion Caravan: When Women Shut Down Government in the Battle for the Right to Choose*, (Toronto: Second Street Press, 2020), 9-13.

⁴⁰ Sethna and Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations," 476-481, 486, 489, 494-495.

⁴¹ Sethna and Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations," 476-481, 486, 489, 494-495.

At a similar time, a growing movement of Indigenous women's activism was galvanized after the 1969 White Paper.⁴² In Saskatchewan, the seventies saw two Indigenous women's activist organizations emerge in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Native Women's Movement and the Saskatchewan Indian Women's Association.⁴³ While those groups shared interests with the reproductive rights movement in combating sexism within the family, Indigenous women pursued their own context-specific solutions to the patriarchal colonial policies that attacked their right to be reproductive parents of their own children.⁴⁴ Janoviček's study also highlights the work of Indigenous women's activism in Thunder Bay, which prioritized Indigenous women parenting their children via community-run shelters and support groups.⁴⁵

Women worked on various feminist issues, and it is now evident that some women were active in many different groups. The reproductive rights movement also offers examples of links between various organizations, such as Stettner's discussion of the abortion caravan and the anti-Vietnam war activism movement.⁴⁶ Women from different feminist groups often shared strategies, resources and ideas, due in no small part to individual women participating in multiple causes. Hone was a strong member of the antiwar movement herself and helped establish the Regina branch of the Voice of Women (VOW), acting as president for many years.⁴⁷ Many works document the VOW movement which was a pacifist, maternalist and highly-organized international women's group.⁴⁸ Studies into VOW demonstrate how, under the protective gloss

⁴² Stevenson and Troupe, "From Kitchen Tables to Formal Organization".

⁴³ Stevenson and Troupe, "From Kitchen Tables to Formal Organization," 235, 237.

⁴⁴ For more see: Allyson Stevenson, "Vibrations across a Continent: The 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act and the Politicization of First Nations Leaders in Saskatchewan," *American Indian Quarterly* 37, no. 1–2 (2013): 218–36, <https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.37.1-2.0218>; Stevenson and Troupe, "From Kitchen Tables to Formal Organization".

⁴⁵ Janoviček, *No Place to Go*, 32,35.

⁴⁶ Stettner, "'We Are Forced to Declare War'," 423–441.

⁴⁷ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 24, Series 6: Voice of Women, File 4: Clippings, Beth Hone, "History and Accomplishment of the Voice of Women," October 1966, 1.

⁴⁸ Many of these works are biographies by important VOW figure, Kay Macpherson, whose documentation efforts resulted in VOW's extensive documentation compared to other feminist sub-groups of the time: Kay Macpherson, "Persistent Voices: Twenty-Five Years with Voice of Women," *Atlantis* 12, no. 2 (1987): 60–72; Kay Macpherson, "Voice of Women/La Voix Des Femmes," *Canadian Woman Studies* 9, no. 1 (1988): 61–64; Kay Macpherson, *When in Doubt, Do Both: The Times of My Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). For

of propriety, the organization strategically employed white, middle and upper class, traditionally female spaces like teas, crafting and fundraisers to create international networks of women banded together against war. VOW is one facet of a prolific women's anti-war movement during the sixties which taught many women activism strategies and tactics which they then employed in their reproductive rights activism of the seventies.⁴⁹

Not only were strategies and tactics shared across feminist groups, but travel between regions and nations during this period were key to spreading and developing activist strategies.⁵⁰ Feminist activists also expressly shared ideas and people across national borders, particularly with their counterparts in the U.S. Ideas from the States frequently spread into Canada and vice versa. The antiwar movement was an obvious point of connection between Canada and America.⁵¹ Hone and her cohort of spiritual feminists also tapped into a network of publications, conferences, and cultural artefacts shipped across the Canadian and American border. The books read and ideas engaged with and by Hone, make it clear that the material produced by the American feminist movement clearly influenced her and her friends. Although regional, specific developments are important, the wider feminist movement often ignored borders in lieu of creating networks based on other commonalities.

In the case of lesbian activism, women were very willing to traverse great distances to build community and for activist organization. Liz Millward notes the vibrant system of national and regional lesbian conferences which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s with the express

other works on VOW, see: Maryanne Cotcher, "A National Organisation in a Prairie City: The Regina Voice of Women, 1961-1963," *Saskatchewan History* 56, no. 1 (2004): 21–29; Roberta Lexier, "Linking the Past with the Future: Voice of Women in Regina," *Saskatchewan History* 56, no. 2 (2004): 24–34; Candace Loewen, "Making Ourselves Heard: 'Voice of Women' and the Peace Movement in the Early Sixties," in *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women's History in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Sharon Anne Cook, Lorna McLean, and Kathryn O'Rourke (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 248–51, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt80q62>; Susan Smith, "Peace Activists and Public Health in Alberta: The Voice of Women against Chemical Weapons," in *Called to Action: Histories of Women's Activisms in Western Canada*, ed. Sarah Carter and Nancy Langford (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 175-196.

⁴⁹ Stettner, "We Are Forced to Declare War," 426-433.

⁵⁰ Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 326.

⁵¹ Despite earnest attempts at transnational collaboration for anti-war activist, issues arose between activists of different nations. This is explored in: Candice Klein, "'They Didn't Even Realize Canada Was a Different Country': Canadian Left Nationalism at the 1971 Vancouver Indochinese Women's Conference," *Labour: Journal of Canadian Labour Studies / Le Travail : Revue d'Études Ouvrières Canadiennes* 84 (2019): 231–58, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lt.2019.0038>.

purpose of creating networks of lesbian community.⁵² Valerie Korinek too notes the importance of travel between communities in prairie queer activism, one notable example for Saskatchewan in particular being the Saskatchewan Gay Coalition (SGC).⁵³ Focused on creating networks between Saskatchewan's many rural, small town spaces and urban centres, the SGC achieved this through travel to rural communities, hosting provincial conferences, and publishing the periodical *Gay Saskatchewan*.⁵⁴ In Saskatchewan, Korinek makes a key observation that many Saskatoon activists were "from the United Kingdom, the United States, and other parts of Canada".⁵⁵

Keeping an Eye out for Religious Feminists

This movement of people and ideas across borders helps to explain how Hone encountered the ideas of spiritual feminism. The feminist branch of the Unitarian Universalist church had chapters across Canada and America which supported extensive coordination, information sharing and community-building. Hone also interacted with popular and influential works of spiritual feminism such as Judy Chicago's very successful art work "The Dinner Party", which toured through Calgary in 1983 and the popular reader, *Womanspirit Rising*, by Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, which her Regina-based reading group studied.⁵⁶ This art show, its accompanying publications and Christ and Plaskow's reader were widely disseminated across North America and beyond, which created an increased momentum around women's spiritual practice for the next two decades.

Equally important was the prominence of a series of feminist theologians in the 1970s, including Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Carol P. Christ, and Judith Plaskow, who began to think and speak about the deep connections between Abrahamic faith, sexist oppression

⁵² For more, see: Liz Millward, "It was an Incredible Conference": Getting Together," In *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community across Canada, 1964-84*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).169-199.

⁵³ Korink, *Prairie Fairies*, 320-326.

⁵⁴ Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 202-207, 320-326.

⁵⁵ Korinek, *Prairie Fairies*, 325.

⁵⁶ Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party: From Creation to Preservation* (London and New York: Merrell Publishers Limited, 2007); Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, Harper Forum Books (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

of women and socio-political structures.⁵⁷ According to Chris Klassen, North American feminist spirituality grew out of white, middle-class consciousness raising groups who realized mutual frustrations with the Christian and Jewish religions within which they were raised and participated.⁵⁸ For these women, religion was imbedded deeply into their lives, but they realized its inherent sexism was ultimately incompatible with their desire for women's equality.⁵⁹ The women in this thesis did not abandon religion entirely, but instead sought out alternatives. Like other women across North America, in-line with cultural feminism, they sought out women-centric religious alternatives. Often, this is where and why images of the goddess became the focus of women's spiritual practice.

Despite the energy around spiritual feminism and Hone's successes, this thesis represents the first account of her work and her community. Part of this elision may be due to a wider historiographical oversight. Writing on American religious feminism historiography, Ann Braude notes that feminist history, "view religion and feminism as inherently incompatible".⁶⁰ Yet, this elision fails to recognize, as discussed above, what these historical accounts of the women's movement demonstrate: a diversity of interest and expression. Reflecting the many contexts in which second-wave feminism was applied, the movement expressed itself in many different ways. Pre-conceptions about the incompatibility of feminism and religion may cause researchers to overlook contradictory evidence. Yet these assumptions can replicate the same reductive and sexist notions.

Hone and her cohort represent a group among many who drew upon feminist spirituality to energize their activism. She belonged to the cohort of older women who used the time freed after raising children and retiring to become further radicalized in their activism. Thus, Hone sits

⁵⁷ Examples include: Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 273–87; Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1973; Judith Plaskow, *Sex, Sin, and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich* (University Press of America, 1980); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983).

⁵⁸ Chris Klassen, "Introduction: Feminist Spirituality and Third-Wave Feminism," in *Feminist Spirituality: The Next Generation*, ed. Chris Klassen (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 4.

⁵⁹ Klassen, "Introduction," 4.

⁶⁰ Ann Braude, "A Religious Feminist-Who Can Find Her? Historiographical Challenges from the National Organization for Women*," *The Journal of Religion* 84, no. 4 (2004): 557.

at a sort of historiographical lacunae: senior women, spiritual feminism, and the Canadian prairies. Each topic on its own lacks toothsome historical analysis. Combined, they present a particularly underrepresented historiographical corner. Thus, it is worth trying to listen, record and analyze the life of Hone as it presents a valuable contribution to our understanding of feminism on the prairies as a complicated, highly engaged, and dynamic movement.

Methodology: Analyzing Archives, Interviews, and Art

Key to analyzing this community of Saskatchewan feminists acting between 1960-1990 is Hone's impressive archive. The documents and ephemera at the University of Saskatchewan Archives and Special Collections Mac and Beth Hone Fonds both demonstrates Hone's values and imparts a strong sense that she put a great deal of thought into how it might be utilized by researchers. Her activities can be tracked through the newspaper clippings, which are neatly annotated and placed into thematic folders. At other times, her care is shown in the inclusion of notes to herself. For example, stacked neatly in their own folder, you will uncover haphazardly scribbled notes on scrap pieces of paper with a stream of thoughts about attracting diverse membership to the cause of pacifism.⁶¹ In another box there will be neatly organized stacks of workshop handouts from her series of public talks on issues in feminist spirituality.⁶²

Through the process of examining these files, I thought back on the storied cases of self-collected archival collections. An example that came to mind is how Lucy Maud Montgomery transcribed her diaries with a mind to public consumption, with strange turns of phrase and gaps leaving the impression she obscured the more painful details of her troubled life.⁶³ In the case of Hone, it is impossible to know what she may have purposefully excluded in her carefully organized archival documents. For example, whether the lack of evidence I found of interpersonal conflict or diaristic writing is because these documents never existed or Hone chose not to include them is unknown. Archives are not neutral objects but marked by all the

⁶¹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 24, Series 6: Voice of Women, File 1: General 1967-1991, Beth Hone, "VOW Notes".

⁶² University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 21, Series 5-3: Unitarian Fellowship – Regina Fellowship, File 25-45.

⁶³ See: Vanessa Brown and Benjamin Lefebvre, "Archival Adventures with L.M. Montgomery; or, "As Long as the Leaves Hold Together," in *Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace: Explorations in Canadian Women's Archives*, eds. Linda M. Morra and Jessica Schagerl (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 233-248.

human hands which pass over them. The choice to collect or discard a document is not just a reflection of the values of who offers it to the institution, but also the institution itself.⁶⁴

So, just as Hone gifted a mindfully curated plethora of details about her relationship to Saskatchewan's activist and artist communities, it is important to think about what she might have chosen to exclude from this record. This too can apply to the other sources consulted such as her donated collection of art and documents to the Mann Art Gallery in Prince Albert or private collections held by individuals. I benefitted immensely from the generosity of all the narrators who chose to share personal items with me that deeply enhanced and shaped this thesis.⁶⁵ When I reached out to the current Unitarian Universalist Women and Religion Committee in America in search of a first edition copy of the very important *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* curriculum I was met with amazing generosity. Not only did the Co-Covener, Gretchen Ohmann, reach out to an existing network for an analogue copy of the curriculum, she notified me of her success by sending me a PDF version she took the time to digitize herself. This one experience is like many I had while working on this topic in which the community consistently responded with an enthusiasm for Hone and the topic through going above and beyond in my aid.

The community contributions went beyond objects, as I completed five interviews with narrators who knew Hone and participated in some of the same groups. In doing these interviews, I was informed by feminist oral history methodology. I chose this approach because it aligned with the feminist values of the thesis' subject matter but also as it offers an approach to the interview as not merely a method to extract answers from individuals but an intersubjective and relational process between the narrator and interviewer.⁶⁶ Therefore, I designed a methodology that received ethical approval by the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board, but

⁶⁴ Linda M. Morra and Jessica Scyhagerl, "Introduction: No Archive is Neutral," in *Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace: Exploration in Canadian Women's Archives*, eds. Linda M. Morra and Jessica Schagerl (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 13-14; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

⁶⁵ I received books, documents, photos and ephemera from my narrators Evelyn Rogers, Barbara Mader, Sandra Johnson, Betty Donaldson and Joanne Greene including: Art from Personal Collection of Sandra Johnson; a copy of Phillip Hewett, *Unitarians in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Canadian Unitarian Council, 1995) from the personal collection of Joanne Greene; Betty Donaldson, "Images of the Goddess Files"; Barbara Mader, "Hone Ephemera"; and Evelyn Rogers, "Crone Stuff".

⁶⁶ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 54-55; Iacovetta 10.

also offered a feminist approach to navigate the delicate power dynamics inherent between interviewer and narrator.⁶⁷ Crucially, the self-reflexivity imbedded in feminist oral history methodology allowed me to understand and manage my inherent biases which ultimately effect the manner in which I pose questions and interpret answers.⁶⁸ As with the process of working with archives, the success of oral history lies in an ethical, vigilant and empathetic historical approach.

The interviews themselves followed a snowball recruitment technique. I reached out to individuals from Hone's art, political or spiritual life who I discerned may have interest in speaking about their experiences. They were then sent a letter of invitation via email or, if the person preferred, via mail. People who agreed to an interview spoke with me for about an hour as I followed a loose guide of interview questions to allow for anecdotes and tangents to arise. Narrators passed on my contact information to other potential individuals who then contacted me if interested. In this way, I found myself reaching community members I would have had no prior way of knowing about without the network of my narrators. All my narrators had a chance to review their interview transcripts to ensure a faithful communication of their lived experiences.

While written and spoken sources perhaps offer a clearer message, Hone and her community left behind important sources in the artworks they made and used. The art objects produced by feminist artists in Regina may not declare their intentions in the same manner as spoken or written word, but they often hold important political, social, or cultural messages shaped into their forms. Hone left behind artworks at the Mann Art Gallery, Saskatchewan Arts Board, the Mackenzie Art Gallery and private collections. In this study it is important to understand an artist's technical abilities, interpret symbolism and thematic content of works but also to analyze why an art object was created, viewed or stored.⁶⁹ In the documentation of the

⁶⁷ Katherine Borland, "'That's not what I said': A Reprise 25 Years On," in *Beyond Women's Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Katrina Srigley, Stacey Zembrzycki and Franca Iacovetta (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2018), 32.

⁶⁸ Borland, "That's not what I said," 32.

⁶⁹ Leonie Hannan and Sarah Longair, *History Through Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 26-27, 51-52.

women's movement, feminist art objects reveal important information about the context in which they were created.⁷⁰ Only by examining these art objects can their use and audience be gleaned.

Chapter Outline

This thesis follows Hone, her friends and co-organizers through their actions and activities. Chapter one provides an overview of Hone's life which aligned with developments in both feminism and Unitarian Universalism. By following her life leading up to her move to Lumsden in 1977, the chapter maps out her developing interest in women's issues and spirituality. Through Hone's experiences, the developing connections between the feminist movement, theology and Unitarian Universalism are outlined. The implementation of formal Unitarian Universalist (UU) policy which criticized sexism and embraced the development of a feminist spiritual educational curriculum demonstrates both the active celebration of feminism within UU and also the method by which feminist ideas spread throughout the organization.

Chapter two highlights the Lumsden Women's Gatherings as a successful, context-specific solution to community-building activism on the prairies. By connecting a wide-spread network across Western Canada, the Gatherings created a wide geographic span of influence across Canada and America. As Hone helped catalyze these events which took place in Lumsden, her archival documentation revealed the intentions, planning and extent of these yearly gatherings. As these Gatherings were organized in collaboration with the UU feminist organization (which was a North American organization) even though they took place in a small Saskatchewan town, people came from across Western and Central Canada. Ideas and materials were also international – many were sourced from the U.S. and central Canada. Therefore, a strong centre of inter-regional, international exchange was established through these yearly gatherings of feminist and women-centric spiritual practice.

After considering the women's spirituality events Hone helped organize, the third chapter examines the art objects Hone produced for her spiritual practices and communities. Hone's focus on goddess motifs in her art, specifically the *Venus of Willendorf*, demonstrates her connection to a wide network of women thinking about intrinsic and vital women's spirituality, community, and power. Feminist interest in overhauling the very myths, symbols and morals

⁷⁰ Alison Bartlett and Margaret Henderson, "What Is a Feminist Object? Feminist Material Culture and the Making of the Activist Object," *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 156–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2016.1157701>.

provided by patriarchal religion are but one example of important feminist thought which developed in the later twentieth century. This period deserves better academic attention as it is rich in activity and literary, practical, and theological output. Goddess themed art objects helped establish a symbolic language that was used in women-centric spiritual practice. These objects also expressed important notions of community belonging, whether through wearing, display, or use. These objects connected women to community across the world, across generations and across history.

Conclusion

At the 1996 Lumsden Women's Gathering, women at a poetry workshop were invited to reflect on where they would be in 10 years "using plants as metaphors".⁷¹ Hone chose to print a few in the following edition of the spiritual feminist newsletter she self-published from home called *UU Women's Web*. The poem chosen for the newsletter's front page was written by Doreen Wuckert, and it compared her increasing feminist awareness of age to a dandelion:

The Dandelion and the Feminist

What will I be when I'm 50? In my fifties I will become more spiritual and more feminist. In my fifties I will become more like the dandelion; sunny and beautiful. The dandelion and the feminist have much in common. Like the feminist, the dandelion can multiply [sic] even in the most adverse conditions. The dandelion, like the feminist, has nutritional as well as healing properties. The dandelion need not be fertilized or cultivated to disseminate its seeds. The dandelion, like the feminist, is considered a nuisance when visible in large numbers. In my fifties, I will observe more closely the tenacious behaviour of the dandelion to develop more fully my feminist being.⁷²

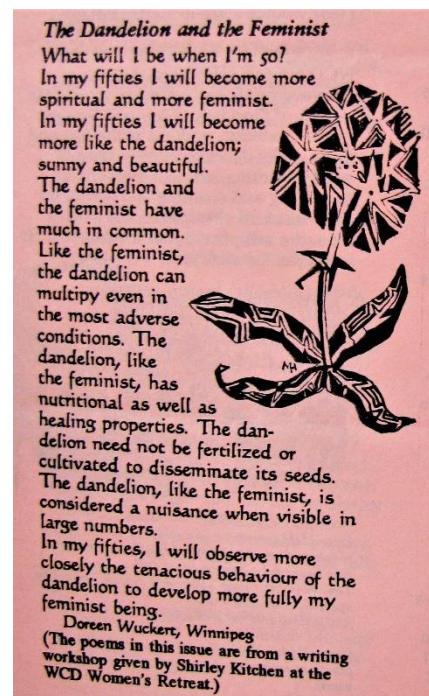


Figure 0-2: Doreen Wuckert, "The Dandelion and the Feminist," Illustrated by Mac Hone, *UU Women's Web*, (Fall 1996), University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 1: General

⁷¹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5.5: Unitarian Fellowship - Women and Religion, File 1: General, Hone, Beth, *UU Women's Web*, (Fall 1996).

⁷² University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 1: General, Doreen Wuckert, "The Dandelion and the Feminist," Illustrated by Mac Hone, *UU Women's Web*, (Fall 1996).

When considering her future as a woman in her fifties, Wuckert chose to ally herself with the humble and much maligned dandelion. Yet, she admired the “sunny and beautiful” dandelion in which she recognized so many admirable, shared characteristics with feminism.⁷³ Growing older was an opportunity to grow wiser and cultivate a tenacious feminist existence.

The “tenacious behaviour” Wuckert identified as key to feminist life is exemplified throughout this thesis.⁷⁴ Despite the “adverse conditions” of geographic distance, political conservatism and scant resources, Hone and her cohort successfully seeded their spiritual feminism throughout Western Canada. This alternative feminist faith not only provided a community, but a new way to understand the self and the world outside of the bounds of patriarchal oppression. As this thesis will discuss, to some unfriendly eyes in the prairies, visible feminist women were an unwelcome intrusion. Yet, Hone and her cohort persisted in creating their yearly gatherings and even spread their ideas to unsuspecting viewers of local access cable in many Canadian cities.

⁷³ Wuckert, “The Dandelion and the Feminist”.

⁷⁴ Wuckert, “The Dandelion and the Feminist”.

Chapter 1 : Religion & The Repertoire of the Feminist Reader

In the corner of Hone's bedroom was a symbol of her own appetite for knowledge and critical thought. There a white bookcase stood which was filled with, in her friend Barb Mader's words, "the repertoire of the feminist reader".¹ Hone was known not only to quickly devour books but also prided herself in staying up-to-date with the latest writing. Mader also noted that when she returned to a graduate program in the early nineties and took a Women's Studies course, she recognized many of her required readings as she had "heard the names from [Beth] long before" because "Beth had read it all".²

Based on reading lists and the many books she referenced in her archives, Hone's bookshelf likely reflected a time of great change and growth of feminist religious thought in the seventies and eighties. Feminists in North America were grappling with the patriarchal nature of traditional organized religions. In her historical monograph, Chris Klassen points out that two significant occurrences happened in 1971 for feminist religion. In response to Catholicism's continued denial of any modicum of religious authority to women, the Catholic theologian Mary Daly gave a provocative sermon at Harvard Memorial Church calling for women to leave the Catholic church. In the same year, another feminist theologian, Z. Budapest, offered a feminist alternative to mainstream established religions by founding the Susan B. Anthony coven No. 1, which began the movement of Dianic Witchcraft.³ These were two indications of alternative feminist solutions to the problematic implications of patriarchal religion. Significantly, both turned away from established religious traditions in order to propose the question of what religion could look like if re-calibrated through a feminist lens.⁴ This question would reverberate throughout the next three decades and its answers would take many shapes. In particular, it was a question to which Hone devoted years of her life.

Hone likely had both Daly and Budapest on her bookshelf. Both authors appear in her personal notes on theology and in the feminist resource lists she compiled to share with other

¹ Barbara Mader, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 16, 2019, 3-4

² Mader, interview, 3-4.

³ Chris Klassen, "Introduction: Feminist Spirituality and Third-Wave Feminism," in *Feminist Spirituality: The Next Generation*, ed. Chris Klassen, 3 (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009).

⁴ Klassen, "Introduction," 3-4.

women.⁵ In fact, notes to herself from the mid-eighties detailed her inner thoughts on the crux of women's challenges which echoed the words of contemporaneous feminist thinkers worldwide: "The Problem – Patriarchy + its influence on women". She then wrote out a four-point list on her opinion on the best way to confront this issue:

What to Do?

Women must value + respect themselves:

1. Female goddesses – women's power
2. Non sexist [sic] language – women's will – refusal to play the passive role
3. Women's bodies – affirmation e.g. ritual to celebrate first menstruation

Z. Budapest.

4. Women's bonds – Mother + Daughter each other
The Dinner Party.⁶

This is a crucially important list as it demonstrates Hone's recognition of contemporaneous feminist theological ideas, particularly the through line from women's personal experience of self-worth, to faith practices, and finally to structural patriarchy.

Feminist theologians recognized that the mainstream religions influenced by patriarchy, particularly Christianity, were directly connected to political, social, and cultural sexist norms. It follows that women's experiences of themselves were heavily impacted by these norms. Note that Hone directly followed up the comment that "women must value [and] respect themselves" with her first suggested solution which linked "female goddesses" with "women's power".⁷ Feminist theologians believed structural changes to religiosity would positively change both women's power structurally and individually because of religion's influential role in society. Hone read works by these feminist theologians and integrated their ideas into her own faith and actions.

Hone's list succinctly summarized important ideas in feminist theology between 1970 and 2000, which will appear throughout this thesis. Key to note now is the explicit and implicit references to symbolism and art in its connection to feminist spirituality as a solution,

⁵ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, Beth Hone, "Resources for Women and Religion," ND, 4; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004.

⁶ Hone, Notes: Miscl. Gathering/Retreat, 4.

⁷ Hone, Notes: Miscl. Gathering/Retreat, 4.

specifically with her citation of Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*.⁸ The choice to include references to a famous feminist artwork speaks to Hone's profession as a ceramicist. Her own work continued to evolve in this period as she shifted from more utilitarian objects to repeating studies of various historical goddess images.⁹ Mader referred to this change as indicative of Hone's evolving thinking about the potential power of feminist spirituality.¹⁰ Like many other feminist artists of her time, the ideas contained in the books on Hone's shelf became translated into objects. By the time Hone and her husband retired to the Qu'Appelle Valley, Hone's ceramics practice began to reflect a growing concern with how religious symbols and stories reflect patriarchal ideology.

What this book list indicates was Hone's established knowledge of widespread feminist discussions. Yet, Hone wrote this list in the mid-eighties when she was in her mid-sixties. She did not arrive at these conclusions in a vacuum, but rather through decades of dedicated study and experience in which she developed into the woman who later became a central figure in prairie feminist spirituality. Without looking at Hone's life story, there is little way to make sense of the seemingly disparate elements of feminism, art, and religion that come together in

⁸ Hone, Notes: Miscl. Gathering/Retreat, 4.

⁹ Studying both Hone's sales catalogues and her gallery showings, her output between the forties into the seventies were primarily utilitarian pieces made for in-home usage by buyers and more abstract ceramic pieces mimicking shapes from the plant world. Utilitarian ceramics provided a steady income through gallery sales and more abstract pieces afford Hone attention at formal art exhibits, including Expo 67 in Montreal. While this thesis does not delve into her early art career, including her business decisions and her artistic influences, her records indicate she attempted to both make money and make a name for herself through ceramics. Those dual foci undoubtedly influenced the type of marketable ceramics she produced. Reaching retirement, Hone's shift towards goddesses strongly reflects her own beliefs and interests as opposed to considering trends and markets of the art world. For more, please see archive files: Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2008-003, Beth Hone, "Fluted Gills #1," 1972, porcelain, stoneware, glaze & lustre, 18 x 17.8 x 17.8 cm; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales, Files 13: Department of Trade & Commerce [Expo], "An Appreciation of the Fine Contribution Towards the Success of the Canadian Government Pavilion at Expo 67"; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales, Files 13: Department of Trade & Commerce [Expo], "Canadian Government Participation 1967 Exhibition Loan Agreement - Works of Art and Crafts," Beth Hone Lender, 1967; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales, Files 14: External Affairs, Catalogue: "Canadian Government Pavilion Expo '67: Canadian Fine Crafts," Montreal QC: 1967; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 34, Series 8: Art- 3, File 12: Price List, Hone-James Studio Price List. For more see: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales.

¹⁰ Mader, interview, 6.

this thesis. Hone's biography reveals a woman who travelled across Canada and Europe first for her own schooling, and afterward for her teaching career. During her travels, Hone encountered elements of religion, activism and art that were all radically transforming. These worlds coalesced in 1980s Saskatchewan when Hone created a hub for feminist spiritual thought.

This chapter will follow Hone through the first half of her life in order to understand what led her to become a driving force and educator in the feminist spirituality movement. She shifted from a physical education teacher in rural Saskatchewan to a university ceramics instructor to co-founding a woman-run studio. In the mid-seventies, her turn towards religion was evidenced by her new membership in Unitarian Universalism. This religious group itself underwent a change throughout the postwar period with a growing interest in social justice and global unity inspired by diverse religious and political views, including feminist theology. Hone's own pre-existing interests in social justice and global unity aligned well with Unitarian Universalism's developing postwar focus. Analyzing Hone's evolution, it is evident how one feminist pursued self-education while on the prairies, despite isolation from the larger community. For Hone, books provided an access point to the feminist ideas which travelled and developed across the world. Therefore, Hone's education in feminist spirituality was possible from her prairie location both by seeking out pre-existing, like-minded faith communities such as Unitarian Universalism, education resources available to her, and through international travel opportunities.

An Education in Motion

The commitment to ongoing learning represented in Beth Hone's white bookcase perhaps had foundations in an early life of education. Born Beth Springer on February 2, 1918 in Halkirk, Alberta, she would not stay long in the town of her birth.¹¹ In her self-penned short autobiography, Hone lists Quill Lake, Imperial, Togo and Eatonia as the handful of places her family moved in order to follow her bank manager father's career.¹² Her dedication to learning was apparent from the beginning. Her family's residence in Eatonia did not offer twelfth grade

¹¹ "Beth Hone Obituary," *The Leader Post*, 29-30 April 2011, accessed on 18 Nov 2019, <https://speersfuneralchapel.com/tribute/details/1411/Beth-Hone/obituary.html>.

¹² University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 1, Series 1.1: Personal-Biography, File 3, Biographies, Mac and Beth Hone, Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone, ND, 3.

level education.¹³ So, she took her learning into her own hands in 1934 and moved to Kindersley to live with her aunt and uncle in order to complete grade twelve.¹⁴

After choosing education as her career, Hone earned her teaching certificate at the Saskatoon Normal School in 1936 and for her first job returned to the same one-room school in Eatonville she had once attended.¹⁵ In an early account of her wit, she reportedly bragged of having “running water in her teacherage” because of its profoundly leaky roof.¹⁶ It cannot have been an easy time, despite the access to “running water,” as she spent two years minding grades one to ten in the depths of a period in Saskatchewan which Hone notes as being wracked with, “dust storms [and] grasshoppers”.¹⁷

Once Hone’s sister, Isobel, completed the twelfth grade, they both left Eatonville in order to study at the University of Toronto.¹⁸ Hone returned to the classroom and studied to be a physical education teacher.¹⁹ Beth Springer graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and returned to Saskatoon in 1941.²⁰ Soon after, she enrolled in the University of Saskatchewan’s high school teaching certification courses



Figure 1--1: Isobel Springer (left) and Beth Springer (right) at a U of T dance, ND, University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 24, Series 7: Visual Materials - Photographs, Files 1: Photo Album - 50 Photographs

¹³ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 3.

¹⁴ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 3.

¹⁵ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 3; “Beth Hone Obituary”.

¹⁶ “Beth Hone Obituary”.

¹⁷ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 3.

¹⁸ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 4.

¹⁹ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 4.

²⁰ “Beth Hone,” *Saskatchewan Network for Art Collecting*, accessed on 18 November 2019, <http://www.sknac.ca/index.php?page=ArtistDetail&id=114>; Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 4.

which is where she met her future husband McGregor (Mac) Hone.²¹ Born in 1920 in Prince Albert, Mac Hone had already spent years studying under the well-known artist Gus Kenderdine at the University of Saskatchewan.²² At the time of meeting the then Beth Springer, he was studying education with hopes of becoming a high school art teacher.²³

After graduation, they went their separate ways with Beth Springer taking a position substitute teaching at Lawson High School and Mac Hone moving to North Vancouver in order to work in the shipyards.²⁴ Their shared interest in art brought them back together in May of 1943 when Springer wrote to Hone “to ask him about where to buy reproductions of famous paintings” to use in the classroom.²⁵ In the coming year, Springer took a position in Nanaimo and often travelled to Vancouver to attend the ballet and concerts with Hone. By December 28, 1944, the two were married.²⁶

The couple lived in North Vancouver and Copper Mountain after marriage and welcomed their first child, David into their family in 1946.²⁷ Their time in British Columbia would not last long as the family moved to Regina where Mac Hone took a job



Figure 1--2: Mac Hone (left) and Beth Springer (right) walking in Vancouver, written on photo's back: "We were married on 28 Dec 1944," Aug 1944, University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 24, Series 7: Visual Materials - Photographs, Files 1: Photo Album - 50 Photographs.

²¹ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 4.

²² Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 4

²³ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 4

²⁴ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 4.

²⁵ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 4.

²⁶ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 1.

²⁷ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 1.

teaching art at Central Collegiate in 1947.²⁸ The Hones would have their daughter, Janet, in 1948.²⁹ It was during this time in Regina that Beth Hone studied pottery at the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus with the accomplished prairie ceramicist, Jack Sures.³⁰

Something about working with clay must have struck Beth Hone on a fundamental level as this teacher who began instructing physical education then chose to change her career significantly.³¹ With their children at ages ten and twelve, the Hones came to a decision to move the entire family in 1958 to Farnham, England for a year so that Beth Hone could study ceramics at the School of Art.³² It is perhaps significant to note that this required Mac Hone to take leave from his established teaching career and focus on the care of his children, a choice different than many men may have made during this time period. Her return to Regina began a seven-year period as an instructor at the same Regina College School of Art at which she studied merely years prior.³³

Regina became home to Hone and her projects for the next, roughly, two decades. Her focused efforts as an artist came to fruition with the 1968 establishment of the Hone-James Studio.³⁴ I explored this business extensively in my prior Honours' Thesis as an example of a women-run, independent studio that serviced ceramicists of many ages, professional levels and backgrounds.³⁵ During this time, the studio provided access to cost-effective training, workshops with internationally-based artists and rentable space not attached to a university-led

²⁸ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 1.

²⁹ Hone, *Autobiographies of Mac and Beth Hone*, 1.

³⁰ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 1, Series 1.1: Personal-Biography, File 3, Biographies, Beth Hone, "Beth Hone," 2000s.

³¹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 1, Series 1.1: Personal-Biography, File 6, Education - Diplomas and Grades - 1930-1944, "Second and Third Year Grades for Diploma in Physical Education," University of Toronto, June 1941 & June 1942.

³² University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 1, Series 1.1: Personal-Biography, File 3, Biographies, Beth Hone, "Biography & CV - Beth Hone," ND.

³³ Hone, "Biography & CV - Beth Hone".

³⁴ Hone, "Biography & CV - Beth Hone".

³⁵ For more see my honours' thesis: Kiera Mitchell, *The Feminist Potential of Space: The Hone James Studio*, Honours' Thesis, University of Regina, 2018.

programme.³⁶ Unfortunately, barriers based on funding availability and the challenges Hone faced as a marginalized female artist made the studio unviable by 1973.³⁷ Hone sold the studio to her business partner, Ann James, and looked towards her future options.³⁸

She continued to produce and show ceramic works throughout this period, but there were other interests on her mind.³⁹ With their children grown, Mac and Beth Hone looked towards their nearing retirements. By the summer of 1977, they began pouring the foundation for the geodesic domes on James Street South in Lumsden.⁴⁰ This home built in the Lumsden hills would be made up of three dome structures: a central for the home, a right for Mac Hone's printmaking studio and a left for Beth Hone's ceramics studio. In this way, Beth Hone prepared herself to continue her ceramics production for as long as she desired.

The pottery wheel continued to turn for Hone but with her new life brought a change in subject matter. Hone began to produce an increasing number of figurines modeled after goddesses of history and myth. Thinking back to Hone's aforementioned list, "The Problem – Patriarchy + its influence on women", one can link this change of subject matter to the first point which connected female goddess imagery to female power.⁴¹ To understand from where this change in subject matter came, it is important to note that in the same decade as her retirement, Beth Hone became increasingly active in Regina's Unitarian Fellowship.

Unitarian Universalist Emerging

The Unitarians arrived in Regina shortly after the Hones. During the postwar period, new fellowships rapidly appeared across Canada, particularly in the west, and Regina welcomed its

³⁶ Mitchell, *The Feminist Potential of Space*.

³⁷ Mitchell, *The Feminist Potential of Space*.

³⁸ Mitchell, *The Feminist Potential of Space*.

³⁹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 56, Series 8.2: Art – Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales, File 6: Beth – Sales & Correspondence.

⁴⁰ Sandra Johnson, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 15, 2019, 10

⁴¹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Beth Hone, Notes: Miscl. Gathering/Retreat, ND, 4.

first fellowship in 1952.⁴² Although Unitarianism experienced a renewed public interest after the Second-World War, it was not a new sect. Unitarianism split from Protestantism in the eighteenth-century because the group questioned the validity of dividing God into the three components of the Christian Holy Trinity.⁴³ The sect argued instead that God could be understood as a united, whole being – hence, the name unitarian.⁴⁴ While this idea was radical at the time, Unitarians did not stop evolving and challenging the doctrines of mainstream Christianity and, more widely, religion entirely. A significant development in Unitarians evolution was their 1961 unification with another eighteenth-century Protestant sect.⁴⁵ The newly joined Universalists’ also originated as a radical challenge to mainstream Protestantism in which they questioned the validity of dividing people based on Christian sect.⁴⁶ In the twentieth century, this belief translated into congregations of many diverse spiritual practices, including Atheists.⁴⁷

The Unitarian Universalist (UU) promise of a different way of practicing faith was attractive in the post-war period of 1950s and 60s, when interest in religious practices accelerated.⁴⁸ Doug Owrarn notes that, in 1945, attendance at Canadian Christian churches was on the decline.⁴⁹ Yet, by the fifties, all major denominations experienced a significant increase in attendance, dubbed the “religious boom”.⁵⁰ Owrarn attributes this increase in numbers to a parental desire to instill standardized religious morals onto the ballooning population of baby

⁴² Phillip Hewett, *Unitarians in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Canadian Unitarian Council, 1995), 238-239.

⁴³ John C. Green, “A Liberal Dynamo: The Political Activism of the Unitarian-Universalist Clergy,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, no. 4 (2003): 577-578; Mark Oppenheimer, “‘The Inherent Worth and Dignity’: Gay Unitarians and the Birth of Sexual Tolerance in Liberal Religion,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 7, no. 1 (1996): 76.

⁴⁴ Green, “A Liberal Dynamo,” 577-578; Oppenheimer, “The Inherent Worth and Dignity,” 76.

⁴⁵ Oppenheimer, “The Inherent Worth and Dignity,” 76-77

⁴⁶ Green, “A Liberal Dynamo,” 577-578; Oppenheimer, “The Inherent Worth and Dignity,” 76.

⁴⁷ Oppenheimer, “The Inherent Worth and Dignity,” 76-77.

⁴⁸ Hewett, *Unitarians*, 218.

⁴⁹ Doug Owrarn, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 104-105.

⁵⁰ Hewett, *Unitarians*, 218; Owrarn, *Born at the Right Time*, 105.

boom children.⁵¹ While it is important to note the use of Christian Sunday school in socializing children to a uniform set of values, equally essential were the many other reasons people may have turned to religious practices in the postwar period.⁵² With the unfathomable scale of violence and disruption caused by the war, it is understandable why, in the wake of such jarring events, people faced new, perplexing questions about life's meaning and then sought out different spiritual answers. Unlike their mainstream Christian counterparts, UU offered a very open space for pursuing spirituality – including questioning the existence of God – which could account for why UU also saw a boost in membership during the postwar period.

Wider societal changes in what people desired from spiritual practices may have influenced wider structural changes in UU during the postwar period as well. As discussed, UU originated from Protestant Christianity. Despite this, throughout the 1940s and 50s, the Christian components of UU were concertedly stripped away including fewer references towards specific beliefs in “God.” For example, the buildings were not referred to as “churches”.⁵³ Additionally, Mark Oppenheimer astutely notes the absence of Jesus or any other Christian figures and symbols in the 1944 official Unitarian Working Principles.⁵⁴ Instead, members guided their lives by:

1: Individual freedom of belief; 2: Discipleship to advancing truth; 3: The democratic process in human relations; 4: Universal brotherhood, undivided by nation, race or creed; Allegiance to the cause of a united world community.⁵⁵

As the twentieth century progressed, UU increased its focus on these four principles, particularly the creation of a community which respected diversity of belief and experience. Throughout the rest of the decade, the organization took actions which made it clear that they would actively create a space for all sorts of people within their fellowships and in wider society.

⁵¹ Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 106-109.

⁵² Owram, *Born at the Right Time*, 106-107.

⁵³ Hewett, *Unitarians*, 223.

⁵⁴ Oppenheimer, “The Inherent Worth and Dignity,” 76.

⁵⁵ Oppenheimer, “The Inherent Worth and Dignity,” 76.

A Space for Social Justice

The Hones counted themselves among the many new, mid-century members of the UU. The earliest records of the Hones attendance at the Unitarian Fellowship were in 1973. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it relates to an art piece. Beth Hone kept a flyer for a memorial tapestry commissioned by the Regina Fellowship to honour a long-standing member.⁵⁶ Well-aligned with both of the Hones' artistic interests, this was just the beginning of extensive evidence of the Hones involvement with the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. While it is impossible to say exactly when Beth Hone and her husband, Mac Hone, first began regular attendance at the Regina Fellowship, further developments within UU made it an attractive option for any person with similar activist causes. While Mac and Beth Hone collaborated during their involvement in UU, they also pursued their own interests within the Fellowship.⁵⁷ Beth Hone paired her existing activist experiences with UU values and foci.

Hone, like many women of her time in the prairies, devoted herself to many different interests, many of which were explicitly political. Throughout the fifties and sixties, she held leadership roles in two organizations: the presidency of the Regina branch of the United Nations

⁵⁶ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 17, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 1 General, File 1: General, "Katherine Pickersgill Memorial Tapestry for Regina Unitarian Fellowship Pamphlet," 1973.

⁵⁷ Mac and Beth Hone shared many of their artistic, political, and activist interests and, while they would pursue different methods of expressing these at times, frequently they worked together. UU was one of many shared interests. Mac and Beth Hone co-edited the Regina Fellowship's newsletter, *The Chalice*, from 1989 to 1996 which often included Mac Hone's original illustrations and was printed on his home studio printing press. Mac Hone also provided original illustrations for the *UU Women's Web* which Beth Hone edited (see as example: Fig. 0-2) and at least one video broadcast produced by the Regina W&R reading group. The two also produced art together, some notable examples being the Mac Hone's assistance in the design of needlework panels that were then executed by Regina Voice of Women members; Beth Hone's role as printmaking studio assistant throughout Mac Hone's career; and the creation of multiple books, in which Beth Hone wrote text and Mac Hone provided illustrations, such as *Return to Ithaca* – a retelling of Homer's *Odyssey* from Penelope's perspective. While a full discussion of the artistic and activist collaboration between the Hones could not be addressed within the scope of this thesis, the dynamics in their relationship could be an interesting topic for future research. For more, see: Beth Hone, *Return to Ithaca: Based on Homer* (Lumsden: The Authors, 1993); Mader, interview, 6; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5.5: Unitarian Fellowship - Women and Religion, File 1: General, Hone, Beth, UU Women's Web, (Apr/May 1994); University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5.5: Unitarian Fellowship - Women and Religion, File 1: General, Hone, Beth, UU Women's Web, (Fall 1996); University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5.5: Unitarian Fellowship - Women and Religion, File 1: General, Hone, Beth, UU Women's Web, (Fall 1997); University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 20, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship – 3: Regina Fellowship, File 7: *The Chalice* – 1987-2006; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 24, Series 6: Voice of Women, File 9: Panels (Needlework).

Association and the presidency of the Voice of Women Regina branch.⁵⁸ Both shared a vision of peace and global unity. Voice of Women (VOW) was particularly notable as a movement begun in Canada and led by women.⁵⁹ Born out of heightened Cold War anxieties regarding nuclear escalation and impending global warfare, within a year of their 1960 founding, VOW had over 5,000 members countrywide.⁶⁰ The organization theorized that all women across the world, joined by their “instinctive concern for the family” (which they presumed was essential) could form together in a massive voice for peace and anti-war advocacy.⁶¹

While this maternalist perspective flattened all women out into a uniform group of idealized mothers and homemakers who shared not only a “dedication to their children” but all children, it is best to understand VOW as employing a successful, long term political strategy for women.⁶² By asserting that the female perspective was guided by maternal instincts, women strategically positioned themselves within masculine discourses such as politics from which they had long been excluded. This strategy had long been employed by women who advocated for their perspective to be included in public discourse from first-wave Canadian suffragists in the early 1900s to the post 1945 emergence of VOW.⁶³

⁵⁸ See article: Kiera Mitchell, “‘We Must Watch Over Our Living’: Why the Message of Regina’s Voice of Women Was Heard,” *Folklore*, (Summer 2019): 32–34; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 1, Series 1.1: Personal-Biography, File 3, Biographies, “McGregor Hone Biography,” ND; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 1, Series 1.1: Personal-Biography, File 3, Biographies, “UNESCO,” Mrs. McGregor Hone, president of UN Association Addresses University Women’s Club, ND; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 10, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 26: Clippings [ca. 1939-1962], “Speaker Describes Decade of UNESCO Achievements,” *The Leader Post*, ND, 6; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 24, Series 6-4, Beth Hone, “History and Accomplishment of the Voice of Women,” October 1966, 1.

⁵⁹ Roberta Lexier, “Linking the Past with the Future: Voice of Women in Regina,” *Saskatchewan History* 56, no. 2 (2004): 24–25.

⁶⁰ Steve Hewitt and Christabelle Sethna, *Just Watch Us: RCMP Surveillance of the Women’s Liberation Movement in Cold War Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018), 108-109; Candace Loewen, “Making Ourselves Heard: ‘Voice of Women’ and the Peace Movement in the Early Sixties,” in *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women’s History in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 248.

⁶¹ Loewen, “Making Ourselves Heard”

⁶² Hone, “History and Accomplishment,” 1.

⁶³ For more, see: Tarah Brookfield, *Cold War Comforts: Canadian Women, Child Safety, and Global Insecurity* (Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012); Joan Sangster, *One Hundred Years of Struggle: The History of*

Noting Hone's involvement in VOW demonstrates both her awareness of contemporaneous feminist strategies and her experience of organizing around so-called women's issues. The focus of Hone's two main activist involvements during this period of her life, VOW and the United Nations, also indicate her concern about world unity and pacifism. Considering again the fourth point of the Unitarian working principles, "allegiance to the cause of a united world community," one can see how Hone's early activist involvement paired well with UU values.⁶⁴ In fact, during the postwar period, UU would make a series of official moves to become an organization which centered social justice causes at its core.

A Different Sort of Religious Organization

Following the Unitarian and Universalist merger, the organization emphasized its position as an advocate for a variety of social justice issues informed by the belief in "the inherent worth and dignity of every person."⁶⁵ In its many chosen advocacy issues, the organization began to differentiate itself from many of its organized religious contemporaries. Additionally, in choosing to take on specific issues, UU became even more attractive for different types of people who may otherwise have felt alienated from organized religion.



Figure 1-3: Beth Hone Giving a Talk at the Regina Unitarian Fellowship, ND, University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 25, Series 7: Visual Materials - Photographs, File 24

One of the longest standing significant differences between UU and most mainstream organized religions was that they allowed women into the ministry as early as the later

Women and the Vote in Canada, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018); Brian T. Thorn, *From Left to Right: Maternalism and Women's Political Activism in Postwar Canada*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).

⁶⁴ Oppenheimer, "The Inherent Worth and Dignity," 76.

⁶⁵ Hewett, *Unitarians*, 318-319.

nineteenth century, with the first in Canada appearing in 1926.⁶⁶ Female leadership in major organized religions was and continues to be a contentious issue (particularly with the Catholic Church), with many barring women from taking on any form of spiritual leadership role. Perhaps even more unusual for the time, Regina Fellowship followed the model of many Canadian UU branches by not having a minister at all. Instead, attendees led the weekly meetings on a rotating basis.⁶⁷ Women acted as important components of Regina's fellowship leadership and Hone stepped up into various leadership roles, including the many talks she gave throughout her time attending the fellowship.⁶⁸ In Fellowships like Regina, religious authority was not held by a single individual but by many and not limited by gender. It cannot be understated how this approach to leadership and gender offered a unique and radical faith community in comparison to other mainstream organized religions active in Regina at this time.

UU's positive attitude towards women's leadership in the church translated into their social justice concerns as well. Securing widespread abortion access in North America became one of UU's concerns in the postwar period. In 1968, when Pope Paul VI released an encyclical stating that any type of birth control was intrinsically wrong, the North America-wide UU

⁶⁶ Valerie J. Korinek details the struggle for women's ordination in the United Church of Canada which resulted in Lydia E. Gruchy's ordination in 1936, after nearly eighteen years of debate on women's religious leadership. As Gruchy also came from Saskatchewan, perhaps the prairies offered a unique space for religious transgression and change. See: Valerie J. Korinek, "No Women Need Apply: The Ordination of Women in the United Church, 1918-65," *The Canadian Historical Review* 74, no. 4 (1993): 473-509, <https://doi.org/10.3138/CHR-074-04-01>; Hewett, *Unitarians*, 319, 388.

⁶⁷ Joanne Greene, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 17, 2019, 3-4.

⁶⁸ For examples of her talks please see: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 21, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 3 Regina Fellowship, File 29: Talks - The Goddess - Artefact & Metaphor, "The Goddess Artefact & Metaphor," Wynyard Unitarian Church, 10 July 1994; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 21, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 3 Regina Fellowship, File 30: Talks - Is Anyone Out There?, Beth Hone, "Is Anyone Out There?" Talk at UU Regina, 6 Nov 1988; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 21, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 3 Regina Fellowship, File 32: Talks - Neopagans & Unitarians, Beth Hone, "Neopagans and Unitarians" Talk for RUF, 28 Feb 1992; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 21, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 3 Regina Fellowship, File 33: Maimonides, Beth Hone, "Maimonides (1139-1204)" Talk for UU Regina, 3 May 1987; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 21, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 3 Regina Fellowship, File 38: Talks - Pagan Wonder, Beth Hone, "Pagan Wonder," Talk for RUF, ND; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 21, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 3 Regina Fellowship, File 43: Talks - Various, Beth Hone, "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: Women and Judaism," 19, Mar 1989; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 21, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 3 Regina Fellowship, File 44: Talks - Who Needs the Goddess?, Beth Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?" Talk for RUF, 20 Apr 1988.

General Assembly began their advocacy for legalizing physician provided abortions.⁶⁹ Later in 1980, the Canadian Unitarian Council put forward a resolution to “promote changes in the law to permit that the right to abortion be determined exclusively by the woman in consultation with a physician”.⁷⁰ This resolution included an action plan to advocate for easy access to birth control and “to form a coalition of like-minded religious” and non-religious groups in order to cohesively lobby all levels of government.⁷¹ Another point, “to support the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL)” was taken up by Hone at the Regina Fellowship.⁷² Hone actively worked to fundraise and advocate for the group throughout the eighties including making ceramic medallions to raise money for CARAL.⁷³ Arguably, Hone’s involvement in UU offered her an introduction to reproductive activism, which became one of her many championed issues.

Yet another UU cause began on July 4, 1970 when the UU General Assembly passed a resolution asking that, “all peoples immediately bring to an end... all discrimination against homosexuals, homosexuality, bisexuals, and bisexuality”⁷⁴ As a flyer from Hone’s archives declares, UU Fellowships moved past mere tolerance for gays and lesbians and into advocacy for, as they put it, “gay human rights”.⁷⁵ This progressive view on sexuality was adopted quite

⁶⁹ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter: *Humanae Vitae* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 25 July 1968), http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 19, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 1 General, File 32: Position Papers – Abortion, Mary Andrus-Overley, "History of UUA Position on Abortion Rights," ND, "Against Censorship in Public Schools," Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, ND.

⁷⁰ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 1: Abortion, Canadian Unitarian Council Action Plan Re: Freedom of Choice (for Terminating a Pregnancy), 1980.

⁷¹ Canadian Unitarian Council Action Plan Re: Freedom of Choice.

⁷² Canadian Unitarian Council Action Plan Re: Freedom of Choice; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, Beth Hone, "Western Canada District," 1985.

⁷³ Hone, "Western Canada District".

⁷⁴ Oppenheimer, “The Inherent Worth and Dignity,” 82.

⁷⁵ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 19, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 1 General, File 30: Pamphlets, "A Voice for Gay Human Rights: Unitarian Universalism" Pamphlet, ND.

early in comparison to many mainstream organized religions and would likely have attracted gay and lesbian membership interested in a welcoming spiritual space. Indeed, one of my narrators, Evelyn Rogers, told me that a crucial reason she and her female partner attended the Regina UU Fellowship was because they were actively welcomed and accepted in the congregation.⁷⁶

As discussed, much of the UU's social justice advocacy was rooted in their belief in "the inherent worth and dignity of every person."⁷⁷ This belief was theologically supported through the UU's omnivorous attitude towards spiritual source material. Point two in the UU Working Principles was "Discipleship to Advancing Truth" which one of my narrators – a member of UU Fellowships since age eight – Joanne Greene, elaborated upon in our interview.⁷⁸ As the story goes, "a Unitarian dies and gets to the pearly gates and they see two signs and one says "to heaven" and one says "to a discussion about heaven". So, the Unitarian goes to the discussion."⁷⁹ This anecdote demonstrated a lighthearted self-awareness about UU membership's notoriety for animatedly discussions of all aspects of the nature of spirituality and faith. The goal was not necessarily getting to heaven, but instead gathering and analyzing as many perspectives as possible about the nature of heaven. Indeed, in the UU perspective, truth was discovered through active discussions about spirituality which then helped develop and modify beliefs and practices.

It is also key to note that the official language UU employs to describe their beliefs was as a "living tradition".⁸⁰ Inherent to their practice was the acknowledgement that in the process of "advancing truth" beliefs may change based on what was discovered.⁸¹ UU members built their living tradition from an ever-evolving list of sources. The 1984 Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Revised Working Principles exemplified this with a list of sources including: "direct experience," "words and deeds of prophetic women and men," "wisdom from the world's

⁷⁶ Evelyn Rogers, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 20, 2019, 6.

⁷⁷ Hewett, *Unitarians*, 318-319.

⁷⁸ Joanne Greene, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 17, 2019, 1; Oppenheimer, "The Inherent Worth and Dignity, 76.

⁷⁹ Greene, interview, 5.

⁸⁰ Hewett, *Unitarians*, 317-318.

⁸¹ Oppenheimer, "The Inherent Worth and Dignity, 76.

religions,” “Jewish and Christian teachings,” and “humanist teachings”.⁸² Greene also told me that this diversity of religious teachings featured heavily in UU children’s programming (which she helped run in Regina) that aimed to teach children “to look at all sorts of things and make their own life choices”.⁸³ She pointed out an irony in the programmes success: many children who took the programs chose an entirely different spiritual practice as adults and left their UU Fellowships behind.⁸⁴ Yet, perhaps no other end result could be more in the spirit of UU.

A Living Tradition Including Feminist Thought

Considering the wide breadth of UU source material, in combination with their social justice activities, it should not be surprising that feminist theology would find its place in UU’s living tradition. In fact, the UU General Assembly officially embraced the growing field of feminist theology in 1977 when it passed a resolution on women and religion.⁸⁵ This stated:

some models of human relationships arising from religious myths, historical materials, and other teachings still create and perpetuate attitudes that cause women everywhere to be overlooked and undervalued.⁸⁶

The resolution’s adoption called for Fellowships to, among other points, “...open their minds and hearts to the insights of feminist theologians...”⁸⁷ With this the UU General Assembly signalled their active inclusion of feminist perspectives on spirituality in UU’s “living tradition”. In a spiritual organization that had fashioned itself into an ever-evolving discussion on all facets of faith, feminist theology would be just yet another text to add to their growing shelf.

As with their other social justice causes, the call against sexism did not simply remain within the UU 1977 resolution. In order to integrate these words into the daily life of the UU

⁸² Hewett, *Unitarians*, 317-318.

⁸³ Greene, interview, 6.

⁸⁴ Greene, interview, 6.

⁸⁵ “1977 Business Resolution,” *Unitarian Universalist Association*, accessed on 20 Nov 2019, <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/women-and-religion>.

⁸⁶ “1977 Business Resolution.”

⁸⁷ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, “1977 Business Resolution”; “Resolution,” ND.

membership, a Women & Religion (W&R) Task Force was created with districts across North America.⁸⁸ As early as 1979, Hone became the chair of the newly minted Western Canadian District and thus opened a significant chapter in her activist life.⁸⁹ With the formation of the W&R Task Force began an official, Unitarian, North America-wide reckoning with institutionalized sexism. The Unitarian women in Regina were not an exception. As Beth Hone wrote in a 1985 report for Regina Women and Religion Study Group's activities: "Feminist theology? Fundamental to all we do!"⁹⁰

Thus, UU offered an existing community of Fellowships across North America combined with an organizational commitment to feminist theological study and practice. This enabled Hone to begin feminist spiritual community building in Regina while using pre-existing community and organizational structures. One example of this was the Study Group in Regina, which sprung out of the W & R Task Force. Groups popped up across North America to allow for the discussion and spread of the latest in feminist theology. Like their sister groups across the continent, women from Regina and the surrounding area met regularly at the UU centre and studied current texts regarding feminist theology.⁹¹ One of these texts was a curriculum developed by the UU Women & Religion Task Force for the very purpose of highlighting major components of current feminist theological thought: *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*.

Betty Donaldson, one of my narrators and a professor emerita from the University of Calgary who had extensive involvement in the UU women and religion movement, emphatically told me that *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* "had an enormous influence".⁹² Published out of

⁸⁸ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, "District Map," ND; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 7: Correspondence - Western Canada, "What is the Resolution on Women & Religion?," Berkeley CA: Women and Religion Task Force, ND.

⁸⁹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 1: General, Beth Hone, "WDCUC W&R News Report," November 1979.

⁹⁰ Hone, "Western Canada District".

⁹¹ Rogers, interview, 3; Mader, interview, 2-3; Greene, interview, 1-2.

⁹² The name, *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, refers to Jeremiah, 7:7-18 in the Hebrew Bible in which God warns Jeremiah that a great disaster will occur because people are worshipping Gods other than Yahweh, including "the women [who] knead dough to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven". A forbidding quote on first examination, choosing to name the curriculum thus was a nod to goddess worshippers in the past whose spiritual practices were viewed as a community danger; Shirley Ann Ranck, *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: A Ten-Session Adult Seminar*

Boston in 1985 by Shirley A. Ranck, *Cakes* offered a “Seminar in Feminist Theology” which combined hands-on activities with current important texts by authors like Carol Christ, Z. Budapest and Starhawk.⁹³ Regarding the spelling of Theology, Donaldson ensured to emphasize in our conversation that this was an intentional distinction from the typical spelling of the word, Theology.⁹⁴ In *Cakes*, Ranck explains that this employed alternate spelling was coined in religious scholar Naomi Goldenberg’s *Theology* “from *thea*, the Greek word for “goddess”.⁹⁵ Its use in *Cakes* indicated to the reader that the content was “about the religion of the Goddess and of women’s relationship to Her”.⁹⁶ This spelling’s inclusion indicated *Cakes* as part of the feminist movement which strove to establish separate, alternative, women-centric spaces, ideas and symbols in order to upend patriarchal power.

Cakes incorporated contemporaneous feminist theological thought on women-centric alternative religion demonstrate and UU provided a platform for wide-distribution of these ideas across North America, including Donaldson’s study group in Calgary and Hone’s in Regina. The curriculum’s suggestions were not out-of-synch with UU’s wider beliefs. In fact, Ranck believed the tenets of the UU tradition provided a perfect space to do feminist interventions into religion.⁹⁷ As discussed above, the inherent religious pluralism within UU meant a “human freedom to choose what we find of value in any religious or secular writings”.⁹⁸ For Ranck, *Cakes* offered an opportunity to fully integrate feminist religious writings and practices into UU’s living tradition.⁹⁹

The first session of *Cakes* made deft work of communicating the connection between the individual, and sexism through introducing discussion of the body. Titled “Reclaiming Our

in Feminist Theology, (Boston: Section of Religion Education Unitarian Universalist Association, 1986); 3; Betty Donaldson, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 22, 2019, 1-2.

⁹³ Donaldson, interview, 2; Ranck, *Seminar*.

⁹⁴ Donaldson, interview, 5.

⁹⁵ Ranck, *Seminar*, 3.

⁹⁶ Ranck, *Seminar*, 3.

⁹⁷ Ranck, *Seminar*, 9.

⁹⁸ Ranck, *Seminar*, 9.

⁹⁹ Ranck, *Seminar* 9.

Bodies”, the first session posed a lofty question: “Would we have more self-esteem and be more accepting of our bodies if God were female?”¹⁰⁰ Feminist theology of the time commonly connected women’s bodies, self-worth, and faith practice. This connection appeared too in Hone’s list at this chapter’s beginning in which the third suggestion is “affirmation” of “women’s bodies”.¹⁰¹ The body is a perfect and commonly employed site for beginning feminist learning because it is unambiguously personal while still subject to constant external pressures.

Cakes was structured to show women how their personal experiences connected to other women and how their experiences connected to religious ideas. These were executed through the three learning outcomes for participating women:

- 1: to get acquainted with each other and with our female ancestors;
- 2: to become aware of our individual attitudes toward the female body;
- 3: to become aware of the veneration of the female in ancient times.¹⁰²

The first exercise not only introduced each participant to one another but contextualized each person within a lineage of women and the practice of intergenerational knowledge. Participants would verbally recite their lineage: “I am _____, daughter of _____, who was the daughter of _____...From my mother (or grandmother) I learned _____”.¹⁰³ By choosing to include a piece of knowledge learned from a participant’s ancestors, this exercise also signalled that women’s knowledge was a valuable and honoured resource in the curriculum which followed.

The principles of the introduction were built on by the next exercise in which women broke into small groups where each person discussed “as much or as little as [they] wish of [their] memories of [themselves] at puberty”.¹⁰⁴ This developed the idea that women’s personal experiences of their body, while potentially wildly differing, could foster moments of connection, empathy and solidarity. Afterwards, the group leader would choose from three options of exercise: each person drawing how they saw themselves nude, a “guided fantasy” observing oneself in the mirror, or imagining preparing one’s appearance as a woman for a big

¹⁰⁰ Ranck, *Seminar*, 17.

¹⁰¹ Hone, Notes: Miscl. Gathering/Retreat, 4.

¹⁰² Ranck, *Seminar*, 17.

¹⁰³ Ranck, *Seminar*, 17.

¹⁰⁴ Ranck, *Seminar*, 18.

public speech.¹⁰⁵ All had the same intention: by considering the physical body, women were provoked into truly considering the connection between the physical self, self-perception, and patriarchal societal expectations. These exercises all occurred in a group setting, which also required women to openly discuss and reflect on not only their own bodily experiences, but that of their fellow participants.

The session ended with an extended discussion of how women's bodies were depicted in earlier stages of history through images of goddesses. A filmstrip flipped through a variety of ancient religious depictions of goddesses across the world with an accompanying text which stated these depictions portrayed the female form as an inherently powerful, positive force.¹⁰⁶ After observing the filmstrip, participants were instructed to first write the phrase: "The Goddess affirms women's bodies" and then respond in discussion to a prompt: "What do *we* [emphasis from text] affirm about women's bodies and how might that be reflected in an image of a Goddess?"¹⁰⁷

From the beginning of the session to its end, participants were guided to connect their embodied experience to that of other participants, and finally to the religious symbols upheld in society. It is worth noting how radical the experience of openly discussing the experience of puberty or a drawing of one's own naked body in a group setting would have been for many women during this time. Yet, in one session, *Cakes* participants experienced this type of discussion paired with a potentially even more scandalous discussion of replacing all patriarchal religious symbols with feminist ones. The opportunity to freely speak about both personal experience and bigger structural or theological questions may have been a welcome and thrilling opportunity for women who may not have had an opportunity to do so otherwise. *Cakes* provided a structured curriculum which provided an accessible structure for such discussions for any community with interested UU women.

¹⁰⁵ Ranck, *Seminar*, 18-19.

¹⁰⁶ Shirley A. Ranck, *A Filmstrip to Accompany Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, (Boston: Section of Religion Education Unitarian Universalist Association, 1986); Ranck, *Seminar*, 19-20.

¹⁰⁷ Ranck, *Seminar*, 20.

Establishing a Network of the Feminist Living Tradition

The Regina Women & Religion Study Group took up *Cakes* and worked through it as did many of their sister groups across North America. This simultaneous studying of the same material created a wide network of people all versed in the same sorts of ideas from the same source. The Unitarian Universalist Women's Association (UUWA) ultimately connected all these disparate groups together through newsletters, mailing lists and, if one had the resources, a series of regularly held conferences across the continent. Yet, Hone and her friends in Regina found themselves in a situation particular to the province in which they lived. Although the Regina women connected to their sister groups across Western Canada and beyond with *Cakes*, many hours of driving separated most prairie towns and cities. A physical meeting could not be easily accomplished without some planning.

However, Hone already had travelled many kilometers for the sake of pursuing education. It was not unheard of for an activist woman on the Canadian prairies to consider a multi-hour drive for a short amount of time among the like-minded.¹⁰⁸ As the next chapter will explore, Hone and her collaborators used the network created by the UUWA and its curriculum, *Cakes*, and established a gathering of women from across Western and Central Canada in the small Saskatchewan town Hone retired to in the mid-seventies. Her role as an organizer was fueled by a combination of Hone's own special interest in feminist spiritual thought, her feminist artistic practice, and her long-established dedication to both continued education and activist organizing. All of this combined with the established infrastructure and liberal omnivorous spiritual tradition of the UU and resulted in a unique feminist gathering tailored to the needs of this group of prairie women. At the crossroads of all of these factors, Hone stood as one of the leaders who breathed life into a particular sort of feminist spirituality which would take hold in central Saskatchewan – a spirituality that challenged the images, symbols and stories of mainstream religious traditions.

¹⁰⁸ For more see: Valerie J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Liz Millward, *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community across Canada, 1964-84*, Sexuality Studies Series (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

Chapter 2 : “Coming Together to Build” – The Lumsden Women’s Gatherings



Figure 2-1: Sally Meadows, *St. Michael's Retreat*, 2015, <https://sallymeadows.com/blogs/new-website/posts/reflections-on-the-prairie-horizons-canscaip-conference-2015>.

From 1986 to 2004, on one July Friday night per year, the main meeting hall of St. Michael’s Retreat Centre in Lumsden, Saskatchewan held a unique ceremony. There, in a room where the windows stretched out to reveal the endless curve of the hills, women from across Western and Central Canada gathered. These women all carried water in a variety of containers: jars, vials, decanters, chalices. Brought in different ways and originating from distant locations, the water came from somewhere each woman found particularly important: perhaps connected to a special trip, or a body of water they lived near and sometimes from a source in their own home. On that night, the women would add their water one-by-one to a communal basin. With the gathering of the waters from vast geographic distances, so was symbolized the start of that year’s Women’s Gathering in Lumsden, Saskatchewan.

As discussed in the previous chapter, a shift in Unitarian Universalism occurred with the 1977 General Assembly resolution which called for the acknowledgement of institutionalized

sexism in organized religion and the incorporation of feminist theology into UU.¹ One of the ways in which this resolution translated into action was through the founding of the Women & Religion (W&R) Committee.² Divided into districts across North America, the W&R Committee began meeting regularly throughout the eighties and worked to enact institutional change necessary to eliminate sexist attitudes and discrimination.³ Hone would become the chair, at its founding in 1979, of the Western Canadian District (WCD), to which the Regina area belonged.⁴

Although the W&R Committee found strength in its interconnected network of districts, each district had its own regional challenges as well as their own perspectives. The WCD contained a vast breadth of territory from British Columbia to Western Ontario. Creating cohesive plans and action across an expansive body of land with a widely dispersed population posed a challenge.⁵ The solution that arose was the founding of the Lumsden Women's Gatherings which occurred between 1986 to 2004. These gatherings only occurred through a confluence of factors: the W&R Task Force, Hone's involvement, and the event's geographic location. Each of these aspects must be examined in order to explain the content and purpose of these Gatherings. The Lumsden Women's Gatherings demonstrate a successful, context-specific solution to community-building activism on the prairies which also attracted participants from across Canada and America.

¹ "1977 Business Resolution," *Unitarian Universalist Association*, accessed on 20 Nov 2019, <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/women-and-religion>; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, "Resolution," ND.

² University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, "District Map," ND; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 7: Correspondence - Western Canada, "What is the Resolution on Women & Religion?," Berkeley CA: Women and Religion Task Force, ND.

³ "What is the Resolution on Women & Religion?"; "District Map".

⁴ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 1: General, Beth Hone, "WDCUC W&R News Report," Nov 1979.

⁵ Other districts were roughly as geographically large, particularly the Mountain Desert District which encompassed Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. Yet, other states had their own district, such as Michigan and Florida. I do not have statistics on other districts, particularly membership population density, so I cannot comment on challenges specific to organizing in other districts or how these district borders were originally determined. University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee "District Map."

Making Our Own Myths

As discussed in the previous chapter, a common resource studied by W&R reading groups across districts was the Boston-published *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*. Studied by many women across North America, the significant influence of this curriculum cannot be understated. The course material provided a common language with which to discuss sexism and religion for all those who studied it. The Regina W&R reading group was among the many students of *Cakes* curriculum. Yet, it would be a mistake to assume that the Regina W&R reading group only relied on resources like *Cakes* from other, particularly larger and American, communities. In fact, while Hone and her fellow representatives brought back to Regina many resources from the W&R conventions they attended, the group also produced their own interpretations of important feminist ideas on religion. Often, these resources were then shared with the wider North American network.

Perhaps the most significant example of this is the television programme and a short, hand-drawn booklet both titled *Ms. & Myth*.⁶ The two formats are nearly identical content translated into two separate mediums. Both demonstrate multi-textual weaving together of sources, such as art objects, poetry, personal experience, religious text and philosophy, into a feminist theological text. A similar approach can be found in Carol P. Christ's influential article "Why Women Need the Goddess", which many of the Regina women would have already encountered in the introductory session of *Cakes*.⁷ In merely eight pages, Christ argues for the potential and power of an alternative, Goddess-centric feminist spiritual practice by weaving together evidence from Ntosake Shange's Broadway play *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, anthropologist Clifford Geertz, philosopher

⁶ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 3: "Being Our Age", Jane Hillabond et al., "Ms. & Myth," Regina SK: Women & Religion Study Group of the Regina Unitarian Fellowship: 14 Oct 1979; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 30, Series 7: Visual Media – 3 Videos, Jane Hillabond et al., "Ms. & Myth"; *Ms. & Myth*. Regina: 1979, Broadcast BETA, 27 minutes.

⁷ Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," in *Readings, Songs and Other Resources to Accompany the Seminar in Feminist Theology*, ed. Shirley A. Ranck, 1-9 (Boston: Section of Religion Education Unitarian Universalist Association, 1986); Shirley Ann Ranck, *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: A Ten-Session Adult Seminar in Feminist Theology*, (Boston: Section of Religion Education Unitarian Universalist Association, 1986), 16.

Simone de Beauvoir, novelist Monique Wittig, artist Judy Chicago and poet Faith Wilding all presented on equal footing with feminist theologians like Mary Daly.⁸

The *Ms. & Myth* booklet was written in a similar way. Published on October 14, 1979 in celebration of “Woman as Persons Day”, it incorporates Unitarian history, women’s history and feminist theology in an educative reflection on the state of women and religion.⁹ All these elements are expressed through lithograph prints produced by Mac Hone and a collage of texts from a variety of sources including passages from the Bible, the Torah, the Qur’an, Thomas Aquinas’ *Suma Theologica*, Marina Warner’s *Alone of All Her Sex*, Judith Goldenberg’s “Epilogue: The Coming of Lilith,” and Maireen Newell’s poem, “It IS Time”.¹⁰ These texts were employed in order to demonstrate how, in places where Abrahamic faith was practised, the treatment of women was directly influenced through a dialogue between Abrahamic teachings on the spiritual treatment of women and the sociopolitical treatment of women. With its last page, the booklet turned to contemporaneous feminist theologians and artists in order to present an alternative, woman-centred faith.¹¹ *Ms. & Myth* demonstrated the Regina Study Group’s awareness of feminist theological ideas of the time, through its recognition of the religious roots of societal notions about ethics, morals and law and its vision of a feminist religious future.

The television programme turned the content of the booklet into a visual medium. While the content of the programme remained very similar to its sister booklet, one of the main changes is the addition of two slideshows of images visually emphasizing the programme’s arguments about women’s historical and complicated relationship to religion.¹² These two batches of slides advanced across the screen accompanied by two songs by the Dianic Priestess and composer Kay Gardner, “Changing” and “Wise Woman”, which are only referenced by title in the print medium

⁸ Christ, “Why Women Need the Goddess,” 1-9.

⁹ Mac Hone provided lithographic prints for both mediums of *Ms. & Myth*. His artistic contributions to these two projects represent yet another instance of supporting his wife’s efforts through the employment of his considerable artistic skill. Hillabond et al., “Ms. & Myth”; Hillabond et al., *Ms. & Myth*, Broadcast BETA.

¹⁰ Hillabond et al., “Ms. & Myth”.

¹¹ Hillabond et al., “Ms. & Myth,” 9.

¹² Hillabond et al., *Ms. & Myth*, Broadcast BETA.

counterpart.¹³ A significant figure in both feminist and lesbian music history, Gardner combined her musical composition with her studies of Dianic Witchcraft and women's cultural history.¹⁴ Her inclusion in *Ms. & Myth* signaled the Regina group's further awareness of developments within the women's spirituality movement, with particular focus on the connection between women's culture, lesbianism, and witchcraft.

Both the booklet and the television programme were not created merely to be used by the members of Regina's W&R reading group. Copies of the booklet were distributed "to all District societies" and the Canadian Unitarian Committee where they would have found readership across North America.¹⁵ The television programme first aired on "Cable 3 Regina" in January 1980. It is intriguing to imagine anybody in Regina and surrounding area tuning into the local television channel and happening upon a declaration of women's spiritual authority. The wide reach of local access cable in its community was an undoubtable benefit. This reach is likely why Hone encouraged members of the WCD in her district newsletter to pursue airing of the programme on their own local television stations.¹⁶ The program was also subsequently distributed by VHS across Canada and the U.S..¹⁷ Finally, a tape was held by the "UUA Audio-visual Loan Library" in Boston which undoubtedly led to more unrecorded viewings as this distributed media for UU members across North America.¹⁸

¹³ Hillabond et al., *Ms. & Myth*, Broadcast BETA.

¹⁴ Catherine Roma, "The Healing Muse: An Interview with Kay Gardner," *Contemporary Music Review* 16, no. 1–2 (1997): 99–104, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494469700640111>; J. Michele Edwards, "Gardner, Kay," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, 20 January 2001, accessed 15 Jan. 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.45073>

¹⁵ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 1: General, Beth Hone, "Report to Board Meeting," WDCUC W&R, Jan 1980, 1.

¹⁶ Beth Hone, "WDCUC W & R News Report".

¹⁷ Some Fellowship at which *Ms. & Myth* was viewed include: Winnipeg, Cambridge, Sacramento and Oakland. University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 7: Correspondence - Western Canada, Letter to May Andrews-Everley from Beth Hone re: order of *Ms. & Myth*, 28 Jan 1986.

¹⁸ Letter to May Andrews-Everley from Beth Hone.

Bridging the Distance Between Women

Hone and the Regina W&R reading group not only shared their resources with a wider North American network, they also often travelled to meet in-person with members of this network. Although the W&R Committee divided North America up into regional districts, based on Hone's records of various conferences it appears that they viewed regular, in-person collaborative meetings an essential part of their organization. As a chair, and someone who both was able and willing, Hone often attended W&R's conventions which brought together district chairs and representatives.¹⁹ One such event that occurred was the UUA Women & Religion Committee's "Convocation 1980".²⁰ This was held in East Lansing, Michigan very shortly after the implementation of the W&R Resolution.²¹ A vital part of this gathering was the training sessions on the W&R Committee's newly designed "auditing process" called "Checking Our Balance".²² This auditing process was designed to "identif[y] the sexism in our societies" and could be applied to any local UU community in order to root out and repair sexist practices.²³ Hone noted her experience of "Checking Our Balance" as providing "materials to eradicate sexism".²⁴

This large scale gathering also offered many other experiences throughout the weekend for attendees. Hone recorded a list of her big takeaways from the weekend which she found to be "affirming womanhood": "songs, poems, recent history, ancient goddesses, witches, novels + plays, celebrating our foremothers, ceremonies".²⁵ This mix of topics were examples of

¹⁹ For this see the files in: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion.

²⁰ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 5: Convocation - East Lansing, Programme from Convocation 1980: Feminist Theology, East Lansing Michigan: Michigan State University, 14-16 Nov 1980.

²¹ Programme from Convocation 1980: Feminist Theology.

²² Programme from Convocation 1980: Feminist Theology.

²³ Programme from Convocation 1980: Feminist Theology.

²⁴ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 5: Convocation - East Lansing, Beth Hone, Notes re: Program, 1980.

²⁵ Hone, Notes re: Program, 1980.

commonly held components of feminist thought at the time. They also became preoccupations of Hone's which would appear in her work and spiritual organizing to come. At Convocation 1980, Hone also encountered the feminist musician "Carolyn McDade singing [and] playing her autoharp."²⁶ Originally from Louisiana, McDade became involved in the UUA Women & Religion and began composing songs about social action and religion for women's choral groups.²⁷ Throughout the 80s and 90s, she presented workshops across North America on the connection between social justice, women's spirituality, and singing.²⁸ Marking yet another transnational connection forged through UU women's spirituality, McDade would visit Saskatchewan multiple times to lead workshops for interested groups.²⁹ Hone attended some of McDade's Saskatchewan events.³⁰

Another significant experience of Hone's from Convocation 1980 is a "Rivers Ceremony" in which participants would "show water brought for [the conference]" and then "each told [a] story of the source [and] what it meant to her, then added it to a bowl".³¹ That ceremony brought together water from places as disparate as the "Rio Grande, Mississippi, Pacific Ocean, Assiniboine River, Atlantic Ocean" and Hone's own contribution from the

²⁶ Hone, Notes re: Program, 1980.

²⁷ Kimberley French, "Carolyn McDade's Spirit of Life: Unitarian Universalism's Most Beloved Song, The Woman Who Wrote It, and the Communities That Sustain Her Spirit," *UU World*, Fall 2007, 2-4.

²⁸ French, "Carolyn McDade's Spirit of Life," 4-5

²⁹ While I did not find evidence of McDade coming to the Lumsden Women's Gatherings, she was connected to the Saskatchewan Feminist Christian Network, another organization in which Hone participated. This organization held fall gatherings during the 80s and 90s at Fort Qu'Appelle's Prairie Christian Training Centre which Evelyn Rogers, Barb Mader and Beth Hone all attended. Both the outcomes of these gatherings and the connection to feminist music and McDade would be worthwhile topics of study. Mader, interview, 3; Rogers, interview, 2; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Letter to Membership from COG Members of Saskatchewan Christian Feminist Network, 15 June 1987; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Letter to Saskatchewan Christian Feminist Network Mailing List People from COG, 27 Mar 1992; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, "Saskatchewan Christian Feminist Network Events," 1992.

³⁰ Mader, interview, 3.

³¹ Hone, Notes re: Program, 1980.

Qu'Appelle River in Lumsden.³² Recalling the scene from the Lumsden Gathering that began this chapter, it is apparent that Hone likely learned about this ceremony at Convocation 1980, where it was first debuted by its inventor, Lucile Schuck Longview.³³ Its inclusion in the tradition of the Lumsden Gatherings represents a connection to a wider network of feminist spiritual practice across North America.

Out of 209 participants, a majority came from the United States with only six Canadians as listed attendees.³⁴ One couple came from West Hill, Ontario, but the others each came from Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Regina.³⁵ The sixth Canadian was Beth Hone from Lumsden, Saskatchewan.³⁶ While the Canadian numbers are small, it is notable to consider that a majority of the attendees travelled the long distance to Michigan from either Alberta or Saskatchewan. They then returned to their prairie provinces with special training, connections, and resources to share with their communities. Consider too that the type of person willing and able to make such an effort is likely also the type of person with the energy to transform their new knowledge into new events. This is the case with Hone and her prairie compatriots.

While the Convocation 1980 gathering provided Hone an early introduction in UU approaches to feminist theology, her attendance at a conference in Redwood City, California in October 1985 helped her put feminist theory into practice. This UU W&R Committee conference would give rise to the Women's Gathering in Lumsden. This conference gave Hone an opportunity to act as a presenter and yet again share the Regina Study Group's *Ms. & Myth* television programme.³⁷ She also joined the shared goal of the many women gathered to work

³² Hone, Notes re: Program, 1980.

³³ UUA Women & Religion leader, Longview, is attributed with inventing this ceremony for each woman at the conference to "connect the work each [woman] was doing locally to the whole". French, "Carolyn McDade's Spirit of Life," 2.

³⁴ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 5: Convocation - East Lansing, "N1111 UUA Women and Religion Convocation," and Beth Hone notes on Back, 14-16 Nov 1980.

³⁵ "N1111 UUA Women and Religion Convocation".

³⁶ "N1111 UUA Women and Religion Convocation".

³⁷ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, Letter to W&R attendees of W&R Rep Gathering in Redwood City CA, 17 Sept 1985; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4:

collaboratively on action plans for each organizational district.³⁸ A long list of To-Dos distributed to conference participants called for each district to hold a conference “to organize and/or strengthen district [Women and Religion] committees”.³⁹ This was quite applicable to the Western Canadian District because of its small population spread across great distances. Hone herself acknowledged this in a 1985 WCD report where she lists some “Barriers to Success” including that “Distances between societies are great,” there is “isolation” between communities and that it is “costly to travel and communicate.”⁴⁰

While the call for strengthening inter-district connections went to all district representatives, Hone and her coworkers faced a particularly difficult situation due to the WCD’s large geographic expanse and the great distance between populations in this area. While meeting together would be an impossible proposition due to travel time, cost, and other commitments, perhaps the best way to bridge the vast distance of the WCD was to bring everyone together once a year. In response to the W&R district-wide action plan at the California conference, Hone and her co-planning committee began to create a step-by-step plan for a retreat to be held in July of the following year.⁴¹ An organization committee was established, monthly newsletters planned

Committee, "Minutes of Meeting," Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento, 19 Oct 1985, 1; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 7: Correspondence - Western Canada, Letter to Beth Hone from Debby Lake re: Ms. & Myth, 28 Jan 1985; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 7: Correspondence - Western Canada, Letter to Dorthey Emerson from Beth Hone re: Ms. & Myth, 28 Jan 1986.

³⁸ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, Memorandum to District Women & Religion Chairs/Covenanters from Tracey Robinson-Harris and Mary Andrus-Overley re: Packet from October 1985 Gathering; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, "District Action Plans" 1985; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, "Women & Religion District Reps as of October 1985," 1985.

³⁹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, "Goals," ND, 4.

⁴⁰ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, Beth Hone, "Western Canada District," 1985.

⁴¹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, Memorandum to District Women &

and suggestions for the shape of the gathering were circulated.⁴² After the conference wound down, the steps were set in motion and the Lumsden Women's Gathering began to take shape.

Finding a Home Among Friars in the Qu'Appelle Valley

The WCD held the first Women's Gathering in July of 1986.⁴³ For three days, women from across the Western District flocked to St. Michael's Retreat, a building just outside of Lumsden and perched in the slopes of the Qu'Appelle Valley among a vast property of nearly un-touched prairie scrub.⁴⁴ A similar format came to the same location every July until 2004.⁴⁵ At first glance, the choice, firstly, to have the Gatherings in Lumsden and, secondly, to host them at St. Michael's Retreat House may seem both unlikely or unusual choices. Admittedly, neither can count themselves among culturally well-known locations. All factors considered, there are many practical reasons why this ended up being the consistently selected location for every single year of the Gatherings. In the case of Lumsden, as addressed earlier in this thesis, the Hones had moved into the town for their retirement in 1977.⁴⁶ One of my narrators, Betty Donaldson, told me that she believed the gatherings happened in Lumsden, Saskatchewan, "largely because that was Beth Hone's home".⁴⁷

Merely thirty-three kilometers north of the Saskatchewan capital city, Regina, Lumsden was in many ways a typical prairie small town. Founded alongside a major railway line in 1889,

Religion Chairs/Covenanters from Tracey Robinson-Harris and Mary Andrus-Overley re: Packet from October 1985 Gathering

⁴² Memorandum to District Women & Religion Chairs/Covenanters.

⁴³ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, "Getting in Touch: A Retreat for Unitarian Women of the Western Canada District," 4-6 July 1986.

⁴⁴ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 7: Correspondence - Western Canada, "Getting in Touch "; St. Michael's Retreat Information Pamphlet, 1985-1986.

⁴⁵ See: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004.

⁴⁶ Betty Donaldson, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 22, 2019, 1.

⁴⁷ Donaldson, interview, 1.

it was named after a Canadian Pacific Railroad engineer, Hugh D. Lumsden.⁴⁸ The town remained quite small throughout the twentieth century. It had a population of 1,369 in 1981 around the time of the Lumsden Women’s Gatherings.⁴⁹ In a town of its size, the influx of Gathering participants would likely have been noticed by locals. A 1971 local history book claimed that Lumsden was well-known to many as “the prettiest town in Saskatchewan”.⁵⁰ That claim written by the pen of eager Lumsden residents is best taken with a grain of salt. Yet, when visiting the town, its position at the base of a valley of rolling hills interspersed with poplars and aspens reveals an undeniable charm.⁵¹ Its natural beauty is only further enhanced by the winding Qu’Appelle River which cuts through the town and supplies water to a vibrant variety of market gardens in the surrounding valley.⁵²

In the seventies, the small community mostly made up of “retired farmers” and long-established farming families underwent a cultural transformation.⁵³ The Hones built their retirement geodesic dome house at the top of James Street South. The particularly steep gravel road was dotted with the homes of people who sarcastically and affectionately dubbed themselves residents of “the red hill” in reference to their reputation among long-established Lumsden residents for political leftism and artistic flair.⁵⁴ I asked one of my narrators who also lived on James Street South, Sandra Johnson, about how leftists and artists had all happened to congregate on one single street, she declared it as a happenstance coincidence.⁵⁵ “Red hill” was not a planned community. Johnson’s own family had moved to the hill because of its proximity

⁴⁸ *Lumsden: The Hills of Home – A History of Lumsden and District as Compiled by the Lumsden Homecoming '71 Book Committee*, (Estevan: Estevan Mercury, 1971), 10-11.

⁴⁹ Saskatchewan Census Population, Government of Saskatchewan, 2016.

⁵⁰ *Lumsden*, 35.

⁵¹ *Lumsden*, 35-36.

⁵² *Lumsden* 35.

⁵³ Sandra Johnson, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 16, 2019, 9-10; *Lumsden* 30-40.

⁵⁴ Johnson, interview, 3.

⁵⁵ Johnson, interview, 9-10.

to the city and relatively lower housing prices.⁵⁶ She self-describes the house they bought, an older turn-of-the-century property, as one that “left a lot to be desired”.⁵⁷ The rest of the street either housed similarly aged homes, including three yellow-brick “sister” houses, or newly available lots from a recently mothballed cattle farm. The Johnsons were one family of many other left-leaning and artistic people who descended on the valley to take advantage of the cheap housing options.

After establishing herself in Lumsden and within the shifting cultural fabric of the town, Hone saw the advantages of establishing the Women’s Gatherings there. In addition to Lumsden’s natural beauty and small minority community of left-leaning people, it also had a particularly advantageous location for visitors. The town sat along the highway which connected the province from north to south and was near the TransCanada highway connecting the province to the rest of Canada. This location also made it a fantastic location for travellers accessing it for the Gatherings. Donaldson highlighted the town’s perfect location when she mentioned Lumsden was “about half-way between Alberta drivers and Winnipeg drivers”.⁵⁸ As most of the women travelled by car, highway accessibility would be a vital planning feature.

In a town of just over 1300 people, it would be helpful to know the number of participants which descended on the valley for a summer weekend. Fortuitously, Hone kept the original enrollment documents which recorded both the numbers of participants and their hometowns. The second annual Women’s Gathering brought together fifty-one women with the majority, at 20, travelling from Edmonton.⁵⁹ By 1993, the Women’s Gathering had grown to 128 participants, with a majority still coming from Edmonton, with Regina in close second.⁶⁰ Others

⁵⁶ Johnson, interview, 9-10.

⁵⁷ Johnson, interview, 9.

⁵⁸ Donaldson, interview, 1.

⁵⁹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, "Western Canada Districts: 2nd Annual Women's Retreat," 1987.

⁶⁰ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Registration List, 1993.

came from a variety of cities and towns across the WCD, presumably hearing about it from newsletter correspondence, and friendships established through WCD or other activist events.⁶¹

As for St. Michael's Retreat House, as the name might indicate, it was a Catholic-owned building presided over by the resident Franciscan Friars.⁶² In the wake of cultural and structural changes in the Catholic Church, St. Michael's Retreat House was opened in 1963 and could count itself among a batch of new purpose-built facilities intended to provide space for everyday people to go on cost-effective spiritual retreats.⁶³ In the Redwood City planning documents for the Women's Gathering, one of the retreat suggestions was, "participation in [a] worship building".⁶⁴ St. Michael's provided access to the desired worship building paired with sleeping quarters, a large common room with space for programming and large, beautiful grounds.⁶⁵ The facilities, the cost and the location made St. Michael's a perfect choice for the Gatherings. At the time of the Gatherings, the Retreat House was available for event rental alongside the Friar's own Catholic spiritual retreats.⁶⁶ While it may strike some as unusual that Catholic Friars would rent space to a group of women actively exploring many types of radical spirituality, apparently no issues arose to prevent them holding their Gatherings. The Friars continued to rent the Retreat House to the WCD women from 1986 to 2004.⁶⁷

⁶¹ The list of locations could read as random to some and, while there is no way at this time to determine why exactly these women travelled to the Gathering, it is likely it hints at wider, established social networks. Examples of locations include: Vancouver, Sarnia, Wynyard, Winnipeg, Lacombe, Surrey, Toronto, North Battleford, Cochlin, Nanaimo and Calgary. Registration List; "Western Canada Districts: 2nd Annual Women's Retreat."

⁶² St. Michael's Retreat Information Pamphlet, 1985-1986.

⁶³ St. Michael's Retreat Information Pamphlet, 1985-1986.

⁶⁴ Memorandum to District Women & Religion Chairs/Coveners.

⁶⁵ St. Michael's Retreat Information Pamphlet, 1985-1986.

⁶⁶ St. Michael's Retreat Information Pamphlet, 1985-1986.

⁶⁷ There was established precedence for St. Michael's Retreat's use by non-Catholics. In 1986, St. Michael's Retreat hosted Anglican Retreats and events. In 1999, the Franciscan Friars entered into an agreement with Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans to collaboratively run the Retreat House. See: St. Michael's Retreat Information Pamphlet, 1985-1986; Stewart Bell, "Four Religious Groups make Historic Agreement: Franciscan Friars, Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans Share Place of Prayer: [National Edition]." *National Post*, Feb 04, 1999.

Getting In-Touch: The Lumsden Gatherings

The first of the Lumsden Women's Gatherings occurred from July 4-6, 1986 and was themed "Getting In Touch".⁶⁸ The gathering was billed as "An opportunity for women to explore experiences on personal, social, intellectual and spiritual levels...to get in touch with our selves and one another".⁶⁹ While it is unknown if the organizers were intentional about the possible playfully sexual interpretations of the weekend's name, the Gatherings over time did not shy away from a certain sexual frankness. In the later 1989 Gathering, women partook in an ice breaker that Hone had a part in designing which asked participants to gather a signature from another woman who "looks attractive to me" and in another case, "felt horny from her ride in a bouncing car".⁷⁰ Both categories would have been quite the conversation starters on the Gathering's first night.

In the example of the first Gathering weekend, after the women were introduced, participants were offered an eclectic mix of activities throughout the weekend. Access to "books on Women and Religion issues" was important to organizers.⁷¹ Participants brought their own books and this collection was made available in the Gathering's Resource Room.⁷² The official programme suggested participants read the recent and widely influential edited collection on feminist theology by Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Womanguides*.⁷³ The reading of feminist theological texts was accompanied by the central lecture by Toronto theology student, Maureen Killoran, who presented a feminist look at the biblical stories of Eve and Lilith.⁷⁴ This talk picked up themes originating from the same, very popular 1972 Judith Plaskow text, "The

⁶⁸ "Getting in Touch".

⁶⁹ "Getting in Touch".

⁷⁰ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Hone, Beth, "Autograph Treasure Hunt, 1989.

⁷¹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 7: Correspondence - Western Canada, Letter to Beth Hone from Lois (Whyte) re: Info for Women's Retreat, 28 Apr 1986.

⁷² Letter to Beth Hone from Lois (Whyte).

⁷³ "Getting in Touch".

⁷⁴ "Getting in Touch".

Coming of Lilith”, which was also heavily referenced in the *Ms. & Myth* programme. In the work, Plaskow proposed a feminist retelling of the Jewish myth of Lilith, Adam’s first wife. In the original story, Lilith represents negative female traits and is banished from Eden for her strong-willed nature and replaced by Eve, her demurring to Adam’s authority representing positive female traits. In Plaskow’s version, Lilith and Eve become friends after Eve also questions Adam’s authority and they create a better world through learning from one another.⁷⁵ Through this approach, Plaskow proposed both that existing mythology could be reclaimed for feminist purposes and positive, productive female sisterhood could be portrayed through religious storytelling.⁷⁶ Thematically, the lesson from this text was well suited to a weekend focused on women connecting across space and differences for discussions of spirituality and fostering friendship.

The lessons found in the shared feminist texts participants read in the library influenced the activities which shaped the Gathering’s days. Female relationships were represented through creative art in one of “Getting In Touch’s” creative exercises which collected items brought by each woman, such as “fabrics, feathers, photos, beads, yarn – what have you” in order to create a collage which visually represented the gathering’s connections.⁷⁷ The activities from the *Cakes For the Queen of Heaven* curriculum were also very influential. At a later Gathering, one of the Calgary attendees, my narrator Betty Donaldson, described an exercise where participants would draw themselves.⁷⁸ This exercise was very close in execution to the one previously discussed from Session 1 of *Cakes*.⁷⁹ Donaldson described, as an example of the variety of depictions,

⁷⁵ Judith Plaskow, “The Coming of Lilith: Toward a Feminist Theology,” in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, 198-209 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

⁷⁶ “The Coming of Lilith” represented Plaskow’s first foray into Jewish feminist theology when published in 1972. For more of her essays, see: Judith Plaskow, *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics, 1972-2003*, ed. Donna Berman and Judith Plaskow (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 27-37. “Getting in Touch.”

⁷⁷ “Getting in Touch.”

⁷⁸ Donaldson, interview, 9-10.

⁷⁹ Shirley Ann Ranck, *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: A Ten-Session Adult Seminar in Feminist Theology*, (Boston: Section of Religion Education Unitarian Universalist Association, 1986), 16-21.

“...some women would put in their sexual parts and other women had no legs...”⁸⁰ Then, the women would share their drawings with the entire group and respond to one another’s drawings.⁸¹ The exercise was intended to reveal the subjective ways in which each woman viewed her body and from where those views came.⁸² It also offered a positive, celebratory, shared discussion of the female body.⁸³ The clear similarity between both the Gathering and *Cakes* activity indicates the organizer’s background training in the influential curriculum.

Another key element was music and performance. Many of my narrators mentioned memories of singing with other participants and witnessing lively performances.⁸⁴ In one anecdote, Donaldson spoke of watching the Regina women put on a tongue-in-cheek performance where they pranced around in full Mountie costume and riding brooms like witches combining symbols of both institutional male power and historically disparaged women’s spiritual practice.⁸⁵ Later at the 1996 Gathering, Donaldson, would bring her own dramatic production to the valley with an adapted version of her recent play, *Images of the Goddess*.⁸⁶ Donaldson had debuted *Images* between January 7-13 of the same year in the Faculty Club at the University of Calgary in order to fundraise for the establishment of a Women and Gender Studies Department.⁸⁷ The play comprised 13 non-linear vignettes which all drew on mythology, history and tradition surrounding women.⁸⁸ Donaldson’s production benefitted from a \$4,000

⁸⁰ Donaldson, interview, 9.

⁸¹ Donaldson, interview, 9-10.

⁸² Donaldson, interview, 10.

⁸³ Donaldson, interview, 10.

⁸⁴ Donaldson, interview, 4-6; Joanne Greene, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 17, 2019, 2; Barbara Mader, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 16, 2019, 4.

⁸⁵ Donaldson, interview, 5.

⁸⁶ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Pamphlet: "Mystical Goddesses of Affirmation," 10th Annual Women's Retreat, 29 June - 1 July 1996.

⁸⁷ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Flyer: "Images of the Goddess," Calgary AB: University of Calgary, 1996; Donaldson, interview, 5.

⁸⁸ Flyer: "Images of the Goddess".

UUWF Theology Award.⁸⁹ Based out of Boston and intended “to support publication in feminist theology from a UU perspective,” the Calgary playwright was awarded these American funds for her ambitious theatrical interpretation of woman-centric spirituality and history.⁹⁰ To aid in mounting the play, Donaldson also enlisted the Calgary feminist theatre collective, Maenad.⁹¹ In bringing together the university and a community arts group with cross-border funding, *Images* is another example of the transnational, multi-source, multi-genre efforts of these activists.

The original production of *Images* took on quite a large scale. Visitors could walk through thirteen separate scenes spread throughout the University of Calgary faculty club.⁹² Entering, one would walk beneath an archway hung with hundreds of wooden leaves with the hand carved names of women “well-known in Canadian history”.⁹³ Other rooms represented the phases of a woman’s life through the triplicate, popularized by witchcraft, of maiden, mother and crone.⁹⁴ In one room, a dancer represented the archetype of a maiden with graceful dancing.⁹⁵ In yet another, a dancer was rooted, through the magic of set-design, in ski-boots so as to create the illusion of her body sprouting out of a massive tree above the crowd.⁹⁶ She moved and swayed in a representation of the archetypal crone gifted with the wisdom of old age.⁹⁷ Another room

⁸⁹ Donaldson, interview, 5.

⁹⁰ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, "The UUWF Feminist Theology Award," Flyer, 1987; Donaldson, interview, 5.

⁹¹ Donaldson, interview, 5.

⁹² Donaldson, interview, 5; Pamphlet: "Images of the Goddess".

⁹³ Donaldson, interview, 6; Pamphlet: "Images of the Goddess".

⁹⁴ In witchcraft, the Maiden, Mother, Crone triplicate represents three phases of the Great Goddess' lifecycle which correspond to the three major phases of the year. The maiden represents a young girl and corresponds to spring; the mother represents the productive mid-life of a woman and corresponds to summer; and the crone represents aged wisdom and corresponds to winter. Therefore, the lifecycle of the Great Goddess, and all women, forms the backbone of witchcraft's calendar, The Wheel of the Year, which structures ritual, ceremony, and celebration of this spiritual practice. For more see: Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, 20th anniversary ed. (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1989), 52-56.

⁹⁵ Donaldson, interview, 5; Pamphlet: "Images of the Goddess".

⁹⁶ Donaldson, interview, 6.

⁹⁷ Donaldson, interview, 6; Pamphlet: "Images of the Goddess".

represented Carol Christ's feminist retelling of the Greek myth about Persephone which refocused its narrative on female sexual awakening and the complex inter-generational relationship between mothers and daughters.⁹⁸ Yet another room meditated on the connection between witchcraft, women-led medical care and childbirth.⁹⁹

Translated to the valley hills of St. Michael's Retreat, there was not the capacity or funding to re-mount every set-piece alongside the original cast of trained actors and dancers. There is no evidence that any of the Gathering women were willing nor able to strap themselves to the highest branches of a tree and dance gracefully. Instead, the women were given an opportunity to take on roles of some of the dramatic scenes.¹⁰⁰ While each participant enacted a part of the production, women also had the opportunity to debrief and reflect on the play's themes. Uniquely, the exercise allowed Gathering participants to be both the actors and the visitors of the *Images* vignettes.

“It is Wise to Have Fun”: Croning at the Gatherings

Yet another narrator, Evelyn Rogers, brought her own style of performance to Gatherings with the Raging Crone-osomes.¹⁰¹ Formed in 1991, Rogers spearheaded the formation of the Raging Crone-osomes “to bring back the word “CRONE” to its ancient rightful meaning of being wise and as crones we think it is wise to have fun”.¹⁰² This group was among a wider movement that sought to reclaim the term crone and drew attention to the intersecting oppressions of both gender and aging.¹⁰³ Many of the Gathering women, like Hone, dealt with

⁹⁸ Donaldson, interview, 6; Pamphlet: "Images of the Goddess"; Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," in *Readings, Songs and Other Resources to Accompany the Seminar in Feminist Theology*, ed. Shirley A. Ranck, 7-8 (Boston: Section of Religion Education Unitarian Universalist Association, 1986).

⁹⁹ Pamphlet: "Images of the Goddess".

¹⁰⁰ Donaldson, interview, 6.

¹⁰¹ Evelyn Rogers, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 20, 2019, 1, 8.

¹⁰² Personal Collection of Evelyn Rogers, Crone Stuff Folder, Evelyn Rogers, "The Raging Crone-osomes," 1993; Personal Collection of Evelyn Rogers, Crone Stuff Folder, Evelyn Rogers, "What is a Crone?" and Lyric Packets, ND.

¹⁰³ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 3: "Being Our Age", "Growing Older Female," UUWF, 1977; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 3: "On Being Our Age", "We Should Live so Long: A Program on Women and Aging," Oakland: Women's Action Training Center, 1974.



Figure 2-2: "Raging Crones at WCD Women's Retreat," July 1994, University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 25, Series 7: Visual Materials - Photographs, File 19: Prairie Cronies.

sexist ideas about older women in a very real, daily manner. Reclaiming the Crone moniker provided a different, empowering way of living life as an older woman with a spiritually rooted reverence for hard-won wisdom and a flair for the theatrical. These self-dubbed Crones donned colourful hats and robes, marched in to the trumpet of kazoos and sung "crone songs".¹⁰⁴ Rogers penned original political and satirical lyrics to the tune of commonly known songs which made joining the crone chorus accessible.¹⁰⁵ Hone and another narrator of mine, Barb Mader, were also members of The Raging Crone-Osomes who frequently made appearances at Women's Gatherings in the nineties.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Rogers, "The Raging Crone-Osomes".

¹⁰⁵ Rogers, interview, 4.

¹⁰⁶ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 25, Series 7: Visual Materials - Photographs, File 19: "Prairie Cronies, "Raging Crones at WCD Women's Retreat," July 1994.

As early as 1995, the UU women also honoured women over the age of fifty with their own croning ceremony.¹⁰⁷ Women gathered in a circle and lead the woman being “crowned” to a decorated chair which represented her “crone throne”.¹⁰⁸ She would be crowned as women read affirmations such as the following::

For most women it takes time after age 50 to assimilate and learn lessons our life has taught us so far. It means choices like taking a risk in having the courage to be the real you. That means being able to say what you really think and feel. It means having tolerance and patience with others as we are all different.¹⁰⁹

While my narrators did reveal these ceremonies were intended to be fun, this quote reveals that it was also an opportunity to acknowledge the potential of growing older as a woman.¹¹⁰ The crone represented wisdom, courage, assertion, but also a willingness to learn and understand others as one continued to grow. For all the theatrical pomp and ceremony, this ritual represented a positive affirmation and outlook for growing older, which offered an alternative to many negative societal ideas of what aging meant for a woman.

Like the Raging Crone-Osomes, croning ceremonies allowed women to both have fun while also recognizing that growing older could be an experience of “respect, dignity and power”.¹¹¹ The Crone movement also represented second-wave feminists, as they aged, beginning to recognize the magnifying effects of ageism on women’s experiences of sexism and transforming that knowledge into activist action. As Evelyn Rogers pointed out in her interview, “what did hippies turn into? They just turned into crones!”.¹¹² As the organizers of the Lumsden Gatherings demonstrated, with age, the hippies did not lose their political drive. With age, these women proved that this drive even increased.

¹⁰⁷ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Beth Hone, "The Croning Ceremony," 13 Feb 1995.

¹⁰⁸ Hone, "The Croning Ceremony," 1.

¹⁰⁹ Hone, "The Croning Ceremony," 1.

¹¹⁰ Donaldson, interview, 12; Mader, interview, 8-9

¹¹¹ Hone, "The Croning Ceremony," 1.

¹¹² Rogers, interview, 8

Examining these activities at the Women's Gatherings demonstrates how organizers interpreted popular ideas from the women's spirituality movement and created accessible, fun, and thought-provoking programming. Year after year, the Gatherings reflected ideas which had developed over time and sourced from important texts, widely studied curriculum, and shared social concerns. In the following chapter, the ways in which these Gatherings contributed to wider network of feminist culture will be examined. This culture was not bound by geography but rather through networks of connection forged through pre-existing sisterhood, books exchanged via the mail, and car trips taken between the physical locations of women across North America.

A Feminist Network Across Western Canada

In 1988 Hone made one of many appearances on Regina's local access Cable 3 channel and announced, "across Canada and the US women are meeting in small groups in living rooms and church halls and travelling considerable distances to attend retreats".¹¹³ Anticipating the question her Regina audience tuning in from their living rooms, "What is the cause of all the excitement?", she answered it:

Among other things, they are sharing ideas about the goddess, a symbol which represents important issues of gender and religion. Women have come to realize that they have been overlooked and undervalued in the mainline patriarchal religions where God is always male and they are searching for religious experiences that relate to their own lives.¹¹⁴

It is impossible to know who viewed this commercial and what they exactly thought of it, but one can imagine Hone's call for women to seek out relatable religious experiences piqued at least a few viewers' interests. Perhaps some of these women even sought out the Regina sessions of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* which Hone was advertising. Through another one of Hone's many networking efforts, any women who attended after watching this commercial would become connected to a wider network of women across North America who were energized by feminist spirituality in the 1980s.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Beth Hone, "Cable 3 Unitarians and Feminist Theology," 1988.

¹¹⁴ Hone, "Cable 3 Unitarians and Feminist Theology".

¹¹⁵ Hone, "Cable 3 Unitarians and Feminist Theology".

Made possible by the network of UU women's study groups, the Lumsden Women's Gatherings are one example of the wider movement of feminist spirituality which created communities of women. Its significance is in its success at bringing women together from British Columbia to Ontario who then formed relationships and shared ideas. Donaldson was quite specific when I spoke to her about emphasizing the choice to use the word "Gathering" in this event's name.¹¹⁶ For these women, retreat connoted individual withdrawal from society.¹¹⁷ Instead, they wanted to emphasize that the women were "coming together to build".¹¹⁸ Indeed, the Gatherings did represent the concerted efforts not just of Hone and her study group in Regina, but women who made the trek from places like Sarnia or Surrey, often carpooling, for the sake of sharing a couple days with like-minded women at a hillside retreat.

This was not an unusual occurrence. Hone already travelled great distances to events such as Convocation 1980 in Michigan or the W&R Committee conference in California for the opportunity to increase her knowledge of feminist theology and practice. Of course, it was also a fantastic social opportunity to get together and catch-up with women from across Canada or even North America. It is impossible to know exactly what motivated each attendee at the Women's Gatherings and foolish to assume everyone was equally dedicated to an intellectual cause. Sometimes the biggest motivator is a social one.

Despite, or perhaps for, the experience of driving across Canada, the draw of visiting fellow feminists, crones and goddess aficionados was apparently a strong enough motivator for those who came year after year to the Women's Gatherings. Donaldson told me that the water gathering ceremony, which began this chapter, was "...the most important ceremony...and that never changed".¹¹⁹ At the end of the weekend, a little bit of that water would be kept and carried forward to the next year's water gathering ceremony. Symbolically, the new ideas built together at the Women's Gathering would be carried forward into the next year into each district and to be built upon in the Gatherings to come.

¹¹⁶ Donaldson, interview, 4.

¹¹⁷ Donaldson, interview, 4.

¹¹⁸ Donaldson, interview, 4.

¹¹⁹ Donaldson, interview, 4.

The Gatherings' end in 2004 seems to coincide with the establishment of a new Canadian-only Unitarian Universalist Women's Association.¹²⁰ Donaldson reported that the energy of running the Gatherings had to be diverted into this organization's formation.¹²¹ It is also important to acknowledge that many of the original organizers were aging and began to pass away, as Hone did in 2011. Yet, during the time of the Gathering's existence, they demonstrated a moment of confluence in the Qu'Appelle Valley. The zeitgeist of feminist spirituality and cultural worlds did not merely pass over the Prairies but instead coalesced in the re-occurring Lumsden Women's Gathering. The organizers and attendees not only consumed the popular texts and ideas of the day but contributed and created new texts and ideas which they shared with wider networks across North America of likeminded women. Perhaps most key to the success of this network was Hone and her compatriots' activity in multiple, intersecting groups in the Prairies and beyond. Without such connections, the feminist cultural world they built would not have achieved such outreach nor the same lasting impact.

¹²⁰ Donaldson, interview, 1.

¹²¹ Donaldson, interview, 1.

Chapter 3 : Sculpting The Great Goddess – Art, Herstory and Spirituality

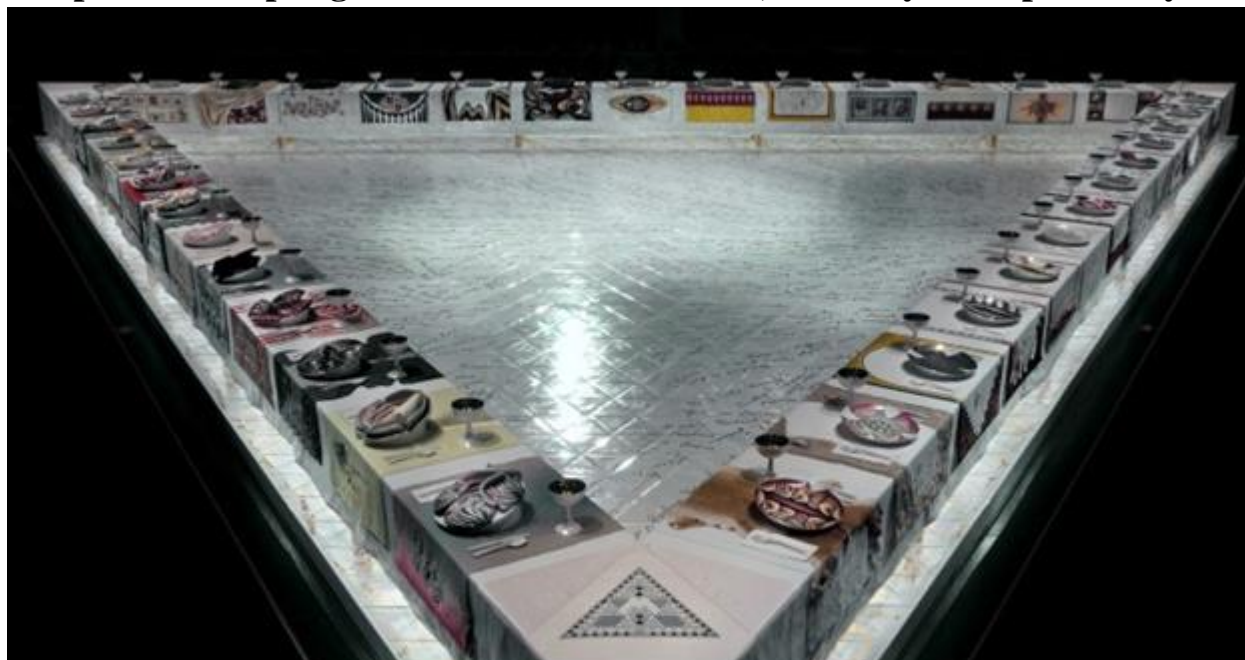


Figure 3-1: Judy Chicago (American, born 1939). *The Dinner Party*, 1974-79. Ceramic, porcelain, textile, 576 x 576 in. Brooklyn Museum; Gift of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation.

In 1983, two years before the first Lumsden Women’s Gatherings took place, Beth Hone drove with a group of friends from Lumsden to Calgary and waited in an endless line-up outside the entrance to the Glenbow Museum.¹ The wait would be worth it when they could join the other roughly 500 people that day who would walk the circuit around the enormous, dramatically lit, and highly controversial artwork, “The Dinner Party,” by California artist, Judy Chicago.² The triangular table was laid out with thirty-nine, to-scale place settings each in honour of a woman from history the artist deemed important (See: Fig. 3-1).³ Each place setting was marked with a table runner which was hand-stitched with the woman’s name and accompanied by important identifying imagery. Then placed on the runner was a set of stylized ceramic dishware, most resembling vulvas, which captured Chicago’s imagining of each woman’s essence and

¹ Barbara Mader, Personal Correspondence with author, email, 3 March 2020.

² *The Dinner Party* ran at Calgary’s Glenbow Museum between December 3, 1982 through February 27, 1983; Nancy Tousley, “Dinner Party Smashes Records,” *Calgary Herald*, 15 March 1983, A17.

³ Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party: From Creation to Preservation* (London and New York: Merrell Publishers Limited, 2007), 10-11.

legacy.⁴ Below the table, the floor was lined in ceramic tiles inscribed with the names of 999 other important women in history.⁵ Altogether, the piece was a landmark visual representation of women's historical contributions.

When it debuted on March 14, 1979 at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the piece proved a massive hit with record-breaking attendance and a swell of media buzz.⁶ The Alberta showing proved no different and the exhibit's potential financial risk and controversy for the gallery proved a worthwhile gamble.⁷ Over "62,000 visitors," a staggering number of attendees, made *The Dinner Party* the Glenbow's most successful exhibit to date.⁸ An article in the *Calgary Herald* noted that "women arrive here every day from across Western Canada and the northwest States to see the Dinner Party," as its prior Canadian locations were in Montreal and Toronto and the Calgary showing marked the exhibit's final scheduled North American date.⁹ A provided example list of women in attendance was indeed diverse: "Red Deer College secretarial art class, the United Church Women from Herschel, Sask., the Palliser Wheat Growers Women's Guild from Regina, the Mountainview Women's Network from Olds..."¹⁰

Due to her own interests and knowledge, Hone would likely have appreciated *The Dinner Party*'s first category of historical figures titled "From Prehistory to Rome".¹¹ Chicago chose to begin her piece with "a series of goddess figures that are intended to symbolize pre-patriarch societies, which were typified by the widespread worship of the Goddess" (See: Fig 3-2).¹² This choice reflected something important happening within particular circles of second-wave

⁴ Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 10-11.

⁵ Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 10-11.

⁶ Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 25.

⁷ Nancy Tousley, "Dinner Party Smashes Records," *Calgary Herald*, 15 March 1983, A17.

⁸ Nancy Tousley, "Dinner Party Smashes Records," *Calgary Herald*, 15 March 1983, A17.

⁹ Patrick Tivy, "Dinner Party Setting a Record," *Calgary Herald*, 17 December 1982, C10; Tousley, "Dinner Party," A17; Nancy Tousley, "Dinner Party Still Going Strong at the Halfway Mark," *Calgary Herald*, 22 January 1983, G1.

¹⁰ Patrick Tivy, "Dinner Party Setting a Record," *Calgary Herald*, 17 December 1982, C10.

¹¹ Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 33.

¹² Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 33.

feminism. For some, when beginning to chart the course of women's history, the starting point incorporated a series of historical, mythical, and religious female figures. Chicago included herself in this trend by beginning her piece with multiple so-called pre-patriarchal goddesses.

Shortly after visiting *The Dinner Party*, Hone began to create art objects depicting various historical goddesses. While it is impossible to determine a perfect correlation between the two events, Hone's



Figure 3-2: Judy Chicago, *Ceramic Goddess #3 (Study for Goddess Figurine on Fertile Goddess runner)*, 1977, Glazed ceramic 10x8 1/2 x 3 in., Brooklyn Museum.

increasing interest in goddesses after viewing Chicago's work is yet another indication that Hone actively participated in a lively, transnational second-wave feminist community concerned with the intersection of women's history, the problem of patriarchal religion, and the perceived educational power of artistic imagery aids. Her interest was fueled by a steady diet of international, regional, and local literature and art that was also greatly enhanced by strong local interest from Western Canada's UU women.

As the previous chapters discussed, Hone and her cohort interacted with networks of women interested in feminist spirituality through the curriculum, *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, and the Lumsden Women's Gatherings. Yet, these two occurrences were greatly informed by a vibrant, international movement of spiritual feminism which actively created a new, women-centered cultural landscape. *The Dinner Party* is just one, particularly successful, component of spiritual feminism. The artwork's intense popularity also reveals that its subject matter spoke to and connected an entire network of women with similar interests and concerns as both the artist, Chicago, and one prairie artist, Hone. In the case of the Calgary exhibition, the piece only came to the city after a community of women petitioned and fundraised because they understood it

would resonate with many other women.¹³ They were correct. Groups of women attended the piece together because the artwork spoke to many women interested in the intersection of women's bodies, history, and spirituality.

To understand this wide-reaching network of women, this chapter will examine one representation of an ancient goddess which Hone encountered in Chicago's work and which Hone began to reproduce repeatedly for other UU women. The symbolic imagery of "Venuses," specifically *The Venus of Willendorf*, exploded in popularity in the seventies through the nineties, as not only symbols of a new, feminist way of approaching religion but also as a badge of belonging within a wider movement. Hone's focus on goddess motifs in her art, specifically the *Venus of Willendorf*, demonstrates her connection to a transnational network of women who thought about the intrinsic and vital connections between women's spirituality, community, and power. Feminist interest in overhauling the very myths, symbols and morals guided by patriarchal religion developed, in part, due to extensive circulation of texts, art objects and ideas through transnational networks of women, of which Hone was an active participant.

"Women Have No Past, No History, and No Religion"

Returning to the UU curriculum, *Cake for the Queen of Heaven*, it is no coincidence that its core philosophy, "A Statement of Feminist Thealogy," began with this quote from Simone de Beauvoir: "Women Have No Past, No History, and No Religion".¹⁴ The statement was taken from de Beauvoir's best-selling book *The Second Sex* which analyzed and criticized women's historical and continued inequality. It was also a book that found its way into the hands of many

¹³ In Chicago's own account of this tour, the Calgary showing fell before Montreal or Toronto. Contemporaneous press coverage repeatedly refers to Calgary as occurring post-Montreal and Toronto's showing. Chicago also refers to a required guarantee of \$50,000 to bring *The Dinner Party* to a particular gallery, which she attributed to the Art Gallery of Ontario. She says the money was then raised by a "Lady Ouida Touche". Press coverage of the Glenbow Museum showing indicate a \$50,000 fee was required to ensure no financial losses bringing in the risky exhibit and Lady Touche was a Calgary resident and known arts patron. The Lady Touche fonds at the University of Calgary identify her as a patron of the Glenbow Museum's *The Dinner Party* exhibit. Press coverage at the time reports a group of local women raised the fees. It is impossible to determine who paid what at this time, but it is likely a collaboration between a group of local women and Lady Touche occurred to raise money from multiple sources. See: Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 277; Nancy Tousley, "Glenbow comes to the aid of the Party," *Calgary Herald*, 29 September 1982, G1; Nancy Tousley, "Dinner Party Still Going Strong," G1.; University of Calgary Archives and Special Collections, "Lady Ouida Touche Fonds," https://searcharchives.ucalgary.ca/lady-ouida-touche-fonds;isad?sf_culture=nl.

¹⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, "The Second Sex", (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 1953), 8; Shirley Ann Ranck, *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: A Ten-Session Adult Seminar in Feminist Thealogy*, (Boston: Section of Religion Education Unitarian Universalist Association, 1986), 7.

North American feminists after its 1953 English translation. *Cakes* developer, Ranck, honed into de Beauvoir's connection between power, history and religion, a notion likely originating in-part from the philosopher's French cultural context. Yet, the quote spoke to North American spiritual feminists exactly because they also observed a connection between power, history, and religion. Without histories, inter-generational connection, education, or religious tradition which centred women's experiences, women lacked a context within which to understand themselves.

Women having "no history" was a huge part of Chicago's own journey to making *The Dinner Party*.¹⁵ Her career began as a lone woman in art school, an institution women had been barred from for hundreds of years.¹⁶ Desperate to learn from woman artists of the past, she was assigned textbooks of male artists and male critics who "repeatedly told" her that "women were incapable of 'being a woman and an artist too'".¹⁷ That profound feeling of absence combined with an introduction to the literature of women's movement motivated Chicago to do her own research into the wider history of women.¹⁸ She discovered, in her own words, "a heritage so rich it took my breath away".¹⁹ As her library and knowledge grew, Chicago began to feel her purpose was "teaching women's history through art".²⁰ Out of this inspiration grew *The Dinner Party*.

Chicago's efforts with *The Dinner Party* reflect a huge groundswell of the second-wave feminist movement's interest in "Herstory". These feminists were concerned with a pressing problem: could the women's movement succeed against patriarchal oppression in the present, if there was no precedent for this in the past? Faced with a glut of events, creations, and systems by

¹⁵ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 7.

¹⁶ For discussion of women's exclusion from western art institutions please see: Kristina Huneault, "Professionalism as Critical Concept and Historical Process for Women and Art in Canada," in *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850-1970*, ed. Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 3-52; Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 145-78; Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

¹⁷ Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 11.

¹⁸ Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 11.

¹⁹ Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 11.

²⁰ Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 12.

and for men, second-wave feminists felt they suffered from a lack of historical knowledge from a past devoid of women. Chicago's efforts with *The Dinner Party* is one of many examples where women attempted to create what they saw as a needed, coherent history of women in order to map out a feminist future. Similar work occurred on the prairies as well, with one example being Saskatoon's Herstory Collective, established in 1972 in order to create a yearly calendar highlighting the stories of women in Canada's history.²¹ Hone too created an exhibit in 1987 titled *Finding Our Foremothers* which displayed ceramic plaques in the shape of the women's symbol, each attributed to a woman from Saskatchewan's past.²²

For many spiritual feminists, lack of historical representation for women was keenly related and as important as women having "no religion". The reason *The Dinner Party* began with prehistoric goddess images and why Hone created goddesses is that, for this branch of spiritual feminism, the quest for a religious past was part of the project of writing women's history. The *Cakes* curriculum, The Lumsden Women's Gatherings and Hone's artwork were all deeply influenced by this international interest in feminist goddess spirituality and "Herstory". Art is important to all forms of action that Hone and her cohort took because this was a way for women to create a new women-centred visual culture which represented their values, history, and religious beliefs.²³ Hone tapped into a thriving, international network of feminist spirituality in order to create her specific expression of a women's culture through her art and her activism.

Jennie Klein identifies a significant indication of how popular goddess spirituality was in the late 70s and 80s as demonstrated by an issue of the popular American feminist journal, *HERESIES*.²⁴ The subject garnered enough excitement in spring of 1978 to merit a single issue dedicated to the subject. Titled "The Great Goddess", the issue brought together articles, poetry and artwork all focussed on the importance and potentiality of incorporating the great goddess into feminist politics. As the statement introducing the issue declared, there was a recognition of

²¹ Mona Holmlund and Gail Younberg, *Inspiring Women: A Celebration of Herstory*, University Authors Collection (Regina: Coteau Books, 2003), iii-v.

²² Saskatchewan Arts Board Permanent Collection, Beth Hone, *Saskatchewan Foremothers*, porcelain & cotton batik, 60.8 x 45.8 cm.

²³ Jennie Klein, "Goddess: Feminist Art and Spirituality in the 1970s," *Feminist Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 579, 580-581

²⁴ Klein, "Goddess," 575.

“a need to counter the distrust that most women harbor towards religion...because of the oppression that we have all experienced from patriarchal religions”.²⁵ The issue expressed this through the blending of mediums united by a singular message: the liberatory, yet multifaceted, potential of the Great Goddess for feminism.

The issue was rife with familiar names from Hone’s bookshelf. Once again, also featured in both the Lumsden Gatherings and the *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* curriculum, Carol P. Christ’s “Why Woman Need the Goddess” appeared in this *HERESIES* issue. Another contributor, Merlin Stone, contributed an article, “The Three Faces of Goddess Spirituality,” which was an abridged version of her highly influential work theorizing a prehistory of female-centered religious practices.²⁶ Stone declared the potentiality of goddess spirituality as:

an examination of the specific ways in which these religions have instituted and maintained a secondary status for women. Involvement in Goddess spirituality has encouraged us to take a more careful look at the scriptures, rituals and the gender of the decision-making levels of the clergy of the religions in which we were raised and/or those that affect the society in which we live.²⁷

Stone suggests that religion affects women’s social inequality and goddess spirituality offered a method of intervening into established patriarchal religions and the aspects of society influenced by said religions. Hone and her cohort, through interacting with ideas primarily in books and journals such as *HERESIES*, were well-versed in a movement of women interested in the political implications of a goddess spirituality.

When God was a Woman: Imagining a Matriarchal Past

No symbol is perhaps as emblematic of goddess spirituality as the Neolithic limestone figurine dubbed *The Venus of Willendorf* (See: Fig. 3-3). The figurine was first excavated in

²⁵ Great Goddess Collective Members, “The Great Goddess Collective Statement, *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* 2, no. 1 (1978): i.

²⁶ For this work, see: Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1976); Merlin Stone, “The Three Faces of Goddess Spirituality,” *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* 2, no. 1 (1978): 2-4.

²⁷ Stone, “The Three Faces,”. 3.

1908 in Wachau, Austria and was created circa 40,000–10,000 BCE.²⁸ The dig represented a moment of significance for archeological research, but the figures uncovered held promise for feminists interested in compiling a past for women. Many second-wave feminists looked at *Venus*' stylized, over-emphasized features which differed so greatly from the depictions of female bodies in the twentieth century and wondered about the society which created such imagery.²⁹ Perhaps, some theorized that it was even possible the *Venus* represented a period in which women's bodies, and women themselves, were respected or even revered.

Such a theory did not appear out of thin air. In fact, it emerged out of the same publication which emphasized the role of Venuses: Marija Gimbutas' 1974 book, *The Goddesses and the God of Old Europe, 6500-3500 BC: Myths and Cult Images*.³⁰ A scholar of European archaeology, Gimbutas examined the extensive collective of Neolithic art objects from the geographical region now referred to as Europe and paid particular attention to the figurines she identified as portraying "The Great Goddess".³¹ She noted repeated imagery which she perceived as representing the female form which recognized a pattern of sturdy, thick limbs and symbolic emphasis on both belly and vulva.³² Yet, Gimbutas did not stop short of



Figure 3-3: *Venus of Willendorf*, female figurine, known as the *Willendorf Venus*, limestone, h. 110 mm, Gravettian culture, c. 30,000–c. 18,000 BP (Vienna, Naturhistorisches Museum); photo credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

²⁸ Joachim Hahn, "Willendorf," *Grove Art Online*, 2003; Accessed 21 Feb. 2020. <https://www-oxfordartonline-com.cyber.usask.ca/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7000091641>.

²⁹ Hahn, "Willendorf".

³⁰ Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe: 6500-3500 B.C.: Myths, Legends and Cult Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

³¹ Gimbutas, *The Goddess and Gods*, 158-187.

³² Gimbutas, *The Goddess and Gods*, 152-168; 236.

merely pointing out repeated imagery, but additionally proposed that the figures, images and symbols pointed towards the existence of many matriarchal, goddess-worshipping cultural groups which held primacy in so-called Old Europe until patriarchal practices overtook religious practice due to cultural shifts.³³

Her arguments were also repeated by the highly influential book “When God Was a Woman”, by Merlin Stone, who penned the *Heresies* article discussed above and which UU women frequently referenced.³⁴ Stone referred to the “numerous sculptures of women” originating in Paleolithic cultures and—quoting from paleontologist Johannes Maringer—maintained that these sculptures demonstrated the existence of “a ‘great mother’ cult”.³⁵ Stone then outlined a version of religious history in which matriarchal religions were overtaken by patriarchal Abrahamic traditions. Perhaps her intentions are made most clear by the very last section of the book titled: “Looking Back to Look Ahead – Paradise In Perspective”.³⁶ Here she clearly connects contemporaneous feminist efforts to oppose patriarchy stating: “For within the very structure of family life, in families that do or did embrace the male religions, are the almost invisibly accepted social customs and life patterns that reflect the one-time strict adherence to the biblical scriptures”.³⁷ She then states her belief that the study of female-centred religions of the

³³ The evidence and argument supporting universal matriarchal traditions in regions now known as Europe have since been highly contested since Gimbutas and Stone’s original books, perhaps most notably in: Cynthia Eller, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won’t Give Women a Future* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000); Gimbutas, *The Goddesses*, 236-238.

³⁴ Examples of UU engagement with Stone’s writings include: Shirley Ann Ranck, “Session Four: Why Did it Happen? The Shift from Goddess to God,” in *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: A Ten-Session Adult Seminar in Feminist Theology*, (Boston: Section of Religion Education Unitarian Universalist Association, 1986), 34-40; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 1: General, Beth Hone, “WDCUC W & R News Report,” Sept 1980; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, Beth Hone, “Resources for Women and Religion,” ND; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 7: Correspondence - Western Canada, “Notes (Study Guide): Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion,” 1980s; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Letter to District Chairs of the Women and Religion Task Forces from Marilyn Gentile re: activities and plans of the Continental Committee, 18 Aug 1987.

³⁵ Stone, *When God*, 13.

³⁶ Stone, *When God*, 236.

³⁷ Stone, *When God*, 239.

past will reveal patriarchal religious beliefs ingrained within society as not inevitable or natural.³⁸ For Stone, the Venus statues represented not just an encouraging past, but a deeply promising future.

Gimbutas and Stone were not alone in their belief in the power of matriarchal past. Both books gained an immense readership. Emblematic of the Venus figures highlighted by Stone and Gimbutas, *The Venus of Willendorf*'s easily recognizable features paired with a direct tie-in to timely feminist ideas about the influence of the past on the future made it an easily adaptable symbol of women interested in goddess spirituality.³⁹ Chicago's *The Dinner Party* included it because the imagery's association with the goddess movement was already established and strong. Hone's visit to *The Dinner Party* in 1983 would mark it as very early exposure to an image which she would soon begin to study and replicate with intense focus in her own art practice.⁴⁰

“Dignity and Strength”: Sharing the Images of *The Venus*

While speaking with oral history narrators, it became clear that the way Hone's art practice manifested within her spiritual feminist community, particularly the Lumsden Women's Gatherings, was through art made in connection with particularly theological purpose. In her interview for this project, Betty Donaldson chose to wear a small pottery figurine with emphasized breasts, hips and vulva.⁴¹ It hung from a leather strap and was inscribed with a small “BH” on its back.⁴² It was immediately recognizable when she pointed it out on the web camera as nearly identical to one that sat on my own desk shelf. This similar necklace was a gift from Barbara Mader at the beginning of this research. During her interview, she clarified that this

³⁸ Stone, *When God*, 240.

³⁹ While the *The Venus of Willendorf* is not featured by Gimbutas in her book, Stone specifically includes the image as an example of Venus statues in connection with Gimbutas. See: Stone, *When God*, Figure 1.

⁴⁰ Hone's archival documents include a file of notes and study documents including newspaper cuttings of art exhibitions she attended featuring goddess imagery and photocopied research documents. Her work accessed ongoing interest in the wider world. For more, see: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 54, Series 8.1: Art – General, File 4: Goddess – Notes & Background Material.

⁴¹ Betty Donaldson, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 22, 2019, 2.

⁴² Donaldson, interview, 2.

specific model passed along to me was one of two copies that had been in her possession.⁴³ This one once belonged to Hone. Mader found it, after the artist's passing, on her studio "bulletin board that she'd tacked things on".⁴⁴ As seen in Fig. 3-4, Hone made many copies of these little figurines and narrators, even those who did not own one, brought them up as a memorable, popular item in Hone's circle of spiritual feminism.⁴⁵

Looking at Hone's body of work from the seventies onwards reveals a sort of meditative repetition on historical representations of female divinity. After the publication of Gimbutas' and Stone's books, along with the prairie visit of *The Dinner Party*, Hone's artistic practice noticeably shifted from useable dishware to abstract plant-inspired forms to images of



Figure 3-4: Beth Hone making necklaces after the image of the Woman of Willendorf, 1986, University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 25, Series 7: Visual Materials - Photographs, File 24

⁴³ Barbara Mader, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 16, 2019, 8.

⁴⁴ Mader, interview, 8.

⁴⁵ Joanne Greene, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 17, 2019, 7; Sandra Johnson, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 16, 2019, 7.

goddesses.⁴⁶ Drawing from the many books of feminist spirituality on her book shelves and observing the conversations in feminist art, Hone turned to goddesses as “her subject matter”.⁴⁷ Mader recalled, “Each time I’d go over, you know, she’d be working on another goddess...and she’d be studying up another...she delighted in it”.⁴⁸ Mader also astutely noted that many factors contributed to Hone’s shift in artistic subject matter.⁴⁹ Hone spent years on her teaching career and raising her two children, while also working extensively as her husband, Mac’s, studio assistant for his printmaking practice.⁵⁰ Later in life, after years of dedicated skill-building in ceramics, she finally had the time to focus on a subject matter about which she was passionate.

The Venus is one figure to which Hone demonstrated a fervent connection. Yet, when she first encountered the figure, it did not provide instant inspiration. Hone spoke of her experience reproducing *The Venus of Willendorf* in her talk, “Who Needs the Goddess?” presented to the Regina UU congregation on April 20, 1986.⁵¹ The talk heavily references both Stone’s “When

⁴⁶ As discussed in Chapter One, Hone’s artistic output shifted over time and it is worth noting the significant with which it did. Her work prior to her mid-seventies retirement were a mix of abstract, Modernist and utilitarian forms which reflected the training she received both at the U of S Regina Campus and the Farnham School of Art. Post-1975, her work focused on goddess imagery and women’s spirituality is far more interested in symbolism, narrative content and objects of belonging. Unfortunately, there is no definitive evidence in her personal archives explaining this artistic shift, despite its remarkable and abrupt nature. For more, please see archive files: Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2008-003, Beth Hone, “Fluted Gills #1,” 1972, porcelain, stoneware, glaze & lustre, 18 x 17.8 x 17.8 cm; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales, Files 13: Department of Trade & Commerce [Expo], "An Appreciation of the Fine Contribution Towards the Success of the Canadian Government Pavilion at Expo 67"; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales, Files 13: Department of Trade & Commerce [Expo], "Canadian Government Participation 1967 Exhibition Loan Agreement - Works of Art and Crafts," Beth Hone Lender, 1967; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales, File 14: External Affairs, Catalogue: "Canadian Government Pavilion Expo '67: Canadian Fine Crafts," Montreal QC: 1967, Canada. For more see: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 32: Series 8: Art - 2 Catalogues, Exhibitions, Galleries and Sales; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 34, Series 8: Art- 3, File 12: Price List, Hone-James Studio Price List.

⁴⁷ Mader, interview, 6.

⁴⁸ Mader, interview, 6.

⁴⁹ Mader, interview, 6.

⁵⁰ Mader, interview, 6.

⁵¹ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 21, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 3 Regina Fellowship, File 44: Talks - Who Needs the Goddess?, Beth Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?" Talk for RUF, 20 Apr 1986.

God Was a Woman,” but also Stone’s series “The Return of the Goddess” which aired earlier that year on CBC radio.⁵² Easy public access to the radio would likely have meant many had listened and the subject was at the forefront of many minds. Hone spoke about reading Stone’s book and, through her studies, encountering *The Venus*.⁵³ Conceding that she, “always considered [the Venus] to be an ugly little thing”, Hone wrote: “As I worked on her voluptuous rounded body I began to appreciate the artistic quality of the shapes. As well as becoming beautiful she also seemed to have a sense of dignity and strength”.⁵⁴

This anecdote reveals the twofold significance Hone and other Saskatchewan women found in images of *The Venus*. The first is revealed in Hone’s own recounting of her process of recreating *The Venus* and her initial repulsion at the over-emphasized features of the female body. Yet, through the process of methodic recreation, Hone began to understand “her voluptuous rounded body” as holding its own beauty, aesthetic and power.⁵⁵ Later in her talk, Hone pointed out that the goddess movement fosters “respect for women’s bodies”.⁵⁶ Connected with that is the determination of women to have control over their own bodies”.⁵⁷ She then connected the necessity for women’s bodily autonomy and self-respect to the struggle against both religious and patriarchal influences in the anti-abortion movement, a cause dear to Hone’s heart.⁵⁸

⁵² Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?," 1, 3; Merlin Stone, "Return of the Goddess," *Ideas* (produced by Merlin Stone), Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, January 8, 15, 22, 29 1986.

⁵³ Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?," 1.

⁵⁴ Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?," 1.

⁵⁵ Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?," 3.

⁵⁶ Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?," 3.

⁵⁷ Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?," 3.

⁵⁸ Coinciding with Hone penning and performing this talk at the RUF, she had spent the eighties already deeply involved with Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) and the Henry Morgentaler trials. There is evidence she was making small ceramic medallions which were sold at the Lumsden Women’s Gatherings to fundraise for CARAL in the mid-eighties. For more see: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 1: Abortion; Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?," 3.

The second significance of *Venus* is that such a bold depiction of a naked woman suggested a past where women could be the centre of religious worship and hold spiritual power. Hone emphasized this point in her talk:

In the goddess movement women have been able to find role models which provide images of strength and power in female deities. To learn that for thousands of years women were worshipped instead of men has had a powerful liberating impact on many women.⁵⁹

This statement is deeply connected to work such as Stone's as it connects women's supposed prehistoric religious power to the potential for present-day liberation. The knowledge of a history where women's bodies and religious authority were both respected was enough to galvanize the women's spirituality movement.

Carnal, Fleshy, Earthy: Shocking Imagery of Women's Bodies

Identifying the connection between women's physical bodies, religious doctrine and societal power was at the forefront of many feminist theologians at the time. Carol P. Christ outlines the issue in "Why Women Need the Goddess" stating, "Women were denigrated because they seemed more carnal, fleshy, and earthly than the culture-creating males".⁶⁰ Catholic feminist theologian, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza picked up this point in her own article in *Womanspirit Rising* by emphasizing Christianity's belief in "body-spirit dualism" intrinsically linked to gender.⁶¹ While men are awarded the superior traits of "mind and reason," women are connected to the body and all the forbidden temptations that go along with it, particularly sexuality.⁶² Fiorenza is quick to point out that not only "this subordination of women is sanctioned by scripture," but that the Pope VI's 1968 encyclical which declared birth control

⁵⁹ Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?," 3.

⁶⁰ Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, 279 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

⁶¹ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "Feminist Spirituality, Christianity, Identity, and Catholic Vision," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, 141-142 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

⁶² Fiorenza, "Feminist Spirituality," 141.

“intrinsically wrong” strengthened the Catholic belief that women cannot change or enact control over their so-called natural bodies.⁶³

Fiorenza’s reference to birth control is an indication of a wider feminist concern over societal attitudes about women’s bodies and their appearance, but all the various things women were or were not allowed to do with them. Part of this, particularly for artists, involved observing how images of the naked female body were received by audiences. Turning back to *The Dinner Party*, a great deal of the controversy surrounding the piece was due to plates resembling stylized vulvas. Upon the Calgary show’s opening, a disgruntled woman, Faye Wall, wrote into the *Calgary Herald* and announced, “This is one woman who is not going to see Judy Chicago’s work “The Dinner Party”...”⁶⁴ Wall accused *The Dinner Party* of intentionally baiting controversy for profit with its depictions of female genitalia. As Wall put it, “if [Chicago] had made ceramic plates for instance of women’s ear-lobes instead of genitalia, you can be sure that her profits would be cut in half and she probably wouldn’t have made it to the front page of the Herald”.⁶⁵

Many leaped to this conclusion that *The Dinner Party* intentionally shocked viewers for profit and popularity. Chicago addressed it herself by saying that making the plates’ design was never about “reducing women to their genital parts” but instead about “universalizing this form...into a aesthetic and metaphysical exploration of what it has meant to be a woman”.⁶⁶ She also wanted to “challenge the prevalence of phallic forms in our society, which are so common that no one even notices them”.⁶⁷ One Calgarian made this connection in a *Calgary Herald* letter

⁶³ Fiorenza, “Feminist Spirituality,” 142; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter: *Humanae Vitae* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 25 July 1968), http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html

⁶⁴ While some people from the prairies may note Faye Wall’s last name and connect it to past Saskatchewan Premier, Brad Wall, there are no indications the two are related. At this time, records only show that Faye was merely a Calgary citizen with a low tolerance for radical feminist artwork displayed in public. Faye Wall, “Mess of the Dinner Party Questioned,” *Calgary Herald*, 7 December 1982, A6.

⁶⁵ Wall, “Message of the Dinner Party Questioned,” A6.

⁶⁶ Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 12.

⁶⁷ Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 12.

to the editor which rebutted Wall: “I expect if Wall is upset over the display of genitalia in *The Dinner Party*, she’ll be numero uno asking to have the Calgary Tower torn down.”⁶⁸

The only reason ceramic plates which suggested the appearance of female genitalia merited a public outcry was, as Chicago pointed out in her retrospective commentary, due to their unfamiliarity in a public forum. For many second-wave feminists, such public reception indicated an underlying, pervasive societal sexism which shaped attitudes towards any imagery of the female body. Of course, there would have been similar novelty to viewing *The Venus of Willendorf*. That “dignity and strength,” that Hone spoke of is perhaps partially revealed by her, for the time, unusually open depiction of a naked female body.⁶⁹ The connection of this figure to its perceived matriarchal spiritual past, combined with its nudity, only strengthen its potential as a liberatory spiritual symbol for feminists seeking to upend sexist, mainstream religious ideas about the female body.

The Goddess Affirms Women’s Bodies

The *Cakes* curriculum drew on the symbolic potential of the *Venus* and combined it with lessons on the female body, self-worth, and societal oppression all in relation to religious practice. It is no mistake that the first session began with a strong focus on the figure of the Venus. Chapter One of this thesis discussed a *Cakes* activity where women would draw and discuss their naked bodies. This activity was immediately followed up by an exercise where the group watched a series of slides depicting the same Neolithic examples of Venus and goddess figures referred to in the aforementioned books by Gimbutas and Stone (See Fig. 3-5).⁷⁰ The second slide in the filmstrip, titled “Venuses”, depicted *The Venus of Willendorf* alongside similar figures. Following slides included images also found in the *Heresies* “Great Goddess” issue, such as slides of the Neolithic archaeological site, Catal Huyuk, that theoretically contained religious shrines believed to be connected to goddesses or goddess worship.⁷¹ After

⁶⁸ Joey Stewart, “Tower Down,” *Calgary Herald*, 14 December 1986, A6.

⁶⁹ Hone, “Who Needs the Goddess,” 1.

⁷⁰ Shirley A. Ranck, *A Filmstrip to Accompany Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, (Boston: Section of Religion Education Unitarian Universalist Association, 1986); Ranck, *Seminar*, 16, 19-20.

⁷¹ Ranck, *Filmstrip*, 8-9; Mimi Lobell, “Temples of the Great Goddess,” *Heresies: A Feminist Publication of Art and Politics* 2, no. 1: 32.

viewing these images, participants were encouraged to discuss the statement: “The Goddess affirms women’s bodies”.”⁷²

This exercise mirrors Hone’s comments about sculpting the *Venus of Willendorf*. After considering and discussing their own naked bodies, participants then viewed images of naked goddess art objects which held religious significance in the distant past. The statement, “The Goddess affirms women’s bodies”, was purposefully paired with goddesses that appeared unclothed and their nakedness was essential to the curriculum’s message. Understanding that the cultural shame and discomfort with naked women’s body stemmed from Christian theology, *Cakes* confronted participants with an alternative religious theology represented by boldly unclothed women’s bodies as religious symbols. Chicago performed the same trick in *The Dinner Party* by relating women’s power to stylized vulvas. By elevating the naked body to an



Figure 3-5: Shirley M. Ranck, Slide 5, A Filmstrip to Accompany *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, Boston: Section of Religion Education Unitarian Universalist Association, 1986.

⁷² Ranck, *Seminar*, 20.

art object with aesthetic, historical, and religious value, an “ugly little thing” like the *Venus* can afford “dignity and strength”.⁷³

By participants valuing their own bodies and themselves, the curriculum hoped women realized their value in culture and in society. After working through all *Cakes* sessions, participants left the final meeting with this objective: “to consider what our hopes are for ourselves and for the institutions of our society”.⁷⁴ *Cakes* taught that women’s systematic removal from religious practice was a result of the patriarchal structure of religions. Ergo, the final lesson of *Cakes* is quite radical in that it asks, through quoting psychologist Jean Baker Miller, for women to consider, “not how...women can fit into, and advance in, the institutions as organized for men, but how should these institutions be reorganized so as to include women”.⁷⁵ By understanding the myths, symbols and beliefs that act as ethical guidelines for societal structures as fundamentally patriarchal, *Cakes* proposed a goddess-centric alternative in order to fully and fundamentally change how society is structured.

The Network of Venuses

All the symbolic meaning Hone gathered from the art viewed, the books she read, and the curriculum she studied all became distilled within the repeated *Venus of Willendorf* imagery which she created. While she did create other goddess imagery inspired by other feminist thinkers and artists of the time, the *Venus of Willendorf* persisted throughout her life and represents a particular moment in feminist spirituality.⁷⁶ As discussed above, the *Venus* became

⁷³ Hone, "Who Needs The Goddess?," 1.

⁷⁴ Ranck, *Seminar*, 75.

⁷⁵ Ranck, *Seminar*, 75.

⁷⁶ Hone frequently reproduced images of goddess which often directly referenced texts she read. The Mann Art Gallery collections include at least thirty examples of objects which reference goddess imagery. The Mac and Beth Hone Fonds and Sandra Johnson’s Personal Collection also hold examples of Hone’s goddess imagery. A majority of all three collection depict recognizable figures from the pages of Gimbuta’s work. For example, a statue of Demeter and Persephone embracing, multiple sculptures of the Minoan Serpent goddess (depicted on the first edition cover of Stone’s *When God Was a Woman*), and even the depiction of crowned god and goddess bird vessels depicting herself and her husband after a similar Neolithic ceramic object identified in Gimbuta’s work. For examples see: Personal Collection of Sandra Johnson, Beth Hone, "Demeter and Persephone," 1986; Personal Collection of Sandra Johnson, Beth Hone, Snake Goddess Bird Bath, 1986; Personal Collection of Sandra Johnson, Beth Hone, Mac and Beth Bird Vessels, 7 Feb 1973; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Series 8-2 Other – Oversize and Three-Dimensional, File: Goddess and Figurines.

imbued with the promise of widespread feminist change through an embrace of radical feminist religion. The *Venus* emerges repeatedly in Hone's work after the mid-eighties. At times, the figure would become rounded-out with her belly shaped into sea and land of the earth (See: Fig. 3-6) or adorn a votive candle where Venuses guarded a leaping pod of dolphins (See: Fig. 3-7).

Yet what persists throughout Hone's artistic output are the *Venus* necklaces. The Mann Art Gallery, which holds most of Hone's personal art collection, has over a dozen of the same form.⁷⁷ They also appear repeatedly in the personal collections of those contacted for this research. Countering the Modernist conventions which placed importance on originality and in which Hone was originally trained, an artist replicating the exact same piece of art would not only decrease its monetary value but was frowned upon. The lithographic prints created by Hone's husband, Mac Hone, are all numbered in the order each was printed within the limited amount made per image because of this very convention. Traditionally, the earlier the number of



Figure 3-6: Beth Hone, "Earth Mother," ND, University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 24, Series 7: Visual Materials - Photographs, Files 2 - Artistic - 14 photograph



Figure 3-7: Beth Hone, "Dolphins with Guardians," ND, Mann Art Gallery.

⁷⁷ In the Mann Art Gallery Beth Hone holdings, there are at least fourteen small ceramic replications of *The Venus of Willendorf*. For complete collection see: Mac and Beth Hone Collection, The Mann Art Gallery, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada.

one of these prints, the higher the value. Yet, Hone's little Venuses bear no similar numbers or indication of value other than her rough initials on each back. Perhaps further indicating a shift in her artistic ideology, these little necklaces' intended primary home was not in stores or galleries, but in the hands of many women who used them as practical objects.

Instead, the value of the Venus necklaces is due to the large amount made because that allowed for a wide network of women to own and wear them. A necklace bearing the image of the Willendorf Venus, attached to Hone and the WCD Women's Retreat, would have indicated belonging to the group.⁷⁸ Furthermore, it would have demonstrated the bearer's knowledge and values. Although it is not possible, at this time, to track how many necklaces were made and distributed, narrators' familiarity with the pieces as well as corroborating anecdotes of many women attending events with necklaces suggests they were a common feature.⁷⁹ Hone made other necklaces with common feminist and UU symbols as well to sell at the Lumsden Women's Gatherings, at first to fundraise for a Gathering bursary to aid women's attendance and to support the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League.⁸⁰ Based on this, it is possible the Venuses were distributed for similar fundraising efforts which tied into and supported these women's collectively held values.

What is important to consider here is how Hone's Venus necklaces are an expression of feminist ideas and enact symbolic significance. Not only do they represent a particularly important symbolic figure for the movement, but they also indicate membership in a particular group. The reason the necklace repeatedly turned up during the research and interviewing process was because its wearing demonstrated belonging to UU women's groups, specifically to the WCD Women's Retreat. Yet, the Venus did not belong solely to the women of Western Canada. She appeared in the internationally touring exhibit of Judy Chicago. Her meaning

⁷⁸ This practice was common among groups at the time, but it has not been thoroughly examined. Mary Jo Neitz briefly addresses the practice of lesbian women interested in particular groups of women's spirituality to subtly declare their identity and beliefs by wearing jewelry with images of labrys, a double-headed ax which came, without foundation, to symbolize "the power of the Amazons". Mary Jo Neitz, "Queering the Dragonfest: Changing Sexualities in a Post-Patriarchal Religion," *Sociology of Religion* 61, no. 4 (2000): 377, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3712521>.

⁷⁹ Donaldson, interview, 2; Greene, interview, 7; Johnson, interview, 7; Mader, interview, 8.

⁸⁰ University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 22, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 4: Committee, Beth Hone, "Western Canada District," 1985.

underscored arguments about the power of goddess spirituality in some of the era's most highly regarded feminist spiritual texts.⁸¹ She appeared over and over in moments where women expressed the necessity and desire for a continuity and community with women across generations and millennia. In short, she held the promise of a great transnational spiritual sisterhood.

By looking at the symbol of the Venus in Hone's own work, it can be demonstrated how Hone and, by extension, her community of UU feminist women were immersed in a wide-reaching, transnational network of women attempting to create a unique, woman-centric, spirituality-based alternative to patriarchal oppression. As a part of this strategy, they employed artistic practice to create new imagery, such as the Venuses, which represented this women-centred, goddess spirituality. Despite the physical distance between Lumsden, Saskatchewan and the location of other women thinking about goddess spirituality, Hone discovered ideas through written word and images. Chicago's piece from California travelled to Calgary, exposing many women in Western Canada and Northwestern America to her ideas about women's history and the symbolism of women's bodies. Hone and her friends travelled to conferences across North America to speak and trade strategies with other women about religion and feminism. Despite great distance and the challenges which accompany it, second-wave feminism and spirituality bound a great number of women together across the continent and beyond.⁸² Indeed, through Herstory, they created a network of women which reached beyond the present far into the past in order to create an entirely new path forward out of patriarchy.

⁸¹ A few significant examples include: Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess"; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Womanguides: Readings Toward a Feminist Theology* (Beacon Press, 1996); Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, 20th anniversary ed. (New York: Harper, 1989); Stone, *When God*.

⁸² Although unable to address the 1994 UUWF curriculum follow-up to *Cakes* within the scope of this thesis, *Rise Up & Call Her Name* represented an engagement between UU spiritual feminism and emergent third wave feminist conversations about race in the context of feminist faith. The W&R Reading Group in Regina worked through the curriculum in Fall 1994 and did group exercises informed by the writing of primarily Black and Indigenous feminists who analyzed the relationship between race, privilege, and spirituality. For more see: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Katie Stein Sather, "Rise Up & Call Her Name" Workbook, Regina SK: Western Canada District Training; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004; "A New UUWF Curriculum: Rise UP & Call Her Name - A Women-honoring Journey into Global Earth-based Spiritualities," Ordering Form, 25 Oct 1994.

Conclusion

When Betty Donaldson recalled Hone's role in the Lumsden Women's Gatherings, especially during the later years, she described her as a respected grandmother figure of the event.¹ As Hone aged, she stepped out of her main organizational role but Donaldson remembered that Hone always attended Sunday morning ceremonies.² Women viewed Hone's attendance in her elder years as "like having a blessing bestowed".³ Other narrators recalled, similarly, the importance of Hone's presence throughout her life at not just the Lumsden Women's Gatherings, but at the many events she both led and attended.



Figure 4-1: "Beth Hone," 2005, University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 25, Series 7: Visual Materials - Photographs, File 17: Portraits - Mac and Beth.

The respect afforded Hone in her latter years was a result of years of effort and leadership done in her particular style. Rogers recalled:

...it wasn't hard to follow Beth because she made sense and she wasn't pushy. She wasn't, you know, "You gotta do it my way" kind of a thing. She would sort of explain it that you couldn't do anything but be like, "Yeah, that's the way to do it".⁴

Speaking with Barbara Mader, she also expressed Hone's quiet sort of leadership:

...she had such a gentle way of offering it. I can't imagine anyone saying, "Ah, that Beth Hone, she's always pontificating!"... That wouldn't be it at all! She'd be on the other end of the spectrum and this stuff would kind of just fall off her as she went along her way, you know?⁵

¹ Betty Donaldson, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 22, 2019, 2-3.

² Donaldson, interview, 2-3.

³ Donaldson, interview, 2-3.

⁴ Evelyn Rogers, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 20, 2019, 5.

⁵ Barbara Mader, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 16, 2019, 2.

Hone's long-established style of gentle, observant but extremely compelling teaching and leadership lent itself well to the forms of activism she chose. The community she helped build formed itself through actions that did not require forceful speeches by a singular leader. Instead, in the style of decentralized leadership favoured by some feminists, Hone's group developed through fostering friendships, supportive networks, and guided learning. The small gatherings of women who read books together, the newsletters mailed out across great distances, and spiritual ceremonies which represented women's connections with one another ultimately developed a lineage of women bound together by friendship, knowledge, and activism.

A reflection of many other activist women's experiences in the twentieth century, Hone's life stretched across many periods of women's activism. While consistently interested in left-leaning activism, her action through the forties into the fifties was inspired more by movements such as the UN's international pacifism. These interests affected the form her women's activism took and influenced her involvement with the VOW's maternalist pacifism. Yet, as second-wave feminism erupted in the sixties, her interests also led her into the realm of cultural, reproductive rights and spiritual feminism. Her actions continued far into her elder years all the way into the early 2000s. As Hone learned more about herself and the world, she moved between feminist organizations and groups. Thus, her life demonstrates feminist networking on the individual, micro scale.

When the narrators spoke of Hone, it was with a great deal of reverence and respect. They acknowledged her great ability to quietly lead, to draw others to her without a great deal of force or noise. She achieved a great deal all with a quiet dignity. Perhaps this very trait of avoiding the spotlight is why there has been very little formally written about her despite her extensive efforts in many fields throughout her life. Additionally, she lived her life at the intersection of things often overlooked in mainstream historical analysis: feminism, the prairies, women's spirituality, and goddess art. Their collective presence in Hone's life were crucial in developing a different picture of Saskatchewan from the seventies through the nineties.⁶

⁶ It is worth noting that the political landscape greatly changed throughout Hone's life, particularly with the election of the Grant Devine government in 1982. While not the focus of this thesis, Beth Hone was very politically engaged throughout her life, which was expressed through her support for the CCF and NDP. Some notable examples of this include: her unsuccessful pursuit of a nomination as CCF candidate for the Regina South-West constituency in the 1956 election; and her participation in the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Regina as a member of the NDP provincial women's committee in 1968. While I did not find similarly direct examples of active involvement in the NDP in her later life, I believe this is more so due to her shifting focus to feminist activism which address social issues effected by political policy such as abortion, labour and women's equity as demonstrated

Hone helped make this feminist activism happen from her home in the middle of a very small town in the middle of a very sparsely populated province. Yet, the Saskatchewan in this thesis is not a place of absence, but a place of action. As this thesis demonstrates, the province's residents were involved in various health, political, gendered, and feminist activism. While many Saskatchewan people were traditionally religious as well as socially and politically conservative, many other people actively challenged normative values and worked to change their world for the better. In fact, this thesis aligns with a period in which many women's activist groups in Saskatchewan gained momentum, including Indigenous, lesbian, and working-class women's organizations.⁷

As discussed throughout this thesis, the reasons many dismiss Saskatchewan as an unlikely location for the study of activism, such as its small, rural population, lack of high-density urban centres or the perceived incompatibility of rural locations and activism, did not stop the movement of people or ideas. Instead, strategies employed reflected the prairie context. Yet, the lack of understanding of this prairie context and its relationship to feminist activism is in part due to a distinct lack of thorough study of contemporary, postwar Saskatchewan history. Many historical studies about the province end with the Great Depression. Although Bill Waiser's *Saskatchewan: A New History* is one of the first to include Saskatchewan's entire history, more historical studies of post-WWII Saskatchewan history are needed.⁸ As addressed in the introduction, this work has begun with some recent publications of contemporary prairie feminist and queer histories, yet this thesis demonstrates that there is still considerable scope for studies of activist histories in postwar Saskatchewan.

in this thesis. See: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 86: Regina South-West Constituency – [ca. 1950s]; Ruth Wilson, "Slow Changes Predicted: Women Sandwiched Between Etiquette and Folklore," *The Leader Post*, 1 May 1968, 13.

⁷ Erika Dyck, *Psychedelic Psychiatry: LSD from Clinic to Campus* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Valerie J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada, 1930-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Liz Millward, *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community across Canada, 1964-84*, Sexuality Studies Series (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).; Allyson Stevenson and Cheryl Troupe, "From Kitchen Tables to Formal Organization: Indigenous Women's Social and Political Activism in Saskatchewan to 1980," in *Compelled to Act: Histories of Women's Activism in Western Canada*, ed. Sarah Carter and Nanci Langford (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, Forthcoming), 218–52.

⁸ Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005).

An analysis of Hone's contributions offers several key insights. First, she was very involved with the international developments in feminist spirituality. She chose to bring that knowledge to a rural setting and drew people into her community through her own aptitude for networking. In response to Hone's efforts, the women in this study willingly embarked on car trips across great distances, took it upon themselves to curate, create and share resources and spearheaded events small and large to create connections with one another. From attendance records we know that women from Alberta and Saskatchewan attended events about feminist spirituality in America, despite significant distance. Perhaps they were starved for such activities, more so than their feminist counterparts in Vancouver or Toronto. The prairie women who travelled to these American events then turned around and replicated a Gathering in their own region. This was an extraordinary feat to attempt – and it succeeded.

As this thesis shows, these activists not only pursued and consumed sources from their transnational networks but reinterpreted these materials and created their own regionally specific resources. The activists in this study travelled to other places for conferences, wrote letters to friends, mailed books to one another, and visited art exhibitions that passed through their cities. Yet, they did not passively consume these sources. Hone and her friends not only took in all this information, but then applied it to their own circumstances. They produced television programmes that could be broadcast on local television and at gatherings. Those Saskatchewan productions were later rebroadcast in many North American towns and cities. These prairie women developed curriculum and programming for both their study groups and the Lumsden Women's Gatherings. Beth Hone transformed all she learned into talks delivered at UU events, but also countless art pieces dedicated to her spiritual feminist practices. The work of Hone and her friends demonstrated not only the far-reaching effects of feminist and religious thought, but the capacity and gumption of Saskatchewan women to respond with their own context-specific interpretations.

Like many other feminist women of the time, Hone moved in many political, artistic, spiritual, and feminist circles. Thus, the women drawn together at the Lumsden Gatherings based on a shared interest in feminist religious practice, would then cross-pollinate other groups and organizations with their views. This finding reflects another strength of Saskatchewan's activist communities. Due to the small population, many groups were necessarily interconnected. Hone's life demonstrated activity and connection to, among many, leftist politics, pacifism, lesbian

activism, and spiritual feminism. She was not an anomaly, but one of many individuals involved in varied, overlapping activisms. This dynamic created unique opportunities, sometimes out of sheer necessity, for sharing of information and resources.

In the specific example of Hone and her cohort, they joined many women in the province and across North America who not only networked by moving between feminist groups, but by actively attempting to bridge divisions they perceived between generations of women. Their entire spiritual practice centred on the creation of a women-centred religion which traced culture, tradition, and knowledge through a lineage of women. All their work, from the worshiping of goddesses to the re-writing of myths to the creation of art was intended to create both alternative historical and religious contexts which honoured women's experiences and knowledge. In direct opposition to the male-centred religious practices of the primarily Christian and Jewish faith in which many of these women were raised, goddess spirituality promised a prioritization of women's authority. The radicalism of creating an event such as the Lumsden Women's Gatherings was that it offered a yearly event of friendship, commiseration, and creativity that also honoured and uplifted women's experiences and knowledge through spiritual practice.

While it is impossible to quantify the level of dedication, awareness, and belief in the activities of each participant who attended events like the Lumsden Women's Gathering, women's repeated attendance demonstrates that many deeply valued this community. The creation of connections between women across spatial and generational divides fostered friendship and offered support. Additionally, these connections created a larger group of women versed in the same ideas and passionate about similar issues such as ageism, reproductive rights, sexism, homophobia and much more.

It is also important to acknowledge that how these women chose to spend their time was quite radical. Many women in the town of Lumsden and in other small prairie towns, would not drive long distances without their husbands. Even fewer of these women would drive such far distances alone to seek a community which read materials that questioned established religious authority and discussed the merits of vulvas. The lack of positive reception, or any interest at all, in many communities would only have further motivated the women who did attend reading groups and Gatherings to make the drive for the sake of finding like-minded thinkers and a community of iconoclasts eager to share their spirited feminist thoughts.

Today, if you drove to Lumsden seeking out the community recorded in this thesis, it would not be easily located. The domes do not stand in the valley where they once did. They fell into disrepair and were dismantled after both Mac and Beth Hone passed on in 2007 and 2011, respectively.⁹ In fact, a recent CBC article on the Lumsden area reflects the popular understanding of this section of the Qu'Appelle Valley. In an article that highlights Lumsden as a quaint, rural shopping experience, one now-resident, Matthew Eddy comments, "I think the biggest draw is just to get out of the hustle and bustle of the city. It's just kind of a slower pace".¹⁰ Lumsden is now known as a quaint and sleepy bedroom community with some nice shopping and a great view. The radical histories of the town have seemingly been forgotten by many residents.

This thesis is one contribution in the recording and analysis of Saskatchewan's postwar history which, among many things, provides an alternative portrait of Lumsden, its resident Beth Hone, and the activists who she brought together in the Qu'Appelle Valley. Yet, as it is with any historical study, during this project's duration, additional topics and areas of research revealed themselves which were beyond the scope of a thesis. For example, I could not spend time on the adjacent Saskatchewan Christian Feminist Network which also held radical feminist spirituality gatherings in another location in the Qu'Appelle Valley.¹¹ Additionally, I could not focus on Hone's extensive feminist newsletter collection, some of which she published herself, which

⁹ "Beth Hone Obituary," *The Leader Post*, 29-30 April 2011, accessed on 18 Nov 2019, <https://speersfuneralchapel.com/tribute/details/1411/Beth-Hone/obituary.html>; "Mac Hone Obituary," *The Leader Post*, July 20, 2007, accessed on 30 Mar 2020, <https://leaderpost.remembering.ca/obituary/mcgregor-hone-1066034852>

¹⁰ Laura Sciarpelletti, "Craven, Sask., Is More than Just Country Thunder, It's a Scenic Natural Wonderland," CBC News, June 11, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/land-of-living-stories-qu-appelle-valley-1.5593656>.

¹¹ For more, see: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Letter to Membership from COG Members of Saskatchewan Christian Feminist Network, 15 June 1987; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, Letter to Saskatchewan Christian Feminist Network Mailing List People from COG, 27 Mar 1992; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship - 5 Women and Religion, File 10: Gathering/Retreat - 1986-2004, "Saskatchewan Christian Feminist Network Events," 1992.

serve as a textual record of transnational community formation and communication.¹² There are also the many passing references in Hone's archive to other Saskatchewan feminist activist community groups, suggesting possibilities for further studies of other activists from during 1970-2000.¹³ The evidence points to many exciting, surprising, and challenging histories which deserve attention and thought. Those avenues remain for future scholars.

Yet, some members of these prairie communities already do the work of preserving these histories in their own way, and Hone's legacy is no exception. The work in this thesis is indebted to these existing efforts. Perhaps this was best demonstrated when I arrived at my first interview with Sandra Johnson which took place in her garden where she still lives on James Street South in Lumsden. Johnson chose to begin our interview



Figure 4-2: Beth Hone, *Snake Goddess Bird Bath (Indoors for the Winter)*, 1986, Personal Collection of Sandra Johnson.

¹² Hone edited and published the *UU Women's Web*, but I was unable to determine the length of the run or obtain copies of all issues printed. She collected assorted other newsletters associated with the UU Women & Religion organization as well. For more, see: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship – 5 Women and Religion, File 13: Miscellaneous Newsletters; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship – 5 Women and Religion, File 16: Newsletter: *Communicator*; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 23, Series 5: Unitarian Fellowship – 5 Women and Religion, File 17: Newsletter: *Nearly There*.

¹³ A non-exhaustive example of groups and issues featured in the Hone archives include: University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 1: Abortion; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 3: Amnesty International; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 29: Community Health Co-Operative Federation – 1984; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 30: Community Health Services Association – 1963; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 2: Alphabetical Subject-Nominal, File 56: Intercultural Grandmothers – 1992-1996; University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, Box 9, Series 6: Voice of Women.

together by touring me through her tiered patios and rows of hedges, in order to point out the many homages to Hone's memory as a prolific and admired gardener. Many of these references mix plants Hone favoured and artwork she created. In the summer, a birdbath shaped like the Mesopotamian Snake Goddess (Fig. 4-2) sits on the deck, painted vibrantly.¹⁴ Every year, Johnson plants geraniums near it in the "gorgeous, fuchsia colour" Hone liked.¹⁵

After Johnson toured me through her garden, we then began the formal interview. It is in small moments such as this, Hone's legacy lives on. Akin to how her art continues to be enjoyed in private homes, her teaching carries on its legacy with generations of students and her activist efforts reverberate throughout the communities she moved within. It is a quiet but powerful sort of legacy, but one worth taking the time to recount. Leadership and impact take many guises and the impact of quiet, careful guidance is unmistakable. As Rogers put it: "...sometimes I sort of believe that you see and talk to God and they're right in front of you, but you don't even think about it...you're just darn lucky that you've met them. And yet...[Beth] would be embarrassed to have that said about her".¹⁶



Figure 4-3: Beth beside Flower Garden at Domes," ND, University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Mac and Beth Hone Fonds, MG 183, " Box 24, Series 7: Visual Materials - Photographs, Files 1: Photo Album - 50 Photographs.

¹⁴ Sandra Johnson, interview with Kiera Mitchell, September 15, 2019, 1.

¹⁵ Johnson, interview, 1.

¹⁶ Rogers, interview, 5.

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