

Radio program, *Not Vanishing*, flourishes

By Wendy Gordon

Despite continued funding struggle, *Not Vanishing*, Winnipeg's only aboriginal radio program, remains a strong and vibrant voice of the aboriginal women's community. The program, produced by the Original Women's Network (OWN), a 400-member organization affiliated with the Indigenous Women's Collective of Manitoba, has had a successful two year life span.

The idea to produce a radio show was inspired by *Becoming Visible*, a study of Manitoba native women done by native feminist Janet Fontaine. The study's findings, that native women were not involved enough in the mainstream media, spawned the idea and enthusiasm for the women to get involved and do it themselves.

The radio program takes its name from the title of a book by native American writer Chrystos. Her book of poems entitled *Not Vanishing* was a response to the work of 20th century photographer who believed his photos of contemporary aboriginal life were the last impressions of a dying culture.

Not Vanishing was launched in March 1990, during the standoff at Oka, Quebec, when a live hook up with a Kanesatake radio station behind the barricades was arranged. The phone in talk show was so successful that they decided to continue.

Not Vanishing has gone on to produce an award winning documentary about native lesbians called *Spirit of Two Women*, which won writer Ivy Chaske the Ontario Canadian Human Rights Journalist award. They have created programs on spouse abuse, and are part of a larger coalition of women working against violence. The show also tackles poverty issues, and the



importance of native women reclaiming their status.

The Original Women's Network is an important vehicle for training aboriginal women in radio production. According to producer Sandy Funk, there's a myth that radio is a very technical industry. "Anyone can do it," she says.

Their hour-long show, aired weekly on CKJS, Winnipeg's multilingual radio station, relies on equipment from the Native Media Network. Coordinator Kathy Mallett said she is looking into purchasing some used radio equipment, and setting up a studio in the OWN offices to help facilitate the training of volunteers.

"We are not vanishing" says producer Sandy Funk. "We are here and getting stronger."

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