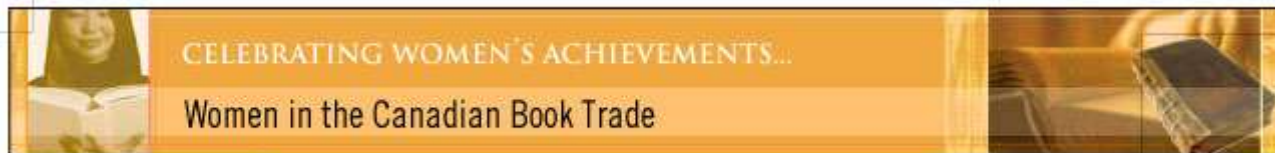




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Press Gang

(1970-)

Publisher

Photo courtesy of
The Vancouver Sun

Press Gang began as a left-wing printing co-operative in Vancouver in 1970. In 1974 it became an all-women collective, offering printing services to local community and women's groups which had an anti-capitalist perspective and promoted the liberation of women. In 1975, with the publication of its first book *Women look at psychology*, Press Gang expanded from printing into publishing. They soon began publishing feminist and lesbian works as well as distributing publications by other feminist publishers.

From 1975 to 1980 the publishing activities of the Press were run by volunteers, incorporating women from the community and the printing shop. In 1982, Press Gang split to become two separate collectives; Press Gang Printers and Press Gang Publishers. Initially, all books published by Press Gang Publishers were printed by Press Gang Printers. By 1985, however, this collaboration was no longer possible due to the high cost of in-house printing. Moreover, Press Gang Publishers tended to contract out the printing of their books while Press Gang Printers focussed on booklets, catalogues and limited print runs for smaller publishing houses. By 1994, Press Gang Printers, the only feminist print shop in North America, had closed down.

In 1989, Press Gang Publishers was reincorporated as Press Gang Publishing Feminist Co-operative Limited. It also stopped using volunteers, its publishing operations now being carried out by three full-time staff: an editor, a promotion/production manager and a financial manager.

Today, Press Gang's co-publishers are Barbara Kuhne and Della McCreary. Barbara Kuhne, who describes herself as a Swiss-Canadian farm girl by birth, has a Communications degree from Simon Fraser University. She became Managing Editor of the Press in 1984. Recently, she has also managed Press Gang's rights sales, acquisitions and some promotional work. From an Irish and British working-class background, Della McCreary joined Press Gang in 1985. She currently manages the Press' financial, legal and business affairs. She also oversees marketing, hiring personnel and assists with acquisitions. Both Kuhne and McCreary maintain a passionate commitment to publishing controversial books. McCreary hopes to one day transform the Press into a mass-market feminist publishing house.

Other key members of Press Gang include board members Paula Clancy and Nancy Pollak, the latter having often worked for Press Gang as a freelance editor. Val Speidel, who has designed the majority of Press Gang's books and book covers, is also an important member of the Press. Many other women work for Press Gang on contract.

Press Gang has published 50 books, 46 of which are still in print. Currently, the Press releases six to eight books a year. Marketing all across Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom the Press has now also begun targeting the cyberworld. Press Gang's publications have also appeared on university course lists, in particular those books on women in the justice system, women in prison, Native women's issues and sexual assault. Press Gang Publishers give priority to fiction and non-fiction writing by Canadian women that reflects a feminist perspective. The Press is also committed to publishing works by First Nations writers and writers of colour, as well as works that contribute to lesbian visibility and reflect a range of cultural and class backgrounds.

Its interest in new perspectives and the avant-garde places Press Gang at the forefront of publishing in the area of feminism. Since its beginnings, Press Gang has tried to provide a forum for authors whose works are not published anywhere and whose voices are not typically mainstream. As such, its publications focus on the exploration of issues which larger publishing houses would not normally touch. Perhaps the most telling aspect of Press Gang Publishers is its logo. Based on *Crow Woman*, a sculpture by feminist artist and writer Persimmon Blackbridge, this symbol was chosen because it best represents the defiant spirit of the books Press Gang is dedicated to publishing.

Selected Publications by Press Gang Publishers

Blackbridge, Persimmon. -- *Prozac highway*. -- Vancouver : Press Gang Publishers, c1997. -- 267 p.

Dykewomon, Elana. -- *Beyond the pale*. -- Vancouver : Press Gang Publishers, c1997. -- 404 p.

Maracle, Lee. -- *I am woman : a Native perspective on sociology and feminism*. -- Vancouver : Press Gang Publishers, c1996. -- 142 p.

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