

## EXCERPT

### *The Killing Fields, 1997: 1,000 Crosses\**

---

SUSAN BOYD, DONALD MACPHERSON, AND  
BUD OSBORN

In the summer of 1997 sirens screamed epidemic casualties day and night. The rise in overdose deaths that began in 1993 resulted in the highest rates in the Western world. No action was then taken by health authorities, but Downtown Eastside activists wrapped thick chains around light poles, blocking East Hastings Street and immobilizing motorists who were handed leaflets revealing the horrific situation. A large banner with the words “The Killing Fields” was attached to the chains. We then marched to a local park where activists spoke, and a First Nations Elder sang and drummed for the sake of all living beings and for those deceased from drug overdose, and we planted a thousand crosses in Oppenheimer Park.



Figure 1. Bud Osborn, 1997. Photo by Duncan Murdoch.

\* Originally published in *Raise Shit! Social Action Saving Lives* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2009), 19, reprinted with permission.



Figure 2. The Killing Fields, 1997. Photo by Elaine Brière.