



# reach

Fall 2007



## \$15 million gift to faculty

Benefactors **Lynn Factor** and **Sheldon Inwentash** fund five endowed chairs and 50 annual scholarships

**THE** University of Toronto's Faculty of Social Work, long regarded as Canada's leading social work faculty, has been given a huge opportunity to make an even bigger difference in the lives of the most vulnerable in society. A \$15 million gift from social worker Lynn Factor and her husband, venture capitalist Sheldon Inwentash, will establish 50 graduate student scholarships, to be awarded annually, and create five endowed chairs. The gift, which springs from the couple's deep commitment to children and the pursuit of social justice, is the largest gift ever made to a social work faculty in North America.

"This gift is visionary," says Professor David Naylor, president of the University of Toronto. "It will enable scholarship and research that will inform future policy and social work practices. And it will help educate the next leaders of social work. We are extremely grateful to Lynn and Sheldon for their extraordinary gift and their commit-

ment to improving how society cares and supports the most vulnerable among us."

The five new chairs are:

- Social Work in Children's Mental Health
- Development, Welfare and Protection of Children
- Social Work in Health Care and Mental Health
- Social Work in the Global Community
- Law and Social Work

Says Professor Cheryl Regehr, Dean of the newly-named Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, "We thank Lynn and Sheldon for their leadership and for providing U of T with the opportunity to make an immense contribution to the study and practice of social work." She stresses the importance of research and the incredible opportunity that is created with the addition of five endowed chairs. "Research ensures best practices and hence best outcomes for the clients and communities that social workers serve," she says. **Profile on page 3**

Photography: Corey Mihailiuk

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### Largest donation ever



Dean Cheryl Regehr

**T**his continues to be a tremendously exciting time for Social Work at the University of Toronto.

In June of this year, we received the largest donation ever made to a Faculty of Social Work in North America due to the tremendous generosity of Lynn Factor and Sheldon Inwentash. As a result, we now proudly bear the name The Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work. This gift allows us to hire five new faculty members over the next few years and create 50 new student scholarships effective September 2008. Recruitment has just commenced for three faculty members in the areas of Child Welfare, Children's Mental Health, Social Work in the Global Community and Social Work and the Law.

We are part way through a process of expanding the number of students in our full-time Masters level program as well as examining and enhancing services to these students. Existing programs will be expanded and new options for students will be developed. An investment in graduate education by the Government of Ontario has made this growth possible.

We continue to receive recognition both nationally and internationally for our research initiatives in evidence-based social work practice and social welfare policies. In the past month, two faculty members have received the prestigious Early Researcher Award from the Premier of Ontario. In the early summer the Faculty of Social Work was named a Canadian partner of the international Campbell Collaboration and will become the Canadian hub for systematic reviews of the research literature in social science interventions.

I am delighted to share these developments with all of you as members of our community in this issue of REACH Magazine and look forward to opportunities to involve you as the Faculty continues to grow and evolve.

\* The U of T Faculty of Social Work respects your privacy. We do not rent, sell or trade our mailing lists. Even if you do choose to receive *Reach*, you may notify us at any time to change your preference.

### Interested in Reconnecting with the Faculty?

The Alumni Association is currently looking for new board members to get involved in areas such as Continuing Education, Advocacy and Faculty liaison. For more information, please contact us at [alumni.fsw@utoronto.ca](mailto:alumni.fsw@utoronto.ca) or 416-978-4437.

## EARLY RESEARCHER AWARD PROGRAM

Through the Early Researcher Award program, the McGuinty government is helping promising, recently appointed Ontario researchers undertake cutting-edge research and build their research teams of graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and research associates. This round of awards will provide \$3,900,000 to support 39 researchers in the Greater Toronto Area. Researchers each receive a \$100,000 award.

#### Dr. Peter A. Newman

Vaccines are our best long-term hope for ending the AIDS epidemic. Ongoing clinical trials to test experimental vaccines are essential. Dr. Peter A. Newman, an associate professor in the Faculty of Social Work and RBC Chair in Applied Social Work Research at the University of Toronto, is creating a set of best practices for community engagement in safe and ethi-

cally conducted HIV vaccine trials in Ontario, North America, and the developing world. By facilitating the development of HIV vaccines, Dr. Newman's research will help to reduce the monumental human and economic costs of the AIDS epidemic.

#### Dr. Aron Shlonsky

Structuring and analyzing data, especially in large institutions such as the child welfare system, is often a daunting task. Dr. Aron Shlonsky, an associate professor in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto, is building a longitudinal child welfare database, a system that will track the service histories of children and families. This will help link data collected from across the province, and provide child welfare workers and government with crucial information on how to improve child and family policies and practices.

### In Memoriam: Bill Stern

**A Valuable and Loyal Alumnus of the Faculty of Social Work died on April 18th, 2007.**

A former president of the Faculty of Social Work Alumni Association from 1961-1964, Bill was the coordinator of the Mentoring Program for the last four years. A long-term mentor himself, he was able to attract many students and many of his colleagues to take on the role of mentor. His success in running this program can be attributed to his commitment, his determination, and the tireless efforts he devoted to it. One of his colleagues wrote in a letter about Bill: "He was a wonderful person with a beautiful heart and a commitment to justice."

We will all miss him

## Update and correction

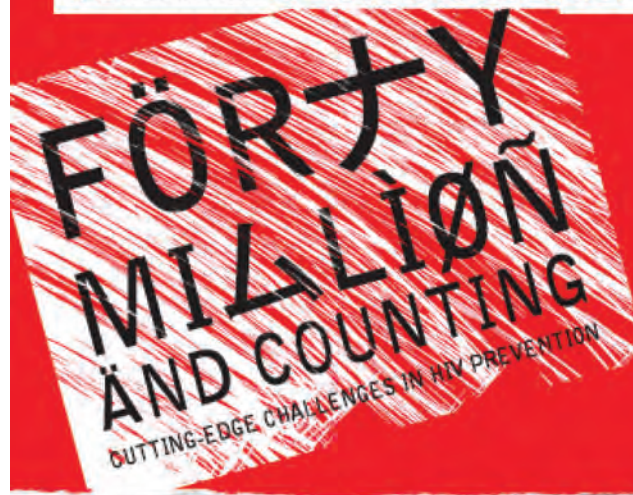
Arts and Social Work Research Initiative (ASWRI) now has a website under the Centre for Applied Social Research, which includes the descriptions of the current research projects, upcoming events, resources and materials produced, including the research report and posters from the Coming Together Project whose pictures of homeless women were featured in the last issue.

In the last issue of REACH, the names of the

community partner agencies were inadvertently omitted in the article titled "Arts and Social Work." Regent Park Community Health Centre and Sistering-A Woman's Place have been the integral partners of the Coming Together Project. We sincerely regret the omission and apologize for the inconvenience this might have caused.

ASWRI is in the process of formalizing our ties with community partners and artist partners, as we see the collaborative efforts of faculty, students, agencies and artists as crucial to knowledge development.

### THE RBC CHAIR IN APPLIED SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH AND THE RBC CHAIR IN PUBLIC AND ECONOMIC POLICY PRESENT:



A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE  
**THURSDAY NOVEMBER 15th, 2007**  
 8:45am-4:30pm  
 UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
 WILLIAM DOO AUDITORIUM  
 NEW COLLEGE, 45 WILLCOCKS ST

Free and open to the public.  
 Advanced registration is required.  
 Seating is limited. For complete details or to register, please contact [fund.fsw@utoronto.ca](mailto:fund.fsw@utoronto.ca) or 416.978.4437



#### KEYNOTE LUNCHEON SPEAKER

**New HIV Transmissions in Canada: Concerns Regarding Drug Resistance and the Failure of Prevention**

**Dr. Mark Wainberg**

Professor, Molecular Biology/Virology, McGill University; former President of the International AIDS Society and Co-chair International AIDS Conference, 2006

#### SEMINAR TOPICS INCLUDE

**HIV Vaccines, Social Challenges: If We Build It, Will They Come?**

**Prof. Peter A. Newman**

Associate Professor, RBC Chair in Applied Social Work Research, Factor Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto

**How Does Poverty Create Vulnerability to HIV Transmission for Women? Grounded Realities from Malawi**

**Ms. Seodi White, LL.B., M.A.**

2007 Dame Nita Barrow Distinguished Visiting Scholar, OISE, University of Toronto; Director, Women and the Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust, Malawi

**Walk with Us: Aboriginal-led HIV Prevention in Canada**

**Mr. J. Kevin Barlow**

Executive Director, Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, Ottawa, ON

**From Silence to Action: Black Women and HIV/AIDS in Canada**

**Ms. Notisha Massaquoi, (Ph.D. cand.)**

Executive Director, Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre, Toronto, ON

Organized by the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto







University President David Naylor (left), Lynn Factor and Sheldon Inwentash attend gift announcement

## Couple share deep commitment to children and social justice

**"F**or years, I have contemplated what I would like to give back in the event I became a success. The University of Toronto was always the top of my list but I felt that I wanted to give back not in the business field but rather in a field that gives back directly to society – like social welfare. I chose social work because Lynn, my wife and life partner, has taught me that there is no more noble profession and no more noble cause than social justice."

Those words, spoken by Sheldon Inwentash about his wife Lynn Factor brought tears to the eyes of many at last June's gathering of faculty, staff and graduates where Inwentash and Factor announced their \$15 million dollar gift to the now named Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work. One woman in the audience said later that her eyes welled up because Inwentash's words showed so much respect for his wife's work. "It's such a recognition for the profession and its importance," she said, adding that that is something social workers have not always felt they received.

The Lynn Factor – Sheldon Inwentash "partnership" began 21 years ago ("we met in March and married in January," Inwentash said) when Factor was beginning her career as a social worker and Inwentash, a chartered accountant with a business degree from the University of Toronto, was taking his first steps into the world of venture capitalism. In 1992, Inwentash founded Pinetree, an investment and merchant-banking firm that became hugely successful. As their fortunes grew, Factor continued to work for various community agencies and the couple had three children, now ages 19, 16, and 12.

Factor has focused on child welfare and child protection in her career as a social worker and currently works for Boost, formerly The Toronto Child Abuse Centre, preparing children who are victims or witnesses of crime to testify in criminal court. She also sits on a child abuse review team that reviews cases of abused children in care of the Children's Aid Society and who want to return home. She has stayed deeply involved in her career because she enjoys it and because she knows it makes a difference in people's lives. But she understands that her path is sometimes misunderstood. Because social work began as a volunteer effort and then evolved into a paid profession, "historically we haven't been a valued profession," she says. "Many people do not have an appreciation for

the type of work we do," she says.

Her husband clearly understands and appreciates the work. While he agrees that the field is often "overlooked and under-funded," social work probably "touches more aspects of society than many other professions. And it especially touches the vulnerable and those in need," he says.

Both Factor and Inwentash are passionate about making a difference in children's lives, which is why two of the five chairs they have established within the faculty will focus on children. These are the chair of Child

a couple of years ago when she brought some case-work home with her. Without revealing any identities, she read some of the profiles of the children she was working with to her daughter and a friend visiting after school. "The backgrounds of those children were so different from our daughter's and her friend. Yet because they were all children it was something they could relate to. I think it was an education for our daughter that day," Factor says.

As a family, the couple and their children donate to the Children's Aid Foundation scholarship fund,

which supports children in care to pursue post-secondary education. The applicants make submissions, which are then reviewed. "We decided we would fund some applicants as a family. So all five of us sat down and read through the same profiles of applicants who are all around our children's age. Many of these children had pretty disturbing backgrounds." The exercise helped their children understand the difficult task of having to decide who and how to help.

While Factor, so steeped in the issues of her field, is very aware of the need and helps to convey this to her husband, both are very aware of the possibilities and potential that a large donation like theirs can make. Five new chairs and 50 scholarships have the potential to "attract the best professors, the best opportunities for

research on what are the best service delivery models," Factor says.

And the couple plans to stay involved and build on their initial commitment. "It's very important to give back and we wanted to do it sooner rather than later while there is an opportunity to build on this donation over time and while Lynn is still very active in the field," Inwentash says. He adds that he hopes their generosity will be "a bit contagious," and that others in business will follow their example. "We hope this will be a leadership gift," he says.

In her remarks at the announcement of the gift, Lynn Factor linked the gift directly to what she has learned as a social worker in the field for the past 25 years. "I am proud to call myself a social worker. Social work addresses the most important issues in our community," she said. However, "the voice of social work is not heard as loudly as it should be," she said. "We need our voices to be heard to attract the scholarship and the leading edge research to the field."



**"I am proud to call myself a social worker. Social work addresses the most important issues in our community."**

Lynn Factor

Welfare Protection and Children's Mental Health. "While you can start anywhere in life to help, we felt we wanted to start with the young," said Inwentash.

The couple sees their efforts as a family affair, wanting to involve their own three children, who all attended the gift announcement. "It's very important to teach your children the concept of giving back," Factor says. "We've always tried to do that as parents. We want our children to appreciate what they have. With privilege comes responsibility. We have wonderful things – but not everyone in the world does," she says.

Factor helped their eldest daughter understand this



# Getting at the facts

The Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare mines the data and shares what's new

**THE** Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, housed in the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto, is one of four Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being, originally created to support the federal government's children's agenda. University of Toronto, McGill University, Université de Montréal, Child Welfare League of Canada and First Nations Child & Family Caring Society are core partners. Several universities throughout Western Canada and Atlantic Canada also carry out CECW projects. The CECW has five main roles – to analyze existing data on child welfare, to conduct research, to provide policy advice, to disseminate information, and to provide networking opportunities.

In the field of child welfare, "it is so important to distinguish clearly between the actual facts – what is happening – and the perception of what's happening, based on a few media stories," says Ivan Brown, who recently retired as manager of the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, a position he held for the last seven years since the CECW's inception. The role of the CECW and its team of experts is to pursue the facts about the child welfare system to better inform social work practice, government policy and public understanding, he says.

Brown, an internationally recognized expert in intellectual disability and quality of life, came on board to manage the CECW in 2001 and help develop its activities across Canada through three federal governments. He recently semi-retired,

reducing his time commitment to 25 per cent and handing over management responsibility to Michael Saini, recent PhD graduate in social work at UofT and systematic review specialist for the Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work.

Looking back at what the CECW has accomplished, Brown points to several highlights. In the area of analyzing existing data, the CECW has funded and helped to support secondary data analysis of results from both 1998 and 2003 Canada Incidence Studies. This landmark study spearheaded by Professor Nico Trocmé while he was a member of the University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work (he is now at McGill) and coordinated through UofT, is conducted every five years. The multi-site study involving several Canadian universities, examines the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of the children and

families investigated by the Canadian child welfare services. These databases are a representative sample of reported child abuse and neglect cases from all over Canada. By analyzing what kinds of abuse and neglect are reported, which cases are substantiated and what happens after, researchers can better understand who perpetrates abuse and neglect, under what conditions it occurs, and the characteristics of a maltreated



Ivan Brown



Michael Saini

The CECW has spearheaded a "research culture" throughout the field of child welfare

child and a perpetrator.

Such knowledge is essential for policy-makers, social workers in the field, and future researchers. However, what has become abundantly clear throughout the social sciences is that there is a strong need to better connect policy, research and practice. That has been the focus of annual symposia that the CECW organizes.

Disseminating information has grown in importance at the CECW. On its website, it posts plain language information sheets on the workings of each provincial child welfare system in the country and offers a bi-monthly newsletter on research results to subscribers at no cost at [info@cecw-cepb.ca](mailto:info@cecw-cepb.ca).

And finally, in the spirit of always focusing on the facts and not perceptions, the CECW has spearheaded a "research culture" throughout the field of child welfare by actively engaging community agencies in research projects and making sure that research results are available in plain language summaries and analyses in the field.

As the new manager of the CECW, Michael Saini hopes to "continue building on the CECW's success in fostering interdisciplinary and cross-national networks of people dedicated to making a difference for children and families in communities throughout Canada."

ing this, child welfare workers can target their efforts more effectively, particularly around training to deal with substance abuse, Blackstock said.

## Supporting First Nations

The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect includes Aboriginal children and their families

**FOR** everyone involved in child welfare in Canada, the Canadian Incidence Study (CIS) of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect is a hugely valuable body of research, but for no group more so than those serving the Aboriginal communities. That's because the CIS is one of the few studies to include Aboriginal children and their families, says doctoral student Cindy Blackstock, a member of the CIS research team and herself a member of the Northwest Coast Gitksan First Nation.

The CIS, conducted every five years with the third wave to be conducted in 2008 and due to be reported in 2010, examines the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of the children and families investigated by the Canadian child welfare services. The CIS-2003 tracked 14,200 child maltreatment investigations conducted in a representative sample of 63 child welfare service areas across Canada in the fall of 2003. The 2008 study, like the previous two, is a multi-site effort, with researchers from several universities involved. Under the direction of Professor Nico Trocmé who developed and initiated the original 1998 study, the 2008 study will be led at UofT by Assistant Professor Barbara Fallon.

"The data is a gold mine," says Blackstock. "I can't overstate how important this information is to Aboriginal communities, and by that I mean First Nations, Metis and Inuit people in Canada."

Before the first CIS was conducted in 1998, it was widely suspected that Aboriginal children were over-represented in the child welfare system. But no one could put numbers to the suspicions or explain why Aboriginal children were over-represented. With the 1998 CIS report came the dramatic evidence that Aboriginal children are over-represented in the child welfare system by a factor of two at every stage in the system including reporting, investigating, substantiating and taking into care.

But what also came out of the research, Blackstock says, is that "Aboriginal children enter care for far different reasons than non-Aboriginal children." Aboriginal children are no more likely to be involved with child welfare in cases of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or domestic violence than non-Aboriginal children. In some populations, they were less likely to be involved. But in the area of child neglect, Aboriginal children were grossly over-represented again at all stages of the system. And the characteristics of the caregivers that correlated with child neglect in the Aboriginal population were poverty, poor housing and caregiver substance abuse, Blackstock said. By understand-



Cindy Blackstock

The over-representation of Aboriginal children reported for child maltreatment informed a separate analysis of provincial "child in care" data in the Wen:de: We are Coming to the Light of Day (2005) report, which found that one in 200 non-Aboriginal children are in care in Canada, while 1 in 10 status Indian children are in care. Overall, there are more Aboriginal children in care in Canada currently than when residential schools were operating at full capacity by a factor of three, Blackstock says.

"That's the biggest challenge facing the child welfare system. I tell my colleagues, 'If there's a bigger issue, let me know!'" she says.

"I just want to say again how thankful we are to the CIS for this data," Blackstock says. While non-Aboriginal peoples sometimes worry that collecting data based on race is somehow racist, Blackstock says that Aboriginal groups have long been asking for this data. "We need it to legitimize our concern about our kids leaving our communities and to better understand our own circumstances," she says.



# The Campbell Collaboration

Faculty of Social Work joins prestigious international group to review and disseminate research evidence

**THE** Faculty of Social Work has been chosen as a Canadian partner in an international organization that is revolutionizing the way social science research is assessed and translated into practice.

“This formal alliance between the Faculty’s Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work and the world renowned Campbell Collaboration will advance our leadership role in closing the gap between research and practice,” says Professor Faye Mishna, director of the Research Institute. “The partnership status will allow our students and faculty members to fully develop the skills and resources needed to make social work research accessible and useful to the field,” she says.

The Campbell Collaboration aims to answer the perennial question of social science practitioners and policy-makers: What works? It is a non-profit organization whose mandate is to help those professionals make well-informed decisions about the effects of a wide variety of interventions. To accomplish this, the global network of Campbell partners prepare, maintain and disseminate systematic reviews of social science interventions.

Practitioners who need to know the efficacy of a particular treatment or course of action often perform *literature reviews*. These traditional reviews of the research are usually limited in scope and may be subject to bias. *Systematic reviews* by the Campbell Collaboration, on the other hand, must adhere to a very rigorous scientific methodology. They are comprehensive, impartial appraisals of all the existing research on a given intervention.

“In Campbell systematic reviews, you don’t just go after published literature,” says Professor Aron Shlonsky, one of several faculty members with a Campbell systematic review underway and Coordinator of the Campbell Collaboration effort at the Faculty of Social Work. “You also go after the ‘grey’ literature and find all the studies that have been done in a given topic area – whether or not they made it to the peer-reviewed, academic press. Then you evaluate these studies using rigorous criteria and use only the very best studies to answer your research question. Campbell’s methods allow for an honest appraisal of everything that’s out there and they are the gold standard for synthesizing evidence and supporting best practice.”

The Faculty has hired a systematic review specialist, Michael Saini, PhD, to provide assistance and advice on the review process. A PhD student, Charlene Cook, also assists with these reviews. Once a review is complete, the final step is to disseminate the findings to the widest possible audience. The Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work and the Campbell Collaboration are committed to creating free online databases of all completed reviews.

“Members of the Faculty of Social Work community will now have the opportunity to be involved in conducting Campbell systematic reviews,” says Mishna. “By doing so, they will be helping practitioners everywhere do a better job of choosing the right interventions for the right clients.”

The following are three examples of current Campbell systematic reviews at differing stages of completion being conducted through the Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work:

**Risk of child maltreatment:  
A systematic review of the  
predictive validity of instruments**

**Lead reviewer:** Professor Aron Shlonsky

**Other reviewers:** Michael Saini

One of the hardest tasks of a child welfare worker is to accurately identify children at risk of future



harm. Historically, the decision to intervene in a family has been based on a worker’s professional experience and intuition. However, there is now evidence that statistically-driven, standardized risk assessment instruments are better at predicting maltreatment recurrence than unassisted practitioners.

There are many risk assessment instruments currently in use by child protection services, but the



Faye Mishna

instruments vary considerably when it comes to their reliability (consistency when completed by different workers) and validity (ability to predict future harm). Led by Professor Aron Shlonsky, this review will systematically compare the ability of these tools to accurately determine the likelihood of future child maltreatment. The review is particularly timely because Ontario’s Ministry of Children and Youth Services has implemented a new risk assessment tool that will be evaluated and updated over the next three years.

**A systematic review of interventions to  
reduce distress in adult victims of sexual  
violence and rape**

**Lead reviewer:** Dean Cheryl Regehr

**Other reviewers:** Professor Ramona Alaggia and

Michael Saini

The psychological effects of sexual assault and rape can be devastating. Research has shown that victims of rape are not only more prone to depression, anxiety and sexual dysfunction than the general population, but are also far more susceptible to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

While there are a number of psychological interventions available to reduce suffering and distress in victims of sexual assault and rape, there is no clear consensus among therapists and researchers on which one is most effective. Dean Cheryl Regehr and her review team will conduct an exhaustive search of studies on psychotherapies for adult victims – both male and female – of sexual assault and rape. They will evaluate a wide variety of interventions, ranging from cognitive behavioural therapy to hypnosis, and evaluate each one based on its ability to reduce levels of trauma, depression and anxiety.

**Prevention and intervention of  
cyber abuse targeting children  
and adolescents: A systematic review  
to evaluate current approaches**

**Lead reviewer:** Professor Faye Mishna

**Other reviewers:** Professor Robert MacFadden, Michael Saini and Charlene Cook

Despite all the benefits that have come from computer-based communication over the last decade, the Internet also has a dark side. Young people are particularly susceptible to sexual predators, stalkers, and exploiters as well as peers who bully online. Research from around the world shows that cyber abuse of children and youth is growing at a rapid rate. As the problem has increased, so have strategies to keep young people safe online.

This review led by Professor Faye Mishna will ensure that the relatively new field of cyber abuse intervention is based on the strongest possible research evidence. It will examine all research regarding technological (e.g., filtering software), policing (e.g., undercover policing) and psycho-educational (e.g., awareness programs for youth and their parents) measures to prevent cyber abuse.



# Gift benefits Chinese newcomers

Buddha's Light International and FSW announce partnership to help newcomers make smooth transition to Canada

**THE** room was aglow in smiles last June when Dean Cheryl Regehr announced the partnership between The Buddha's Light International Association of Toronto and the Faculty of Social Work. But no smile was more beatific than that of Abbess Venerable Chueh Chu, the spiritual leader of the association. Through an interpreter, Ven. Chueh Chu said the partnership, which focuses on helping Chinese newcomers make a smooth transition into Canadian society, is important because "everyone is the same and shares one life. We must live together happily in a harmonious and prosperous society."

The Buddha's Light International's generous gift of \$150,000 will go toward a new initiative for Chinese newcomers to Canada that will include a program of research on Chinese newcomers, training student social workers to work with Chinese Canadians, and increasing the skill levels of settlement workers currently working with Chinese newcomers.

Professor Faye Mishna, director of the Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work, welcomed the initiative, which will allow for further research on

best practices in how to help Chinese newcomers make the transition to Canada, she said. Already the faculty has excellent relationships with community organizations, including the Mandarin speaking Chinese Community Service Workers Networking group and the Hong Fook Mental Health Association. By partnering with such agencies to undertake collaborative research, researchers will help to identify and disseminate research findings on the most effective programs and practices.

At present, there is a severe shortage of social workers to provide services in Cantonese or Mandarin to the Chinese community. Very few Chinese speakers in Canada choose social work as a field of study and few newcomers from China or Hong Kong arrive with a social work degree. To help alleviate this shortage, Masters of Social Work students who speak English are being placed in Chinese community agencies,



Abbess Venerable Chueh Chu

such as the Centre for Information and Community Services (CICS) as part of their practicum training to work with Chinese youth (who are most likely to have English language skills). The objective is that these MSW students will become more knowledgeable and sensitive to Chinese culture and community. At the same time, exposure to social work may encourage more Chinese youth to apply to study social work.

The third prong of the partnership will focus on offering settlement workers opportunities to continue training and upgrade their skills. Continuing Education at FSW is partnering with the CICS to develop a pilot training program for CICS workers. Chinese newcomers who speak Mandarin make up a large part of their caseloads.

Said Ven. Chueh Chu of her organization's partnership with the Faculty of Social Work: "The path for Chinese newcomers is not straightforward. We want to help them by all means possible to fit into Canada."

## Alumni Association hosts round table

Panel asks: Do Internationally Educated Social Workers Have Fair Access to Employment in Ontario?

**I**n her welcoming remarks to the Faculty of Social Work Alumni Association annual general meeting and the round table discussion on whether internationally educated social workers (IESW) have fair access to the Canadian labour market, Dean Cheryl Regehr reiterated the faculty's mission. "What we do and what our grads do is improve the lives of people in Canada and throughout the world," she said. To achieve positive change, everyone trained in social work needs opportunities to apply their skills in the workplace, but what many in the room that evening acknowledged is that internationally trained students face high hurdles, whether they trained as social workers elsewhere or in Canada. Here's a summary of the key points made by each speaker at the table.

Moderator Izumi Sakamoto, assistant professor and international student coordinator, started the discussion off by describing the importance of the issue from a faculty perspective. "How can we help IESWs achieve their goals?" she asked. When a group of IESWs studying at the faculty got together in 2004 to complain that they felt marginalized within the faculty and wanted more support in expressing their unique experiences and perspectives and help in navigating the job search, faculty facilitated a networking and mentoring group. "As social workers, we know that once people come together, they are stronger," she said. However, she noted that some students in the group still took two years to get work.

Panelist Carolyn Daniels, deputy registrar for the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, offered her perspective as a regulator. She reminded the group that the role of the college is not as an advocacy group for social workers but as an agency mandated to set standards and to protect the public from incompetence within the field of social work. One of the hurdles that IESWs face is that in order to practice they must be registered by the college. However, if they arrive with degrees

other than from accredited schools, the college has difficulty verifying their credentials. Daniels made two hopeful points: Labor mobility is becoming a huge issue in Canada and worldwide so that pressure is mounting to harmonize the regulation and assessments of credentials. And, the education of a social worker is a stable body of knowledge that lends itself to being transferred.

Panelist Ransford Danso, a MSW student with an undergraduate degree from University of Ghana, questioned Canada's immigration policy that encour-

"We talk to employers and have frank discussion about what organizations really mean when they say they want diversity but seem to reward sameness."

ages immigrants to come but then erects enormous barriers to employment when they arrive. "It just doesn't make sense for the government to spend all this money [to attract newcomers.] What is the point?" He pointed to personal hardship, even tragedy. "When friends share personal stories, they talk about having to move again to the U.S., even people committing suicide." And he described his own frustrating job search as he nears the end of his Masters studies, of being asked repeatedly how long he has been in Canada, about his accent. "Apart from my first degree, all my education has been achieved in Canada so the discrimination that occurs doesn't have to do with where you got your credentials. If it did, then I should be employed," he said.

Patricia O'Connor and June Yee, both represented The Chang School's IESW Bridging Program. June Yee, an associate professor in Ryerson University's School of Social Work and an anti-racism scholar, echoed Danso's personal comments from a research perspective. Whether Canadian or internationally

educated, visible minorities face employment hurdles, she said. "Race plays a role in terms of the barriers you face," she said. Researchers began to look at the issues of systemic discrimination in institutions in the 1990s. What they discovered was that "visible minorities feel trapped."

Patricia O'Connor, who is field placement coordinator for the bridging program, described the program which provides networking opportunities and free lectures to IESWs as well as a 10-month course that gives them a certificate in social work education and tells prospective employers that they have done courses that "are recognized as Canadian social work courses." The program also offers field placements and does advocacy work: "We talk to employers and have frank discussion about what organizations really mean when they say they want diversity but seem to reward sameness." O'Connor pointed to the new Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act passed in Ontario in 2006 as a positive step. One area that desperately needs reforming is how to help people whose credentials are not assessed as equivalent to Canadian credentials. "These people are left with little idea of what to do. They don't know what is missing from their education. They don't know how to remedy it. Some people have redone an entire degree."

Axelle Janczur, executive director of Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre, closed out the panel, offering her perspective as an employer. She reiterated the view that serious barriers exist in employment for IESWs and said that, as she has reflected on the issue, she has come to the conclusion that social work practices themselves are major barriers. By expecting all employees to fit one narrow mold, employers leave many out. It is time to acknowledge in Canada that "racial minorities are the dominant culture," she said. Employers have a legal responsibility to provide a non-discriminatory work environment with "anti-racist values," that include "respect, honesty, fairness and equity."

In the follow-up discussion, audience members shared stories of IESWs spending many years getting their credentials accredited and finding work in Canada. Dean Regehr made the point that universities must share responsibility because they don't admit people for partial degrees. "The way that universities are structured will have to be overhauled," she said. IESWs need to be able to know "this is where your degree is short and this is how you can get the missing pieces."



# Go, team! Whoo hoo!

FSW new intramural softball team gives its all on and off the field

**T**hey may not have won a game yet, but the Therapeutic Alliance, the faculty's freshly minted intramural softball team, had a blast in their first season. Made up mostly of first-year Masters students, the team is already practicing for next year with undiminished enthusiasm, says team organizer Rachael Walisser. "We're 0 and 8, but some games were close," she says. And so enjoyable was the season that the team is thinking about playing intramural volleyball this winter.

Walisser started the team because she loves to play ball and had played at McGill University where she did her undergraduate studies and in her hometown of Victoria, B.C. "I really wanted to get into a league here," she says. Faculty coffers bankrolled the team with \$400 to cover the entry fee and team members bought their own uniforms, which were T-shirts with the vaguely positive but mystifying words "OK Well" bought in bulk from Honest Ed's for 97 cents each. Walisser admits team members were somewhat perplexed by their de facto team slogan but the T-shirt price was right.

Intramural rules for co-ed teams require that there be at least three women and three men on each team. With the overwhelmingly female makeup of the faculty, finding enough guys meant bringing in a few "external friends" from other faculties. As well, a few non-student friends of team members helped out, says player Laura Shugar. Shugar, whose softball experience had been limited to playing catch as a kid, discovered she had topnotch cheerleading abilities along with ball-playing prowess. Nobody on the team left the field without a "Go, team! Whoo-hoo!" or a "Good job!" "It makes everyone happier. You have to have positive energy," she says.

Highlights of the season included a couple of double plays. "That's when you put two people out at the same time. It's really exciting!" explains Shugar.

Team members discovered they liked getting together once a week during the summer to catch up outside of the classroom. And having members from both first and second years of the Masters program meant getting to know students from other years. "We always had so much fun regardless of the fact that we lost every game. We always left the field with smiles on our faces," says Shugar. And, of course, the team did their best strategizing over drinks and nachos after each game. "We'll be back next year," says Walisser, with a veteran's confidence.



Team Therapeutic Alliance



Umbereen Inayet (left) and Mehreen Poonja

## A student play about family violence opens community discussion

**W**hen two Masters students were given a class assignment to create a therapeutic product for a course entitled "Working with Survivors of Trauma," they fused their social work expertise with their theatre background to produce a moving play and a powerful tool for raising awareness about family violence. The course, offered by Dr. Bonnie Burstow through the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, allowed Mehreen Poonja and Umbereen Inayet to put a spotlight on domestic violence within their own South Asian community. The outcome was the thought-provoking play entitled *Meri Kahani: My Story*.

The play had its debut in May at the Hart House during South Asian Heritage Month and was performed in July at Masala! Mehndi! Masti!, a major South Asian cultural festival in Toronto, and also during Gay Pride Week. It will be staged several times this fall at community organization annual general meetings. "The beauty of theatre is its ability to be mobile and bring stories to the community," Poonja says.

Poonja and Inayet, who both graduated with their Masters of Social Work in June, are keenly passionate about using their education and skills to help their own ethnic community. They decided to write a play, says Inayet, because it allowed them to explore issues of abuse in a non-threatening way. "It's a safe way to discuss issues without having to identify victims or perpetrators," she says.

Both women are big fans of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* and had helped mount the play at their respective universities as undergraduates. Like *The Vagina Monologues*, *Meri Kahani: My Story* deals with violence against women in a series of vignettes; in the case of *Meri Kahani: My Story*, all the characters come from the South Asian community. There's Shanti, a new immigrant and victim of spousal abuse, who struggles to get help from social services despite a language barrier; there's Anne, a lesbian woman who wonders whether she should "just get married" to please her traditional parents and then, when she does, suffers serious consequences; there's Amita, an ambitious young professional, working with her therapist to deal with the childhood trauma of witnessing her parents' abusive relationship. "One of the unique elements of the play is that it can be shown in its entirety or individually depending on the needs of the audience," Poonja says.

The two writers drew on their experience working with survivors of abuse within several communities to create their characters. Each character is a composite of several women but the idea is that "we are telling their stories and each woman we interviewed helped us to write about their issues," says Inayet. "Abuse spans across all cultures, religions and races," says Poonja, "but each culture has its specific nuances and we felt we needed to speak to our own."

Creating a play can stop the cycle of abuse in several ways, Inayet says. Abuse victims may recognize themselves and learn how to access help that exists. Perpetrators may recognize themselves and reform their behaviour. Service providers can learn about the unique issues of abuse within the South Asian community and learn how better to serve the community. And at a systemic level, a play performed in public takes the lid off an issue that may be hidden in a way that can be a powerful venue for change. "When you get people talking, you start to build a social movement so that change will take place," she says.

The response to the play, which has been performed in several community settings, has been intense. After seeing the play, some attendees have emailed the writers to tell them about their own experiences of abuse. One woman wrote: "I'm a survivor of abuse. I'm going to bring my daughter to see the play because I want her to understand what I went through." Other members of the audience have been moved to tears by the depictions of women's struggles. And on occasion, members of the audience have got up and walked out, angered by the way the play portrays controversial issues within their community.

From their own families, Inayet and Poonja have received only praise and support. Inayet says her aunts told her how proud they were of her work and she has received emails from relatives in Pakistan who have read the reviews on line or watched a clip of a CBC interview she did that's available on YouTube. "They've been really supportive," she says. Besides family and friends, they have received community supports through partnerships with agencies such as the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO), Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention, Coalition of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) and the South Asian Women's Centre (SAWC.)

Inayet says that both she and Poonja feel a strong sense of responsibility to advocate on behalf of their community here in Canada "Our parents brought us here to have a better life. If you're privileged enough to get a Masters degree, you'd better make it worthwhile," she says.

For more information on the play, visit [www.merikahani.ca](http://www.merikahani.ca)



# Doctoral program shows the way of the future

Students work "at the very edges of new knowledge"



Professors Marion Bogo, Adrienne Chambon and Sheila Neysmith

**THE** 10 doctoral students that the Faculty of Social Work accepts each year carry a major load – and it's not just the research and course work they undertake. Professor Sheila Neysmith, who is director of the doctoral program, reminds each new crop of doctoral students that they are the future. "Whatever it is that you become doing your PhD, that's where social work is heading. You're putting into place what social work will be in year 2030, 2040," she says.

Neysmith, who has been PhD director since 2004, says PhDs build knowledge in the field and influence how social work will develop in two ways: as professors, they teach future social workers, and as researchers they set the agenda for what research

will be carried out for decades to come.

Neysmith chairs a policy committee on PhD studies that considers "what should a PhD program look like? What are the most important questions? What kinds of connections at the international level are important to keep social work relevant?" In a PhD program such as the one at U of T, which is research intensive, PhD students are working on the most important questions of the day within a global context and then building on their knowledge and skills in many different forums. "Former PhD students from our faculty work everywhere in the world," Neysmith says.

The program, which is one of the preeminent ones in North America and by all standards, the foremost doctoral program in Canada, has had guaranteed funding since 2000. Each PhD student

is funded \$13,000 plus tuition and fees for a total of just under \$20,000 per year. Students who choose the program "are also choosing to come to U of T because it is a large and high-quality university that is very rich in cross-disciplinary opportunities," Neysmith says. Currently FSW students can take part in eight different collaborative programs with students from other faculties, she said.

Professor Adrienne Chambon who has been involved in developing PhD programming at the University of Toronto and elsewhere for many years and who served as PhD director in 2005/2006 while Professor Neysmith was on sabbatical, emphasizes the importance of treating PhD students as colleagues and offering them opportunities to be visible within their fields. The year she served as director, a large annual conference of schools of social work was held at York University. She discussed with organizers the possibility that University of Toronto PhD students organize a session on doctoral studies courses, which was agreed to. Then she turned the project over to the students to plan and host. "Part of the scholarly task is to lead in the areas of policy, research and academics," she says. "It is important that students take on this role from the beginning," she says. Students were also encouraged to take more leadership in the PhD working groups.

Professor Chambon also initiated a review of PhD curriculum. Out of the first year of that review came the concept of "communities of scholarship." Although doctoral studies can be very competitive which creates considerable stress for students, it is also important to guide the program with "a very generous spirit" and help students see how they are connected. One way this was accomplished was to encourage the relaunching of the PhD student organization that had been inactive. By finding ways to profile students' work to let everyone know who is working on what and by being sensitive and open to student financial issues, the faculty can help create that sense of community. "They are not just seen as people passing through. They are colleagues working at the very edges of new knowledge. We want to know them as individuals and get to know each other," she says.

## MARION BOGO PIONEERS LEARNING BY DOING

The first time a nervous Masters student role-plays interviewing an "angry client" played by a professional actor, with a video camera rolling and her fellow students and professor observing, she probably isn't feeling very grateful to Professor Marion Bogo. But she should be – because Professor Bogo over the past two decades has led the movement within the social work field toward an experiential teaching approach. The result is that students, at the University of Toronto and all over the world, enter the field with a foundation of practice skills along with theoretical knowledge. For her pioneering work in experiential pedagogy, Professor Bogo recently won a 2007 President's Teaching Award.

For most of her career, Professor Bogo has focused on developing research evidence for the best ways to turn students into practicing social work professionals. In the classroom, that's meant introducing role-playing in a highly supportive and professional educational environment, and in the field, it has meant redefining the field instructor/student relationship from a

hierarchical apprenticeship model to one where the student takes a more active role in directing her learning and offering her own analysis. In 1998, Professor Bogo and a co-author released the second edition of *The Practice of Field Instruction in Social Work*, which was originally published in 1987 and which is used extensively in social work faculties throughout North America and internationally. In 2006, she published *Social Work Practice Concepts, Processes, and Interviewing*, also widely used.

Currently, Professor Bogo's research focuses on developing valid and reliable methods for assessing practice competence in students. As well, she is developing best practices in teaching doctoral students to prepare them for roles as professors of social work. She has taken a leadership role in creating a course on teaching and a teaching internship program for doctoral students, again with an experiential component, so that students learn by doing. "Twenty-five years ago, students learned about social work – with the emphasis on "about," she says. Today they learn much more about how to "do" social work, thanks to Professor Marion Bogo.

# reach

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