



# CONNECTION

Volume 12, No. 1 - August 2005. Welcome to Connection, the official newsletter of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers.

## ***Welcome Susan Nasser - Executive Director of NSASW***

Greetings All:

I would like to take this opportunity to announce to everyone that Susan Nasser is the new Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers ; Susan began her employment on May 30, 2005.

Susan has a Bachelor of Social Work from McGill University, a Master of Social Work from the University of Minnesota and her Master of Public Health from the University of Minnesota. Susan has had many years of experience in many settings ranging from supervision of a sheltered workshop , to Program Assistant of adult education programs in a community college, to Community worker in Neighbourhood Services, to a Health Planner of home care demonstration projects, to Director of a branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, to Project Director of a community development project for senior citizens in isolated rural areas of Nova Scotia, to Health Studies Project Officer for Dalhousie University Institutional Affairs, to Coordinator of Off-Campus Degree Programs and Acting Field Coordinator for the School of Social Work at Dalhousie, to Academic Coordinator of the Bachelor of Health Sciences project within the School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Health Professions Dalhousie University , to Coordinator of the Healthy Balance Research Program, Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Susan has been an active member of the NSASW since 1995, serving on committees of the association and as a member of the Board of Examiners. She has also been a very active and involved community volunteer.

We welcome Susan as our Executive Director and we look forward to working with her.

Sincerely, Jean Bremner President



## ***Named to the Order of Canada - Wanda Thomas Bernard***

The Governor General of Canada, Adrienne Clarkson, announced last February that seven Nova Scotians were among the latest appointments to the order of Canada. One of those seven was a social worker, Wanda Thomas Bernard, a Registered Social Worker and a well known educator and scholar who is director of the School of Social Work at Dalhousie University and founding member of the Association of Black Social Workers. She is highly regarded for addressing racial and cultural diversity in social work education and the community. Congratulations to Wanda from her colleagues in the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers.

***Flower Power***

In one of my social work courses we were requested to complete an exercise called flower power in which each petal represented a characteristic that was either dominant or subordinate characteristics.

When I filled out the flower I have the following dominant characteristics; I'm a heterosexual, a North American, live in an urban area, I'm able-bodied, normal, have university, am 28 years old, raised in the upper-middle class, a Christian and I speak English.

My subordinate characteristics include being a woman, being Black, being of African origin, being a single mother and living in Nova Scotia.

#### My Dominate Characteristics- The Advantages

Being heterosexual is that it is culturally acceptable to be so and therefore I fit into the acceptable norms of Western society.

To be living in North America are that Canada is a democratic, safe, and a relatively progressive country. Canada is also one of richest countries in the world and I'm afforded many things like MSI, a good education, good food that is bountiful, excellent living conditions and excellent human rights laws. I feel fortunate to be a Canadian citizen, since many of these qualities and privileges are not found in many other countries around the world.

Living in an urban center is an advantage because there is a greater diversity of people that elevates people's awareness and consciousness of other races and ethnicities of people. Halifax being an urban center although it is not overflowing with bountiful work opportunities, there are still more opportunities here in the city compared to smaller towns. The urban center is comprised of many educational facilities, many hospitals and police and emergency services are near by if needed.

Being able - bodied makes me part of the "normal" world, and I am able to function more easily within it, therefore people do not discriminate against me in this regard. The world is built for the able-bodied person so simple actions like walking up steps to get into a store or getting on the bus are easy since I have no physical limitations. Since I'm considered to be "normal" I can easily fit into "regular" society because I have a normal body, for lack of a better word, that includes all my limbs, body parts and facial features.

I am a pretty woman and people are often attracted to pretty people and being pretty will work to my advantage in helping me find employment in the future. Now, North Americans have their ideal of pretty, as do different cultures within North America. Within the Black communities, I am considered pretty all over, whereas in the White -communities, my face is pretty but I'm big. People either fit into the definition of pretty or they don't and are penalized accordingly.

I'm privileged to have had higher education and this is uncommon for Black people and especially for Black women in Canada. I'm proud of myself and I recognize my privilege in completing a university education. Having a university education opens doors for me and will allow me to pursue a masters and Ph.D. in the future all related to better jobs, better rates of pay and therefore a higher quality and standard of life for my child and myself.

Being 28 years old makes me a young woman and I am at the prime of my life to be a good and productive employee or employer being able to work and making a contribution to society. This is a desirable trait to have within North American society.

Being of the upper- middle class should allow me access to privilege, better jobs and connections. Being of the upper-middle class should repeat itself in the future generations and help to secure a better quality of life for my daughter and future generations.

Being a Christian makes me a member of the largest religious group in the world. Being a Christian also gives me direct access to God who is my Lord and savior, where I get strength, forgiveness, grace and mercy.

Speaking English as my primary language is positive because it makes me part of the dominant culture in North America. It is also a language that is desirable for others to learn, since it's predominately spoken in North America. Knowing English is also a job requirement for employment in North America.

### Subordinate Characteristics - The Disadvantages

By virtue of being a woman, society has automatically placed expectations upon me of what women can and can't do and should and should not do like being a mother, working as a home-maker, not holding top positions in companies, can't do a "man's job" like a police officer or fire fighter, or go to university, and so on. In many cases, because I'm a woman, I will always see the glass ceiling, and may never surpass it under the current system now in place. There are still stereotypical, sexist, patriarchal, paternalistic, discriminatory practices that flourish in our modern society that vastly continue to effect women.

Unfortunately, there are still many racist people in the world and these people perpetuate racist behaviors, mentalities, institutions and laws. These continue to shape and to some degree, control my life. There are also many barriers against me because I am Black. Hundreds of years ago, a White man involved in the slave trade, came up with a scale of color, White being on the top and therefore superior while all other races fell below it, Black being at the bottom. Unfortunately, this manner of though has been perpetuated for generations and therefore I am seen as being less than those who are White because I am Black. Therefore I deserve, contribute less and need less within my life. The scale of color is alive and well in modern day society and people of color still hold more of the subordinate positions more often than those who are White and continue to be stigmatized by society. Since I am a single mother, people look down on me. I feel people look at me like, "Oh yeah, she's Black and I expected that she would be a single mother". I feel like I became one of the statistics I have often read about in my research that Black women have an extremely high rate of being single mothers.

Living in Nova Scotia is a bad thing because of the lack of employment opportunities to support the local graduates, including my self. NS is a smaller province, having less money and fewer opportunities for employment with more opportunities being found in Ont., PQ., Alta., and BC. Both of the above mentioned create barriers for gainful employment and providing for myself and daughter a good standard of living.

### The Positives of my Subordinate Characteristics

The positives I have found being a woman are that I feel I have increased sensitivity, ability to communicate well and relate to other women and people. Being a women also opens up many doors of opportunity for financial assistance and promotion via the government and public and private enterprise. As a women I can have babies, the lifeblood of human existence and that is an honor. Being a women makes me extremely intelligent, thoughtful and logical.

The positives of being Black are that within recent years with the realization and unveiling of institutional racism, Black people are being helped with many programs that deal with equality and opportunity issues. I am a direct descendent of slaves and I am proud of that. Concerning my African culture, I stand as a reminder to everyone that my ancestors survived and thrived, despite extreme and horrendous inhumane conditions thrust upon them with slavery and that to makes me happy and proud.

The positives of being a single mother are that I am responsible for the Christian upbringing of my child. I am responsible in preparing her to live a full and productive life. That I chose people that love and support her to infuse her life. These are important things to have in raising a well -rounded, secure and confident young lady. I have the responsibility to forge ahead and create a better life for both my child and myself through my life experiences, hard work and higher education.

Being in Nova Scotia is positive because most of my family is here, providing a wonderful support system. I am extremely familiar with the city since I have lived here almost all of my life and this helps me feel in control. I love that Halifax is on the water providing beautiful

views, excellent fresh seafood, tolerable summers and warmer winters, with less snow compared to the prairies.

### The Conclusion

This assignment has only reconfirmed to me that despite the many dominant characteristics I have, my fewer subordinate characteristics overshadow the dominant ones. Although my parents have money, it does not help me, I still need student loan to continue my education. Although I'm middle class, it did not work to my advantage, not being accepted to the IBM program because of family ties. Although I have two previous degrees, I still could not get a job here in Halifax, going on only one interview. Although I'm intelligent, I am still assumed to be uneducated and stupid. Although I'm pretty, I'm still penalized because I'm overweight, when shopping, in what people I should be eating and in how people see and look at me. Although I'm a hard worker and fast learner, I still couldn't do a "man's job", people assumed I could not lift and carry heavy boxes when I worked in shipping, but I did. Since I do not belong to the WASP, White, Anglo- Saxon, Protestant, White male category, I will never experience the privilege they do under the current system. That since I'm not a member of that group, I will continue to be held back unless the system changes, affording true equality for all people.

Go ahead you try! Here is your opportunity to reflect on where you stand in the contemporary North American world. For the following categories, list the dominant characteristics, the subordinate characteristics and the positives of your subordinate characteristics for sex, race, ethnic group, language, religion, family (nuclear, single parent), social class, age, education, physical appearance, dis/ ability, settlement size, geographic region (your origin and current and sexual orientation).

-Erin Desmond

### ***Social Work at the Aberdeen Hospital***

The Aberdeen Hospital is a 105 bed regional facility providing a broad range of primary and secondary care services to a mixed population (50,000 +) consisting of varying socioeconomic status with pockets of cultural diversity blended in. One would assume that given the complexity of a population base this size and the magnitude of medical events and crisis that can occur in a person's life, social work would have been a common and intricate part of patient care services at the Aberdeen Hospital. However, prior to July, 2002, social workers were not a part of the Aberdeen hospital's multidisciplinary team for patient care services other than, a small number of social workers providing intervention to a specific population group in Mental Health outpatients.

The Discharge Planning position was implemented at the Aberdeen Hospital approximately 20 years ago with a focus on utilizing hospital beds and not a mindset of helping people deal with the ramifications of the psychosocial pressures encompassing a medical event. The need for social work intervention became apparent by the number of psychosocial issues that were identified, either by patients, a family member or a medical team member.

Social work is now recognized as a significant team member in providing a holistic approach to patient care. Social work practice evolved with the gradual implementation of a new approach to discharge planning. During the early stages, the assessment and reassessment of the discharge process lead me to the conclusion that the approach lacked continuity in service delivery to all patients despite their age and diagnoses. The discharge planning role was counterproductive towards building healthy working relationships which is necessary when building trust and engaging patients in the intervention process. As the months evolved, the Social Work Referral/Assessment tool was implemented which initiated the referral process. Later, to streamline patients' access to service providers and prevent duplication in discharge planning, the Discharge Flow Chart was implemented. Then multidisciplinary rounds on medicine and surgery were implemented which focused on the patient's overall wellbeing and not just the medical problem.

After 2 years and 9 months, the workload has grown and the value of social work intervention is recognized and I now have a social work colleague sharing the workload. The foundation for the social work profession has been laid for patient care services. Social workers have a privileged opportunity to make a difference in someone's life through our specialized skills of advocating,

networking, teaching, modeling, empowering and above all, challenging the structures of society for real change that benefits us all.

-Linda Tapp, MSW, RSW.

## ***Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman***

Mission Statement: Foster confidence in the Public Service by promoting the principles of fairness, integrity and good governance.

Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman - Overview Established in 1970, the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman was created under the Ombudsman Act. The Ombudsman Act provides the authority to examine whether an administrative decision of provincial or municipal departments, agencies, boards or commissions has been unfairly or improperly handled. Examples include unreasonable delay; neglect; inaction; inefficiency; failure to follow policy and proper procedures; discourtesy; inconsistency; mistakes of fact or law; and giving inaccurate, improper information or advice.

Reporting directly to the House of Assembly, the Ombudsman is an independent Officer of the Legislature. The Office of the Ombudsman is responsible for the impartial handling of individual and group complaints against provincial and municipal government departments, agencies, boards and commissions. The Ombudsman's Office receives complaints from individuals or groups who believe they have been mistreated by those who administer public policy, as well as complaints questioning the fairness of the policies. Services are free of charge and complaints addressed to the Office are held in confidence and not subject to freedom of information requests.

### Administrative Review & Investigation Process

Administrative Reviews and Investigations conducted under the Ombudsman Act are independent of government and impartial. Ombudsman Representatives do not act as an advocate for the complainant, nor on behalf of a respondent. If Ombudsman Representatives believe an error or omission has occurred, both the complainant and respondent are advised and recommendations are made which may rectify the matter. Ombudsman Representatives cannot insist a respondent accept their recommendations.

If an Administrative Review or Investigation shows no breach of the Act, the parties are advised and the complaint is dismissed. The Ombudsman also has the authority to initiate "Own Motion" Investigations, matters referred by a Committee of the House and has responsibility for addressing complaints under the Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing regulations.

### Non - Jurisdictional Matters

The Office of the Ombudsman may not investigate complaints outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman Act however Ombudsman Representatives may direct or refer an individual or group to the appropriate resource or avenue of appeal.

The Office may not review or investigate Judicial decisions from any level of court.; deliberations and proceedings of the Executive Council or committee; decisions of elected officials at the provincial level (MLA's) however this exclusion does not extend to Cabinet Ministers when performing duties that would allow the Minister to be considered a "member of the Department."

Decisions of elected officials at the municipal level (councillors, mayors); complaints involving private individuals, the federal government, union members who have an available grievance or arbitration procedure with regard to a specific complaint; self-regulating bodies such as the Nova Scotia Barrister's Society, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, Registered Nurses Association of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Dental Board, Nova Scotia Land Surveyors' Association, Universities, private trade schools; decisions from tribunals such as the Labour Standards Tribunal, Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal, and Police Review Board are also considered non-jurisdictional within the meaning of the Ombudsman Act.

### Youth Services

The establishment of a specialized child and youth mandate at the Office of the Ombudsman is part of the increased recognition of child and youth rights, and the demand for government accountability where services affect them. The Office of the Ombudsman offers an independent

mechanism for investigating and resolving complaints from children and youth in the child custody and child protection systems. Ombudsman Representatives provide children and youth with an opportunity to have their voice heard, monitor conditions in provincial and municipal facilities and make recommendations to improve various provincial and municipal child and youth-serving systems. Posters and brochures designed specifically for children and youth are available in English, French and Mi'kmaq.

#### Senior Services Initiative - Proposed

A statistical profile prepared by the Nova Scotia Senior Citizens' Secretariat in 2003 revealed seniors are the fastest growing population segment within Nova Scotia. It is projected between 2000 and 2026 our senior population will almost double. Recognizing these demographic changes will impact the development of provincial and municipal policies, programs and services, the Office of the Ombudsman is in the early stages of implementing a Senior Services Initiative. While the primary responsibility for seniors in provincial care facilities rests with the Department of Health, once fully established the Ombudsman's proposed Senior Services Initiative intends to provide independent oversight to seniors in all residential care facilities, nursing homes and homes for the aged through a regular visitation process.

#### Looking Ahead

Goals for the future include expanding the Office's outreach to youth and seniors, the municipalities, and to the Aboriginal, African-Nova Scotian and new immigrant communities. Where required, Ombudsman Representatives will be prepared to ensure the objectives of the recent amendments to the Civil Service Act, in particular, the "Regulations Respecting Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing" are met and monitored.

Contact Us: 5670 Spring Garden Rd. Suite 700 PO Box 2152 Halifax, NS B3J 3B7 Within the Halifax Regional Municipality: 424-6780 Toll free within Nova Scotia: 1-800-670-1111 Youth Services: Toll free within Nova Scotia 1-888-839-6884 Fax: 1-902-424-6675 Web address: [www.gov.ns.ca/ombu](http://www.gov.ns.ca/ombu)



#### ***David Divine - A Biography***

Professor Divine comes to us from London, UK, where he has been a leading social worker, community development worker and researcher since 1978. A published author and international speaker, he holds memberships in several professional organizations. He has worked on the front lines and completed graduate studies at the London School of Economics.

"It's a hugely wonderful opportunity," says Professor Divine who has moved here with his family to live permanently beyond the six-year term of the chair. Halifax and London share many similarities in terms of the strong and "longstanding black communities that go back hundreds of years," Divine says.

Besides broader societal conditions, Divine identifies another question at the heart of these trends. "What does the individual contribute, unintentionally, to his not being fully engaged in and contributing to the wider society? It's a little more of a personal focus and it's highly contentious," Divine acknowledges.

"The uniqueness of the James R. Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies," continues Divine, "lies in the structure of a senior academic position that is linked with the issues and concerns of those who identify themselves as Black of African descent."

"Here in Canada we actually have the opportunity to do something fairly radical about discrimination," he says. For one, the Canadian government seems more open to community input, he says.

The Johnston Chair will give Divine the opportunity to visit other Canadian cities, where he'll document the "personal and communal stories" of black people. He'll also bring leading scholars and community representatives from all over the country to Halifax. It is also intended to have a number of international conferences on issues of concern relating to Black Canadian life. "I want to build a network of scholars, students, practitioners and community members to give input that benefits community relations in Canada, not just between black and white people, but between all people." The Chair over the next six years will have a local, national and international perspective.

The James R. Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies is established at various Dalhousie schools, faculties and departments for six-year terms. The original endowment for the chair was created through support from diverse individuals and organizations, including the Department of Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Status of Women) and the Royal Bank of Canada Foundation. The chair holder contributes to and advances Black Canadian scholarship at Dal and forges new links with the local and national communities broadly, and with African-Canadian communities in particular. The inaugural chair was in Law from 1996 to 2002.

Divine is enthusiastic about his tenure as Chair and says a great deal can be accomplished over the next six years. "This position should serve as a centre of excellence in Black Canadian research, a clearing house for material relating to Black Canadian scholarship, a centre for coordinating major conferences - local, national and international - on Black Canadian research, an important centre of Black community development, and a crucible for the development of aspirant scholars in Black Canadian studies."

### ***Donna DeAngelis - A Biography***

Donna DeAngelis is the Executive Director of the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the organization of boards that regulate social work in Canada and the United States, a position that she has held since January 1995. She oversees a licensing examination program used in 49 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Alberta, Canada.

She has a masters degree in social service administration from the University of Chicago, is a licensed independent clinical social worker, a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers, and a Diplomate in Clinical Social Work.

Previous to her position with ASWB, Donna worked for the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) as director of its Office of Quality Assurance, where she administered certification programs, including examination development and administration.

Other experience includes positions with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), The American Public Welfare Association, and the Lupus Foundation of America. She also had a part-time private practice providing mental health services at the Center for Loss and Grief in Washington, DC.

In addition to her work at ASWB, Donna served as President of the board of directors of the Federation of Associations of Regulatory Boards (FARB) from 2003 to 2005.

She has also served as a member of the CSWE Commission on Educational Policy (1997 - 2001) and the NASW Adjudication Task Force (1998 - 1999).

### ***Highlights of the NSASW Annual General Meeting***

The 2005 Annual General Meeting of the NSASW was held in the Cameron Room , Howe Hall, Dalhousie University on May 6th. This was the 42nd annual meeting of the Association, which indicates that the Association is fast approaching its 50th anniversary. Some of the highlights of the meeting are summarized below:

2004 Audited Financial Statements - The Association continued to record its series of annual deficits, which has been the case since the year 2000. The Council has undergone severe cost cutting by limiting the expenditures for Committees, professional development and limiting the number of Council meetings. Since revenue is directly related to membership fees, deficits have been caused by a failure to increase membership fees since 1996. During the last ten years of its existence, the Association experienced rapid growth due to the regulation of the practice of social work in 1994. Since the year 2000, it has become increasingly difficult for the Association to fund its regulatory and professional responsibilities delegated to it by the Nova Scotia Legislature under the Social Workers Act.

Membership Fees - Last year, members attending the 2004 AGM approved a \$50 increase in the annual membership fee. This has brought the annual fee for practising social workers and social worker candidates to \$313 per year and the non-practising fee to \$156.50 per year. This increase is substantial and should ease the revenue situation for this year (2005).

Resolutions from the AGM - Several resolutions to amend By-laws were presented and approved by the members attending the AGM. An amendment was approved to permit the governing Council to approve small increases in membership fees up to the Statistics Canada CPI to account for inflation. All membership fee increases above the CPI will still need the approval of the membership voting at an AGM.

Another resolution passed at the AGM, provided for a better definition of the non-practising category of membership. The new amendment provides for a member who is unemployed to use the non-practising status as well as others who have changed jobs to one that does not seem to be the practice of social work. These members will need the approval of the Registrar and the Board of Examiners before they can opt for the non-practising membership status.

The membership also recognized that some members have a difficult time paying their licensing fees and approved a resolution to provide funds in a membership assistance fund for up to ten members each year to assist them to pay their licensing fees. The use of the fund will be reviewed each year.



### ***Silent Auction***

LOOKING FOR NSASW MEMBERS WHO WOULD LIKE TO DONATE ART OR CRAFT WORK TO THE SILENT AUCTION BEING HELD DURING THE 2006 NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE:

If you have an artistic talent, you are invited to participate in a unique marketing opportunity for your artwork or product.

The Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers, in partnership with the Canadian Association of Social Workers, is hosting the National Conference ([www.nsasw.org/transformation2006.html](http://www.nsasw.org/transformation2006.html)) in June 2006 and is seeking donations for the Silent Auction to be held in conjunction with the conference Banquet. How to participate:

Donations of your product and a description will be posted on the Silent Auction web site. Once the item is received, we will ask you to provide a written description of the item that you want posted. We will also post a direct link to your web page (if you have one) on our Silent Auction page. The written submission may be used for a description and/or a biography as the standardized space permits. If you wish to participate in this unique opportunity, please respond to Nora Jessome at: [JESSOMNP@gov.ns.ca](mailto:JESSOMNP@gov.ns.ca) and your request will be forwarded to the Silent Auction committee. If you are aware of someone who is not a member of NSASW and you think would like to be informed about the Silent Auction please pass this information on to them.

### ***Blue Cross Coverage for Social Work Services***

Social Workers and Third Party Billing to Blue Cross

There have been changes to the Health and Dental Plan for some groups of employees employed by the Province of Nova Scotia that includes approval for counselling services by Social Workers effective July 1, 2005. A new benefit of \$800.00 per calendar year is available for services provided by a Registered Psychologist or Social Worker. The Social Worker must have a Masters of Social Work degree (MSW) and be licensed and registered. For further information on becoming an approved provider and obtaining a registration number to have counselling services covered under this plan, please contact Blue Cross at 1-800-667-4511 Ext. 3.

As well, the Nova Scotia Government's Employee Assistance Program approves some counselling services offered by Social Workers. Those interested in becoming an approved provider for this program, please contact the Nova Scotia Government's Employee Assistance Program Coordinator, Rhonda Calcott at 424-5433 or 1-800-777-5888 to receive an application package.

Submitted by Wanda Pierrynowski, RSW NS Government Employee Assistance Program Consultant.

### ***Honorary Degree Conferred on Joan Cummings***



### Honorary Degree Conferred on Joan Cummings

In May 2005, the degree Doctor Of Laws (honoris causa) was conferred on Joan Cummings during the convocation for the Faculty of Health Professions at Dalhousie University. This honorary degree is a great tribute to this longstanding member of NSASW. Included below is the citation which was given during convocation.

Dr. Joan Cummings' life story is one of commitment and passion. For over 50 years, Dr. Cummings has made a profound contribution to the field of social work in Canada. As a social work researcher, a creator of public policy, an educator, and a practitioner, she has strongly made her mark on Canadian society. Her tremendous achievement in the field of social work education are matched by her tireless advocacy for persons with disabilities. As a visually impaired person, herself, she has set an example of strength, courage and determination.

Educated at Dalhousie University, the Maritime School of Social Work and the University of Toronto, Dr. Cummings began her distinguished career as a social worker at the Nova Scotia Hospital where she became Director of Social Work, and at the Dalhousie Child Guidance Clinic (later renamed the Atlantic Child Guidance Clinic), where she was also the Director of Social Work. She accepted an academic appointment teaching social work at Dalhousie in 1965. She spent her entire academic career at Dalhousie, rising to full professor before her retirement in 1996.

Dr. Cummings inspired an entire generation of social workers and social work educators. For those in the field, she became a source of expertise. For other academics, she became a wise role model. While teaching, she also devoted much time to Dalhousie Senate, the Employment Equity Committee and the Faculty of Health Professions, to name but a few university contributions.

Throughout her career, Dr. Cummings developed an active research program that focused on community development. One of her most significant contributions was a five-year examination of the social service needs of the Atlantic region. Her report formed the basis of the development of several provincial programs.

No assessment of Dr. Cummings' contributions would be complete without reference to her role as an advocate for persons with disabilities. She has been Chair of the Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission and has fought to challenge society to recognize and esteem the abilities within each person.

Dr. Cummings has also made huge contributions to her profession, both provincially and nationally. For example, she was instrumental in the creation of the first Social Workers Act in Nova Scotia in 1963. For this work, she received a Certificate of Merit for Outstanding Service by the Canadian Association of Social Workers.

Since then, she has received many honours, including the 1999 "Rebel With a Cause" award from the Elizabeth Fry Society, "for distinguished community service and leadership."

For a lifetime of service to social work practice, policy, research and education, and for being a distinguished rebel with many causes, I ask you, Mr. Chancellor, to grant Dr. Joan Cummings the degree of Doctor of Law, honoris causa.



### ***2006 National Social Work Conference***

The Call for Abstracts for the 2006 National Social Work Conference to be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia from June 17-20 has been posted on the NSASW website. Members are invited to participate in the Conference by presenting a paper or poster. For your convenience you can submit an abstract on-line. More information is available by visiting the website at: ([www.nsasw.org](http://www.nsasw.org)) or the Canadian Association of Social Workers website ([www.casw-acts.ca](http://www.casw-acts.ca)).

Deadline for submission of abstracts is September 15, 2005.

(Use the following link to read the Call for Abstracts: [www.nsasw.org/transformation2006.html](http://www.nsasw.org/transformation2006.html) )

Please feel free to circulate this information.

## ***NSASW Conference 2005 Discussion Group Summaries***

FROM THE NSASW CONFERENCE - May 5, 2005

Part of this year's annual conference was devoted to discussion of various topics. Each group identified relevant challenges, services to alleviate the challenges, and suggestions and best practices related to addressing the challenges. Here are some key points from each of the discussion groups.

### **HOMELESSNESS**

#### Challenges:

- Homelessness covers a wide range of different situations - all lumped together and not well understood
- As a country we have lost sight of public responsibility - public has accepted the idea that there is no money to provide greater support to people so they just have to cope as best they can with what is available (have lost ground - was a public housing policy in the 1970's).
- Stigma faced by those with mental illness, youth, non-white, non-English speaking, on Income Assistance, etc. (difficult to find safe, suitable and affordable housing )
- For some people (e.g. with mental illness or addictions) it is very difficult to be a responsible tenant (may lose damage deposit; hard to find new housing with no money for damage deposit, problems re references and reputation)
- Immigrant families may have suitable housing initially while receiving special financial support, but when that funding runs out they can't afford to stay
- Very limited access to housing by youth (affordability, landlord acceptance of youth tenants, landlord may want rent directly paid by third party, options even less in rural areas than in metro)

#### Recommendations:

- Government allocate more funds to affordable housing; also for prevention/support programs to minimize the number of people at risk of homelessness
- Increase minimum wage and shelter allowance on IA
- Pursue alternatives to large ghettoized housing (co-op housing, in fill housing)
- Recognize that people have special needs so just any room is not ok for anybody (special needs, racial/cultural issues, etc.)
- Identify successes with housing initiatives from the past; look at going back to rent control (was an effective social policy in the past)
- Need to address underlying problems not just find another place to live,
- Social workers need to speak up about the current situation and needs

### **RURAL SOCIAL WORK**

### Challenges:

- “Old school” thinking, resistance to change although rural way of thinking may be more inclusive
- Lack of resources and difficult access to jobs, transportation, services; client isolation and loneliness are big issues
- Social worker also may feel isolated not having a social work team (may need to redefine team)
- Social worker seen as a gateway to all area resources so on call 24/7
- Social workers wear many hats, not able to specialize in any area
- May take a longer time to build trust in rural area
- Frustration with multi disciplinary teams
- Challenge of personal and professional roles (friends, family may also be clients)
- Disconnect between social workers, association and employers

### Recommendations:

- What can NSASW do to help? Rural social workers also need to share the responsibility; voice of rural social workers needs to be louder. Should NSASW have a Rural Social Work Committee?
- Social workers need to be very creative in getting clients’ needs met; may need to step out of usual role
- Need to work interdependently

## **POVERTY**

### Challenges:

- A fundamental issue for most clients
- Voices of those who live in poverty are not heard
- Services for those living with poverty given low priority
- Connection between poverty and education - access to literacy and broader educational programs is limited

### Recommendations:

- Government reinstate policy to provide Income Assistance while pursuing first university degree
- IA recipients able to keep larger portion of income earned
- Lobby to raise minimum wage
- Support for community initiatives in non-urban areas; provision of small loans for local,

small scale development

- NSASW (in collaboration with others) continue lobbying efforts, help to make poverty more visible
- Individual social workers take responsibility for keeping aware of this issue and saying it is not ok; engage in lobbying MLA's, Ministers, etc. (letter writing, emails, etc.)
- Work with School of Social Work to help all social workers fulfill their role as social justice advocates
- Follow fair trade and environmentally sound practices
- Insist on consumer representation on all decision making bodies: also social work representation

## **YOUTH JUSTICE**

### Challenges:

- Youth justice system ties hands of parents of youth. Parents expected to support youth but info may be kept from parent (solicitor/client privilege)
- Common thread between youth involved in youth criminal justice system and mental health issues
- Belief that youth criminal record will not follow a young person, but there are provisions for youth criminal record to be submitted as evidence in adult court
- Racism continues to be an issue in the youth criminal justice system (action may be taken more quickly against an African Canadian youth and fewer chances may be given)
- Youth may see social workers in the youth justice system as "the enemy" and linked with the police
- Lack of support/resources for both youth and their families (also employees) involved with the youth justice system

### Recommendations:

- Need to educate families
- Need plan of action for professionals, families, communities and youth to combat racism in criminal justice system

## **HEALTH**

### Challenges:

- Isolation and patient advocacy are challenging
- Social work role is poorly understood
- Minorities are under represented amongst health care professionals
- Focus on money

### Recommendations:

- Social workers write up and publish successes
- Create new support systems; identify allies
- Scope of practice is key - important to be strategic in what we do
- Identify ethical issues and take advantage of supports such as Standards and Ethics Committee of NSASW
- Encourage multi-disciplinary educational opportunities
- Need a tool for assessing a health care setting
- Promote image of African Canadian social workers

### ***Continuing Education Workshops and Certificate Programs***

The following is a listing of upcoming Workshops and Certificate Programs offered through the Maritime School of Social Work.

#### **Workshops**

September 30, 2005 - How Can I Forgive You? A Radical Approach To Healing Intimate Wounds. Presented by Janis Abrahms Spring, Ph.D., ABPP.

October 6 & 7, 2005 - The Clinical Treatment of Shame, Guilt, Pride & Rage. Presented by Ronald T. Potter-Efron, MSW, Ph.D.

October 27 & 28 - Working With What's Important to Clients: Solution-Focused Therapy Interventions with Individuals, Couples and Families. Jill Ceccolini and Barry McClatchey.

November 3 & 4, 2005 - Creative Interventions for Sexually Abused Children. Presented by Liana Lowenstein, MSW, RSW, CPR-S.

November 7 & 8, 2005 - Cognitive Behavior Therapy: An Advanced Training Experience. Presented by Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D.

November 17 & 18, 2005 - Context and Connection: Helping Clients Transform Their Life Narratives. Presented by Monica McGoldrick, MSW, Ph.D. (h.c.) and Nydia Garcia Preto, LCSW.

#### **Certificate Programs**

October 13 & 14, 2005 - ASIST: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training - A Certificate Program. Presented by Peter Taylor and Dave Cail.

November 24 & 25, 2005 - Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) - Assisting Individuals In Crisis - A Certificate Program. Presented by Susan V. Bennett MSW, RSW.

November 28 to December 2, 2005 - Counselling Skills Level 1 - A Certificate Program, Counselling Skills. Presented by Pamela Dixon, M.Sc. and Susan V. Bennett, MSW, RSW.

January 9 to 13, 2006 - Counselling Skills Level 2 - A Certificate Program. Presented by Jill Ceccolini, MSW, RSW.

February 21 to 23, 2006 - Counselling Skills Level 3 - Boosting Counselling Skills - A Certificate Program. Presented by Jill Ceccolini, MSW, RSW.

## ***Social Workers Elect New President***

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) proudly announces the election of Ms. Veronica Marsman as the Association's new president.

Veronica is an NSASW member. She completed her Master of Social Work Degree at the Maritime School of Social Work, Dalhousie University. She is currently employed as a manager within a regional office of the Department of Community Services in Nova Scotia and is a sessional faculty instructor at Dalhousie University.

Veronica's history of involvement with her provincial social work association is extensive. She has also been on the national board for the past 4 years. Her commitment to community and to the profession includes involvement with organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Halifax, the Maritime School of Social Work and the Association of Black Social Workers of Canada Inc.

In her acceptance speech, Veronica emphasized her commitment to guide the national association's continuing work in its three strategic directions: pursuit of social justice, strengthening the profession, and supporting excellence in regulation. She plans to continue pursuing efforts to create public awareness of women and poverty and looks forward to upcoming CASW initiatives that will bring awareness of the poverty of Black and Aboriginal women in Canada. NSASW is very proud of Veronica. Congratulations!