



# CONNECTION

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Welcome to **CONNECTION**, the official newsletter of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers.

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### ***Deconstructing Social Policy When Working With Challenging Children and Youth - Summary Report - 41st Annual Convention for NSASW***

Over one hundred social workers attended the Professional Development workshop in Coldbrook as part of the 2004 Annual Convention of NSASW.

Dr. Mike Ungar was the first key note speaker who spoke to us about "Pathways to resilience among children in Child Welfare, Corrections, Mental Health and Educational settings". Specifically he addressed policy implications.

To set the scene Mike spoke to the principles of social policy by using a framework of resilience. He talked about keeping families and children healthy and about navigating and negotiating through the service delivery system. It is important, when constructing social policy, to be taught by people who have experienced trauma and to use that trauma as an opportunity to grow. "We need to structure services and systems that will foster resilience" he said, basing his statements on current international research he is conducting.

If we can construct social policy to include the principles of navigation and negotiation perhaps we can be more effective in positive outcomes for children and youth. Navigation is creating opportunities that are truly meeting the needs of youth that travel with and towards resources. Negotiation is creating and finding pathways to health and resilience, listening to what youth are asking for and providing them with support. "One policy does not fit all," Mike stated, "policy needs to account for social and cultural factors." There needs to be built in capacity to be flexible and see each youth as unique and individual. Mike illustrated this by telling us Fiona and Greg's stories. Two siblings with two completely different outcomes. One, Greg, who learned the art of negotiation and together with his social worker and support system, navigated his way to a healthy outcome.

The other, Fiona, who was not heard, passed from practitioner to practitioner and ended up a

street youth. She only wanted to go home, even though home was determined to be "inappropriate". How important, then, is it to respond rather than to react in constructing social policy?

Mike posed the following recommendation on how to respond:

- when understanding social policy question "who is the leader?", "for whom is this policy written?"
- place the services and case planning under the control of those served.
- see services as alliances rather than competitors for funding
- develop the seamless service delivery
- have a back door plan; keep the windows and doors (the options) open
- strengthen the experience of trauma as a tool to develop healthier outcomes
- one child one worker; stay with the child
- de-centre the helping profession; put the child and the child's hopes and needs front and centre.
- celebrate when social policy is working and encourage the youth to shout something special about themselves.

In conclusion, Dr. Ungar encouraged social workers to be more engaged with people; to move ourselves out of the centre; to follow our kids across the services; and to push the envelope. He challenged us to think ahead in fifty years. "What are we going to say in 50 years time about these services?"

The second half of the morning was a panel presentation from several professionals working with youth in a range of practice models from outreach to incarceration.

Joe Simatovic (Dept. Of Justice) expressed the frustration of trying to be creative within a bureaucracy. How so very often we lose sight of the youth because of political decision making and barriers that prevent innovation and risk taking.

Janette Hay-Connolly (Wood St. Centre) spoke to the impact on practice when the court directs the case and the environment is short term, confined and only a fraction of a longer term plan. Here, we heard a different language spoken of "consent, confinement, diagnosis", and "service not placement".

Wanda MacDonald from the Choices programs described the practice of "not passing the hot potato." That is, when working with a youth the practitioner stays with the youth throughout the treatment process. Previously measured by bed capacity, Choices prefers to not be in competition with other youth service agencies but to work with them to share resources. In fact, she says, there is an "infectious resilience" among practitioners who advocate for the value of healthy living and acceptable, enhanced services for youth in the community not in the institutions.

Out of Province Placements was presented by Janet Nearing of the Department of Community Services. Again, these placements were often court driven and often planning comprehensively for youth, involving the child in the plan, both pre and post placement can be very challenging when the youth is going to be out of the province.

Questions from the floor ranged from disillusionment of government leadership and its emphasis on fiscal priorities rather than youths' needs; to "are we doing government's business or are we here to help people?" Some of the audience questioned the values of business contradicting the values of social work. Also, suggestions that social workers are not lobbying enough was raised as a strategy that could be helpful in getting government to listen to the needs of youth. General consensus is that, there may be enough money, it just isn't being resourced effectively.

After lunch we had an informative presentation by Susan Logue, Executive Director of Policy at the Department of Community Services. She spoke about "influencing social policy". She challenged us to explore three realms: control, influence and awareness. How much do we control our environment and how can we use this control to influence change? Then, once we begin to influence, how can we maintain the momentum of awareness of the issue to ensure that change does take place? For social workers in government this can be a risky place.

Susan posed these questions to us:

- How can you personally participate in order to influence?
- How true is consultation?
- Who are consultations really for?
- Are the people who are affected by policy at the meeting?
- How can you link the action of a lobby group within the workings of a bureaucracy?

This obviously posed questions back from the floor, that in fact social policy is created to contain the social order and there is very little that can be done externally or internally to change that. This is the conflict with which social workers face. They often work in a social control bureaucracy but wish to practice with a social justice approach.

The group work towards the end of the day provided many opportunities to take the day's information and put it into some strategies to change social policy. The first brainstorming area was in developing strategies to overcome existing policies:

- participate in policy forums
- educate people about the policy both internally and externally
- get Professional Associations involved to strengthen how we can work together. Stay together.
- make sure issues are made known to the public at large, to politicians and other groups.
- de-stigmatize the various perceptions that label certain social work fields of practice.
- include the experience and responsibility of the policy maker with the field.

In brainstorming about strategies to reframe policies affecting children and youth some are:

- finding ways to get your Deputy Minister and Senior Executive thoroughly aware of the issues.
- take advantage of policy forums and make this action part of your practice
- finding the social work voice in government that speaks to our values. Introduce yourself always as a Social Worker. You may be that voice.
- utilize other supports and allies outside your workplace which are environments who have similar interests.

And in working with groups and other departments to overcome barriers:

- take your forum into the community
- take responsibility to know each others functions
- share with each other names, telephone lists. Pick up the phone and call to discuss issues with community people.
- develop, or strengthen, inter-agency, communication systems. Develop a trusting relationship which you can depend on in time of need.
- ensure funding policies have sustainability.
- widen your knowledge about accessing funding. Read up on criteria for funding. Strengthen proposal writing skills. Learn the jargon for a successful proposal.
- work together to lessen the inconsistencies from office to office, program to program, social worker to social worker.
- always bring people together after a large event to debrief, maintain the momentum so as not to lose the passion.

As always, we had discussion as it relates to the Social Work Code of Ethics. How often do we challenge policy when it contradicts our Code of Ethics? Do we ever? What are the consequences? Policy development should always be done with clients in mind. When we know what works eg: investing in the Early Years, Prevention, Community Development then why do we always find ourselves in crisis management? Many, many questions. But, in conclusion I would ask you these questions:

"What are we going to say in 50 years time about these "services" we provide today? Are we going to laugh at ourselves or are we going to see that 2004 was a turning point in our social policy direction? Are we going to look back in anger and defeat or are we going to be celebrating the action of these strategies that resulted in just, effective and purposeful social policy?"

*(Wendy Keen is the District Manager of the Department of Community Services, Hants District Office and a member of the NSASW Board of Examiners)*



### ***Letter to the Editor***

In October 2004, the government increased the personal allowance for an adult on income assistance by \$4.00 a month - to just over \$6.00 a day. This is to cover not only food but clothing, any personal or household items, and in most cases transportation.

This increase still doesn't bring overall basic allowances back to 1994 levels. And the reason this increase didn't come sooner - and is not more - is that governments believe it isn't something the average citizen may care that much about.

Is that really so? We know we should care! Not only for fairness and justice - but also because it influences the kind of society we all share.

Recently Roy Romanow said now that the federal and provincial governments have agreed to a fix for medicare, it's time to rebuild Canada's social programs. He pointed out that social assistance programs frequently are not adequate to cover basic needs, so that many people are forced to choose between paying the rent or feeding their children. "Not acceptable in a country like ours", he declared.

He also expressed concern that the gap between rich and poor has been growing and threatens the well being of all Canadians.

How we support our poorest and most vulnerable citizens really does matter. I think we all recognize that -how about letting our politicians know!

Jean Bremner, RSW President Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers

### ***School of Social Work Alumni Report***

The MSSW Alumni held its annual general meeting on November 2. At this meeting, Margaret Ferguson, President, and Wanda Thomas Bernard, Director, highlighted alumni and School activities. The Maritime School has a new name, the Dalhousie University School of Social Work, which came as a result of Dalhousie's recent integrated marketing communications program. The alumni has become Dalhousie University School of Social Work Alumni.

Tara Garahty was awarded the MSSW Alumni Award for BSW Students. Tributes were given in memory of Dr. Lawrence T. Hancock, the School's first full time Director who died in September; and to Dr. Calvin W. Ruck, who graduated in 1979, human rights activist, author and senator. Donations can be made to the Dr. L.T. Hancock and Dr. Calvin W. Ruck Scholarships, which are awarded annually to social work students.

Jules Oliver (MSW 1969) was the guest speaker on the topic of challenges facing social workers in an increasingly diverse, technologically advanced and complex world.

Appreciation was extended to Margaret Ferguson for her work as President during the past three years. Shirley MacPherson is the new President. New members are welcome to participate in the School's alumni.

Joan Gilroy, RSW

### ***The 5th Annual Nova Scotia Youth Achievement Awards***

It continues to get bigger and better every year. There are few opportunities in child welfare to focus on the positives outcomes of our youth in care, which is why this event is so unique and important. The Youth Achievement Awards provides a time to honor our youth and their accomplishments.

This year 55 youth from across the province received awards and more than 250 people attended the ceremony at the Best Western Glengary in Truro. There were foster families, birth families, social workers, group home workers and others who provide support to these young achievers. It is also an important event because it provides youth in care a chance to meet other youth in care from across the province and to celebrate their achievements. The room was elegantly decorated with lights and beautiful Christmas trees, which provided a pleasant atmosphere for the buffet luncheon and awards ceremony. There was an art display of photography, stained glass, paintings, and light boxes, which were created by youth in care, who are between the ages of 12 to 18. Their art work was also displayed recently at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

The event was sponsored by the Nova Scotia Council of the Family, who introduced the Award ceremony in 2000 to honor youth in care between the ages of 13 and 21 who have shown outstanding perseverance in the face of life challenges. Youth were nominated by their social worker and another person who knows the youth well such as their foster parent, group home staff, teacher or coach. The nominees must have shown evidence of: educational achievement, leadership qualities, outstanding achievement in sport/art/culture/hobby, overcome personal challenges success with their plan of care, and/or have a vision for their future. Many of the nomination letters described the youth as: hardworking, bright, role models for others, having inner strength and the leaders for tomorrow. All of the youth are dynamic and they aspire to become pilots, veterinarians, social workers, foster parents, plumbers, engineers and teachers; to name just a few of the professions mentioned. There were a number of emotional acceptance speeches: one recipient read a very touching poem she had written about foster parents, while another stated, "Everyone in this room is living proof that no matter how hard things get, you just have to keep your head up, stay strong and believe in yourself".

Anne Blandford, Executive Director of the Children's Aid Society of Pictou County, did a great job hosting the awards again this year. The awards were presented by Adrienna McKenzie, who is a former Youth Achievement Award recipient, Amanda's gift recipient and Master of Ceremony, as well as the Coordinator of Destination Up. The Master's of Ceremony this year were Melissa Pacard and Paige Howell, both former Youth Achievement Award recipients, who are currently enrolled in post secondary education.

Comments from some of those who attended the awards ceremony included: "A wonderful day to celebrate the hard work which the youth have experienced in attaining their goals," "It makes me proud to be part of the team who works with youth in care," "Wow! These young people are an inspiration and an asset to our community," "It's such an incredible event!," "It was so energizing to see and hear from the recipients. They are a testament to courage, perseverance and the power of self-determination," "I was impressed by the numbers of people here- winners and supporters".

Unfortunately we do not have a corporate sponsor yet, but donations from ADCRF and the placement conference committee allowed the event to occur this year. A special thanks goes to those who took the time to nominate these outstanding youth.

Next year make sure you don't miss this inspirational event!

Tara Moore, BSW, RSW Board member of the Nova Scotia Council of the Family



### ***Advance Notice of the 2005 NSASW Convention***

The NSASW Annual Convention will be held on Thursday, May 5th and Friday, May 6th, 2005 and is to be held at the University of Kings College and Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Theme: "Social Work for Social Justice: An Africentric Approach"

Mark your calendars and plan now to attend the Annual Conference followed by the Annual General Meeting of your Professional Association.

### ***NSASW Co-ordinator's Report - January 2005***

I am beginning my sixth year with the association. I work three days a week (normally Tuesday through Thursday) in the role of providing staff support to various committees and more broadly assisting with various initiatives of the association. Following is an overview of some of my recent involvements.

#### Child Welfare Committee:

The Child Welfare Committee is made up of a small group of very committed members. It has been difficult to attract and maintain members especially from direct service. New members would be most welcome.

Last year the Child Welfare Committee held four regional meetings for over 140 members involved in the delivery of child welfare services. Detailed reports of each meeting were prepared following those meetings. This year the committee's goal is to follow up on issues which arose through that process. To assist with that I prepared a summary report from the more detailed regional reports. This was distributed to child welfare social workers and other relevant people. Copies are available to anyone interested.

Also, the committee has been meeting with partners in this initiative with respect to follow up on issues. A meeting has been held with the Acting Director of Child Welfare and Residential Services along with the regional Child Welfare Specialists. I also raised the key findings of the report with the Deputy Minister and senior staff of the Department of Community Services at a meeting in December and discussed the report with the NSASW Council in January. A meeting also will be arranged with representatives of the School of Social Work.

One of the concerns that arose in the child welfare meetings was the limited understanding and support of child welfare amongst the public and to some extent even within other fields of social work. Thus, we are very pleased to be partnering with the Department of Community Services in a Child Welfare Public Education Initiative. Both the Child Welfare Committee and the PR Committee are involved with this initiative while I am the staff resource person. A comprehensive plan has been developed with the communications staff of the Department of Community Services taking the lead role.

Governance of the child welfare system is a major current issue. I assisted with preparation of the committee's submission to the Department of Community Services regarding governance.

I represent the association on the national Children's Issues Network organized through CASW. It provides an opportunity for sharing of information through twice yearly teleconferences and occasional emails. Several provinces have committees actively involved with children's issues especially with respect to advocacy. Several others do not have committees. I think we can be proud of the work our Child Welfare Committee has done over the past three or four years. In several provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario) child welfare recently has undergone significant change or the program is under review leading to a considerable degree of worker stress. Differential response is being advocated or implemented in some provinces (BC, Alberta, Ontario) apparently with a mixed response.

#### Health Interest Group:

A Health Interest Group has been initiated. I have assisted this group particularly with preparation of a submission regarding the Nova Scotia Gaming Strategy which is being developed.

#### Public Relations Committee:

The PR Committee has begun preparations for Social Work Week which will be held from March 6 - 12, 2005. Specific information is available elsewhere in this newsletter.

As noted above, the PR Committee is involved with the Child Welfare Public Education Initiative. The communications director for the Department of Community Services recently met with the PR Committee and offered helpful guidance. We are pleased that some significant aspects of the Child Welfare Public Education Initiative will be able to be linked with Social Work Week.

NSASW Listserv (nsasw-list@lists.dal.ca):

We now have about 775 members registered on the listserv. Since we have changed the reply default to the individual sender rather than the total group, the listserv has been operating smoothly. The main problem now is ensuring that the email addresses are current and accurate. Periodically I need to devote a fair amount of time to management of the listserv, but I believe it serves a very useful function for the association.

Social Action Committee:

The Social Action Committee has been reactivated. It's focus has been on adequacy of income assistance, early learning and child care, and housing. I played an active role in discussing these and other issues at a meeting with the Deputy Minister and senior staff of the Department of Community Services held early in December.

I represented the association at a meeting in the fall with the Minister of Community Services and representatives of the NDP concerning inadequate income assistance rates. This was organized by the Community Advocates Network. I also assisted with the preparation of a letter to the editor regarding child poverty. As well I provided some leads regarding resource people and material related to poverty, nutrition and health to ATV for a program they were preparing.

Standards and Ethics:

The Standards and Ethics Committee has a full agenda so is pleased to have some new members to assist with its work. This fall the committee has had several requests from members for guidance on ethical issues. The committee's responses seem to have been helpful. The committee is resuming work on preparation of a Guide to Ethical Decision Making which it is hoped will be useful to members. Currently, on behalf of the committee I am organizing a privacy audit. It is anticipated that the current phase will be completed by March. Items needing attention then will be identified and a policy will be developed.

Graeme M. Fraser, MSW, RSW Co-ordinator [graeme.fraser@nsasw.org](mailto:graeme.fraser@nsasw.org)

(902) 429-0243

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Fred R. MacKinnon

### ***Pioneer in Social Work - Dr. Fred MacKinnon***

Dr. There are very few people who publish their first book at the age of ninety-two but then Fred MacKinnon is a remarkable man who was in the forefront in the development of social work and social welfare services in Nova Scotia for many decades beginning in 1939. His book REFLECTIONS Fifty-five years in the Public Service in Nova Scotia, published in 2004, recounts his experiences as one of Nova Scotia most outstanding public servants and traces the development of social welfare services in Nova Scotia. It is his crowning achievement in a life filled with many achievements. For those who have not read it, it is worth the read.

Born in the small village of Meadow Springs, Pictou County in 1912, Fred has always taken pride in his humble beginnings on the farm in Pictou county and in his Scottish heritage. The values instilled

in him by his scottish parents, his rural upbringing and his later experiences during the Depression years molded and shaped his attitudes about life in general and, in particular; education, work and money. They influenced him throughout his life.

Fred first ventured forth from his Pictou County home in 1927 to pursue a bachelor's degree and then a teaching certificate at Mount Allison University. Like many youngsters today, he took a hiatus from university to raise enough money to continue his studies and in 1929-30 he taught school in Woodfield, Pictou County. He returned to university receiving his Bachelor of Arts Degree, a Superior First Class Teaching Certificate and first class honours in mathematics in 1932. Until 1935 he taught and was principal in various schools in Pictou County and then, having raised enough money to return to university, he applied to and was accepted at Harvard University. He graduated from Harvard with a Masters Degree in Mathematics. From Harvard Fred went to work for an insurance company hoping to eventually become an actuary but, that was not to be and in 1936 he returned to Nova Scotia. He worked briefly in sales and then as he says in his book, he blundered into social work when he applied for and was accepted as the Agent for the Children's Aid Society of Colchester County in 1937. He had found his niche and began a most amazing and wonderful career.

Fred's talents and abilities were soon recognized by Ernest H. Blois the Director of Child Welfare, Mothers' Allowance and Old Age Pensions for the Province of Nova Scotia and his career was fast tracked. With the help of the Minister of Public Health, Dr. Frank Davis, Fred obtained a Rockefeller Foundation Scholarship and attended the School of Social Services Administration of the University of Chicago from 1938-39. In 1939 Fred returned to Nova Scotia where he was appointed Assistant Director of Child Welfare for the Province. Although his primary job as Assistant Director of Child Welfare was to bring new life and perspective to the work of the twelve Children's Aid Societies, shortly after his appointment Fred was assigned the task of preparing for the reception and placement of the British Guest Children and dealing with the problems being presented by the Ideal Maternity Home. Both were major challenges but Fred met them with his usual aplomb.

The Children's Aid Societies were another matter. They needed an injection of professionally educated social workers but there were few such individuals available in Nova Scotia and people who were sent to other provinces to receive the much needed education rarely returned to Nova Scotia. Fred MacKinnon was a firm believer in the value of professional social work education and when approached by Dr. Samuel Prince regarding the establishment of a School of Social Work pledged his support for such an endeavour. In 1941 under the tutelage of Dr. Samuel Prince, Mr. Ernest H. Blois and other notables the Maritime School of Social Work was founded. Fred MacKinnon was one of the founders and remained a great supporter of the School throughout his career. He also taught at the School from 1941 until the early 1970s.

Although there was a Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), Nova Scotia did not have an organized social work community in the early forties. In 1943 Fred MacKinnon along with Gwendolyn Shand, Gwendolyn Lantz, Jean Morrison, Ada Ward and Elizabeth Torrey founded the Nova Scotia Branch of the CASW. Fred was the first President and has maintained an interest in the Association of Social Workers throughout his life. He is currently a life member of the NSASW.

In 1944 Fred MacKinnon became Director of Child Welfare replacing Ernest H. Blois who became Deputy Minister of a newly created Department of Public Welfare. When Mr. Blois retired in 1947, Fred became Deputy Head of the Department along with his colleague, Hiram Farquhar. Mr. Farquhar was responsible for Old Age Pensions and Blind Persons Allowance while Fred MacKinnon was responsible for Child Welfare and Mothers' Allowance. Fred Mackinnon remained in this position until 1959 when he was appointed Deputy Minister of the Department.

Fred MacKinnon had innumerable significant accomplishments throughout his career. He was instrumental in the abolition of the Elizabethan Poor Law and the modernization of social assistance legislation in 1958; the drafting of Human Rights Legislation and the establishment of the Human Rights Commission in 1967 and on a national level, the development and implementation of the Canada Assistance Plan in 1967. The system of care for the elderly, institutional care of children, the care of the mentally handicapped, particularly children who were housed in asylums and the old county hospitals, the introduction of a Family Court system and the system of family and child welfare services were all modernized and enhanced under his leadership.

In 1980, having served the Province of Nova Scotia for forty-one years, he decided to retire as Deputy Minister of Social Services. For many individuals that would have been enough but for Fred,

offered a new challenge, it was just a beginning. He became the first Director of the newly formed Nova Scotia Senior Citizens' Secretariat and served the province in that capacity for another fifteen years until his retirement in 1995 at the age of eighty-three. During that time one of the things he was instrumental in founding was the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging at Mount Saint Vincent University. In 1996 shortly after his retirement an Endowment Fund for the Centre was established in his name. He has served on the Advisory Board for the Centre since its inception and continues to do so today at the age of ninety-two.

Over the years he has given unstintingly of his time to many, many voluntary and community organizations both on a provincial and national level. He was a founding member of the Nova Scotia Branch of the Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded, President of the Rotary Club of Halifax as well as a District Governor and a Paul Harris Fellow; President of the Nova Scotia Society for the care of Crippled Children; the President of the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled; President of the Vanier Institute of the Family; President of the Canadian Bible Society and the list goes on and on.

In recognition of his work and commitment in the voluntary and public sectors Fred has received many awards and honours such as Doctor of Law, honoris causa, St. Francis Xavier University (1969); Doctor of Laws, Dalhousie University (1980); Member of the Order of Canada (1992); and, Doctor of Law, Mount Allison University (2003). In 1999 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the Canadian Association of Social Workers and in 2002 was named the Hedley Ivany Senior Citizen of the Year by the Northwood Foundation.

In April, 2004 the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging hosted a Tribute Dinner in Fred's honour in recognition of his many years of service and dedication to the Centre, the public service and the community. Today Fred lives with his wife, Mary, at Parkland Estates and although in failing health continues to be interested in social work, social services, services for seniors and all that is happening in today's world. He is, indeed, a truly remarkable man and a pioneer.

Bessie Harris, RSW

### ***Dr. Frederick R. MacKinnon Scholarship***

The Maritime School of Social Work and its Alumni announces a scholarship in honour of Dr. Fred R. MacKinnon. This scholarship and his book *Reflections: 55 Years in Public Service in Nova Scotia* were launched on April 15, 2004.

Dr. MacKinnon is a founder of the Maritime School of Social Work, the founding president of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers (which was at that time, 1943, a division of the Canadian Association of Social Workers) and a pioneer in social work and social welfare in Canada.

He has had a long and distinguished career in public service, which he describes in his book. In *Reflections*, he writes about the importance of social work education and ongoing professional development in forming progressive social policy and delivering services of high quality. The School and its Alumni thought a named scholarship would be an especially fitting tribute to the value he placed on social work education and training, to his pioneering work and vision of social programs founded on compassion and justice.

Friends and colleagues are invited to donate to this scholarship. Cheques can be made payable to Dalhousie University, indicating that they are for the F.R. MacKinnon Scholarship and mailed to the Dalhousie's Office of External Relations, MacDonald Building, Dalhousie University Halifax, N.S. B3H 3J5. VISA, MasterCard and Amex are all accepted.

*Reflections: 55 Years in Public Service in Nova Scotia* is available through Ferwood Publishing. For further information about the scholarship and book, please contact Dr. Bernard at the Maritime School or Joan Gilroy, Alumni Treasurer.

## ***Labour Market Experience of Social Work Graduates: Exploring the Role of Affirmative Action in Education: Summary Report***

The motivation for this study is rooted in the School of Social Work's (formerly Maritime School of Social Work) commitment to increasing the diversity of its student body and making available to the profession and to social service agencies qualified graduates who come from the region's Indigenous Aboriginal, African Canadian and Acadian populations, as well as its "mainstream" population. This commitment is expressed in an affirmative action policy that was established in the mid-1970's and that has led to the admission and graduation of a large number of students from these particular groups, from both the undergraduate and graduate degree programs. In the mid-1990's, the School expanded its commitment to include person's with disabilities.

There have been calls from the profession to rededicate itself to the pursuit of social justice and answer criticism that the profession fails to practice what it preaches. At the same time, there has been extensive and mostly ideological debate about the advisability of affirmative action. However, there is scant empirical literature available to answer hard questions about the impact of affirmative action and equity programs. This study addresses the issue of the effectiveness of affirmative action strategies in the context of professional education. What happens to the equity group students once they graduate? What is the nature of their labour market experience in comparison to the mainstream students? Despite dissimilar beginnings, do they end up in equivalent jobs (occupation, types of employer, salaries, job stability, etc.)? Are they more or less subject to unemployment? Do they find jobs in a similar manner? Do they perceive they are subject to continuing discrimination?

The information provided in this summary of the study provides a rare opportunity to examine whether mainstream and equity group students, end up having similar experiences in the labour market or whether preadmission differences are carried forward after graduation.

The methodology for the study involved selecting all of the School's equity group graduates from the decade 1991-2001. This group was matched with "mainstream" graduates on the basis of year of graduation, gender and full-time/part-time study. At the BSW level, 167 out of 230 interviews were successfully completed (74%); at the MSW level, 41 out of 56 (73%). We asked about students' employment and other characteristics at the point of entry into the degree program, at the point of graduation, and also at the time of the interview (2001-2002).

### Findings of the BSW Graduates:

While in the BSW program, a high proportion of both the equity group and mainstream graduates were studying but also working at the same time (about 70 per cent). Their jobs were similar in terms of occupation and employer but equity group students were less likely to have jobs that could be classified as permanent, and full time at this stage of their career.

At the point of graduation, equity group students were less likely to continue the job they held during their BSW program. When they looked for work, both groups relied on talking to friends and relatives, looking at newspaper advertisements, making direct inquiries with potential employers, and using Canada Employment Centres. The latter was a more frequent choice for equity group graduates, presumably because they previously had less personal contact with social work agencies. Graduates heard about the job they eventually accepted from similar sources (friends, relatives, newspapers, etc) but Canada Manpower Centres proved to be relatively unproductive in this sense for both groups. Important factors in their actually getting the job, they said, included personal references, field placements, volunteer work experience and references from the school. The latter two factors were especially important for equity group graduates.

At the time of this study, we found that 60 per cent of the graduates had a different job than they did at the point of graduation, and 90 per cent of both groups were in the labour force (defined as either working or looking for work). Leaving aside those not in the labour force (e.g., maternity leave, pursuing graduate education etc.) our data reveals that all of the graduates were in fact employed. Occupations not related to social work have all but disappeared, but the under representation of equity groups in the hospital and health sector (which we first noticed when students were still in school) continues. Mainstream graduates are now a bit more likely to work for government while equity group graduates are found in larger numbers working in the child welfare field. Proportions in permanent, full-time work are in the 75 to 80 per cent range, with the

mainstream group at the lower end of this continuum. Median salaries on a full-time, full-year basis are at \$36,250 for both groups, and job satisfaction has risen to the mid-80 per cent range. Forty-three per cent of equity group graduates have gone on to undertake a graduate degree, compared to forty per cent of mainstream graduates. However, some 32 per cent of equity group graduates have experienced one or more periods of unemployment since graduation, compared to only 17 per cent of the mainstream graduates.

As to the questions, then, about obstacles faced in finding employment, the equity group graduates were more likely to say that they experienced obstacles, citing lack of experience, race and lack of job opportunities. For its part, the mainstream group cited lack of experience, lack of job opportunities and the fact that many jobs required MSW degrees. With respect to job search, 29 per cent of the equity group graduates said they experienced discrimination, compared to 8 per cent of the mainstream graduates. For example, among equity group students, age discrimination was cited most frequently, followed by race and gender. When asked what kinds of situations they encountered, they mentioned 'covert' discrimination, being qualified but not receiving the position, and facing inappropriate questions or comments.

A similar pattern emerged on the question about employment discrimination, which was mentioned by 33 per cent of the equity group graduates, compared to 14 per cent of the mainstream graduates. Among equity group graduates who said they experienced discrimination, a very high percentage (70 per cent) cited racial discrimination. For the mainstream group, discrimination was most likely to take the form of age and gender discrimination. The kinds of situations mentioned by the equity group graduates had to do with not being taken seriously by clients or the community; with the idea that the agency is racist, biased or unsafe; and being on the receiving end of inappropriate questions or comments.

#### Findings of the MSW Graduates:

All students who come into the MSW Program have social work related employment, and would have completed a social work degree or equivalent. Thus the differences among equity and mainstream students that we noticed at the BSW level upon entry to the degree program have been sharply reduced.

In looking for a job in the MSW Program, it appears that equity group students are less well connected to current and previous employers and are less able to take advantage of school and agency mechanisms. However, this difference recedes in importance by the time they graduate and look for a position at that point. Still, the job search process is more difficult for them and the results leave them underrepresented in certain occupations, such as hospital, health care, child welfare work, and among certain employers such as the provincial government.

At the time of this study, all equity and mainstream graduates were employed if they were in the labour force. However, a gap in annual salaries has emerged, with mainstream graduates earning some \$3,000 to \$4,000 more in terms of the median figure. Equity group students also report, as did their BSW counterparts, that they are more likely to encounter barriers in finding jobs in the profession, and more likely to face discrimination in their job search and employment, especially racial discrimination. These figures are no better than they were at the BSW level.

#### Conclusions:

Three major conclusions emerged from this study. First, our results indicate that it is possible through a determined effort that involves a program of affirmative action in education to diversify not only the student body of a school but also the ranks of the profession. Secondly, educational and employment related differences observed as students enter a professional degree program can be sharply reduced or eliminated over time. On most of the indices of labour market outcomes, we found there were few substantial differences between the two groups. Lastly, while affirmative action in our case appears to have been effective, it looks like it is still going to be needed because without it we would not have the number of applicants we need in order to continue to diversify the student body and the profession. However, affirmative action in education is not sufficient. It also requires determined action on the part of employers to eliminate continuing discrimination.

Authors: Wanda Thomas Brenard, Fred Wein, and Nancy MacDonald



## ***Committee Activities Scheduled for 2005***

Here is a list of many of the activities which will be taking place this year in our committees and coming before Council. More always gets added as the year progresses:

### Membership Services Committee:

- Research and develop more benefits for members
- Review decision –making options for members unable to attend annual meetings
- Determine the most convenient annual meeting times
- Other

### Personnel Committee:

- Review of Association’s job descriptions for Executive Director, Office Manager and Registrar’s Administrative Assistant.
- Review requested travel rates
- Revisions of Personnel Policy
- Recruitment Plans for and Executive Director

### Private Practice Committee:

- Continue to explore coverage of social work services by insurance companies
- Review ramifications of privacy legislation for private practitioners
- Obtain information on GST exemption
- Clarify the approval of specialties for private practice
- Distinguish between social work private practitioners and other counselors and therapists in the community.
- Develop information on the business of operating a private practice

### Program Committee:

- Plan and develop the program for the annual meeting

### Professional Development Committee:

- Review the approved professional development activities for members
- Investigate professional development requirements in other provinces such as Alberta, Newfoundland and New Brunswick.
- Review Association of Social Work Boards continuing education criteria and programs
- Investigate developing guidelines for those offering professional development programs
- Investigate developing a roster of professional individuals who offer or could offer programs
- Offer professional development program(s) for 2005
- Meet with the Board of Examiners’ Registrar to understand areas of need for professional development from the experiences of the Board.

### Public Relations Committee:

- Produce the Newsletter Connections Plan activities for Social Work week
- Enhance website
- Promote 2006 National Social Work Convention.

### Standards and Ethics Committee:

- Review the NSASW Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice document after the new CASW code is approved
- Develop Ethical Decision-making brochure

- Perform Privacy audit and develop NSASW Privacy Policy
- On-going meetings with NSGEU Department of Community Services Working Group
- Consultations regarding ethical dilemmas presented by individuals

#### Social Action Committee:

- Continue to work with other coalitions in the community to address inequalities and discrimination
- Advocate for adequate incomes to ensure individual and family health ( includes “the working poor” as well as those on social assistance)
- Advocate for affordable housing and address homelessness
- On-going critical analysis of current legislation and social policy
- Actively consult with government on the development of social policies
- Support community –based agencies in their advocacy for funding from government
- Meet with, inform, educate members of government and opposition caucuses on issues that are a priority of the Association.

#### Candidacy Committee:

- Available to assist the Registrar and Board of Examiners concerning social work candidacy when the need arises

#### Ad Hoc Committee on Social Work Legislation:

- Legislation Amendments before the government
- On-going review of legislation with representatives from the Board of Examiners

#### Ad Hoc Committee on Child Welfare:

- On-going activity regarding the CASW Study on BEST PRACTICES in CHILD WELFARE
- Develop summary report of Regional meetings with child welfare workers \_ themes and issues
- Write article regarding child welfare project for Connections
- Work on a joint project with the department of Community Services regarding public education- correct misinformation on child welfare

#### Ad Hoc Committee on Social Work Practice

- Review Competencies and MRA demands

#### Ad Hoc Committee on Health Services:

- Send representatives to Enhancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Primary Health Care
- Review umbrella legislation on Regulating Health Care Professionals
- Review Atlantic Health Education Training Planning Study
- Review Call for Proposal for Interprofessional Education
- Review Human Resources Occupational Projections document
- Review Mental Health Legislation
- Review Canadian Coalition for Seniors’ mental health document
- Review Nova Scotia’s strategy on HIV/Aids
- Review the Canadian Aids Treatment information Exchange (CATIE) document
- Review information on Primary Health Care
- Review Provincial Health Council Report on Income and Social status
- Review implications of Gaming legislation
- Other as documents come in over the year

#### Planning Committee National Social Work Conference in June 2006

- Make the conference happen!!!

## ***Members of the NSASW Board of Examiners***

The Social Workers Act provides for the Board of Examiners to be composed of both Council and Government appointments.

COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS: Wayne Hollett; Wendy Keen; Jay LeBlanc; Jill Ceccolini; Don Gloade; Richard Gruchy; Sylvie Ouellette; Susan Riordan; Michael Ungar

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS: Edward MacMaster; Don Brown; Colin Campbell

REGISTRAR FOR THE BOARD: Joyce Halpern

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO THE BOARD: Suzanne Desjardins

## ***Social Worker Candidacy Supervisors***

The Board of Examiners would like to acknowledge the following for their contribution as Candidate Supervisors. The role of the Candidacy Supervisor is highly valued. Candidacy Supervisors are an important link in the model for continuing education within the membership of the NSASW.

### CAPE BRETON:

Dave Brown,  
Frances Butler,  
Shaune Butler,  
Sr. Franklyn Ferguson,  
Darlene Hall,  
John Janega,  
Elsbeth MacKay-Lawrence,  
Sheena Williams.

### HALIFAX:

Nancy Beaton,  
Jill Ceccolini,  
Carolyn Guy,  
Lori Corbett,  
Denise Crowell,  
Deborah Dithurbide,  
Arthur Dukeshire,  
Anne Dunsworth,  
Carol Ezekiel,  
Avis Faulkner,  
Mary Anne Fraser,  
Richard Gruchy,  
Pamela Hall,  
Glenda Haydon,  
Cyd LePage,  
Colleen Maloney-Greenfield,  
Jennifer Moore,  
Marie-Josée Picard,  
Anne Pirie,  
Tanya Rafter,  
Anne Sampson,  
Jane Tolson,  
Mary Upton,  
Chirstine Willett,  
Barbara Williams,  
Erika Wilson,  
Joy Woodford,  
Lynda Thomas.

SOUTH SHORE:  
Michelle Hammond,  
Edwin McClare.

ANNAPOLIS:  
Rona Cameron,  
Michael Hazelwood,  
Sean Marshall,  
Elaine Sabine-Baird,  
Susan Webber.

FUNDY SHORE:  
Janelle Comeau,  
Melanie MacNaughton,  
Suzanne Magliaro.

NORTH SHORE:  
Donna Deveaux-MacLeod,  
Karen Hunter,  
Margaret Anne MacFarlane,  
Cheryl Melnyk,  
Deborah Taylor.

TRURO:  
Lubin Bourque,  
Geraldine Wright.

CUMBERLAND:  
Betsy Prager.

### ***Board of Examiners' Approvals***

The Board of Examiners approves all applications for registration and private practice as well as applications for student and associate membership.

#### ***Registered Social Worker Candidates***

OCTOBER 2004  
Alysa MacArthur,  
Lynne Sullivan,  
Suzanne Mercer,  
Cheryl Jennings,  
Jennifer McCarron,  
Sandra Henneberry,  
Steve Hennessey,  
Tanya Deveau,  
Erin Findley,  
Sandra Dunphy.

NOVEMBER 2004  
Suzanne Matheson,  
Gail Powers-Moore,  
Claire Sampson-MacDonald,>br> Jane Cowie,  
Jerry Young,  
Donika Collins,  
Mary Jensen,  
Nicole Smith,  
Edwina Beals,  
Dianne Miles,  
Karen Gosbee,  
Catrina Brown.

DECEMBER 2004

Susan Abenheimer,  
Teri Pitcher,  
Andrew Tubman,  
Gregg Lambert,  
Evelyn Wheeler,  
Ronald MacDougall.

JANUARY 2005

Heather Glennie,  
JoAnne Burns,  
Rebeckah Skeete,  
Tracey Mombourquette,  
Wendy Roberts.

***Registered Social Workers***

OCTOBER 2004

Amy Foote,  
Christina Schaump,  
Stacey Bartlett,  
Colleen Barron,  
Melissa Nearing,  
Lori Coles,  
Kara-Leigh Burke,  
Terri Ross Beaudry.

NOVEMBER 2004

Wendy Wierstra,  
Bridget Perrin-Gouthro,  
Paula Rideout,  
Melanie Mood-Deveau,  
Smadar Levinson,  
Sandra Jean Miller.

DECEMBER 2004

Kimberly King,  
Jill-Marie Pothier,  
Shannon MacLeod,  
Shalyn Murphy,  
Sonia Reashore,  
Amy Ward,  
Cynthia Nemis,  
Holly Meuse.

JANUARY 2005

Fatina Elkurdi,  
Danielle M. LeBlanc,  
Lynn Clarke,  
Mary Noelle Holloway,  
Stacey Paupin,  
Errin Williams-Spidle,  
Lynn Power,  
Faith O'Reilly,  
Pius Trainor,  
Jennifer Powell,  
April Westerman,  
Donna Murphy,  
Cindy Pedvis,  
Madeleine Jeffery.

***Private Practitioners***

NOVEMBER 2004

Beth Toomey,

Darlene MacGregor.

DECEMBER 2004

Ian Tay Landry.

***Student Membership***

NOVEMBER 2004

Janet Pothier.

***Conference - Advances in Reproductive Care: Impacts and Outcomes***

To be held at The Casino Hotel, Halifax, N.S.

Thursday, April 28 & Friday, April 29, 2005.

Conference Objectives:

- Explore emerging reproductive health care practices related to women, newborns and their families.
- Provide an opportunity to share and discuss expanding and new health care roles in Women's and Newborn Health.
- Explore the challenges and expectations of integrating technology into the reproductive health care arena.
- Reflect on and share strategies related to work life issues for those working in reproductive health.

Early Registration Deadline: March 22, 2005.

For a conference agenda and registration form call (902) 470-6943 or E-mail [whn.conference@iwk.nshealth.ca](mailto:whn.conference@iwk.nshealth.ca).



***Council Members***

The NSASW Council is composed of members who are elected at the Association's Annual General Meeting for two year terms except for the Executive who are elected annually.

EXECUTIVE

President: Jean Bremner

Vice President: Denise MacDonald-Billard

Treasurer: Barry McClatchey

Secretary: Anne Vaughan

Past President: Kathy MacGuire

BOARD OF EXAMINERS REPRESENTATIVE

Wendy Keen

COMMITTEES & CHAIRPERSONS

Social Action: David Williams and Monique Auffrey

Program: Maxine Colley and Winnie Benton

Professional Development: Joan Parks-Hubley

Public Relations: Janelle Comeau

Membership Services: M. Barry Moore

Standards of Practice: Carol Shepard-Conrad

Nominating: Maureen Brownlow

Private Practice: Denise Perron and Debbie Kaetz

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Cape Breton: Douglas Thorn and Catherine MacDonald

Colchester (Metro Truro): Lauchlan Learned and Brian Schrock  
Cumberland Co.: Donna Fitzpatrick  
Fundy Shore: Nancy Castlebury  
Halifax Metro: Kathy Wood Piccott  
North Shore: Stephen B. Young  
South Shore: Tonya Grant and Archie MacKinnon  
Valley: Debbie Reimer  
CASW Board Member: Veronica Marsman  
MSSW: Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard  
MSSW Student: Tara Geraghty  
NSASW: Sylvia Colley Ewing

ADMINISTRATION: (Phone 429-7799 Fax 429-7650)

Executive Director: Harold Beals 429-1790  
Office Manager: Marilyn Marcon 429-7799  
Coordinator: Graeme Fraser 429-0243

BOARD OF EXAMINERS' OFFICE (Fax 429-0888)

Registrar: Joyce Halpern 429-7298  
Administrative Assistant: Suzanne Desjardins 429-7298

### ***CONNECTION Editorial Policy***

CONNECTION is the official newsletter of Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers (NSASW). It is distributed primarily to over 1,500 members across Nova Scotia, as well as to schools of social work, selected government departments, social agencies and libraries.

Publication of any article or advertisement does not constitute endorsement or approval by NSASW of any product or service advertised, any point of view, standard, or opinion presented therein. NSASW is not responsible for any claims made in an advertisement appearing in its publications.

All advertising is subject to the NSASW's approval. NSASW reserves the right to reject advertisements for any reason at any time. All advertising must adhere to generally accepted ethical guidelines. NSASW is not liable for any alleged loss or damages if an advertisement is omitted for any reason. The placement of an advertising order constitutes an acceptance of all the rates and conditions under which advertising is sold at the time. NSASW reserves the right to position ads at its discretion, although advertisers' preferences will be met whenever possible. Please contact the NSASW office for current advertising rates.

Submissions from members are welcome and the Editor encourages readers to submit letters to the Editor, stories, pictures, artwork, announcements, thoughts, and ideas.

Please submit all material in electronic format ( Word or WordPerfect) to Wendy Wierstra, Editor, by e-mail ([wwierstra@gmail.com](mailto:wwierstra@gmail.com)) or on computer disc to the NSASW office.

### ***The Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia Recruits Volunteers for Special Projects***

The Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia  
The Medical Arts Building, Suite 306  
5880 Spring Garden Road  
Halifax, NS, B3H 1Y1  
Phone:(902) 429-2633

We currently seek energetic and motivated volunteers to help with education projects and special events. As a Volunteer Committee Member or Board Member you could make a difference in the lives of 9500 Nova Scotians living with Epilepsy.

The Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia (EANS) is a province-wide health charity that provides programs of support to persons with seizure disorders. Epilepsy affects 1-2% of the population, more than twice the number of people with Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, Cystic Fibrosis and Cerebral Palsy combined. Seizures are more than just a medical problem. The condition impacts families, causes economic hardship, makes it difficult to keep a driver's license, education and employment, and can cause social isolation and embarrassment.

As a member of the board you will be making a difference in the lives of 9500 Nova Scotians living with Epilepsy.

Contact:

Deborah Boltz  
Executive Director  
The Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia  
Telephone:(902) 429-2633  
Fax:(902) 425-0821  
Email:[eans@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:eans@ns.sympatico.ca)  
Website:[www.epilepsyns.com](http://www.epilepsyns.com)

### ***National Volunteer Week***

National Volunteer Week is quickly approaching!

The week of April 17-23 is the time to recognize the service of valued volunteers.

For more information on National Volunteer Week call (800) 670-0401 or visit [www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca)

Volunteer Canada also offers a series of capacity-building resources and manuals. These products are now available through the Marketplace at [www.volunteer.ca/marketplace](http://www.volunteer.ca/marketplace).

### ***S.T.A.B.L.E. - A Pre-Transport Stabilization Program for Neonatal Health Care Providers***

S.T.A.B.L.E. is an educational program designed to provide health care workers with the knowledge and skills required for the care and stabilization of neonates prior to being transported to a tertiary care centre. The program was designed by Kristine A. Karlsen, RNC, MS, NNP, from Park City, Utah in 1985. The program underwent major revisions in 1990 and continues to evolve while being used throughout the United States. It has also been very successful in Newfoundland/Labrador, since 1997 and Nova Scotia since 1999.

This course is being offered in conjunction with the 27th Annual Perinatal Conference to be held Saturday, April 30,2005  
8:00a.m. to 5:00p.m.  
Parker Reception Room  
IWK Health Centre

For Registration Information Contact:

Nancy O'Neill, RNC, MN, NNP  
Coordinator, S.T.A.B.L.E. Program  
IWK Health Centre  
Telephone:(902) 470-8895  
Fax:(902) 470-7255  
E-Mail:[nancy.oneill@iwk.nshealth.ca](mailto:nancy.oneill@iwk.nshealth.ca)