



BULLETIN

SECTION DE L'EST: L'ASSOCIATION DES
TRAVAILLEUSES ET TRAVAILLEURS SOCIAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Summer/Été
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Social Work and Diversity

Eastern Branch News	1
President's Report	1
Branch Representative to OASW	2
New Members	4
Awards: Bessie Touzel Recipient	4
Scholarships and Bursaries	6
Gala Guest Speaker: Senator Art Eggleton "We can't afford Poverty"	6
Committee Reports	7
Editorial: "Advancing Social Inclusion"	8
Articles:	
• Why is the Canadian Government Fighting Racial Equality for First Nations Children?	9
• Regard critique sur un système marqué par l'ambiguïté : Résumé d'un mémoire portant sur les politiques d'admission de réfugiés au Canada	11
• Mental Health Social Work Practice with Refugees from the Horn of Africa : A Personal Experience.....	11
• CASW Foreign Trained Education Assessments.....	13
• A Journey to a Culturally-Competent Practice in a Community Health Centre.....	14
Marketplace	15

EASTERN BRANCH NEWS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At our Annual General Meeting on April 15, 2010, the following members were elected to the Board: Julie Martin-MacKay (Emerging Minds and Patient Palliative Rehabilitation Clinic at Elizabeth Bruyère), Gerry Shea (University of Ottawa Heart Institute, Ottawa General Hospital) and Sarah Telford (Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre). All three will bring fresh perspectives to the Board. Gerry is also the Director for the Eastern Region to the OASW Provincial Board in Toronto. It will be great to have Julie, Gerry and Sarah working together with our re-elected Board members: Laurie Alphonse, Bill Dare and Julie Stevenson, who share the duties of Secretary, Glenn Drover our Treasurer, Kathy Stiell our Vice President of Operations, and Martha Wiebe.

During our Spring Gala event, Evariste Thériault was presented with the 2010 Bessie Touzel Award, in recognition of his passion for promoting research within the social welfare field.

Our Gala speaker this year was Senator Art Eggleton, co-chair of the Senate Committee on Cities whose report on *Poverty, Housing and Homelessness* was unanimously adopted by the full Senate on April 30th. For a summary of his presentation, please see page 6 of this issue.

I wish to thank all the committee members who worked so hard on the 2010 Gala/AGM to make it such a success!

Bulletin

The Official Publication of the Branch

Le Bulletin est publié trois fois par année : Fall/Automne, Spring/Printemps, et Summer/Été. The Publication Committee welcomes submissions that examine public health and social issues, discuss local, regional or provincial issues in social work/social welfare, or which share social work information of interest to social workers or the social service public.

Nous invitons la soumission d'articles portant sur des questions relatives au travail social ou au bien-être social, tant sur le plan local, régional que provincial et ceux offrant de l'information d'intérêt public ou professionnel.

Preferred length is **500 words**. **All articles require a précis!**

Submissions may be e-mailed to the address below. They must be in an IBM-compatible word processing format.

Subscription Price: Members and Non-members \$12.
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Contact Graeme Roderick at 613 226-7081, or request an ad circular from the Branch Office at 613 238-8406.

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oasw-eb@bellnet.ca

During the past year the Board focused on three priorities: strengthening our relationship with the OASW Provincial Board; improving our outreach to members, students and faculty at the Schools of Social Work at our two local universities; and further defining our role vis-à-vis the Bulletin. At our first Board meeting in mid-May for 2010-2011, the members re-examined these three priorities and determined that they were still relevant. It was agreed that they require continued attention over the coming year.

The Board would like to encourage more member participation in its activities. We meet monthly throughout the year, except during July and August. All meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm in Room 3343 of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre. Members are most welcome to attend the meetings and participate in the discussions.

Lastly, we wish to recognize our part-time administrative assistant, Emilia Perri. She has brought order out of chaos to the office. Working with Marg Nelson, Chair of the Gullen Award Committee, Emilia organized nominations, judges and award winners. As a member of the Bessie Touzel Award Committee, Emilia encouraged nominations and provided local and regional media with information about this year's recipient. And she worked closely with Martha Wiebe, Chair of the Spring Gala/AGM Task Group to help organize a very successful event. We look forward to continuing to work with Emilia.

Have a great summer!

Barbara Merriam
President

THE BULLETIN FOR FALL 2010

"Children and Youth"
« Enfance et jeunesse »

Deadline for submissions: October 17, 2010.
Your news, articles and ideas for this issue
are welcomed.

BRANCH REPRESENTATIVE TO OASW

OASW PROVINCIAL BOARD MEETING FEBRUARY 2010

I had the privilege of representing the Eastern Branch at the last provincial board teleconference held this past February. The Board received

updates on both the professional advocacy and social advocacy activities of the Association.

Professional Advocacy Activities :

- *In January 2010, OASW's Government Relations Advisory Committee and Policy Concepts consultants met to refine OASW's Government Relations Strategy in light of the current fiscal climate and the McGuinty government priorities.* It was agreed that in the coming year activities will focus on continuing to work closely with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) to seek the removal of barriers to social work practice, positioning and branding social work services as offering a cost-effective alternative to medial approaches to health care, and continuing to explore ways to increase the pool of social workers with skills in building relationships with MPPs.
- *Recent OASW Children and Youth Advisory Group initiatives include setting up a Facebook Group to support the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada's "Be a Witness" Campaign.* (See Cindy Blackstock's article, page 9.) OASW's Facebook group has 166 participants from schools of social work and the Association's membership. With "Youth Engagement", a significant policy direction in the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Advisory Group is drafting a position paper to inform and encourage discussion with the profession regarding implementation of this concept.
- *OASW continues to be active in the Alliance of Professional Associations for Community-Based Therapy Services (APACTS).* The ongoing restructuring of this sector, chronic under funding and provision of acute care services using a nursing model has increasingly reduced referrals for rehabilitative services. Over the past year, the drop in referrals for social work services is particularly dramatic. APACTS activities have focused on: maintaining a presence and voice at Ministry of Health and stakeholder tables; identifying and supporting research that documents the benefits of rehabilitative services; and

supporting our respective members through the provision of information on the revamped APACTS website and an updated "Reference Guide" which provides role statements for the five therapy professions for use by case managers in CCACs.

- *Lobbying by OASW and the professional associations representing social workers, physicians, psychologists, nurses and occupational therapists, has resulted in legislative amendments allowing members of the Colleges for these professions who are authorized to perform the controlled act of psychotherapy, to use the title "psychotherapist" as long as they comply with specific terms and conditions.* In the case of social workers, an amendment was made to the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998*, specifying that a member who is authorized to perform the controlled act of psychotherapy may use the title "psychotherapist" in compliance with the SWSSW Act, its regulations and by-laws. These provisions will not come into effect until the relevant sections of the Psychotherapy Act are proclaimed.

Social Justice Highlights:

- *In January, OASW submitted a written response to the 5-year Review of the Child and Family Services Act.* Issues addressed in our response included extending the age of protection for children coming into care from 15 to 18, extending support to former Crown Wards from age 20 to age 25 to more closely mirror the broader community and the period of time parents frequently support young adults as they seek further education or job training, and the importance of reviewing specific Aboriginal child welfare provisions every five years. Additionally, OASW commented on to the need for the review of the legislation to look beyond current funding issues to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children are central to the review.
- *In November 2009, OASW participated in the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) Forum on Affordable Housing at Queen's Park.* Two panels looked at ways to

increase the pool of affordable housing and change the regulatory framework to ensure better access to affordable housing.

- At the request of OASW's Hamilton Branch's Social Action Committee, *all Branches were encouraged to lobby the McGuinty government to change its current practice of clawing back money for children of recipients of social assistance who receive special allowances for "Back-to-School" and "Winter Clothing"*. Of the \$42 increase promised to low-income families in July 2009, all but \$1 is clawed back from monies that had previously been basic needs allowances.
- OASW *provided information to members and encouraged them to contact government to urge them to meet their commitment to undertake a Social Assistance Review*. In *Breaking the Cycle: A Poverty Reduction Strategy for Ontario*, the Ontario Government had stated that they planned to review social assistance with the goal of removing barriers and increasing opportunity, with a particular focus on people trying to move into employment from social assistance.
- *Information was circulated to OASW members encouraging them to lobby by e-bulletin November 20th, National Child Day*, for federal politicians to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code which allows hitting children for discipline, and to explicitly prohibit all forms of corporal punishment.
- *In December 2009, OASW participated in the Pre-Budget Consultation led by the Finance Minister Dwight Duncan*. OASW's submission focused on the need for government to fund cost-effective alternatives to the medical model of health care and fund practical solutions provided by social workers who address broad-based health and social needs. It addressed the importance of the McGuinty government moving forward with implementation of the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy, including a thorough, proactive view of the Social Assistance Review, despite the poor economy.

In closing I would like to add that it has been an honour and a privilege to represent the members of Eastern Branch at the OASW Provincial Board meetings. I welcome our new regional representative Gerry Shea, and I am confident that we will be very well represented.

Ann-Marie O'Brien
Branch Representative to OASW

NEW MEMBERS

Eastern Branch welcomes new members

Deborah Aarenau, France Anik Campeau, Arlene Farrell, Bernadette Turcotte, Abdelfettah Elkchirid, Diana Pimenta, Josette Cattan, Melissa Sarah Borduas, Michelle Jackson-Brown, Marina D. Eddy, Robert Adolfson, Susanne Reinhold, Debra Rimmer, Juliet Haynes, Boon Keong Ong, Cheryl Grant, Gerry Shea, Genevieve Hone, Michelle King-Stacey, Robin Numberger, Barbara MacKinnon, Laura Klohn, Leah Binsky, Melissa Chung, Eliane Atallah, and Meghan Simmons.

Welcome back to Lori Rosgrove, Timothy R. Hutchinson, Arlene Farrell, Neshi Rodin, John Ostrander, Elizabeth K.D. Hester, Nicole Comtois, Sarah Lamoureux, Jane Sherwood, Sally Cuddy, Wendy Appleby, Joanne Doucette, and Tanya M. Clemens.

AWARDS

BESSIE TOUZEL AWARD 2010

EVARISTE THERIAULT – DEAN OF CANADIAN SOCIAL RESEARCH¹

Evariste is the recipient of the Touzel Award. He is recognized for his passion in promoting research within the social welfare field. His specialization for the MSW degree from the

¹ Introcom, Health and Welfare Canada, January 1989: Theriault typifies the welfare grants balance of quality and excitement, enduring value and flexibility in the face of new challenges.

Université de Montréal was Research and Community Development. On graduation, he worked briefly for the government of New Brunswick and the Canadian Welfare Council, before joining the federal public service. From 1968 to 2002 he administered funding and management of research and development projects in social services/social welfare. A particular emphasis was the development of applied social research capacity and expertise.

While Evariste had opportunities to be a manager, he found it more rewarding to be a federal government representative to the universities and social service organizations seeking grants, and to partner with university researchers and provincial authorities. His discretionary authority gave him the freedom to be innovative.

Being employed for thirty years in a department that witnessed seven governments, seventeen ministers and almost as many directors, as well as a number of organizational restructurings showed Evariste that initiatives long in the cultivation could be cut. It taught him to look for community partners and promising individuals whose research findings or project outcomes were likely to make a lasting difference for the whole country. Six initiatives were of note: National Welfare Grants, the National Fellowship Grants, the Research Groups Development Grants, the Child Welfare Research Agenda, the Senior Initiative Research Program and the Human Resource Study on the Social Work Sector.

A comment by a grant recipient reflects an attitude Evariste brought to this work: "People here have commented that it is unusual for a funder to act like they believe in the product they're investing in." Evariste says he was a *believer* and *investor*, noting that there are too few career researchers or longitudinal studies on which dollars can be invested!

Over time, these development grants resulted in many schools of social work acquiring enhanced capacity to bid on and be awarded Centre of Excellence funds. For instance, the Centre of

Excellence in Child Welfare received funds from 2000 to 2010. One of its accomplishments is the Child Welfare Research Portal, providing one point of access to child welfare research. The portal now is funded by two schools of social work and an innovative research organization, each located in different provinces. Another example of an enduring initiative is Canadian Review of Social Policy/Revue canadienne de politique sociale.

Evariste hopes that through the opportunities afforded him throughout his career, he has helped to advance the quality of services delivered by our profession. He believes the profession has expanded and matured since his days as a new social worker. It is well positioned within an array of helping professions. This maturation has come in ebbs and flows that remain present within and between the regulatory, educational, and public and professional advocacy arms of our profession, a profession that represents itself locally, provincially, nationally and internationally. Evariste is confident that the leaders of our profession can build the necessary cohesion to continue this advancement. He sees a role for research in achieving this.

Reflecting on leadership, Evariste considers leaders possess attributes both innate and acquired. Leaders possess solid interpersonal and communication skills to connect and engage others. They possess a sense of the past and of a destination. They can convincingly articulate a sense of how to get there. Through self-confidence and building confidence in others, they give themselves and others the freedom to take risks and/or create opportunities. They can assess and call up needed resources to achieve goals. Leaders have the freedom to dedicate themselves to the service of a cause, often over an extended period of time and situations. They have latitude to act. While circumstances and opportunities afforded Bessie Touzel occasions to become a leader in ever-widening circles of influence, she accepted these roles. It must have had its sacrifices. It is wonderful that we continue to celebrate her accomplishments. Evariste often told those whom he funded to *Celebrate Success*, and do so from the client's perspective.

Evariste served on the editorial board of the *Canadian Social Worker* and the Eastern Branch *Bulletin*. He has served on the Branch's Board of Directors. For a time, he was the Branch liaison to the École de Service Social, l'Université d'Ottawa. He provided field placements for them as well as the Carleton School. A 1991 testimonial by OASW Eastern recognized his contribution to the Branch and to the profession.

In 2001, he was granted an Honorary Life Membership from the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work. In 2002, he was bestowed a Life Achievement Award from the Canadian Council on Social Development.

In eloquently introducing Evariste, nominator Hector Balthazar gave us every reason to celebrate the steadfast dedication to service of the Dean of Canadian Social Research.

Graeme Roderick

SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

It is with pleasure we announce this year's winners of the Branch's Scholarships and Bursaries.

Carleton University

The Edith Moore Bursary (BSW) was awarded to Heidi Leighton.

The Swithun Bowers Memorial Scholarship (MSW) was awarded jointly to Justine McNulty and Alison Tutak.

The recipients of the *Brian Macintosh Memorial Bursaries* are Shawna Reid, Courtney Cassell, and Susan Lopez.

Université d'Ottawa

The Branch partners with Ottawa U's School of Social Work in the awarding of the Roland Lecomte Scholarship. This year's winner is Sabina Grabowiecka.

Congratulations to all this year's recipients. To all Eastern Branch members who over the past 25 years have financially supported student education, a very sincere thank you.

Note: Tax deductible donations can be made to these Awards to support students of social work at any time.

For more information on how to donate, please don't hesitate to contact our Branch Office by phone at 613 238-8406, or by e-mail at oasw-eb@bellnet.ca

GALA GUEST SPEAKER

"WE CAN'T AFFORD POVERTY" If we ever could!

Our Annual Gala's guest speaker was Art Eggleton, co-chair of the Senate Committee on Cities whose report on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness was unanimously adopted by the full Senate on April 30th. The Senator said over two years the Committee had held 35 hearings, heard from 200 witnesses, hosted five roundtables and visited 20 agencies during their 2 years of study. The Committee concluded that Canada's system for lifting people out of poverty must be overhauled - **now**.

Most taxpayers don't realize that one in 10 Canadian citizens lives in poverty, almost a quarter being children. Or, that Canada's economic cost of poverty is over \$30 billion annually. The Committee exposed something systemic about poverty. "We saw that decades of social policy making by all levels of government have resulted in two equally devastating results. First, even when all of the programs are working as they should, the resulting income is often only enough to simply *maintain* people in poverty. Second, at their worst, existing policies and programs actually *entrap* people in poverty, creating unintended but nonetheless perverse effects that make it almost impossible to escape the reliance on income security programs or homeless shelters." As Senator David Croll said in his landmark Committee Report on Poverty almost 40 years ago, "We are pouring billions of dollars every year into a social welfare system that merely treats the symptoms of poverty but leaves the disease itself untouched."

During their work, examples of promising practices and programs were found. These were largely community based, such as *Pathways to Education* in Toronto's Regent Park. It has been instrumental in lowering the high school drop-out rate from 56% to 10% and increasing the number of high school graduates going on to post-secondary education from 20% to 80%. Sadly, these examples are pockets of promise in a dysfunctional system.

Call for Action:

The federal, provincial and territories governments must adopt the goal of lifting people out of poverty. Key initiatives to achieve this core goal are coordination of a nationwide federal-provincial initiative on early childhood education and subsequent training; the development of a national housing and homelessness strategy, and improvement in income security programs, and in particular, creation of a basic income floor for all Canadians who are severely disabled. The Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB) is one existing government program that bears real promise. Details are available at <http://senatorarteggleton.ca/Resources/Documents.aspx>

In his concluding remarks, Senator Eggleton acknowledged something social workers know too well: social programs should lift people out of poverty, not keep them there, and that it is past due to give people the tools they need to lift themselves into a better life. "We spend a lot of money and don't get the results we should. We don't need to spend more money; we need to spend smarter, more efficiently and effectively." He further said, "In a very real sense, the future level of our prosperity depends on addressing the current level of our poverty. Simply put, we can't afford poverty anymore."

A discussion followed, in which the Senator said he hoped the Report would be not only a means to focus the attention of all levels of governments, community organizations, media and citizens, but also a catalyst of change. The changing demographics that soon would be upon us will command our attention, and demand solutions.

He asked for our membership's assistance in promoting the above-noted solutions.

Graeme Roderick

COMMITTEE REPORTS

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

The Social Justice Committee has addressed two new issues brought to the attention of members and Branches by OASW. The first is the discontinuation of the Ontario Special Diet Allowance. A new program has been created to provide a nutritional supplement for recipients of Social Assistance with severe health problems, to be administered by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Complete information about the new program is not yet available, but the Government has clarified that the criteria will be much less inclusive than was the case with the Special Diet Allowance.

Our Committee notified other community groups about this situation and requested OASW to provide a model letter that all members could use to contact Premier McGuinty and other MPPs about the need for a nutritional supplement for all recipients of Social Assistance. The letter is available on OASW's Web site. Members of our Committee and the Board of EB have joined other activists in the province to lobby the Ontario Government on this issue.

The loss of the Special Diet Allowance adds urgency to the need to advocate regarding the inadequacy of Social Assistance rates, which are 40% lower than they were prior to the Harris cuts made in 1995. Several provincial coalitions and campaigns are actively pressing for change. In support of these actions, members of our Social Justice Committee will request opportunities to speak to some of our provincial representatives, including Premier McGuinty, to ask when this government will restore Social Assistance rates to the 1993 level. We will use those opportunities to speak to the action by Hamilton Branch advocating for an end to the

clawback of the National Child Tax Benefit supplement.

Ongoing work of the Committee includes exploration of concerns regarding the adequacy of care in the City's Domiciliary Hostels. A representative of the City will meet with us in June to discuss our concerns.

Finally, the sub-committee working to raise support for a recommendation to Ottawa City Council to initiate a study on the possible benefits of a municipal income tax has received support from *People for a Better Ottawa*. Councillor Alex Cullen has pledged his support for this project. Plans are in place to approach a number of other community organizations to request their support and their participation in a media event and subsequent presentation to the City's Audit, Budget and Finance Committee in September.

Members interested in any of the issues described above are cordially invited to contribute to the Committee's work.

Margaret Nelson
Chair (margn@gamma.ca)

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Your Publications Committee invites **all** members to submit articles and ideas on subjects of interest to the social work community to the *Bulletin*. The theme of the next issue can always be found on page 2.

If you would like to join the Committee...

We meet 3 times a year for an hour to discuss the next issue. An additional 3 hours of independent work is required, contacting potential contributors, and following up on leads.

If you would like to attend our September meeting, please contact Graeme Roderick via our Branch office at oasw-eb@bellnet.ca for details.

Publications Committee

EDITORIAL AND ARTICLES

ADVANCING SOCIAL INCLUSION

In the past fifteen years, your *Bulletin* has twice taken up the theme of social work and social inclusion, the last being the summer 2005 issue. Under the caption, "No Time or Reason to be Complacent", the 2005 editorial drew on the 2002 survey of employers² which had reported that, "between nineteen and thirty-five percent of social workers did not possess the necessary client-focused skills to assist 'ethno-racial' clients". It also drew upon a survey of thirty-four Canadian Schools of Social Work finding that only ten schools required courses in cultural sensitivity and two on racism, most often at the undergraduate level. Elective courses were available at many but not all schools. That and this editorial acknowledge that the data is dated. What follows then, is an attempt to provide you with a current perspective using a survey of course requirements, professional presentations, and journal articles as indicators of the importance given to the theme of this Issue. Topics explored in the two previous *Bulletin* issues well reflect the scope of our theme.

Contributors to this and previous issues have sought to assist in advancing social work knowledge and skills in the context of working with individuals, families, groups and communities who are at risk or experience a heightened degree of social exclusion, often because of age, gender, sexual orientation, language, (dis)abilities, race, religion, ethnic heritage or a combination of these aspects. Vulnerability may be systemic (i.e. oppression).

Regarding the first indicator, university courses, a complete survey of undergraduate and graduate programs was not undertaken. Of the dozen schools' Web sites visited at the undergraduate and graduate level, either explicitly or by inference, all programs address diversity minimally, with one required course and a number of electives. Using the above stated scope of social exclusion, a couple of schools stated on their home page that they were seeking applicants who identified themselves as a citizen

² In Critical Demand, p. 106

with a diverse background. An aspect of this might be informed course providers.

During the 2009 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences held at Carleton University, the Canadian Association on Social Work Education (CASWE) sponsored 162 presentations. Using the percent of presentation titles as an indicator of the importance given to the topic of social inclusion/exclusion by social work professors/researchers, at least thirty-eight per cent had such a focus. That's impressive.

Regarding the second indicator, other presentations, two sponsored by OASW, were reviewed as these targeted practitioners. The theme of National Social Work Week 2005 was *Social Workers: Honouring Communities and Celebrating Diversity*. No doubt the choice of the guest speaker at that year's Eastern Branch Spring Gala was influenced by the theme. In her address, social worker Sharon Kan of the Catholic Immigration Centre of Ottawa said that in the ideal world, social workers of a similar cultural and linguistic background would provide client services. In the real world, this match is seldom possible. Echoing the Sector Study's recommendation, she foresaw social workers receiving extra training in helping and empowering newcomers, many of whom would face exclusion or marginalization during their adjustment to Canada. She hoped researchers, service providers and educators could collaborate on ways to enhance such training. Sharon identified co-counselling as a promising area of collaboration between social workers and settlement workers, who usually were experienced interpreters.

More recently, the topic was taken up at the 2008 National Conference sponsored by OASW, CASW, and CASWE, its theme being, *Human Rights in a Diverse Community*. The conference's Beverley Antle Memorial Lecture was delivered by local member and 2010 recipient of the CASW biennial *Outstanding Service Award*, Cindy Blackstock. She was a driving force behind the passage of Jordan's Principle, the child-first principle to resolving intergovernmental jurisdictional disputes related to the funding of services for First Nations children. Cindy is a contributor to this issue.

The third indicator of importance was attention given in professional journals. Two journals were surveyed over a period of the last five years. Article titles in *Canadian Social Work* indicate three of forty articles touched on this theme. The article by social worker S. Kassim (2007) concluded his study on racial profiling by noting that there is little social work research on the topic, but that social workers should examine their own practice, education and training to identify and eradicate discriminatory/ oppressive practices and policies, while continuing to promote and implement anti-racist social work practices.

A similar survey of titles in *OASW Newsmagazine* during the same period noted that eleven of sixty-seven articles touched on the theme. Of particular interest was C. Bradshaw and J. Graham's study of fifty social workers working with Muslim communities in Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto³. Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, it considers "strategies to achieve more inclusive social work."

In summary, at base, thirteen percent of articles of these two publications taken together addressed related topics. Other articles may be found to do so on more careful review.

Based on these indicators, our impression is that there have been advances in the past five years. Indeed the following articles are a testament to that advancement.

Publications Committee

**WHY IS THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT
FIGHTING RACIAL EQUALITY FOR FIRST
NATIONS CHILDREN?**

by Cindy Blackstock

Précis : *Cet article présente les grandes lignes d'une cause faisant présentement l'objet de délibérations au Tribunal canadien des droits de*

3

<http://oasw.org/en/membersite/pdfs/Newsmag%20Oct%2005.pdf>, p.13/14.

la personne, dans laquelle le gouvernement fédéral est accusé de discrimination raciale à l'endroit des enfants des Premières Nations. Déposée par l'Assemblée des Premières Nations, la plainte allègue qu'en consacrant moins de financement pour la protection des enfants vivant sur réserve, le gouvernement fédéral fait preuve de discrimination face à ces derniers. La Société de soutien à l'enfance et à la famille a lancé une campagne intitulée « Je suis témoin », invitant les individus et les organismes à s'engager à suivre les audiences du tribunal.

Provincial child welfare laws apply on and off reserve but the federal government funds the services on reserves. If the federal government does not do so, or does so inadequately, the provinces do not typically top up the funding levels, resulting in a two tiered system where First Nations children get less. The funding inequality in child welfare services has been documented for over 10 years and has been affirmed by the Auditor General of Canada and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Federal government documents obtained under Access to Information say the federal government's child welfare funding service on reserves results in a "dire" situation. The documents go on to describe how inequitable child welfare funding contributes to growing numbers of First Nations children in foster care and First Nations child welfare agencies being unable to meet their mandated responsibilities.

The federal government's response to the child welfare funding inequality issue facing First Nations children has been to partially implement a funding formula known as the *Enhanced Funding Approach* that the Auditor General of Canada ruled inequitable in her May 2008 report.

The federal government is currently before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to face allegations that it is racially discriminating against First Nations children by providing less child welfare benefit than other children receive. Canada has repeatedly tried to derail the tribunal using legal loopholes. The most important legal

loophole they are pursuing is to argue that funding is not a service and, therefore, federal funding levels on reserve, no matter how inequitable, should not be subject to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Canada has lost two legal efforts to try to get the federal court to derail the tribunal on the "funding is not a service" loophole, but this has not deterred them. In December of 2009, the federal government filed a motion at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to have the case dismissed, claiming that the Canadian Human Rights Act does not apply as Canada only funds child welfare services on reserves – it is First Nations that deliver them. Canada has not made any connection between its "funding is not a service" argument and the safety and well being of First Nations children. Canada refused to have its witness cross-examined in public, claiming the presence of the public would distract her from her answers. All witnesses testifying on behalf of First Nations testified in public, emphasizing the need for public accountability and the importance of the hearing being open to the participation of children, youth and their families.

The hearing on Canada's motion to dismiss this case on the "funding is not a service" issue was heard on June 2, 3, 2010 at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Transcripts of testimony leading up to dismiss are posted on line at www.fnwitness.ca. The Government of Canada was opposed by 1) the Assembly of First Nations 2) the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada 3) the Canadian Human Rights Commission 4) Amnesty International Canada and 5) the Chiefs of Ontario.

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (www.fncaringsociety.com) has launched a public engagement campaign for the tribunal called, "I am a witness." This campaign invites people of all ages and organizations to register as a witness to the tribunal meaning that you commit to follow the case in person, through the media or on the web and then, after hearing all the facts, you make up your own mind about whether or not you feel the Canadian Government is treating First Nations

children fairly. To date, there are over 4600 witnesses making the First Nations child welfare tribunal the most formally watched court case on children's rights in Canadian history. Sign up at <http://www.fnwitness.ca/>. It takes two minutes and is completely free.

Cindy Blackstock is Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada.

**REGARD CRITIQUE SUR UN SYSTÈME
MARQUÉ PAR L'AMBIGUÏTÉ :
RÉSUMÉ D'UN MÉMOIRE PORTANT SUR
LES POLITIQUES D'ADMISSION
DE RÉFUGIÉS AU CANADA**

par Stefanie Wirz

Précis: *An analysis of the Canadian refugee policies points to the many ambiguities and contradictions which they generate, and which result from the conflicting views and discourses promoted by two distinct groups of actors: those from within the system, including the federal and provincial governments and the Immigration and Refugee Board, and those from non-government organizations defending refugees and their rights. These contradictions revolve around six main elements, namely the definition of refugee and the process involved in obtaining refugee status.*

La politique de protection des réfugiés au Canada est marquée par l'ambiguïté. Un certain nombre d'éléments du système actuel d'admission des réfugiés souffre de contradictions et de conflits de valeurs. Ce phénomène est le résultat de l'influence simultanée de deux groupes d'acteurs principaux sur le système : les acteurs institutionnels et les acteurs non gouvernementaux.

L'analyse de la politique canadienne de protection des réfugiés effectuée dans le cadre de cette étude récapitule l'histoire des politiques des réfugiés au niveau national et international, et elle explique le fonctionnement du système actuel d'admission. On y présente les acteurs principaux et les discours qu'ils tiennent ainsi qu'un examen de la dynamique entre ces deux discours. D'un côté, les acteurs

institutionnels (les gouvernements fédéral et provinciaux et la Commission de l'immigration et du statut de réfugié [CISR]) défendent un discours de souveraineté, en soulignant les intérêts économiques et sécuritaires du Canada; ils revendiquent une politique d'admission restrictive. D'un autre côté, les acteurs non gouvernementaux (les réfugiés et les organisations défendant les droits des réfugiés) s'inscrivent dans le discours de l'humanitaire. Ces acteurs s'opposent à la restriction de l'accès à la protection pour les réfugiés et ils revendiquent une politique plus ouverte.

Notre analyse relève six points où l'ambiguïté créée par le mélange du discours de souveraineté et du discours de l'humanitaire devient particulièrement évidente : la définition du « réfugié »; l'Entente sur les tiers pays sûrs; le processus de détermination du statut de réfugié; l'audience devant la CISR (notamment le soupçon du mensonge et l'ordre de l'interrogatoire inversé); la nomination des commissaires de la CISR; la non-instauratoin de la Section d'appel des réfugiés (SAR).

Notre étude se conclut par une proposition eu égard au maintien de l'équilibre entre l'influence des deux groupes d'acteurs : le renforcement du rôle du système juridique. En entérinant les droits garantis aux réfugiés par la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés et par les traités internationaux signés par le Canada, les juges peuvent jouer un rôle crucial pour l'assurance d'un système de protection des réfugiés qui est juste et en conformité avec les obligations internationales du pays.

Stefanie Wirz a obtenu son diplôme de maîtrise à l'École de service social de l'Université d'Ottawa et elle travaille présentement à l'Organisation internationale pour les migrations à Berne en Suisse.

**MENTAL HEALTH SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE
WITH REFUGEES FROM THE HORN OF
AFRICA: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**
by Yohannes F. Drar

Précis : *Depuis les années 1980, de nombreux réfugiés originaires de la Corne de l'Afrique arrivent au Canada. Ces personnes sont*

confrontées à de nombreuses sources de stress, à la fois pré et post migratoire, qui peuvent parfois engendrer des problèmes de santé mentale. Étant donné les tabous associés aux problèmes de santé mentale dans leur communauté d'origine, plusieurs réfugiés cachent leur état de santé jusqu'à ce qu'une crise nécessite une hospitalisation d'urgence. Il est important que les travailleurs sociaux soient sensibilisés aux effets des stress vécus par les réfugiés et que leur intervention tienne compte de leurs forces et des ressources de leur communauté.

Africa is a continent comprising 53 independent countries. The Horn of Africa includes Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Sudan. This region has a population of roughly 100 million people. This part of the world belongs to the original inhabitants of humanity. The oldest human skull ("Lucy" or "the Ethiopian Lady") was found in the Rift Valley of Ethiopia.

Due to its geographic location, the Horn of Africa has been a strategic connection between Africa, Europe and the Middle East. During the 19th Century, it has been governed by a plethora of different colonial European powers. It is a mosaic of different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic groups.

For the last sixty years after independence, the Horn of Africa has been in constant social, political, economic, cultural and religious crisis, and it has been ruled by different oppressive regimes and dictatorships. It has been at the centre of Cold War hegemony. As a result, beginning in the 80's, the Horn of Africa has become a major source of refugees to Canada.

Mental Health Issues with Horn of Africa Refugees

It is important to understand that these refugees have major pre-immigration stressors in addition to post immigration stressors. Most have either directly or indirectly witnessed the effects of war, persecution and imprisonment. Countries such as Sudan and Somalia have civil wars. Eritrea has a history of 30 years of liberation war *vis à vis* Ethiopia and currently there are unresolved

border wars. To perhaps say the obvious, these wars profoundly affect the mental health and well being of all touched by them.

Traditional Beliefs about Mental Illness among Communities

Horn of Africa refugees have their traditional ways of looking at mental illness. People rely on religious or traditional healers involving animal sacrifices or simply praying. Everyday references to people with mental illness are negative. There are no 'medium' words. A person is either "crazy" or "normal." Frequently people refer to individuals with mental illness as "possessed by evil" or "cursed."

Due to the stigma of mental illness in these communities, refugees mask their mental illness problems until the illness becomes acute and many end up in psychiatric hospital emergencies. (To my knowledge, there have been no long term studies of mental illness among these refugees. There have, however, been several studies on suicide, depression, post traumatic stress disorder, and addictions.)

"Everyday references to people with mental illness are negative. There are no 'medium' words. A person is either "crazy" or "normal." Frequently people refer to individuals with mental illness as "possessed by evil" or "cursed."

Assisting in Recovery

For more than a decade at the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, I have used education and empowerment approaches to assist patients and their families. Additionally, I have presented educational sessions through seminars, radio and local ethnic newspapers. My message for social workers and other helping professionals has 3 points:

1. Refugee communities from the Horn of Africa have class, religious and ethnic differences;
 2. They have strong resources including family, friends and religious organizations, and their coping skills are strong;
 3. Knowledge of historical backgrounds will greatly assist social workers in assessing and helping these refugees.
-

Conclusion

Although the refugees from the Horn of Africa began to arrive 30 years ago in Canada, social workers can still assist these communities with both pre and post immigration issues, including assisting refugees to make connections with the many community resources addressing mental health issues. At this point, I would like to salute those of you who have made efforts to develop your sensitivity when working with refugees. As well, I want at this time to suggest that social workers continue to make efforts to deepen their sense of cultural sensitivity by, for example, becoming more aware of the historical background of each individual refugee and community member in order to maximize assistance in today's Canadian cultural mosaic.

Yohannes F. Drar is a former refugee from Eritrea and has worked as a social worker at the Royal Ottawa Hospital for over 20 years. Over the last several years, he has had the opportunity to practice social work with numerous African refugees and landed immigrants.

CASW FOREIGN TRAINED EDUCATION ASSESSMENTS

by Fred Phelps

Précis : Depuis le début des années '70 l'Association canadienne des travailleuses et travailleurs sociaux (ACTS) offre un service d'évaluation des études en travail social aux personnes formées à l'extérieur du Canada, dans le but d'établir des équivalences en matière de diplomation. Au cours de la dernière décennie, l'Association a complété annuellement environ 99 évaluations pour des personnes originaires de 28 pays différents et 81% de celles-ci ont obtenu une reconnaissance d'équivalence. L'apport de ces professionnels contribue à l'enrichissement et à la diversification de la profession et des pratiques du service social au Canada.

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) has proudly provided the assessment of Foreign Trained Social Work (FTSW) educational credentials to Canadian equivalence since the early 1970's. In providing the FTSW assessment

service to new comers, as well as to those Canadians who have studied social work abroad, CASW has offered a path to add diversity to the social work profession in Canada. In fact, over the past 10 years CASW has processed an average of 99 FTSW assessments from 28 different countries each year.

CASW records also show that 81% of applicants' educational credentials were deemed equivalent to a Canadian social work degree over the last 10 years. Of the successful applicants, many are now permanent residents seeking to renew their social work practice in their adopted homeland, adding immense diversity to the social work profession.

The experience of CASW is that FTSW applicants who arrive in Canada first and then apply for an evaluation often experience a great deal more stress in the evaluation process, compounded by issues around their recent move to a new country. Consequently, CASW strongly encourages potential FTSW applicants to apply for their evaluation prior to leaving their country of origin. This means one less problem for them when they arrive in Canada. And documentation required to process FTSW applications is easier to obtain when applicants can personally access the institutions where they received their education.

"...over the past 10 years CASW has processed an average of 99 FTSW assessments from 28 different countries each year. "

The process applicants undergo in establishing the legitimacy of their FTSW educational credentials has not changed substantially since the 1970s. To successfully process a FTSW application, an applicant must have their educational institution provide CASW with a Verification Form and transcript(s) to establish the legitimacy of the education and identity claimed. Applicants are required to provide CASW with copies of their social work diploma(s), course descriptions, field practice description, and any proof of professional membership. All required documentation for an assessment is the responsibility of the applicant to provide.

Once CASW has received a complete application, the results can be expected within 4 to 6 weeks. Applicants are then provided with a letter indicating equivalency to either a Bachelor or Masters of Social Work degree. In cases of non-equivalence, the letter states the main reason for lack of equivalency, and the decision can be appealed. The full FTSW application process is outlined in detail on the CASW website (<http://www.casw-acts.ca/>).

Over the past year CASW has been joined on the national stage by the Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators (CCSWR) whose purpose is to provide a national structure for the provincial social work regulatory authorities and aims to develop and promote national standards for the assessment of competence in social work practice. In this regard, CASW had previously committed to reviewing its role in providing the service of assessing FTSW education to Canadian equivalence in 2011. The establishment of the CCSWR provides context for this review to take place.

Fred Phelps is a social worker with the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW).

A JOURNEY TO A CULTURALLY- COMPETENT PRACTICE IN A COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE IN OTTAWA

by Ana Mercedes Guerra

***Précis:** Le Centre de santé communautaire du Sud-est d'Ottawa est une agence multi- services œuvrant dans un quartier très diversifié. Il travaille en collaboration avec les personnes et avec d'autres organismes pour promouvoir le bien-être et la sécurité de tous et toutes, renforcer les capacités de la communauté et soutenir les nombreux groupes qui la composent. Le Centre met en place des politiques et des pratiques novatrices, visant à faire en sorte que les personnes de cultures diverses se sentent accueillies et soutenues.*

The South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre is a multi-service agency whose mission is to:

- work with the area's diverse population and with partners to **foster a safe, healthy, welcoming communities**,
- **strengthen well-being** by promoting the development of healthy individuals and families, particularly with vulnerable persons; and
- **provide a place where help may be given and received** by providing integrated holistic primary care and social services, promoting access to other services and opportunities for persons who are vulnerable or marginalized, and by supporting community members to help one another.

The 2006 census numbers residents in the area at 82,738, or 10.3% of the population of the City of Ottawa. Of this percentage of the population of Ottawa, the number of people who do not speak either official language is 18.3%, whereas citywide it is 11%.

Considering this reality, it has been a priority for the Centre to respond to the needs of the diverse population that it serves.

- We believe that access to good health and social services improves the quality of life and well-being of residents of South-East Ottawa.
- We appreciate the worth of each individual in our community.
- We are inclusive, respectful, honest, responsible and accountable with partners and participants.
- We strive to be a healthy organization that incorporates new ideas and innovative approaches, celebrates community, shares successes, and learns from mistakes.

I have worked at the Centre as a Social Worker since 1993, and I have been part of the Centre's journey to respond to the needs of the community it serves. One vital aspect of this process is the commitment of the Board of Directors and staff to developing clear policies and procedures that guide the work that we do in relation to diversity. We rely on community members, clients, volunteers, partner agencies and funding representatives to provide feedback on our programs and services. Some of the practical strategies we have used to support diversity are:

- obtaining the services of culturally-competent interpreters;
- adopting flexible options to serve clients (e.g. evening appointments)
- offering intake walk-in services every day for support during crises and for access to social services;
- raising awareness of personal preferences, bias, and cultural values that might impact on service delivery by ongoing reflection on our practice; and
- developing ongoing awareness and sensitization at all levels of the Centre to issues of discrimination, bias and racism by offering staff, volunteer and Board diversity training.

In the more specific counselling relationships, there is:

- an awareness of the importance that clients' expectations for counselling may be culturally determined;
- flexibility in modifying the counselling sessions in order to meet our clients "where they are at" and to support them in attaining their goals;
- support to help clients in identifying the strengths and resources from her/his own family, culture and community;
- the ability to assess when we need to become advocates for our client; and
- the ability to assess whether her/his issues and concerns are beyond the scope of our counselling practice and to refer to appropriate resources.

We have incorporated centre-wide initiatives and counselling-specific strategies to support diversity into our work, and to help to ensure that people from a range of backgrounds, cultures and experiences feel welcomed and supported.

I firmly believe that the practitioner commits to a journey, to a process of maintaining a sensitive, culturally-competent practice.

Ana Mercedes Guerra is a Social Worker/Counsellor with the South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre.

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“Children and Youth”
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Need to get in touch with Eastern Branch?

We can be reached by contacting our excellent Admin Assistant Emilia Perri at our Branch Office by phone at 613 238-8406, by regular mail at the address above, or by email at oasw-eb@bellnet.ca