



BULLETIN

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

Summer/Été
2008 (Vol.34 No. 2)

Social Work and the Environment:
A Community Development Perspective

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EASTERN BRANCH NEWS

SPRING GALA 2008 72ND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As the enjoyable evening of April 16 concluded, President Glen Drover extended the membership's appreciation to the Gala Organizing Committee whose attention to detail had ensured a great success. Hats off to our facilitator Geneviève Coté, who kept proceedings relaxed but on time. The Gala attracted over 70 registrants. For those who could not attend this year's gathering at Algonquin College, the highlights are recounted.

Military social worker Marianne Vincent was our guest speaker. Her presentation, (see page 6 for the summary), highlighted additional life challenges faced by military personnel and their families, and the role social workers play in assisting some to meeting them. Regular forces social workers and their families may also confront these challenges, often related to their own deployment. Mary Sinclair thanked Marianne for her engaging talk. It was noted that in 1954 Mary undertook the study that recommended the establishment of social work positions in the Canadian Forces (see page 7 for Mary's story).

Following a quality dining experience provided by the College, an auction was held in support of the Branch's five Education and Media Recognition Endowment Funds.

Bulletin

The Official Publication of the Branch

Le Bulletin est publié trois fois par année : Fall/Winter/ Automne/Hiver, 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.

Toutes contributions seront considérées pour publication; les articles sur des questions relatives au travail social/ bien-être social, tant sur le plan local, régional ou provincial ainsi que des renseignements d'intérêt public ou professionnel. Preferred length is **500** words (600 words maximum). **All articles require a précis!**

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

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Our Annual Auctions are always a fun means of increasing core funding, and this year was no different. A total of \$2080 was raised under the gavel of skilled auctioneer Marie-France Lalonde. Relative to other branches and provincial associations in Canada, the membership of Eastern Branch has made an exceptional contribution to the future practioners of our profession. Thanks to everyone who participated in the bidding or made a donation.

We also wish to thank the following sponsors who generously provided the items auctioned at this year's event: Lynn Bloom, Bernard Boucher, Glen Drover, Madeleine Dubois, Rita Finnigan, Colin MacDougall, Barbara Merriam, Marg Nelson, and the *Retirement Residences Group*.

Recipients of the Swithun Bowers Memorial Scholarship, the Edit Moore Bursary, the Brian McIntosh Bursary and the Roland Lecomte Scholarship were recognized and presented with a copy of the Code of Ethics.

Madeleine Dubois is the 25th recipient of the Bessie Touzel Award. She received her gift from last year's recipient, Ruth Brown. Madeleine is best known to graduates of the Université d'Ottawa as the Head of Field Education. She is an editor of *Reflets*, and a former editor of the *Bulletin*. Also recognized that evening were seven 25-year members of the Association.

During the brief Annual General Meeting, the funding concerns raised in President Glenn Drover's January 17th letter (*Bulletin* Vol. 34, No. 1, p. 2) were clarified from the perspective of OASW Provincial and OASW Eastern.

We thank those who attended, particularly those who traveled a distance to be there. It is a great opportunity for our social work community to network and celebrate our profession.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The following members were re-elected to the board of OASW-EB at the 72nd annual general meeting: Barbara Merriam, Nathalie Tremblay Morand, Ann Marie O'Brien and Martha Wiebe.

THE BULLETIN FOR FALL 2008

"Social Work and Families"

Deadline for submissions: October 17, 2008.
Your news, articles and ideas for this issue are welcomed.

Kathy Stiell was elected to the board for the first time. Given her extensive experience in marriage and family therapy and as co-founder of the aphasia centre, she brings a wealth of experience to the board. Hopefully, she will help us to address the interests of a wider group of members.

In addition to the above, Laurie Alphonse, Bill Dare, Glenn Drover and Margaret Nelson will continue in the second year of their term. Officers were to be decided at the meeting on Wednesday, June 18.

In 2008-09, the board is faced with challenges and opportunities. A major challenge will be the downsizing of the branch due to cutbacks in the provincial allocation. The impact is likely to be the closing of our office on Chapel Street and replacing it with a virtual office or sharing an office with others.

Sadly, we are losing Jennifer Graham who has been our administrative assistant in the past few years. Jennifer has helped enormously to improve the administration of the branch and provide communication with members. She is resigning for personal reasons. We thank her for her great contribution. She shall be sorely missed.

We shall also be missing two student representatives who have been very active on the board during this past year: Sarah Telford from Carleton University and Emmanelle Cyr from the University of Ottawa. New student representatives will be added to the board in the fall.

In terms of priorities, we shall continue to build on our outreach during National Social Work Week celebrations and the Spring Gala/Annual General Meeting.

Ideally, we would also like to introduce more educational programs for members and improve our contacts with members in rural areas as well as all members through interactive electronic exchanges. We will keep you posted through the **Bulletin**.

Members are always welcome to join board meetings. We normally meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM at the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre on Carling Avenue.

Glenn Drover
President

BRANCH REPRESENTATIVE TO OASW

OASW PROVINCIAL MEETING MAY 2008

This meeting of the OASW board of directors was significant for many reasons. Most of the board members were in Toronto to attend the CASW/CASSW conference hosted by the OASW. While the official evaluations of the meeting are still being collated, anecdotally it was a resounding success. Having practitioners and academics together added a richness to this meeting that was appreciated by all the participants. The keynote speakers reflected the diversity that is Canadian culture. Each spoke of their commitment to human rights.

The weekend began with our AGM. Dan Andreae addressed the membership for the last time as President. We are indebted to him for his generous commitment to the organization following Beverley Antle's untimely death. Dan is a truly eloquent speaker, and an inspiring leader: "Change can be daunting but ultimately rewarding. Social work, as a profession is at a crossroads, and how we manage change in the future will determine our viability and relevance to the social and health care systems and the clients we serve. Yet the skill sets we possess are precisely those required at this time, while health care and social service delivery are being restructure and reorganized. Our demonstrated understanding of the linkages between individuals and communities, our theoretical and practical understanding of complex systemic functioning and advocacy, our knowledge of and adherence to ethical standards, as well as our ability to work collaboratively with allied professionals, place us in an enviable and unique position if we take the initiative."

Our new President is Anne Sawarna. Anne is a long-time member of the organization, most recently serving as treasurer. She is the Director of Social Work at London Health Sciences.

Following the conference, our Board of Directors convened. We reviewed, discussed, and renewed our strategic plan. We also reviewed the work of our committees that advance social justice and professional advocacy.

The Board continues to move forward in discussions on how to best serve the needs of our members. In this context an organizational review task group has been formed. The review process is open, transparent, and inclusive. The task group has continued to explore issues related to the role of Branches and the effectiveness of the Board structure. The Eastern Branch is represented on this task group.

The board will next convene in September.

Ann-Marie O'Brien
Branch Representative to OASW

NEW MEMBERS

Eastern Branch welcomes new members

Francesca Dattilo, Laurie-Anne Muldoon, Paul Brisson, Sonia Mailloux, Cedric von Machui, Susie Trotter, Yvonne Gomez, and Marcie Taylor.

Welcome back to Elizabeth Dent and Sheila Boardman.

AWARDS

MADELEINE DUBOIS: 25TH BESSIE TOUZEL AWARD RECIPIENT

Quelques pistes de réflexion émanant d'une carrière en service social

Recevoir le prix Bessie Touzel est tout un privilège et je remercie de tout coeur mes collègues de l'ATTSO de m'avoir accordé cet honneur. La tradition établie depuis quelques années veut que soit publié, dans le **Bulletin**, un aperçu des accomplissements du récipiendaire,

dans les domaines professionnel et du bénévolat. J'ai plutôt choisi de partager des réflexions et des observations aléatoires sur divers aspects liés à la pratique du service social.

Walking along the Rideau Canal on the Sunday morning of the Ottawa marathon, my attention was drawn to a message booming from a loudspeaker on the other side of the canal. It was the voice of the Ottawa General Hospital Social Workers on the Run, enthusiastically encouraging the runners and offering them drinks. Impressed with this creative initiative, I also saw it as an excellent illustration of the sometimes illusive concept of empowerment as well as an example of the extent to which social work practices and approaches have evolved since I took my first steps in this career thirty nine years ago.

À quinze ans, j'avais été invitée à représenter ma région du Nord de l'Ontario à un camp guide provincial, le camp Lemire, dont le but était d'encourager le potentiel de leadership des jeunes femmes. Chaque jour, nous pouvions participer à un échange avec une femme professionnelle venue nous présenter son travail. C'était la première fois que j'entendais parler du service social et j'ai décidé sur le champ de mon choix de carrière.

Ce qui m'a si fortement inspirée? Même si j'ai oublié son nom et celui de l'organisme pour lequel elle travaillait, je me souviens clairement à quel point j'ai été impressionnée par l'engagement de cette travailleuse sociale, par l'empathie qui se dégageait de son discours lorsqu'elle partageait ses préoccupations face aux conditions difficiles auxquelles étaient confrontées les personnes avec qui elle travaillait et par l'énergie de ses propos sur le rôle du travail social dans les changements à effectuer pour améliorer les conditions de vie des personnes. Ce que j'ai sans doute retenu, sans nécessairement pouvoir le verbaliser à l'époque, c'est que le choix d'une carrière en service social avait des ramifications allant au-delà du travail, qu'il s'agissait à la fois d'un travail et d'un engagement social donnant un sens à la vie et marquant notre façon d'être en tant que citoyen et membre de diverses collectivités.

Dans le cadre de mon travail dans une variété de lieux de pratique, j'ai constaté que peu importe l'évolution des approches et leur enrichissement par des paradigmes d'analyse systémiques, écologiques, féministes ou interculturels, les valeurs qui donnent un sens au travail social doivent demeurer au centre de toute forme d'intervention avec les personnes et les communautés. Peu importe le modèle d'intervention privilégié, ce n'est qu'en l'ancrant profondément dans une réflexion constante sur et dans notre pratique que nous pouvons réussir à garder le cap sur les valeurs d'authenticité, d'empathie et de respect pour chaque personne, ouvrant la voie à un dialogue bâti sur le sens qu'elle donne à son expérience, plutôt qu'à l'imposition d'une perspective idéologique, si bien intentionnée soit-elle.

Un des moyens qui aide à activer et à nourrir notre réflexion sur la pratique, est, à mon avis, le travail d'équipe. Sans prétendre que toute forme de travail d'équipe favorise inéluctablement ce type de réflexion, celui axé sur un « raisonnement partagé », tel que présenté par Guylaine Racine (1997) et Hervik (1994), facilite toutefois la confrontation de notre savoir et de notre savoir être au regard critique de l'autre, ce qui est essentiel au processus de réflexivité sur nos pratiques. J'ai eu l'occasion de participer à multiples forums de travail en équipe, que ce soit dans le cadre de ma participation à des équipes de recherche pilotées par l'Assemblée francophone du Conseil de planification sociale, au comité de l'étude sectorielle sur le service social au Canada en l'an 2000, et j'ai aussi tenté de privilégier et de faciliter le travail d'équipe dans divers postes de supervision que j'ai occupés. Dans tous ces forums, j'ai pu bénéficier énormément de l'enrichissement que procure la synergie qui se crée par la confrontation et le dialogue, de travailler avec des personnes prêtes à partager leurs connaissances et leurs questions.

With regards to team work, the Branch's Publication Committee, in which I have participated for many years, has given me the opportunity to benefit from the inspiration of the « *grandes dames* » of social work, Dorothy Hodgson, Joyce Ireland and Ruth Brown, whose knowledge and clarity of thought on social issues are truly remarkable. Graeme Roderick, long

standing « *maître d'œuvre* » of the committee, is also an exemplary role model with regards to social engagement.

Quoique chacun des milieux de travail auxquels j'ai participé ait été source de plaisir et de défis, c'est sans doute le travail avec les étudiants, dans lequel je suis engagée depuis 15 ans, qui me procure les plus grands défis et les sources de satisfaction les plus estimables. Le fait de côtoyer des étudiantes et des étudiants se préparant à une carrière en service social incite constamment au questionnement de nos pratiques, ce que j'essaie de faire sans pour autant perdre de vue l'importance de nourrir l'enthousiasme, l'énergie et le désir de contribuer au « mieux vivre ensemble » qui les anime et les motive. Je me sens privilégiée et choyée lorsque les étudiantes et étudiants partagent avec moi leur cheminement et leur parcours de découverte des multiples complexités, contradictions, bienfaits et réalisations du service social.

Enfin, le service social est aussi un domaine qui se renouvelle et se façonne grâce au travail souvent tacite de personnes qui agissent à titre de mentor et qui sont source d'inspiration pour ceux et celles qui bénéficient de leur sagesse et de leur encouragement. J'ai eu l'occasion de bénéficier de soutien et de l'inspiration de Roland Lecomte au cours de mes premières années à l'Université d'Ottawa, et je continue de côtoyer des collègues tels que Michael Mulrone, qui est un mentor pour plusieurs étudiants et étudiantes ayant fait un stage à la Société de l'aide à l'enfance, ainsi que de nombreux collègues dans une variété d'organismes qui acceptent de superviser un stagiaire et avec qui le partage d'expériences et de questionnement nourrit constamment mes réflexions sur la profession. Je les remercie tous et toutes.

Madeleine Dubois

SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

This year's Swithun Bowers Memorial Scholarship (MSW) from Carleton University was shared by two students; Charles Furlotte (who was published in the Spring 2008 issue of *The Bulletin*) and Christine Head.

The Edith Moore Bursary (BSW) was awarded to Maria Reyes.

The Branch has again partnered with the University of Ottawa's School of Social Work in the awarding of the Roland Lecomte Scholarship. This year's winner is Anne Jutras.

The first recipient of the new Brian Macintosh Memorial Bursary is Moira Teed.

GALA GUEST SPEAKER

SOCIAL WORKERS SUPPORTING THE CANADIAN FORCES

Marianne Vincent, a social worker with the Occupational Trauma and Stress Support Centre (OTSSC) for the Department of National Defence (DND) joined us at our Spring Gala, and spoke of her work in Ottawa with members of the Canadian Forces (CF).

Health services for members of the Canadian Forces ("Members") are provided by the CF and not by provincial health services. Mental health services are also provided by the CF, either through other members of the Canadian Forces (social workers, Chaplains, mental health nurses, psychologists, and psychiatrists), or through civilians in these disciplines who work for DND.

CF Mental health services for military members are divided into three sections:

- *Psychosocial team* (primary care) – as the "first line of defence", this team is made up of social workers, Chaplains, addiction counsellors, psychiatrists and mental health nurses. Members can self-refer for services. Some of the reasons a Member might access these services include anger, grief, relationship conflict, workplace issues, parenting problems, or family issues.

This team does mental health screenings both pre- and post-deployments to ensure there is no psychosocial reason the Member should not be deployed. The pre-deployment screening is a half hour interview with the Member and their

family, providing education about mental health concerns which might occur during a deployment. Post-deployment screening involves a questionnaire about possible symptoms, as well as a one-on-one interview with a team member.

Social workers on this team provide advocacy for the Member and have some influence with the Member's chain of command. The Member might have reason to request not to be posted or deployed for compassionate, family or medical reasons, and the practitioners of the Psychosocial team assist in making that determination.

- *General Mental Health team*: A Member's medical doctor might refer them for services provided by this multidisciplinary team, which includes social workers, mental health nurses, Chaplains, psychologists and psychiatrists. Practitioners provide individual therapy; the social workers provide couple therapy. The team runs groups for depression, anxiety and dialectic behavioural therapy (DBT).
- *Occupational Trauma and Stress Support Centre team*: (OTSSC) is also a multi-disciplinary team and requires a referral from a medical doctor or a member of another team. The Member is assessed and treated for an "occupational stress injury" (OSI), a term coined by the military to describe the mental health consequence of any Canadian Forces duty.

The team provides individual therapy, and social workers may also provide couple or family assessments and therapy. The team runs psycho-educational groups for Members and their spouses/families, as well as providing outreach services for education and prevention.

The OTSSC team has a regional mandate, meaning that the primary care and general mental health teams are available to Members across the country, but there are only five OTSSC teams in Canada. The OTSSC team in Ottawa provides assessment and diagnosis for all military Members across Ontario.

There remains a stigma within the CF about mental health. Members are trained to “show no weakness”. There is a cultural shift occurring due to the increase in mental health casualties. In the past, a Member might have suffered from a deployment-related mental health issue for years before seeking treatment. Now treatment is sought sooner as people become aware of the symptoms.

There are challenges to being a social worker for DND. Like many agencies, there are not enough social workers for the job. There are currently 40 military social workers and 100 civilians across the country. There are concerns about confidentiality as psychosocial records are currently kept in medical files. Members fear a negative impact for seeking services. This is a real fear. If a Member has restrictions with respect to work or deployments as a result of a mental health issue, then the practitioners have an obligation to advise the Member’s chain of command of those limitations.

Ms. Vincent loves her job as the Members are “easy to work with”, and are highly motivated given the culture of health. Members will “do what needs to be done to get better”. She feels that the profession of social work is well recognized in the Canadian Forces and well respected by the chain of command and medical professions.

Valerie Morinville

RETROSPECTIVE

MY CONTRIBUTION TO MILITARY SOCIAL WORK RE-VISITED

by Mary Sinclair

As I listened to our excellent speaker, Marianne Vincent, at our Spring Gala in April, my mind flashed back to a very long-ago chapter of life – a chapter I was asked to share with you on a new beginning – social work in the Royal Canadian Navy.

It was the year 1954 – 54 years ago –and there I was in the middle of winter in HMCS CORNWALLIS, Nova Scotia, learning to shoot Bren Guns and 303s on the Rifle Range and going on long route marches with 20 men.

Why? Having served in the WRCNS for 4 years during the War (1942 –46) and later graduating with an MSW, I was invited to re-join the Navy to do a Research Project on Welfare Services in the RCN to determine whether or not social workers were required to meet the needs of Naval personnel and their families.

In uniform again, I joined the staff of the Directorate of Service Conditions and Welfare in Ottawa. But before embarking on this new adventure, I was informed that as women were now an integral and equal part of the RCN, they must undergo the same training as men.

So back to the rifle range for a moment. -- scared stiff I fired my round of 10 with my 303 at the all-too-far away target and trudged through the snow to find I had hit the bull’s eye every time! What a surprise only to discover in the Wardroom that evening that a Gunnery Officer next to me had fired at my target instead of his.

In this spirit of teamwork and co-operation, for the next year and a half I had the opportunity to travel across Canada, visiting all the Naval ports and establishments. I interviewed and had group discussions with Naval personnel and their families, Divisional Officers, Chaplains, Medical Officers, Legal Officers, Housing Administrators and Social Workers in community agencies, identifying the existing resources and procedures for preventing and alleviating personal problems and assessing the need for full time Social Workers in the RCN.

On completion of this study in 1956, the recommendation was a resounding “Yes:” – a new, specialized branch of the RCN--professional social work – should be initiated with social workers at Naval Headquarters in Ottawa, as well as on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts.

What a great day it was in 1961--5 years later-- when I received an official memo saying that the first social worker had been appointed to the Atlantic Command in Halifax!

But what about the present and the future? To-day I am more convinced than ever that men and women in all three Services --the Navy, the Army and the Air Force--as well as their families --

deserve the very best that social work has to offer.

The war to end all wars that we all dreamed about during World War II unfortunately never happened and the problems of those who are presently serving our country are often even more profound and complex.

However, there have also been many new, positive developments with a dramatic increase in the numbers of social workers – both in the Services and civilian – supporting the Canadian Forces all across Canada as well as overseas; the establishment of Military Family Resource Centres; greater recognition of the importance of debriefing sessions when returning from war zones and the need for counselling for post traumatic stress disorder.

To all of you who are presently working with Service personnel and their families and those of you who might be contemplating a career in that direction, a grateful salute! May your experience be as meaningful and enriching as mine!

Mary Sinclair

EDITOR'S NOTE :

We received an overwhelming response from contributors to this issue on our theme, "Social Work and the Environment – A Community Development Perspective". Thank you!

We regret that space constraints mean that we are unable to print them all in this format of the **Bulletin**. We invite you to visit our Web page at oasw.org/east where an extended version of the Summer **Bulletin** is posted, containing all of the articles we received for this issue, including:

- **No Community Left Behind** by Abid Ullah Jan
- **Community-Based Research and the Environment** by Tina Shrigley
- **Can we end Homelessness?** by Mary Martha Hale
- **Le rôle du travail social dans la promotion et le développement de agriculture urbaine** par Marie-Eve Verret

The Editor

EDITORIAL AND ARTICLES

SOCIAL WORK'S ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Whether it is in response to effective messaging or atypical weather patterns, environmental concern and action is slowly being adopted by mainstream society. "Going green" is a goal gradually being promoted by individuals, governments and even commercial industries. But where does social work stand on the environmental front?

Two articles in this issue, "Now Is Our Last Chance To Get The Future Right" and "An Opportunity of Strengthening Community Skills", provide excellent examples of community development work in which social justice principles are employed to empower individuals and/or engage the community in solving problems that deprive citizens of the social environment they require in order to lead healthy and productive lives. Community development is a traditional and valued social work role. If we look beyond the social environment to the natural environment, can we, as a profession, point to similar examples of the application of social justice principles to empower individuals and/or engage the community in solving problems related to the natural environment?

In its ethical statements, the social work profession has traditionally recognized the need for advocacy for a clean and healthy environment. According to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), social work by definition is based on understanding people's interaction with their environment and historically, as far back as the 19th and early 20th century, social workers campaigned for improvements in public health and the built environment. However, it may be argued that in practice over the years, social workers have increasingly overlooked the natural environment and focused solely on the social environment.

A new emphasis on environmental health and sustainability is being called for in the international social work community. The IFSW 2005 Policy Statement on Globalization and the

Environment encourages social workers to broaden their understanding of environment from social environment to include natural environment. It recognizes that the natural environment has a direct impact on people's potential to develop and that the earth's resources should be shared in a sustainable way.

Social work ethics, both provincially and nationally, state a professional obligation to promote a clean and healthy environment. The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers Code of Ethics states, "A social worker or social service worker shall advocate change in the best interest of the client, and for the overall benefit of society, the environment and the global community."

Nationally, the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Ethical Practice (2005), as a principle of the value to pursue social justice states social workers' commitment to advocate for a clean and healthy environment and to promote "environmental management in the interests of all people."

This edition of the *Bulletin* highlights the relevance of the environment to social work practice and several of the articles reflect the necessity for social work to truly work from a person-in-environment perspective, incorporating advocacy for the natural environment into practice.

Mishka Lysack notes social work's absence in the discussion on environment issues and explores ways that social workers can integrate social justice and environmental sustainability in practice.

Cindy Shrigley calls upon social work to commit to creating environmental change by describing her own practice and experience during the Samia asbestos tragedy. An article by Tina Shrigley recalling the tragedy in Walkerton, Ontario explores the devastating effects of improper management of environmental resources and the role of community-based research. (For this article see the Web edition of the Summer *Bulletin* at oasw.org/east.)

Some social workers are increasingly doing their part to create environmental change. For example, the recent *National Social Work Conference* hosted by the Ontario Association of Social Workers demonstrated its commitment to the environment by being powered with 100 per cent green electricity, minimizing the use of paper and choosing a hotel that supports energy conservation.

Social work education also seems to be recognizing the connection between social work and the natural environment. For example, at Carleton University, both the BSW and MSW programs offer a course on this topic by faculties who teach courses on Community Development and Organization. In addition, since 2007, a group of faculty and students have established the Carleton School of Social Work Environmental Caucus which has been very active and enjoys the support of the School.

In the Fall-Winter 2007 edition of the *Bulletin*, Marie-Eve Verret, a student in the social work program at Ottawa University, wrote about her field placement at Just Food/Alimentation Juste, an environmental organization that promotes buying food locally and grass-roots involvement in food security.

At the theoretical level, there is a recognition in our profession that a sustainable healthy environment is a right, and that a healthy environment must exist for individuals to live and to reach their potential. Yet it is clear that the social work profession has not yet embraced environmental issues as an essential element in social justice work, either at the educational or the practice level.

The brief exploration of the topic in this issue provides a compelling case for action on this universal concern by a social work professor, a social worker, and a Ph.D. student in Psychology. Comments by our members on their involvement regarding environmental issues, either as concerned citizens or as professionals, will be received with great interest.

Marg Nelson
Helen Saravanamuttoo

“NOW IS OUR LAST CHANCE TO GET THE FUTURE RIGHT”: SOCIAL WORK AND BUILDING ENVIRONMENTALLY DURABLE COMMUNITIES

by Mishka Lysack

Précis : *Le réchauffement planétaire et la détérioration du système écologique entraînent des conséquences ayant des impacts sérieux, notamment pour la santé, l'économie et la justice sociale. La pratique communautaire doit cibler à la fois la justice sociale et le développement durable. Diverses pistes sont proposées pour orienter l'action sociale dans ce sens.*

At present, social work is conspicuous by its absence from discussion of environmental issues and action in building ecologically durable communities. Given our history of challenging the structures and forces that undermine life or diminish the dignity of others, our silence regarding environmental justice in our journals and conferences is confusing. While social work has rightly challenged the notion of a *decontextualized person* divorced from society, we have fallen prey to the anthropocentric idea of a *decontextualized society*, supposedly detached from the biosphere of the Earth. Meanwhile, there is a growing need for practitioners with community-building skills: globally, the number of environmental refugees (25 million) now exceeds political and war refugees (23 million) for the first time in history (UN, 2003).

In *Social Work in a Sustainable World*, Nancy Mary (2008) maintains that authentic community development rests on integrating both social justice and environmental sustainability, insisting that social work is well positioned to make important contributions in this area. What would be the characteristics of such an approach to community development?

In *Deep Economy*, McKibben (2007) explores the features of bioregional local communities that embody ecological sustainability and social justice. Working in partnerships with community and environmental NGO's, social workers could:

- encourage the emergence of **strong, local and durable communities** oriented by relationships and economic interdependence rather than a culture of economic independence,
- centre attention on fostering the **ecologically possible and desirable** by encouraging steady-state qualitative economic **development** that protects the natural capital of the Earth's ecosystems and respects the carrying capacity and finite limits of the planet, instead of submitting to the imperative of endless quantitative economic **growth** without limits,
- highlight a **communitarian ethic of social and environmental care** rather than the self-centered individualism and compulsive consumerism and materialism,
- advocate the **de-commodification of the environmental commons of the Earth** rather than the private ownership of the environmental commons of air, water, earth, and life by corporations,
- work for **de-stratification of societies and economies** on both a local and global level, challenging the widening gap between the wealthy elites and the marginalized poor.
- be sustained by the **values of conservation, thrift, humility, and compassion for the other** that undergird a localized network of “deep economy” communities in contrast to the values of conspicuous consumption, waste, and disregard for both people and the environment that characterize our present global economy,
- be oriented by an **ecocentric ethic of the Earth community** rather than an anthropocentric set of values.

While the challenges are great, the opportunities for social work to make a difference are inspiring. Will we finally get it right?

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**AN OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
COMMUNITY CAPACITIES THROUGH
A BUSINESS TRAINING PROGRAM
FOR IMMIGRANTS AND ETHNIC
MINORITY BUSINESSES**

by Vilma Luna

Précis : *Le RDÉCO offre un programme de formation en planification s'adressant aux personnes immigrantes et visant à renforcer leurs aptitudes pour la création de petites entreprises. Le programme offre une série d'ateliers traitant entre autres de plan d'affaires, de lois canadiennes pertinentes et de gestion financière, ainsi que des possibilités de mentorat et de réseautage.*

Over the years, the Ottawa Community Economic Development Network¹ (OCEDN) has identified that the establishment of businesses is an important part of employment development and CED. This is particularly true for ethnic minority community members and, through social enterprises, for other groups facing marginalization from the mainstream labour market. However, new ethnic minority business entrepreneurs and social enterprises face particular challenges which other new businesses do not. Research from the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPC) indicated that many immigrants and ethnic minority community members seek to establish a business in response to marginalization from the labour force and because many have previous business experience. These entrepreneurs face many unique challenges including lack of familiarity with the way business is done in Canada, limited networks with the business community, and limited access to traditional sources of capital for a variety of reasons including not having a credit history in Canada.

In that context, for the third year, the OCEDN² is implementing the Ethnic Minority Business (EMB) program for entrepreneurs (supported by the City of Ottawa). The main objective is to build the

capacity of immigrant and ethnic minority community members who are attempting to improve the livelihoods of their families through the creation of small businesses.

"An important component of the program is the mentoring provided by existing business people, who share their expertise and practical advice on making businesses in Ottawa."

These potential entrepreneurs are supported to verify whether or not their business aspirations will have a good chance of improving their economic situation, and if so, to provide them with training, mentorship and networking opportunities to give them the best chance of business success. The EMB program is a workshop series and the participants are trained in five business expertise areas: business plan development, building a customer base and marketing, financial management and accounting, Canadian laws and finally one other workshop based on the needs of the specific participants.

The EMB program has received 90 applications (26% from French speaking and 74% from English speaking). An important component of the program is the mentoring provided by existing business people, who share their expertise and practical advice on making businesses in Ottawa. We have 16 mentors, but continue to solicit more. Many participants would benefit from greater access to mentors. The networking sessions (Entrepreneurship Café) are bilingual events to share their challenges and successes, learn from each other and improve their networking skills.

As well, the program includes a small related workshop series to increase the capacity of local voluntary sector organizations through business skill development to enhance the chances for success of revenue generating enterprises they establish (social enterprises).

The OCEDN approach does not promote business enterprises development as a substitute for adequate incomes, quality employment and adequate funding of support services for low income people. Business development has many risks, including a high failure rate for small businesses.

¹ SPC. Final research report on ethnic minority businesses in Ottawa. Okafor and Rahman, 2005.

² OCEDN. Capacity building for ethnic minority businesses and social enterprises project. 2007.

The goals of CED approaches to business development are to enhance the likelihood of success for individual CED related business enterprises, to address community needs not addressed by the mainstream market, and to address difficulties in distressed neighbourhoods³.

You are invited to visit our updated website at www.ced-dec-ott.net for more information about the OCEDN.

Vilma Luna is the Project Coordinator of the EMB Program. She is a passionate professional who has gained a global experience in executing projects in partnership with the community to strengthen local infrastructure with a global perspective.

SOCIAL WORK AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: A MISSED RESPONSIBILITY

by Cindy Shrigley

Precis : *Après avoir brossé un tableau succinct de son implication au sein d'activités de sensibilisation aux problèmes résultant d'exposition à des milieux toxiques, l'auteur en appelle à la nécessité d'intervention sociale liée à l'environnement. L'engagement du travail social par le biais du développement communautaire, de l'activisme et d'approches d'intervention avec des individus et des familles victimes de tragédies environnementales contribuera à inciter les communautés et les individus à militer en faveur des changements qui s'imposent pour assurer des milieux de vie et de travail plus écologiques.*

Over the past few years I have written two articles for the OASW – Western Branch Newsletter. In the Spring 2004 issue, I addressed my experience as a professional and a surviving family member of the Samia asbestos tragedy. Hundreds of men, including my father, have died from asbestos-related cancers as a result of occupational exposure (Brophy, 2007). I discussed my role in breaking the silence about

this ongoing tragedy in our community, and in assisting with community development with regard to activism, scientific inquiry, and social justice.

I discussed my involvement as a victim, and as a professional in the Walkerton E.coli disaster. At that time I questioned the lost role of activism and advocacy in social work. I challenged my colleagues to begin to question similarities in clients' health or occupational profiles that might lead them to wonder about occupational health or environmental exposures.

In the Winter 2008 issue, I wrote a follow-up to my first article⁴ addressing the growing concern about environmental-related health issues in Southwestern Ontario, the latest health issue being the sharp decline in the birth of male children on one of the native reserves in Samia, Ontario (Mackenzie, Lockridge and Keith, 2005). A research method called 'participatory action research' has been used extensively to empower communities, or groups involved, to identify clusters of illnesses and related physical and psychological symptoms (Keith and Brophy, 2004). Using this information, groups have worked with researchers to make the link between their concerns with scientific-based research.

This community development strategy has brought about tremendous social change in the Samia area. Awareness of our issues has spread worldwide. The process has empowered both individuals and groups to address such issues as a world asbestos ban, legislative changes, financial compensation, workplace and community health and safety reporting procedures. These and many other changes have been a result of the community development and activism process.

"I was told that our clinic in Sarnia was the only known occupational health clinic on the North American continent that had a social worker."

³ SPC. Moving Forward on CED in Ottawa. A Draft Discussion Paper. 2006. p. 5.

⁴ See Western Branch Newsletter, www.oasw.org

As a social worker I found many opportunities for involvement as the Sarnia asbestos disaster unfolded. Initially I was involved in making the public aware of the safety concerns. I brought together occupational health experts with local union leaders. I made the experts aware of the clusters of health concerns that I had noticed personally and professionally. I participated in a community steering group to bring an occupational health clinic to our community to address community-specific concerns. Once the clinic was established, I provided trauma-specific consultation as a Critical Incident Stress debriefer on the proper management of the disaster as it unfolded. I advocated with the Workplace Insurance Safety Board to channel funding to our community for psychological first aid. I provided individual and group trauma-specific counselling to victims and their families. I provided training to the occupational health clinic staff to increase their awareness of the psychological implications of trauma so they could recognize the need for support for their patients.

I was told that our clinic in Sarnia was the only known occupational health clinic on the North American continent that had a social worker. This leads me to challenge my professional colleagues to take off the blinders that we have worn as a profession with regard to environmental issues and their devastating impacts on our lives, our health, and our families. I invite those who work in this area to write about their experiences so we can continue to learn about ways we, as a profession, can assist with environmental change and social justice.

These disasters are not just about life and death, health and disease; they are about the impact that permeates ourselves, our families and our communities. It is these issues which should be championed by the social work profession because after all, is that not what our profession is about?

Cindy Shrigley is a social worker in private practice in Sarnia, Ontario. She specializes in the treatment of trauma and grief. Cindy has been involved in issues related to environmental and occupational health disasters for over 10 years.

LE DÉVELOPPEMENT COMMUNAUTAIRE DANS LES CENTRES DE SANTÉ ET DE RESSOURCES COMMUNAUTAIRES D'OTTAWA

par Armand L. Kayolo

Précis : Community development is an important component of the work being done in the 14 community resource centers in Ottawa, and it is rooted in the voluntary and autonomous actions taken by various groups of people working to better their community. Examples are given of such initiatives in the Overbrook Forbes community. Questions are raised concerning the possibility of maintaining the principles which are the essence of social development while at the same time participating in organization models imposed by the funders.

Dans les débuts du mouvement vers la communautarisation des services, les organismes communautaires reposaient sur l'action volontaire et autonome des groupes sociaux situés en dehors de l'État et de l'économie privée. Cependant, il y avait un dilemme du fait que le communautaire était devenu le concept intégrateur de la politique sociale: d'un côté l'État semblait offrir aux organismes communautaires la place qu'ils ont toujours cherchée au sein du système des services sociaux; de l'autre, ils étaient menacés par les risques d'appropriation, de sous-traitance, voire d'intégration au système institutionnel auquel ils s'opposaient, ou du moins, duquel ils voulaient se distancier.

« Le développement communautaire est un concept fondamental dans la planification et le développement à court et long terme; il renvoie à l'organisation de plusieurs pans de la vie sociale. »

Cette réalité est encore présente aujourd'hui, d'où la nécessité de tenir compte des aspects instrumental (planification par le haut) et expressif (initiation à la base) auxquels est lié le développement communautaire. Ce dernier est l'élément central de ce concept intégrateur au sein des centres de santé et de ressources communautaires à Ottawa. Ceux-ci se

regroupent dans une coalition de quatorze centres dont cinq sont à vocation francophone mais bilingues dans leur vision générale. Les agents de développement communautaire de ces centres sont aussi organisés en coalition, ce qui ne les empêche pas de travailler en étroite collaboration avec leurs collègues d'autres organismes communautaires ne faisant pas partie de la coalition.

Défis et modèles d'organisation

Le développement communautaire est un concept fondamental dans la planification et le développement à court et long terme; il renvoie à l'organisation de plusieurs pans de la vie sociale. C'est une philosophie qui mise sur la reconnaissance et la valorisation du potentiel des individus, des réseaux sociaux, des milieux et des communautés. L'agent (e) de développement communautaire peut se présenter sous diverses figures : c'est un modérateur, un coordonnateur, un formateur, un avocat-militant, un partisan, un négociateur ou tout simplement un agent de changement social; son action est basée sur des connaissances systématiques, des habiletés et des méthodes d'interventions et d'analyses appropriées. Au quotidien, l'agent (e) de développement communautaire fonctionne en suivant le processus suivant : *voir* ou explorer son milieu, *juger* ou planifier son travail d'organisation du milieu, *agir* ou mettre en œuvre des projets prioritaires et *évaluer* le travail dans le milieu (Doucet et Favreau, 1991).

Par ailleurs, l'agent (e) de développement communautaire doit établir un rapport égalitaire permettant d'*agir avec* au lieu d'*agir pour* le milieu. Pour ce faire, il y a des défis à surmonter tels que connaître le milieu, assurer une présence continue et soutenable, entretenir des liens de confiance avec le milieu, créer des occasions de collaboration et encourager les initiatives. On évoque aussi parfois des difficultés inhérentes au manque d'espace de socialisation à la communauté, à la précarité socio-économique et au financement.

Néanmoins, le développement communautaire s'appuie sur des approches communautaires qui utilisent le dialogue direct et constructif avec son milieu, l'*empowerment* des membres de la

communauté et le *capacity building* afin de surmonter les défis auxquels il fait face. Le club de marche, organisé par le centre de ressources communautaires Overbrook-Forbes au 540 de la rue Thomson à Ottawa, est un exemple réussi d'*empowerment* : en 2006, l'agent de développement communautaire a initié, sur demande des locataires de cet immeuble, un regroupement de 22 aînés et aînées qui se réunissaient chaque jeudi matin pour marcher ensemble pendant une heure, et ce, dans le cadre de la promotion de la santé. A la fin de chaque marche, les membres se retrouvent autour d'un café pour socialiser et échanger sur différentes questions relatives à leur bien-être commun et surtout à la sécurité dans l'immeuble. Après six mois, l'agent de développement communautaire a progressivement laissé les membres du groupe s'organiser par eux-mêmes. Aujourd'hui, ce groupe est totalement autonome. Les membres ont tellement d'influence dans leur entourage qu'ils ont été invités à la télévision communautaire *Rogers* pour parler de leur club et encourager les autres aînés et aînées à les imiter. Parlant du *capacity building*, la coalition des agents de développement communautaire, en collaboration avec la coordination de l'anti-pauvreté de la ville d'Ottawa, ont récemment organisé un forum intitulé *Repenser la pauvreté*. A l'aide de divers ateliers, les participants ont eu l'occasion d'apprendre différentes techniques pour lutter contre la pauvreté et ses effets immédiats. Environ 120 personnes de milieux diversifiés y ont participé. Ces deux exemples font référence à l'aspect expressif du développement communautaire car les activités sont initiées à partir de la base.

En outre, la coalition des agents et agentes de développement communautaire a adopté le modèle logique comme outil d'évaluation des activités de ses divers programmes. Avec ce modèle, il est, par exemple, possible de savoir, par le biais d'un questionnaire, si la réalisation d'un projet est davantage influencée par les besoins de la communauté ou plutôt centrée sur l'initiative professionnelle. Dans tous les cas, la réussite des actions en développement communautaire dépend largement de la direction politique de chaque centre. Ce dernier, à son tour, fonctionne en collaboration avec la politique socio-économique des ses bailleurs de fonds.

Environnement sociopolitique et enjeux actuels

Depuis plus de trois ans, la ville d'Ottawa pensait mettre en place une structure de développement communautaire unique et commune à tous les organismes communautaires de la ville. À la fin de l'hiver 2008, la ville a réuni tous les leaders du communautaire pour leur faire part de sa décision d'implanter le modèle « Aucune communauté n'est laissée de côté – ACLC » (*No Community Left Behind- NCLB*). Ce modèle est une initiative de développement social qui vise à empêcher le crime et à adresser des causes des déterminants sociaux de santé par une approche et une intégration de collaboration des services (www.nocommunityleftbehind.ca). La décision de la ville se justifierait par l'usage d'approches fragmentées dans le milieu communautaire, la multitude d'initiatives de résolution de problèmes et de demandes de financement, les ressources limitées et l'augmentation des indices de redevabilité.

Bien que la ville d'Ottawa espère instaurer une gouvernance à responsabilités partagées équitablement et une emphase unique centrée sur l'excellence du service basé sur le besoin de la population et l'engagement de l'employé, il est néanmoins vrai que cela suscite des questions-enjeux du genre : Sommes-nous en train d'assister au début de la fin du communautaire ? Comment deux quartiers géopolitiquement différents peuvent-ils être gérés avec le même modèle ? Quelle sera la prochaine surprise que nous réserve la ville ? Les organismes communautaires, ne sont-ils pas en train de perdre le peu d'autonomie qui leur restait ? Quel sera le rôle des agents de développement communautaire de la ville ?

Perspectives d'avenir et conclusion

Le risque d'une telle instrumentalisation ou bureaucratisation est la perte d'ancrage dans la communauté et la « colonisation du communautaire ». Les organismes communautaires ont une grande force par leur volonté de s'autogouverner mais faut-il qu'ils trouvent des moyens pour leur autosuffisance financière afin de prétendre se distancier de l'appareil étatique et ainsi redonner au développement communautaire et à la population

la possibilité de s'autodéfinir et de participer à l'élaboration des programmes qui concourent à leur devenir ?

Armand Kayolo a un diplôme de maîtrise en service social et il occupe le poste d'agent de développement communautaire au Centre de ressources communautaires Overbrook-Forbes.

NO COMMUNITY LEFT BEHIND: A VITAL COMPONENT OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

by Abid Ullah Jan

Precis: *Comme il en est pour l'individu, ce n'est pas facile pour une communauté de se tirer d'affaire quand elle s'est formée une mauvaise réputation pour crime commis et d'essayer de surmonter les sentiments de peur et d'isolement. Pour certaines communautés un tel état peut s'avérer un cauchemar. Le but de « No Community Left Behind » (NCLB) est de trouver des moyens de surmonter les obstacles pour faire en sorte qu'il y ait une véritable participation de la communauté – et ça c'est ce qui s'est passé dans le sud-est d'Ottawa.*

Like individuals, it's not easy for communities to get rid of the stigma of crime and pull themselves from the depth of fear and isolation. For some communities, this stigma becomes a nightmare. There is very little energy left to follow dreams when so much is spent fighting nightmares. Some communities in South East Ottawa have not only pulled themselves out of such quagmires, but have also provided the rest of the city with an opportunity to adopt a new approach to community development work.

No Community Left Behind (NCLB) was a response to overcome the hurdles to meaningful community participation in some at promise communities in South East Ottawa. The challenge was huge. There was a need to identify local circumstances that were hindering community involvement, give voice to isolated communities, acknowledge their diversity, develop place-based social mobilization

strategies, involve residents in neighbourhood levels planning process, and bring all service providers around a table to support local initiatives.

A neighbourhood-level strategy development process was put in place in the Banff Avenue community in 2005 as a pilot phase. Successful implementation in Banff led to the expansion of the initiative to Heatherington, Russell Heights and Confederation Court in 2006.

The NCLB approach recognized from the beginning that different neighbourhoods have different assets, needs and opportunities. Each community can follow the same strategy development process, but the tools used in the process could be different according to local circumstances. The common result, however, was that each participating neighbourhood now has a process in place for strategic actions vis-à-vis community development, community-partners engagement, exploring opportunities, and adopting new ways to build healthier, safer communities.

In short, the NCLB puts a multi-disciplinary process in place at the neighbourhood level in which the residents become the driving force behind the major decisions about their communities, and all the service providers have the opportunity to maximize the return on their investment by making issue specific interventions.

The experience of working on the NCLB approach in South East Ottawa shows that on the larger scale, it provides opportunities to service providers and various agencies to collaborate, reduce duplication, engage in partnerships, reevaluate funding priorities and minimize silos amongst services.

The NCLB approach opens windows to the communities and establishes communication channels with community development agencies, making their outreach work fruitful. Building bridges, establishing trust and exchanging information with the communities has never been so easy. Now collaboration with service providers, generating knowledge and skills and

increasing community capacity is a given. It also provides the opportunity for community development specialists to put the dynamics and interactions of communities at the grassroots with various stakeholders at the meso- and macro-levels into proper perspective.

In the bigger picture, NCLB becomes a vehicle for ensuring decentralization from the top (the macro-level) and community mobilization from the grassroots up (micro-level). Other agencies and organizations such as the Community Health and Resource Centres, at the meso-level become the facilitating organs for decentralizing the decision-making process to the neighbourhood level for improved delivery of service and increased interaction between the City and the people.

In the existing scheme of things, the meso-level remains like a mirage, where occasionally we see some development. However, what we see never turns into reality. Occasionally the stakeholders at the macro-level come in and prioritize some area for intervention, but the meso-level never becomes as functional as it has to be for inclusion of the people in the process of development.

Instead of saying that the government/City will only create entry points where frame conditions for expanding self-help and neighbourhood level plans are opened up and not restricted, the government seems to have somehow assumed an artificial role –like a socialistic system – to deliver to each person, and each civil society member has a right to be served by the government. No one, however, can explain how. Would the government do so in a frame condition? Or would they go directly to people and ask them about their needs and priorities?

Consequently, people have developed the feeling that the government should deliver anything they need. This is the worst kind of dependency syndrome. NCLB provides an opportunity for creating freedom of movement that can only come with real organization and institutionalizing participation at all the three levels in a society.

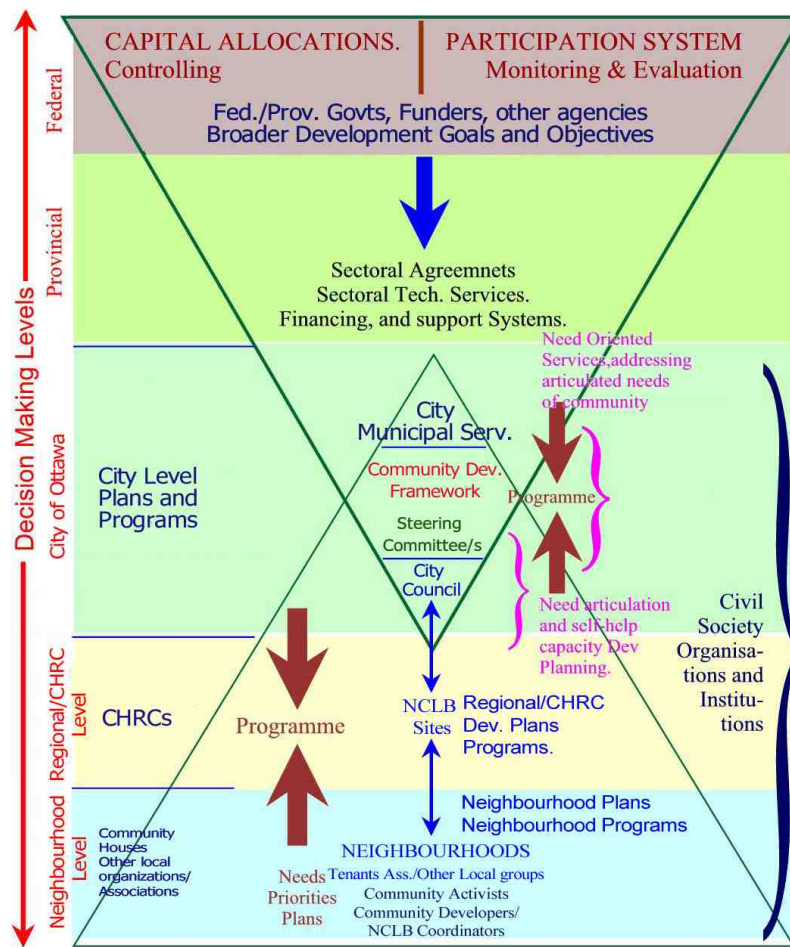


Figure 1 (above) shows how NCLB brings the micro and meso-level institutions into positive interaction. There was a need for catalytic agents to link grassroots to the macro-level so that their needs and priorities could be well-articulated for resource allocations and other possible support. NCLB provides that meso-level interface where people can easily reach and participate in the adrecaation and articulation of their needs.

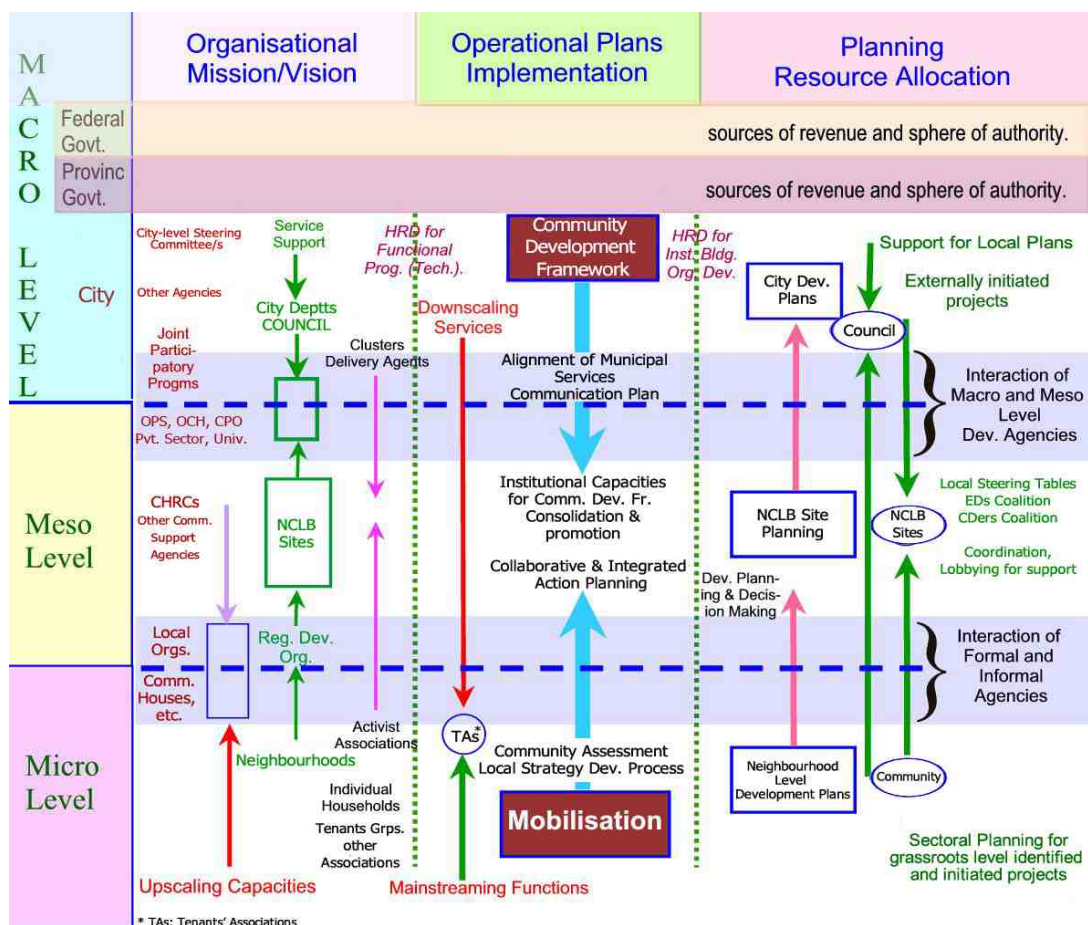


Figure 2 (above) shows functions of various institutions at various levels and how an NCLB site, like the South East Ottawa Community Health Centre at the moment, plays an effective role in mobilizing the communities and filling the gap between the macro and micro-levels.

Abid Ullah Jan is the Coordinator of the "No Community Left Behind" initiative at the South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre.

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

by Tina Shrigley

Précis : *Boire un simple verre d'eau n'est plus une activité que les résidents de Walkerton, Ontario tiennent pour acquise depuis la crise résultant de la contamination de leur système d'eau potable en 2003. Cette expérience a amené un groupe de citoyens à initier une étude communautaire participative sur les impacts physiques et psychologiques de la contamination à l'E-coli. Ce type de recherche a eu un effet de sensibilisation et de mobilisation très puissant pour la communauté. Cet article fait valoir l'importance de ce type de recherche pour activer le pouvoir d'agir et créer des réseaux de soutien au sein d'une communauté, ainsi que sa pertinence pour le travail social.*

During the Walkerton crisis, several community members stepped forward and acted as a voice of advocacy and support of Walkerton residents. They told their side of the story to the media, helped to hand out water bottles, and started the 'Concerned Walkerton Citizens' group. This group became a source of information and support for community members. Although many institutions and groups came to do research on the May 2000 Walkerton disaster, residents of Walkerton wanted their own study. Through the support of local unions, especially the local teachers' union, funding became available to do a community-based study of the physical and psychological impact of individuals affected by the E.coli contamination in 2003.

Community-based research is a grassroots approach in which the problem is defined, analyzed and ultimately solved by the

community. The process of community-based research can generate a greater awareness in the community, make members more aware of their resources, and facilitate self-reliant development. Involving the community in the research process facilitates a more authentic analysis of social reality within the community (Hall & Kidd, 1978). This form of research fits very well with social work, as the research process is empowerment-based and encourages interconnectedness within the community.

Five years ago I was asked by the *Concerned Walkerton Citizens'* committee to work with them to conduct research entitled, the "Walkerton Impact Research Study", or WIRS. Together we discussed how this study would be conducted, who would be involved and what would be done with the results. Community members were informed of the study through print and TV media, and by word of mouth. Close to three hundred individuals of all ages participated. A detailed health history was documented in one-on-one interviews where participants were asked to share how they felt their health changed after the May 2000 water contamination. The individual results were plotted on a 'body map', a visual representation of the health history. This allowed potential 'clusters' of physical and psychological health issues to be seen by the community, media, and other interested parties.

One of the most fascinating offshoots of this study was the sense of relief participants felt when they saw the body map. One of the most frequent comments was, "You mean I'm not the only one who has this problem?" The process yielded visual representations of clusters of ongoing health issues (see next page or the results of the WIRS body map).

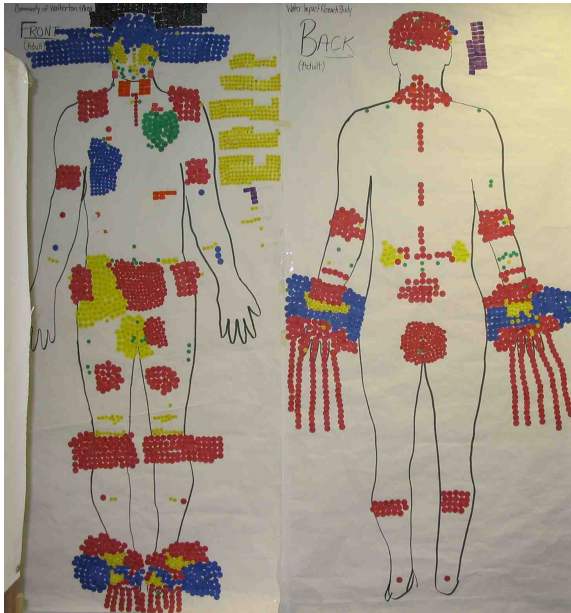


Figure 1: The results of the Walkerton Impact Research Study shows clusters of ongoing health issues reported by close to 300 participants.

The impact of doing this type of research is far-reaching. Community-based research is an incredibly empowering format to work together with groups and communities to literally map areas of distress in the body and the mind. Once the map is complete, further discussion can be held with participants to gain further insight into the issue.

In closing, I'd like to reiterate that research does not always have to be 'scientific'. It can be meaningful and empowering for both the community and the researcher. I extend an invitation to you to engage in your community through activism regarding environmental issues. Through acknowledging that our clients are impacted by their environment, a great relationship can be built upon which meaningful and relevant research can be conducted.

Tina Shrigley is a M.Ed. Counselling Psychology student at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. Her research interests include the traumatic impact of disasters on communities,

and the effect of traumatic stress on chronic pain and chronic illness.

CAN WE END HOMELESSNESS?

by Mary Martha Hale

Précis : En 1999, le « Toronto Disaster Relief Committee » qualifiait la problématique de l'itinérance de désastre national, déclaration ayant trouvé écho à la Ville d'Ottawa et auprès du gouvernement fédéral. Pourtant, depuis cette date, le problème prend de l'ampleur à Ottawa, où on a noté, entre 2004 et 2007, une augmentation de 2.9% du nombre de personnes ayant eu recours à l'hébergement d'urgence et une augmentation d'autant plus préoccupante de 13.3% du nombre d'enfants y ayant vécu. Malgré leurs discours décrivant le problème, les gouvernements consacrent peu de fonds au logement abordable, essentiel pour solutionner le problème de l'itinérance. Nous avons tous à nous impliquer pour exiger des politiques et du financement plus adéquats.

In 1999, Homelessness was declared a National Disaster by the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, followed by the City of Ottawa and the federal government. One would expect that such a declaration would mobilize hundreds of thousands of people in an effort to respond to the disaster. Many individuals, organizations, and all three orders of government have responded to homelessness, but the disaster has not been resolved or even lessened. In fact the numbers reflect an upward trend. In 2007, in Ottawa, 8,915 people stayed in a shelter, a 2.9% increase over 2004 when the Alliance to End Homelessness began tracking the data in our annual Report Card on Ending Homelessness. Even more worrisome is the increasing number of children who stay in shelters; 1,237 in 2007, up 13.3% over 2004. Where have we gone wrong?

In the early 1990's, the Canadian Health and Social Transfer replaced the Canada Assistance Plan. This permitted the provinces to use federal dollars transferred as they chose. They were no longer required to spend a specific amount on social programs. The federal government got out

of the business of funding permanent social housing, and the Mike Harris 'Common Sense Revolution' rolled out over Ontario. Other policies established by the Harris government had a significant impact on our ability to respond to the crisis in homelessness: rent controls were removed and welfare rates were slashed; the closure of psychiatric hospitals experienced a second wave; and significant cuts to health care were imposed.

"Everything we have learned has pointed to the provision of permanent, appropriate housing as the primary solution to homelessness."

In 1995, shelter providers, health and social service agencies, representatives of funding sources and other stakeholders formed the Alliance to End Homelessness; a coalition whose mission and commitment is to work collaboratively to end homelessness. Our vision is of an inclusive community that takes responsibility for ensuring every resident has an appropriate home.

For the past 13 years member agencies of the Alliance have been working together to provide the basic needs to individuals who are experiencing homelessness, raising awareness about the causes and different faces of homelessness within the broader community; supporting and doing research on the causes, barriers, and successful strategies out of homelessness.

Everything we have learned has pointed to the provision of permanent, appropriate housing as the primary solution to homelessness.

Canada helped to draft the 1948 *UN Declaration of Human Rights* that includes a right to access to housing. (Article 25: *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for . . . housing. . .*) In 1976, Canada ratified the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* that included the same right to housing. Canada has not recognized these rights in legislation or in the Charter of Rights.

In October 2007, Miloon Kothari, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, provided a preliminary report on Canada's response to homelessness. He noted the discrepancy between the principles of access to housing that Canada espouses and the lack of budgetary commitment from all levels of government. He also noted that Canada is unique in dealing with homelessness because it had been successful in the past in housing Canadians through a national housing program. In other words, "We know what to do since we've done it before!"

Mr. Kothari ended by urging Canada and the provinces and territories to meet their commitments by investing in housing for the many women, Aboriginal people, elders, youth, members of racialized communities, immigrants and others who are particularly vulnerable to poverty and homelessness.

Ottawa as a City and as a community has worked diligently to intervene at every point on the homelessness to being housed continuum. For more information on housing solutions in Ottawa see the special report, "Housing Works" on page 5 of our fourth Report Card on Ending Homelessness at the link below:

http://www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca/documents/2007ReportCardonEndingHomelessnessinOttawa_EN.pdf

How can we end homelessness? Governments need to commit to policies that will end homelessness. Governments need to act on their own and work together to End Homelessness. You can help make that happen by welcoming all types of housing in your neighbourhood, contacting your elected officials to urge them to support a national housing strategy by backing up their words with dollars, and getting involved in your community to raise awareness about the homelessness crisis we are all facing and the very real ways that solutions can occur.

Mary-Martha Hale is the Director, Anglican Social Services – Centre 454. She is also the Past Chair of the Alliance to End Homelessness.

Editor's Note:

*In the Fall-Winter 2007 edition of the **Bulletin**, Marie-Eve Verret, a student in the social work program at Ottawa University, wrote about her field placement at Just Food/ Alimentation Juste, an environmental organization that promotes buying food locally and grass-roots involvement in food security.*

It is being reprinted here as it is particularly relevant to the theme of our Summer issue.

LE RÔLE DU TRAVAIL SOCIAL DANS LA PROMOTION ET LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DE L'AGRICULTURE URBAINE

par Marie-Eve Verret

Précis : *Food security is an issue which concerns social workers, yet there seems to be a dearth of research and of expressed interest in social work's potential contributions in this area. The following article relates how a field placement with the organization, Just Food/Alimentation Juste was instrumental in opening the door to reflections concerning the application of knowledge and skills acquired through community development models to various interventions in the area of food security. These points are highlighted with the example of community gardens, which offer a lot of potential for empowering participants, developing their social capital, and reinforcing community ties while contributing to food security.*

Alimentation Juste est un organisme communautaire à but non-lucratif situé à Ottawa, qui travaille à développer un système d'alimentation sain et équitable. Au cours du stage que j'y ai effectué, mon mandat était de travailler principalement sur les thèmes de l'agriculture urbaine (AU) et de la sécurité alimentaire des nouveaux arrivants. Cette expérience m'a permis de me familiariser davantage avec les différentes possibilités qu'offre l'AU dans le domaine du développement communautaire et de la sécurité alimentaire et de réfléchir au rôle important que peut jouer notre

profession dans sa promotion et son développement.

Par agriculture urbaine, j'entends : « les pratiques agricoles dans les villes et autour des villes qui utilisent des ressources (terre, eau, énergie, main-d'œuvre) pouvant également servir à d'autres usages, pour satisfaire les besoins de la population urbaine» (FAO 1999). Pratiquée depuis des siècles à travers le monde, l'AU prend plusieurs formes. Que ce soit les jardins dans la cour arrière d'une maison, le jardinage sur les balcons ou les jardins communautaires ou collectifs, l'AU est largement présente à Ottawa, mais ce sont principalement des fleurs qui y sont cultivées.

Pour ce qui est de la sécurité alimentaire, elle est atteinte lorsque « tous les humains, à tout moment, ont un accès physique et économique à une nourriture saine et nutritive, en quantité suffisante, permettant de répondre à leurs besoins énergétiques et à leurs préférences alimentaires afin de pouvoir mener une vie saine et active » (Alimentation juste, 2007). Je crois qu'il est raisonnable de dire que la sécurité alimentaire est un idéal à atteindre et qu'il faut surtout tenter de s'en approcher autant que possible.

Les banques alimentaires constituent le moyen le plus répandu pour tenter de pallier au problème de la faim à Ottawa. Avec leurs contraintes et leurs limites (aliments à faible teneur en vitamines et minéraux, peu de produits frais, de diversité et de choix, quantités insuffisantes, etc.), les banques alimentaires partout au Canada ne devraient avoir qu'un rôle de dépannage et idéalement, cesser d'être utilisées pour de longues périodes. Il est donc important de se pencher sur une réponse plus définitive en remontant vers la source du problème. J'ai observé au cours de mon stage que l'AU s'avère être une solution concrète et réaliste afin de développer un système d'alimentation plus juste et durable à Ottawa.

Cela dit, comment mettre en application ce potentiel des jardins communautaires à atteindre une plus grande sécurité alimentaire? Je crois que le développement communautaire est l'approche appropriée pour cette tâche. C'est ainsi que le travail social entre dans l'équation.

« Les jardins communautaires ont une capacité de construire du capital social, de développer un sentiment d'appartenance, en plus de pouvoir développer la confiance en soi et de briser l'isolement, améliorant ainsi la santé de façon générale et holistique. »

Tout d'abord, nous pouvons faire appel aux rôles d'éducation et de promotion que peuvent jouer les travailleurs sociaux. Ensuite, on peut mettre en pratique, autour de l'AU, les connaissances qu'ont plusieurs travailleurs sociaux au sujet de l'animation de groupe et de l'intervention, individuelle et de groupe. L'agriculture urbaine, en plus d'offrir la possibilité, à long terme, de pallier à l'insécurité alimentaire, est aussi un outil d'intervention et une thérapie en soi, présentant d'autres possibilités pouvant être développées par le travail social.

L'AU peut offrir certaines réponses à plusieurs problématiques sociales, c'est pourquoi je pense que tous les travailleurs sociaux devraient être sensibilisés à ses avantages et ses possibilités. Sous la forme de jardins communautaires, l'AU s'inscrit dans une approche de développement communautaire, c'est-à-dire, « un processus par lequel les individus, les familles et les communautés acquièrent le pouvoir, les connaissances et les ressources pour prendre des décisions et poser des gestes concrets influençant leur bien-être ». (traduction libre, Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team 1999).

Les jardins communautaires ont une capacité de construire du capital social, de développer un sentiment d'appartenance, en plus de pouvoir développer la confiance en soi et de briser l'isolement, améliorant ainsi la santé de façon générale et holistique. Une recherche effectuée sur la relation entre le développement communautaire et la santé explique que l'appartenance à une communauté peut avoir un apport significatif sur la santé des individus. Pour

ces chercheurs, les concepts de « santé positive (bien-être), partage du pouvoir et participation significative » sont étroitement reliés au développement communautaire (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team 1999 : 20). De plus, tel que présentée par la théorie d'éducation populaire de Paulo Freire, nous pourrions avancer qu'une des forces du développement communautaire dans le domaine de l'AU, est d'engager les émotions de la personne qui prend part au jardinage, favorisant l'apprentissage et la réflexion (Freire 1973). Vu ainsi, le jardinage en communauté apparaît comme un complément idéal au travail que font plusieurs travailleurs sociaux quotidiennement.

Par ailleurs, quoique peu de recherches aient été faites à ce jour sur la question du recours à l'AU comme outil d'intervention individuelle, les nombreux impacts positifs du jardinage sur des populations variées laissent penser que le potentiel d'intervention des jardins communautaires devrait être davantage exploité (Boulianne 1998, Ayalon 2006, Dow 2006). Ainsi, à travers cette approche, les travailleurs sociaux pourraient faciliter l'empowerment individuel en plus de faciliter l'appropriation d'un certain pouvoir des gens sur leur alimentation, au lieu de se limiter au rôle passif que leur impose le système actuel.

En tant que future travailleuse sociale, j'ai senti pendant mon stage que je pouvais prendre la parole au sujet de l'AU et des jardins communautaires. Ils ont un fort potentiel de changement social et ils pourraient offrir des pistes pour la mise en place d'un système économique et social plus juste, sain et équitable. Personnellement, j'aimerais que ma profession prenne part à ce changement et soit plus active dans la réflexion et l'action autour de l'agriculture urbaine.

Marie-Eve Verret est une étudiante inscrite dans la 2^e année du programme de maîtrise en service social à l'Université d'Ottawa.



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- Do you have a comment about an item or article that appeared in the *Bulletin*?

Members are invited to send their *Letters to the Editor* on subjects of interest to social work and the social work profession.

You can reach us by email at reacheb@magma.ca or by regular mail at the address above. Your comments are always welcome.


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"Social Work and Families"

You are invited to submit your articles and ideas for the **Fall 2008** issue of the *Bulletin*.

Deadline: October 17, 2008
