Message from Erin Careless

It is with great pleasure that I submit the
front page write-up for this edition of
Serendipity. As a PhD Candidate in the Inter-
University Doctoral program in Educational
Studies, my working relationship with St. FX
began when I acted as facilitator for the
Learning to Love Research Moodle
workshop, exactly one year ago. I like to
think of this opportunity as serendipitous,
because a couple of months later I was
asked to join the Adult Education
department as a contract faculty member!
It has been, and continues to be, an
incredible experience to work with the
supportive, prolific, and creative women in
this department. Dr. Leona English, Dr.
Carole Roy, Dr. Maureen Coady, and Dr.
Paula Cameron are inspirations to me as a
woman, an academic, and an educator.
Academe can be a tough, competitive
sphere, but my colleagues here at St. FX,
and the ever-patient Angela, have shown
me the collaborative and positive ways that
people can work together.

My reading list right now is fairly diverse! I
am teaching a seminar course at Mount
Saint Vincent University this term, and for
that we are reading Stephen Brookfield’s
Liberating Adult Learning and Teaching,
which is a comprehensive overview of
historical and contemporary interpretations
of critical theory as based in the tenets of
Marxism. We are also using Sharan
Merriam’s (2009) text, Qualitative

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Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation, which is used in the M.Ad. Ed. here at St. FX! My own research looks at the ways in which feminism and feminist values are learned through social media applications, so I am enjoying the foundational feminist text by Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, which was originally published in 1949, and a much more contemporary text by researcher danah boyd called It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens, published in 2014. One of my favorite aspects of working in this field is the reading, and I am often perusing my colleagues’ bookshelves for inspiration.

Another significant part of academic work is presenting your ideas to others. We have a national organization called the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE), which serves as a network for faculty, researchers, students, and practitioners. Each year CASAE holds a national conference in a major city in Canada, where members get together to present, learn, network, and discuss the current issues and debates in the field of adult education. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to make connections with other students and faculty around the country, and to get valued feedback on their work. Depending on your comfort level and the stage of your research project, you can present a poster, engage in a small roundtable discussion with others, or present a paper to a small audience. I have been attending the yearly CASAE conferences since 2010, and have been involved in organizing the poster presentation event, the student pre-conference day, and in reviewing conference submissions. This year, CASAE will hold its conference at the Universite de Montreal, in Montreal, Quebec from June 9-11 and I cannot suggest strongly enough that you get involved! And of course, while there is plenty of academic activity going on, there is always time to be social at the receptions and banquet dinner, and even during coffee breaks.

So, in closing this piece, I look forward to the year ahead, to have the opportunity to work at this wonderful institution, to continue being part of the student journeys here at St.FX... it is truly serendipitous.

~~ Erin

Faculty Activities...

Leona English is in her final year as Chair of the Research Ethics Board (REB) for the University. She reports that she enjoys this Board as it provides a great opportunity to see the variety of research that is happening on campus and especially within the Faculty of Education. Our department has the greatest number of REB applications yearly since all M.Ad.Ed. students complete a major research project. In 2013-2014, 21/35 graduate student applications came from our department. All in all, the REB reviews about 130 applications a year (faculty, graduates and undergraduate students) - it is interesting to see the major role that adult education plays in creating new knowledge on campus.

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Leona English
Aside from on-going advising and administrative responsibilities, Carole Roy had an article published in the Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education last spring and is working on a few writing projects now. She was involved with the Antigonish International Film Festival www.antigonishfilmfest.org in the fall which showed 28 documentaries and had an audience of almost 1500 over the 1 1/2 days. As in past years, Carole and one of her colleagues showed documentaries at the Nova Federal Prison for Women twice this fall. The women really enjoyed Trash Dance, a documentary about a choreographer in Austin, Texas, who collaborated with the people working on garbage trucks and various cleaning tasks for the city of Austin and choreographed "trash dance" using their trucks and tools. This was performed in front of a large audience. As we witness the hard work and the complexity of their tasks, we also learned about many dimensions of the workers' personalities revealed through their personal lives: devoted single father; creative dancer; skilled musician; great chef who offers hospitality to many; and a very strong woman who trains in body building, to name a few. In the discussion following the film women talked about the importance to keep in mind that we all have multi-dimensional identities. Many commented on the pride the workers took in their work as well as the pride of their families at the performance. Now with spring on the horizon, preparations are starting for the Foundations Institute so we can welcome a new group of adult educators into our program.

Since the last issue of Serendipity, Paula Cameron has enjoyed getting to know new students while Maureen is on sabbatical. She coordinated a successful webinar with StFX president Kent MacDonald leading—thanks to those of you who participated! She is currently writing a conference paper and journal articles on grassroots publishing and social movement learning, and emotion work within transformative learning. Paula is working on two research projects examining community schools in PEI and arts-based research for social justice. Her resolutions for 2015 are: more writing, and regular hikes in the woods near home, a home that she and her husband recently purchased. They are first time home owners and we congratulate them. Sending the best to you in this brand new year!

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Serendipity

Long ago, a group of mariners were exploring the Indian Ocean. Unexpectedly, they came across a beautiful island. They named it “Serendip” in their language.

This island has come to be known as Sri Lanka. All who have seen it agree that it is indeed a most beautiful island. In the English language, the word “Serendipity” has come to mean any unexpected occurrence – or unexpected learning.

Story shared by the late Dr. John Dobson.
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FALL 2014 GRADUATES


KELLY, Tina.  Creating a sea-change for women working and studying in SETT in Canada: A multiple case study of policies and practices in three, women-only SETT training programs. Winner of the M.A.Gillen Award. Advisor: L.English.


MCNEIL, Catherine.  Examining the learning needs of rehabilitation professionals considering community development as a practice model: A case study. Advisor: C.Roy.


Congratulations to Samantha Letourneau on receiving the Marie A. Gillen Award. Samantha shares her story here:

I am honored to be this year’s recipient of the Marie A. Gillen Award. I have worked in the field of adult education as a facilitator for over ten years and have been a counsellor for women who have encountered abuse for the last five years. These roles have provided me with the skills and insights to work with and support women who are marginalized in society. The majority of the work has been in provincially government-funded programs.

Rarely in these programs are the needs of the learners addressed or significant time allotted to work with women overcoming abuse. They are based on quantitative results set by the mandate of government ministries with little attention given to the qualitative outcomes that may take longer to fairly evaluate.

With staggering Canadian statistics reporting that half of all women have been physically or sexually assaulted at least once since the age of 16, (http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence), research focusing on women learners affected by abuse is extremely important.

Violence shapes a person. It can make it hard to trust oneself, to feel safe and this can make it difficult to learn. The impact of abuse on women’s ability to learn is still an area that requires further investigation. Although a handful of adult education researchers have examined the issue (hooks, 1984; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Horsman, 1998; Hayes & Flannery, 2000; Tisdell, 2000; Twiss, 2003; Lafontant-Beaubouef, 2005; Flood, & Pease, 2009), there is still little material available that provides concrete principles on creating a safe learning environment from the learners’ perspective and little examining how literacy and the arts together, can be a tool in healing women from their abuse. This is what I will be studying in my research titled *Defining safety for women learners affected by abuse: Case study exploring healing through literacy and the arts.*

Violence against women can be seen as physical, emotional and/or sexual. Regardless of the type of abuse endured by a woman, it leaves her "stuck" in the trauma of abuse unable to learn (Horsman, 1998). Horsman’s (2006) insights on the effects of violence on women's literacy demonstrates the need to approach literacy classes with sensitivity and consider the extent to which so many people, especially women, are affected by violence.

I believe there is a need to define what a safe learning environment is through the eyes of women in order to address the abuse so they can take the risk to learn. I am also curious whether the arts have the ability to invite women into learning, to help create safety and to encourage women to be aware of their emotions and how these emotions can affect cognitive abilities. Literacy, learning and self-expression have a strong role to play in the lives of women. It may be what moves women from being marginalized to being mobilized.

I am thankful for the Marie A. Gillen Award for placing focus on the development of women in Canada and in supporting research on women and learning.
References


Thank you Samantha!

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Congratulations to Fernando Azpiroz, SJ from Macau SAR. China for receiving the John Dobson Award. Here he shares his story:

I would like to thank the Awards Committee of the Department of Adult Education and Dr. John Dobson’s family for considering my recently submitted AE 520 research report entitled “An Inquiry on Collective Knowledge: A participatory action inquiry of a Chinese faith-based network of social service communities” worthy to receive the 2014 John Dobson Award.
Hammon (1998) wrote that “an organization is a mystery to be embraced” (p. 24). Still, contrary to our expectations, evidence shows that non-profit service organizations are not necessarily natural learners (Hailey & James, 2002), being many times unable to discover and embrace the mystery they are. This can only happen when such organizations are provided with useful methods and structures to generate the space and time needed for personal encounters, needed to allow people to learn at the personal, community and organizational levels. My research project describes and analyzes a pilot experience of building collective knowledge from personal experiences in Casa Ricci Social Services (CRSS).

CRSS is a faith-based solidarity and social service communities’ network, whose main mission is to serve the poor and marginalized people in China. Throughout this research, I accompanied a group of 10 members with different roles and responsibilities in this network in a participatory learning process which lasted around 4 months. The process consisted of a series of cooperative inquiry (CI) sessions, focused on group members' narratives based on their experiences related to three topics central to the network mission, namely: their experiences of building solidarity, learning, and cooperating with others. The research shows that a “focus-group” oriented cooperative inquiry, coupled with a Most Significant Change (MSC) technique (Davies & Dart, 2005) provides a fast and effective start-up organizational learning method and structure for horizontal service organizations with rich individual members’ service experience, but weak shared collective knowledge.

I believe the proposed inquiry underscores some of the values that, I understand, the John Dobson’s award wishes to promote. It does so in terms of its field of research, the ultimate beneficiaries of its findings, and the methodology it used. First, it inserts itself in a field of study that is highly important for development work: the exploration of some synergies between adult education and organizational learning in the context of service organizations. Second, it explores the use of learning tools and structures that could be used by other members of the network and by other similar organizations as well. These learning tools will allow them to deepen their critical understanding of their service experience in terms of ‘what they are doing’, ‘how they are doing it’, and ‘why they are doing it’. It will also help these members integrate their mission (e.g. of building communion and solidarity) with their personal faith and living values. Third, the research explored the use of a hybrid methodology which combines cooperative inquiry, focus questions and the MSC technique. The methodology enabled deeper congruence between the experiential, presentational, propositional and practical forms of knowing, “refining the way they elevate and consummate each other, and deepening the complementary way they are grounded in each other” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 283). It challenged the participants, while being at the same time culturally sensible and adapted to their Chinese context. It allowed members with different gender, cultural and educational background to work and learn together in a rather joyful and effective way. It is our hope that this learning will have an impact on the people who form the CRSS network (100 members, 50 communities, 5000 beneficiaries), as it has had on me and the participants of this inquiry.

Thank you Fernando!
FROM & ABOUT YOU...

Congratulations to Matt Taylor, July 2010, who is now serving as the Academic Chair for the School of Access with the NSCC, Truro Campus. His portfolio includes the Adult Learning Program, Academic and Career Connections, and leading a significant portion of online learning. Matt is very excited about this position and says it is closely aligned with his M.Ad.Ed. studies.

Congratulations to Lynn Charlebois, July 2010, who was awarded the 2014 Dr. Alan Middleton Workplace Literacy and Learning Award. Lynn was presented with the award during ABC Life Literacy Night in Toronto in September. For more information on the ABC Life Literacy Canada, their website is http://abclifeliteracy.ca/dr-alan-middleton-workplace-literacy-and-learning-award.

Congratulations to Margaret Dumkee, Fall ’09 Grad, who has been appointed the Dean of Applied Science and Management at the Yukon College in Whitehorse. Maggie says she “would not have been considered or prepared for this position if not for her M.Ad.Ed. degree”.

Congratulations to Peter Wolf, Spring ’07 Grad, who was selected by Queen’s University as its inaugural associate vice-provost, teaching and learning. In this role, Dr. Wolf oversees the Centre for Teaching and Learning, working closely with the vice-provost, teaching and learning, to implement the institution’s teaching and learning action plan. Peter’s appointment took place on October 1st.

Speaking of Dr. John Dobson…his son, John Dobson Jr. was recently awarded his Ph.D. from the University of Manchester, UK in Development Informatics (the use of information systems to further development). John’s research was titled The role of institutions in adoption and non-adoption of information Systems (IS) innovations. His research explored the role that norms and cultural-cognition play on the adoption behaviour of IS innovations in Indigenous communities in Mexico. John received the highest honor they give out. It took a lot of hard work and determination for five years. “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree”. Congratulations John and thank you for your continued support of our program here at StFX.
To access to your T2202A Income Tax forms online, follow these steps:

Go to www.stfx.ca
On the top right, click in to MYSTFX
Scroll down to the middle of the page & Click in to BANNER

At this point you will log in – ID# & Pin #
If you’ve forgotten your pin, you put in your Student ID# & click “Forgot Pin”; there’s a question & answer that you made up & are not supposed to forget. If you answer the question correctly, you will be able to reset your pin. It will have to be a 6-digit number.

Click into REGISTRATION. Look at the bottom left & you will see Canadian Tax Form (T2202A Tax Receipt) You can print off any year as many times as you like – Revenue Canada accepts duplicates. The university does not mail these forms out anymore. They will be available after the end of February.

Please note: Sometimes when you try to do this printing at work, you may not be able to log in as employers often block unfamiliar incoming sites. If you have any problems please contact our Technology Support Centre – (902) 867-2356 or tsg@stfx.ca.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING STUDENT ACCOUNTS

St. Francis Xavier University has discontinued the mailing of paper statements effective December 1, 2012. This is one of several initiatives the University has implemented to cut costs. This will eliminate the costs associated with printing and mailing statements while at the same time help the environment.

Notification will be sent to your St. Francis Xavier University e-mail account on a monthly basis. The message will include your balance and other important information such as payment deadline dates. At any time, details of your student account can be viewed by visiting your mesAmis account online and selecting Lookup Student Account Information.

University policy recognizes that the financial account belongs to the student. Therefore, if your student account is being paid by someone other than yourself, it is your responsibility to ensure that the appropriate person is made aware of the contents of this message.

For inquiries concerning this new process please contact either of the following:

Sonya MacDonald  
slmadon@stfx.ca  
(902) 867-2123

OR  

Deborah Nemeth  
dnemeth@stfx.ca  
(902) 867-3738
~~IMPORTANT DATES~~

FOUNDATIONS INSTITUTES

April 12-30, 2015
July 5-23, 2015
{2 running simultaneously in July}

See list of annual important dates on our webpage:
http://sites.stfx.ca/adult_education_graduate_studies/

34th Annual
CASAE/ACEEA Conference

Université de Montréal
Montréal, PQ

June 9-11, 2015
www.casae-aceea.ca

For more information
contact:
Jude.walker@ubc.ca

Serendipity is designed and produced by Angela Stewart. The next issue will be in the Spring. Contributions to the newsletter are always welcomed, Please send to Angela at aesecret@stfx.ca or fax to 902-867-3765. Thank you.