



# School of Social Work Newsletter

University of Victoria

## Message from our Director—Pam Miller

Congratulations to the June graduates and to the students who have been successful in their applications to our School for Spring and Fall 2009. To those who have graduated we look forward to keeping in touch with you as you move along in your careers. To those who have just joined us, we look forward to you working with us. You have joined a profession that is diverse in its membership and in its range of work with social justice as a core commitment.

The School reflects this diversity with graduates, students, faculty and sessionals involved in a broad range of practice areas with diverse populations. For example, Jeannine Carriere and Cathy Richardson this coming fall are beginning a capacity building project with the Metis Community Services of Victoria. Barb Whittington participated in the development of a 2009 Legal Guide for Grandparents who are raising grandchildren to help them obtain important resources and rights. Jackie Green is finishing her term as Project Coordinator for the Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network. She is organizing an October 7-8 Conference for the Network: Gathering and Sharing Knowledge. Mehmoona Mossa-Mitha is co-project coordinator for our EU-Canada project which will bring students from Denmark and England to campus and practicum sites in the Fall and a group of our students will in turn be in those countries to complete practicum sites in selected sites. Yvonne Haist presented at the International Eco Conference, organized by two social work educators. I hope that snap shot of the work of our School gives you an idea of how our work reflects the rich diversity that social work encompasses.

As you will see from reading this newsletter, the School also continues to be a vital and important participant in the many communities we are connected with. On July 8 we had an open house at the York Hotel, 707 Johnson Street, Victoria BC for staff and faculty to show off the classroom and office we are leasing from Cool Aid which has its resource and employment program in the front of the building. We are looking forward to the Fall when we will start building our presence in the Hotel with the goal of being a partner with the non-profit organizations that are working in the downtown area. Dora Leigh Bjornson is taking on the coordinator role for scheduling the activities we will host in the space. Some of those activities will include: practicum seminars; class sessions; professional development opportunities for staff in non-profit agencies; and research on homelessness, housing solutions and related topics. We will share more news about our York Hotel work as it develops.

Thanks to Margy Gamble for her leadership in putting our e-newsletter together and I hope you have time for a holiday this summer.



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## Convocation June 2009

Congratulations! Eighty students graduated June 15 (two new MSW's and seventy-eight new BSW's). We had a great pre-graduation ceremony reception for graduates, their families and friends at the University Club. The evening ceremony for indigenous students (including our fifteen social work indigenous graduates) was organized by the Office of Indigenous Affairs and took place at the Songhees Longhouse. It was a great day for all of us and we wish the very best to our new alumni with the hope that we can be of continuing support to them in their careers.

Photos by UVic Photo Services



BSW Graduates, Faculty and Staff



To view Convocation photos by Prof. David Turner, you're invited to:

[www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=285177&id=659995611&l=86a4fbd012](http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=285177&id=659995611&l=86a4fbd012)

Indigenous BSW Graduates and Faculty

## Masters in Social Work—Indigenous Specialization

The School of Social Work welcomed their first cohort into their Master of Social Work in the Indigenous Specialization this summer. Students within the Indigenous Specialization traveled from Central Vancouver Island, Alberta and as far away as Five Islands, Nova Scotia to meet and learn together. This group of students will spend the remainder of the year expanding on their knowledge and understanding of themselves and their roles as practitioners in their home communities.





# Reflections from a Working Distance Student—Ashley Horton

A year after being accepted into UVic’s online BSW program, I have the opportunity to reflect on how it has contributed to my professional and personal life. Like many of my peers taking this BSW program, I wear many hats at the same time: I am a student, employee, volunteer, friend, partner, and family member. It is comforting to know that other students surround me, who have the same commitments, struggles, and enthusiasm, from all over Canada.

The appeal of distance courses was, for me, the ability to continue to work full time - the bills weren’t going to pay themselves! I enjoyed the thrill of working in the field, but had the desire to have it supplemented with readings and courses that could help make sense of what I saw. There were also other appealing prospects: work around my own hours (since there weren’t any 10pm courses!); have the “comfort” of my own home, and have the opportunity to learn with students from across Canada, with their vast experiences challenging my own thoughts and practices.

Sure, there are limitations to distance courses, such as the lack of connection that comes from staring at a computer screen instead of into someone’s eyes. Like many things in life, though, I think that work and education can be a great balance. There is no substitution for the combination of work – hands on practice – and school, and I’m having fun learning concurrently from both avenues.



## Grad Profile of Ann Rose Kerkovius

by Christine McLaren featured in ‘The Ring’

Ann Rose Kerkovius, an Inuk from the Copper Inuit Nation, was born in an igloo in Kugluktuk, Nunavut—formerly Coppermine, NWT.

As a young child, she lived a nomadic life with her family, traveling by dog sled. But at age 6, she was enrolled in a residential school, where she lost her language and a way of life. The experience compelled her to pursue her dream of working with her people and reclaiming her language and her culture. She dispelled the myth that pervaded her early school years that “she would never amount to much,” and is receiving her Master’s of Social Work at Spring Convocation.

Kerkovius waited until her children had left home to pursue their educational goals before beginning her journey towards higher education. “I never gave up on getting an education and I believe we are never too old to go back to school,” says Kerkovius of her educational pursuits.

She completed her bachelor of social work at UVic and returned to the campus to pursue her masters. Upon acceptance as a graduate student, she was honored to learn that, based on her marks, she had been chosen to receive a financial fellowship. “Here, the beauty that surrounded me, the knowledge I obtained and the deeper understanding of myself that I gained gave me the strength to return to the North to be with my people,” she says. She is currently working as a community social worker in her home town of Kugluktuk.

While working on her masters, Kerkovius contributed important Aboriginal research to the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren project and she produced a moving thesis entitled “Snow Drifters” about the homeless men in Rankin Inlet.

“My connection with Indigenous people at UVic gave me comfort and a sense of belonging,” says Kerkovius. She says she will always remember the words of a Coast Salish elder who said, “We have the spirit in us and we use it with each other when we meet different nations”.

Her future plans include management pursuits, continuing to use her language with her people and in her community work and—she will never rule out the possibility of taking more courses.



## New Program: MSW Non-BSW Entry

Beginning fall 2009, we will be accepting applications for our non-BSW entry into our MSW program for a fall, 2010 start-up date. Our graduate program emphasizes the critical role of community context on practice, whatever the student chooses as their area(s) of practice. Our faculty and staff are pleased to be able to offer this opportunity for qualified applicants with a degree other than social work to have access to our program. For several years we have had inquiries by non BSW degree holders asking that

### HSD Building



we make our graduate program available to them. We have also been asked by our BSW alumni to provide our MSW program through a blended delivery mode (web based delivery with face-to-face summer sessions). In response to both requests in 2010 we will launch the foundation year for those accepted into our non-BSW entry and in 2011 we will provide the Advanced year through blended delivery to both BSW graduate students and non-BSW graduate students who have completed their foundation year.

## University of Victoria Social Work Field Unit—York Hotel

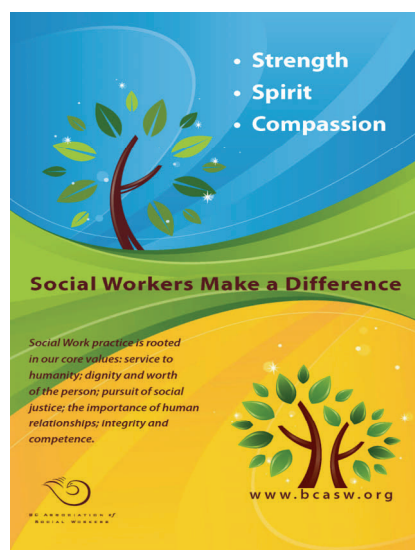


L-R: Lynn Milnes UVic Development & External Relations Officer, Laurie Ferguson Cool-Aid Society, Mel Cooper TELUS Victoria Community Board Chair, and Nancy Pike UVic Department of Social Work Practica Coordinator.

With \$12,000 in funding from the TELUS Victoria Community board, the UVic School of Social Work is going to set up a Downtown Field Unit in the York Hotel on Fort Street. This will provide support for the work of non-profit agencies like Cool Aid whose dedicated staff and volunteers assist the most vulnerable in our city. The Downtown Field Unit will provide visible support for marginalized young people and help them find adequate housing, educational opportunities and outreach programs, as well as providing UVic Social Work students

with invaluable experience. The Downtown Field Unit will offer classes for front-line social workers in partnership with such non-profit agencies as Cool Aid, AIDS Vancouver Island and PEERS to exchange ideas and increase awareness and communication across agencies and with the public.

Story and Photo courtesy of Snap Victoria. Photo by Kirby Brame.





# International Exchange from Ethiopia



"Now I finally understand what snowball sampling is all about," said Ashenafi Hagos with wry humour. A PhD student from the School of Social Work in Addis Ababa, he had never seen snow until he came to Victoria during the "winter." He was interning for 4 months with David Turner and Leslie Brown here, learning how to be (and not to be) a professor (David) and useful research skills (Leslie) under an agreement between UVic and Addis Ababa University. The goal was to build the capacity of indigenous professors in order to support the Ethiopian school which has almost three times as many on-campus students as UVic and only a 2.5 professors. He had been preceded by Emebet Mulugetu last year and she is now Acting Dean.

The trick for us was to make Ashenafi feel welcome but not too much which might entice him to stay. 80% of African students who study in the North America do not return home. Fortunately the Ethiopian school had chosen its intern candidates well. Both Emebet and Ashenafi told us they had been invigorated by their experience in Canada but were committed to Ethiopia.

Our plan was to expose him to as many experiences as possible. Ashenafi joined me in attending weekly meetings with people who were homeless (where housed people were often outnumbered.) This was particularly meaningful since he was studying the phenomenon and definitions of homelessness in Ethiopia and discovered how Western intellectual concepts are not always helpful. He told me his eyes were opened to the poverty and human rights issues in Canada; something he was not exposed to given Canada is seen as the ideal country by many Ethiopians. He attended law and research classes and said he liked the Canadian interactive style of teaching and professor/student relationships. Perhaps he was trying to keep me happy. We joined in political demonstrations such as the 'Stolen Sisters March' where practicum student Trish Palichuk was a key organiser. He met politicians, social workers, practicum supervisors and their



agencies, and was interested in developing some similar practicum approaches back home. He interacted with the local Ethiopian and Kenyan community through his host Angela. And we travelled to several communities on the Island.

I was humbled by his humour, eagerness to learn, strong intellect and resilience in the face of tough economic and political conditions in his homeland. Although he was here to learn from us, I believe we learned more from him. The International Circle is working on further mutually beneficial exchanges. Thank you to all the students, staff and faculty who made him feel welcome.

Written by David Turner

Photos by David Turner

# UVic Research Overseas: Citizenship and Diversity

## **Citizenship and Diversity: Promoting inclusionary social work practice with socially excluded groups (CIDIS)**

The School of Social Work at the University of Victoria has embarked on a 3 year research project involved with Durham University (UK), College of Social Work Copenhagen (Denmark) and Dalhousie University (Canada) for a student exchange.

### **Project objectives are to:**

- work with socially excluded and marginalised groups on assessed placements
- explore socially inclusive forms of practice that promote integration and social cohesion on an equitable basis for citizens and non-citizens
- pass on the knowledge gained to those not directly involved in the project
- develop course materials that promote good practice with diverse and socially excluded groups
- fulfil a dissemination strategy involving publications in both academic and popular outlets, 12 seminar presentations and 2 conferences - one each in Year 2 and 3.

**Project Summary:** Nation-states have tended to think of themselves as homogenous entities in which one basic formula in welfare provision was presumed to meet the needs of all citizens, and in some cases, for all inhabitants. Globalisation, migratory movements and cultural diversity across and within nation-states are challenging this assumption. The issue of responding to diversity within nation-states that espouse democratic decision-making and equity has become a major social concern of our time. Addressing its implications is particularly problematic for social work practitioners who are expected to work with socially excluded groups and respond to their many and diverse needs within limited resources. This situation can create ethical dilemmas for social workers who have to reconcile the needs of newcomers such as immigrants, migrants and asylum seekers with those from locally excluded groups such as indigenous people and poor white, working class men and women, often under conditions in which resources are scarce and often inadequate for meeting the needs of any one of these groups.

Social work students, practitioners and faculty involved in this project will explore how social workers work with diversity to meet people's needs in ways that empower those concerned to take control of their lives. The students will engage with specific client groups in placements with agencies that promote best practice. Amongst these groups are the indigenous peoples (First Nations, Inuit, Métis) of Canada and Greenland (Inuit) and black and minority ethnic (BME) groups in the UK, Denmark and Canada.

Forty students will undertake practice placements in settings that address the needs of marginalised and socially excluded people in these countries. They will pass on their experiences to those not directly involved through seminar presentations and the project website. Faculty and practitioners involved in the exchanges will publish in both academic and popular outlets to widen project participation and develop course materials to be incorporated into existing teaching after the project ends. They will also organise 12 seminars and two conferences (one in Canada and one in Europe) during the project.

University of Victoria contact for this project is Dr. Mehmoona Moosa-Mitha – [mehmoona@uvic.ca](mailto:mehmoona@uvic.ca)



**Copenhagen College of Social Work**



**University  
of Victoria**

**School of  
Social Work**



**Durham  
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## Where Are They Now?



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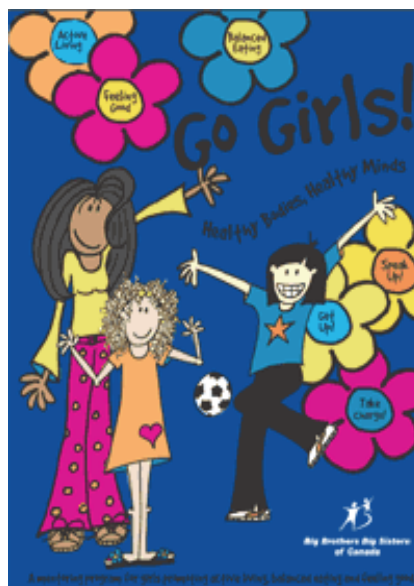
There's a new display wall in the School of Social Work main office that you may want to look at the next time you are in. We contacted several MSW & BSW Grads from the school to send us their profiles. We wanted to give students some real life examples of the many, many diverse jobs and exciting opportunities in the social work field that are out there and where a Social Work degree can take you. If you are a School of Social Work Grad and are not already on our wall we would love to add you to it. Please contact Margy at [swrecept@Uvic.ca](mailto:swrecept@Uvic.ca) for more information.

## Good News of \$250,000

The School of Social Work has been given some great news - the Interlock Employee and Family Assistance Society is establishing a grad scholarship in Social Work for the next 20 years to pay out \$12,500 each year ( \$250,000 total) for a full or part-time grad student. The money comes from the sale of the society to a corporation. This scholarship will begin in the 2010 school year.

## Community-Minded UVic Students Honoured

Eight University of Victoria students who combine strong academic performance with a commitment to community volunteer work were honoured this week with the 2009 Blue and Gold Awards. The awards are presented annually to students who make significant contributions to promoting and improving the quality of life on the UVic campus and in our community. Candace Witkowskyj—A third-year social work student and mother of two, Witkowskyj has volunteered with the Discovery Program, working with youth who have been suspended from school for substance use,



and the Community Social Planning Council, providing support to people with disabilities and on low income. She currently volunteers with the Prostitutes Empowerment Education and Resource Society (PEERS) as an informal outreach worker and cook, with Together Against Poverty as an advocate for people with disabilities, and with Big Sisters co-facilitating a group called "Go Girls" that fosters healthy body images among pre-teen girls.