Youth are three times more likely than adults to be unemployed. Youth with developmental disabilities have the lowest employment rates. Despite transition-to-employment programming and curriculum focused on acquiring job-readiness skills, there remains a significant barrier for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. The severity of unemployment and underemployment for transitioning youth with disabilities is a pressing issue in North America, Europe, Australia and the UK. There is an urgent need for appropriate and relevant employment experiences and training in order to assist youth to acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that will enable them to secure gainful and meaningful employment in their communities. Research at CFYS, in partnership with Community Options for Children and Families, is exploring how work-life identity and transitions to employment are understood by youth with developmental and other disabilities and the adults who work with them.

Recent literature suggests that creating relationships both inside and outside of the work space, as well as enhanced status and rapport within the community are some of the benefits individuals with intellectual disabilities can garner from community based employment. Transitioning youth, agencies, and families are increasingly using micro- and social enterprises with both a business and a social mission to address the high unemployment rate of youth who have an intellectual disability, a neurological impairment such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), or mental health disorders. Drawing on reports from individuals with intellectual disabilities, researchers found that using a social enterprise model for employment increased the individual’s social ties with coworkers, family, and the broader community. Employers of social enterprises and their families also report a sense of purpose and pride in their work. Self-reports from individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who transitioned from day programs to micro-enterprises showed an increase in work-life factors such as pride and enjoyment in their daily work.

Three important themes are emerging from the CFYS study: the need for accommodation, financial considerations (including employer pay), and workplace location and environment. More detailed results and a related inventory of social enterprises in food and beverage, arts and crafts, health and beauty, animal and agricultural areas will be made available on our web site.

Psychology, he investigates socialization processes and the development of intrinsic and extrinsic goals and values among young adults. Dr. Grouzet will draw upon his research expertise, multifaceted administrative experiences, and broad network of local and international partners and colleagues as he takes on the Centre Director role.
Message from Our Director

This is my last message to you as Director – it’s been a wonderful nine years for me at Youth & Society. Looking back, I’m fortunate to have been able to work with so many of you on research that contributes to youth well-being. The Centre has an amazing group of talented researchers, students, and community partners who are involved in a diverse array of basic and community-engaged research, program development, and knowledge mobilization. The collaborations have also contributed to my own growth as a community-engaged scholar.

This year is a time of multiple transitions. Our five-year Centre Review process that began last fall is nearing successful completion and we launched our new-look website in December. In July, we welcome our new Director Dr. Fred Grouzet, who will bring new ideas and opportunities for our next five years. Dr. Grouzet will be working with UVic’s newly-appointed Associate Vice-President of Research Dr. Lisa Kalyshnak.

Looking forward, we have new members among our faculty, Advisory Board, student, and partner groups who will stimulate and extend the work of the Centre in the future. You will see several examples of our projects and partnerships in this newsletter, with many more to come!

My special thanks go to Associate Director Tricia Roche and Centre Assistant Karolina Karas who make working at CFYS such a pleasure. Very best wishes to you all,

Anne

Research News

Digital Youth Research

An emerging area of research at CFYS is the study of youth in digital contexts. This project aims to increase knowledge of and access to digital methods and tools for university student researchers across multiple disciplines. Today’s youth live online and offline. Their daily lives are permeated by new media technologies such as smartphones, social network sites, tablets, and online games. According to a 2015 report on “Teens, Social Media, & Technology”, 92% of teens go online daily. Among those, 24% are almost always online because of their widespread smartphone use (Lenhart, 2015). Mobile phone use is up not only among older teens, almost half of students in Grade 4 regularly have access to their own phone or someone else’s phone (Steeves, 2014). This is a generation of highly connected children and teens who have frequent online access through portable, personal devices. As virtual spaces and technological forms of communication become embedded in their everyday lives, this creates new opportunities for young people to engage and to be engaged in digital research.

The CFYS study explores the current state of the field of digital research with youth to consider innovative strategies for training new researchers in using digital tools. Interviews were conducted with experienced researchers involved in digital projects with children and youth to gain insight about how using digital tools can strengthen research projects and to gather strategies for teaching new researchers how to conduct ethical, community-engaged youth studies with students in digital contexts. Their responses highlight barriers, opportunities, methods, tools, and teaching strategies for digital research with youth. A complementary literature review shows that digital methods increase accessibility for researchers and youth, raise new concerns about ethics, evolve very quickly, complement old methods, are embedded in children’s lives, support youth-centered methods, and require more focus on intersectionality and digital inclusion. Within this shifting media landscape, youth are central actors; there is a need for research that engages digital tools as both the objects and methods of study. Recognizing a need for further training and more resources, this research explores strategies for training students and researchers to conduct ethical and meaningful digital research with youth.

Who participates in youth philanthropic initiatives?

Among today’s youth, volunteering and community engagement are increasingly vital for transition to meaningful employment. Marginalized youth often lack the same opportunities for sustained community engagement available to their more privileged peers. In partnership with the United Way of Greater Victoria, recent research at CFYS has examined several youth philanthropy initiatives in order to better understand the contemporary context of youth engagement in philanthropy and to investigate the ways in which sustainable youth engagement is essential for building compassionate communities and dynamic societies.

The review considers innovative strategies to engage marginalized youth in philan- thropy and how philanthropic organizations can work to better engage marginalized youth. It is supplemented by an inventory of youth-grantmaking, youth advisory councils, and youth-led community service or citizenship initiatives around the world. These documents will inspire reflection within the greater Victoria community on how to strategically engage with equity groups and facilitate their participation within the philanthropic sector in non-tokenistic ways.

Join Us

Members Include Research Fellows, Student Affiliates, and Community Partners who support the mission and goals of CFYS and are expected to adhere to high ethical principles in the conduct and mobilization of research.

Membership is free. More information can be found on the “Join Us” page of our website www.youth.society.uvic.ca

New Research Fellows

CFYS is delighted to welcome new Research Fellows from the School of Child and Youth Care: Nevin Harper and Jeffrey Anslos; from Curriculum and Instruction: Tim Anderson and Anita Prest; and from Psychology: Briana Turner. We look forward to collaborating with these UVic faculty members.

Associate Director Nominated for UVic Award

Our Associate Director, Tricia Roche, was nominated for a UVic Service Award. From her nominators: “As Associate Director at CFYS, Tricia is an outstanding relationship-builder among our community and academic researchers. Recognizing the importance of youth engagement in order to achieve sustained change, she brings her creative skills to research and KM products that make these attractive and accessible, particularly to children and youth who might have mental health, language, or developmental difficulties. The Centre’s success with community engagement and knowledge mobilization is due in large part to Tricia’s efforts. Her frontline experience and deep understanding of the community sector has guided faculty and students to “think community” (including other academic communities) from the very beginning of their projects – this enables more focused and relevant methods and data. Her innovative and engaging outreach activities have also brought community members to understand and experience UVic in new ways and to better appreciate the value of our work.”

Our congratulations to Tricia for this acknowledgement of her outstanding contributions.

Research Assistants discuss the Youth Engagement in Philanthropy project.

Girls’ Active Transportation to School

Support from the Roy Watson Traffic Safety fund has enabled CFYS student affiliates Claire Sauvage-Mar and Teresa Hartrick to conduct focus groups for a study on girls’ active transportation to school, under the supervision of Research Fellow Dr. PJ Naylor. The purpose of the Way2Go research project is to identify barriers, motivators, and enablers to active transportation to school experienced by girls 7-15 years of age in the Victoria region. Focus groups are being held throughout spring 2017 to identify critical messages to promote walking, biking, and taking the bus to school. This formative research will be used in a future Island Health social marketing campaign to promote active transportation through the eyes of girls across the Capital Regional District.

www.youth.society.uvic.ca