This is our first e-newsletter and we look forward to your comments about its format and content. Our plan is to send you an e-newsletter at least three times a year. A special thanks to Margy Gamble, our “Jill of all trades” staff person for taking on the responsibility of putting our e-newsletters together.

We want to use these newsletters to share examples of our faculty and staff’s service and scholarship activities and update you on curriculum and teaching developments. We also invite you to send Margy news that you want to share, such as workshops, conferences and similar events you think our School’s network of agencies, practicum supervisors, students, alumni, faculty and friends of the School would be interested in. This newsletter should be a communication tool we can use to support our social work community on the Island and across Canada.

I hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and please do let Margy know what you think of this format and share any suggestions you have for improving our next edition.

Pam Miller

School of Social Work Director

Contact Margy at swrecept@uvic.ca

Growing up with Grandparents Goes Legal

GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN : a Legal Guide

"So grandparents go legal" read the headline. This guide is one of the finished products from a 2 year research journey (Barb Whittington, School of Social Work UVic and Parent Support Services B.C.). It is free of charge to grandparents who are raising their grandchildren ($20.00 to others so we can continue to offer it free to grandparents) . The guide and the issues were featured on CTV Canada AM and on BC Almanac in early April. if you want more info, here it is. Lawyers, judges and best of all grandparents reviewed the drafts of the guide. We had gathered information from over 300 grandparents throughout B.C. about the issues they were confronted with daily as they parenting their often traumatized grandkids when mental illness, developmental disability, FASD, addiction, incarceration or even death had prevented their adult children from parenting. There are 9,940 such children in B.C. Surprisingly, that is more than the number of kids in B.C.foster care and the grands get little support and acknowledgement for parenting again. Custody, adoption, access, wills, working with the courts, advocacy, working outside the courts, finding legal assistance and how to work well with the Ministry of Children and Family development, schools and health professionals were all topics that grandparents called 'the maze” of law and policy. If you know someone or you are someone in this position please contact ggr@parentsupportbc.ca to pick up your free legal guide. Soon, very soon it will also be available on line but not quite yet.
Alayne Hamilton Community Social Work Award and Social Work Week

As part of the BC Association of Social Workers Social Work Week (March 9th-14th), the University of Victoria’s School of Social Work awarded its prestigious Alayne Hamilton Community Social Work Award. Alayne Hamilton was the late founder of the Family Violence Project, and a passionate contributor to social work education. The award honours social workers on the South Island who have a commitment to social work education, show leadership in their organization and have a passion for social work in general.

Of six nominees three work directly for VIHA and the other three partner with VIHA staff on a daily basis. All are great examples of the wide variety of social work available in our community.

The award was presented to Chris Schmidt, who works with the Integrated Mobile Crisis Response Team providing services to those with urgent and emergent mental health issues.

The other two VIHA nominees were Kirsten Duncan of the Pandora Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team, who provides outreach to clients in Victoria and Samantha Sansregret, Women’s Wellness Coordinator for Aboriginal Health, who works in nine reserve communities, the urban aboriginal community and the local Métis Nation.

“Chris’ commitment to social work also extends to his work with AIDS Vancouver Island’s Needle Exchange program,” said Barb Whittington, UVic Social Work professor and chair of the celebration. “Such an amazing group, Alayne would be so proud of their cooperative work.”

The other three nominees were Deb Loiselle (Oak Bay Lodge), Suzanne Cole (Burnside Gorge Community Centre) and Cheryl Fix (Choices Adoption and Counselling).

Research

Street sex work research

Four researchers from the School (Leslie Brown, Jeannine Carrière, Robina Thomas and Susan Strega) received 3 years of SSHRC Standard Research Grant funding, to begin in 2009, to research the relationships between street sex workers and their families. The research project, entitled Someone’s mother, sister, or daughter: Street sex workers, their families and transitioning out of street sex work intends to uncover the complex relations between adult female street sex workers and their birth/biological/foster/adoptive families and explore the impact of these relationships on transitioning out of sex work. It will also document and analyse recent media discourse about street sex workers and their family relationships and explore the impact of these discourses on family relationships and the transitioning process.

This research project will address four principal questions:

What are the social processes involved in relationships between adult female street sex workers and their birth, biological, foster and/or adoptive families and how do these family relationships impact the process of transitioning out of street sex work?

What factors enhance or impede relationships between street sex workers and their families and positively or negatively impact the process of transitioning out of street sex work?

What are the current media discourses about street sex workers and the families of street sex workers?

How do these discourses impact family relationships and the process of transitioning out of street sex work?

Fathering and Child Welfare

Fathering and child welfare

The “Fathering and child welfare” research team, which includes three researchers from the School (Leslie Brown, Marilyn Callahan and Susan Strega) and two other researchers (Christopher Walmsley from Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops and Lena Dominelli from Durham University in the UK) has been very active recently, presenting their research results (Kamloops and Vancouver, BC and Toronto, ON) and publishing. Recent articles include:

Working with me, working at me: Fathers’ narratives of child welfare (Forthcoming in the Journal of Progressive Human Services)

Manufacturing ghost fathers: The paradox of father presence and absence in child welfare. (Child and Family Social Work, 14, 25-34)

Connecting father absence and mother blame in child welfare policies and practices. Children and Youth Services Review 30 (7), 705-716
Congratulations to Sherri Poojak and Yvonne Gomez who have just written an article titled, “Using a Narrative Approach to understanding the Frontline Practices and Experiences of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Child Protection Workers” that will appear in an upcoming edition of the First Peoples Child & Family Review. Sherri is of Cree heritage and works in the field of health research as well as being a practitioner with high risk youth. Yvonne is a second generation Canadian of Spanish ancestry and ethically identifies as White. She works in the field of Child Welfare. Sherri’s current research for her MSW focuses on the familial relationships of First Nation women involved in the sex trade and resiliency using a Cree First Nation methodology and storytelling methods. Yvonne’s MSW research focused on how to better understand frontline child protection social workers conceptualize power through their daily practice narratives. During one particular conversation, Sherri and Yvonne came to see the overlaps in their theoretical perspectives, practice styles, and mutual interest in how stories are told and how we, as social workers listen to these stories. Their collaborative article discusses how narratives of frontline child protection social workers can be understood through a Cree/First Nation worldview and a Western one.

The Power of the Social Worker
Celebrating Social Workers Mar 9-14

The Victoria-Beacon Hill MLA office has been blessed to have a number of UVIC social work practicum students in the past few years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for the good work they have done in the Community Office. Naomi, Angela, Laura and Wendy successively have taken on Community Office work with great enthusiasm and professionalism. In particular, Project ID would never have been the success it was without their compassion and commitment. Angela researched and wrote the booklet titled “How to Get Your I.D. Laura and Wendy spent countless hours listening to the homeless clients and advocating on their behalf. The BC Association of Social Work Students www.bcasw.org/content/home.asp speak of the strength, the spirit and the compassion of the social workers. I can unequivocally state that the social work students who spent school terms in the office represented these values to the best of their ability.

Thank-you UVIC Social Work Students!!!!

Students Perspective by Kayla Melchoir

I graduated with my BSW from the University of Victoria in 1999. During my time in the field as a counsellor at both a transition house and in the school system, I increasingly valued the critical perspective I had gained from my BSW and recognized the ways it was contributing to my practice. Throughout my practice I often had social work practicum students join me and share their own learning with me. This opportunity kept me learning, kept me interested, and inspired me to return to school to expand my practice framework further.

The University of Victoria MSW program has an anti-oppressive critical perspective and a strong research focus. The program offers either a thesis or a practicum/research project option. I have recently completed the coursework for my MSW, and am about to begin my practicum and research project. Returning to school to do my MSW was an excellent decision. The MSW program has allowed me to reflect on my practice, develop new perspectives, and explore new areas of knowledge (in my case, critical disability studies) in ways that have been profoundly meaningful. Further, having the opportunity to do a practicum at a Master’s level will allow me to launch my career into a new social work direction that might not have otherwise been possible. I believe that having a critically reflective framework is essential to practice. As I return to the field as a MSW practicum student, I have no doubt that my practice will be even more effective as my understanding of myself and my framework has been challenged and deepened even further. I am full of excitement for the new learning and opportunities that await!
New Book

Walking this Path Together

Anti-racist and anti-oppressive child welfare practice, edited by Susan Strega and Sohki Aski Esquiao (Jeannine Carrière) has recently been published by Fernwood Books. The collection features work from across Canada, including several chapters by faculty members (and one recent BSW graduate) from the School. For more information, or to order a copy, visit the Fernwood Books website:

http://www.fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/361


Highlights from the Provincial planning session

There was general agreement for UVIC to take the lead, a coordinating role, in moving this project forward. People are keen to keep the conversation going, to expand the circle and to work collectively. UVIC has written the contributions from the planning day up in the form of a report in order to share the information with other partners who may be able to assist us in making a difference in child welfare. In closing Paul Lacerte shared, “Somebody had to say, ‘hey lets go up to the top of the mountain!’

Let’s all go up together and on top of that mountain we found a lake and when we all looked in we saw each other and ourselves reflected in that lake. The Faculty of Human and Social Development at UVIC via Leslie Brown has taken a leadership role in bringing us all together today and identifying the mountain we needed to begin to climb together for the betterment of the children and people in our communities.”