



Multiplicity

A bi-annual newsletter from the Diversity Advisor,
Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost

Fall/Winter 2008



University of Victoria

All voices at the table

Grace Wong Sneddon | Diversity Advisor to the Provost

In today's world, we often hear the phrase, but what does "all voices at the table" really mean? It certainly has a nice ring to it—one that echoes inclusion, diversity and collegiality. Bringing all voices to the table is an ideal that, though simple in its conception, is challenging in its implementation. A university community, perhaps more than any other institution, brings together disparate voices in a variety of settings for a variety of purposes, and has a responsibility to mine this phrase for its many deeper meanings. It can, for example, be used to describe a token checklist of marginalized groups that have little influence on the direction or activities of the larger group.

At the same time, when all voices are at the table, are we open to hearing alternate perspectives, especially when there are contested views and opinions? Have we invited people to the table who hold opinions that we don't and cannot agree with? Can we distinguish between academic freedom of speech and inflammatory or prejudicial statements? And, given this difficulty, how do we protect the vulnerable, many of whom may have suffered historical persecution from similar perspectives?

I encounter the challenges created by bringing all voices to the table when I lead a committee or task group. I believe that "getting the job done" shouldn't override the need to hear different ideas, but often that is what happens. I have been in many committees where the voice that brings up difficult issues is seen as impeding the efficiency of the group and becomes a "problem." I believe that when we work together, we share personal and group responsibilities that require us to clarify the intention and articulate the purpose of any discussion. This may occur in a committee, a classroom or even on a sports team.

We need to be aware that when we genuinely invite all voices to the table, some voices may bring discomfort. Expanding our repertoire of responses, being intentional in how we choose to respond and recognizing that different situations require different responses can provide safety as well as opportunities

for learning. Creating a safe atmosphere where we can discuss our differences in a respectful way goes a long way toward achieving an inclusive learning environment.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue. In recognition of our open invitation to all voices, you can ...

Contact Us:

Please send your articles to multi@uvic.ca. We are interested in your ideas, comments, stories and perspectives on diversity and equity. Let us know how this newsletter can better serve you. Tell us what you liked and what you would like to see more of.

For more information, check our website at web.uvic.ca/vpac/diversity.



Announcing...

Mark your calendar for February 11 & 12, 2009 for

Critical Conversations Continued – Creating New Stories Together: An Indigenous and Diversity Research Forum

- Sponsored by the offices of the Diversity Advisor, Indigenous Affairs and Community-Based Research
- Featuring an Elders Dinner and two days of critical conversations and presentations
- Visit web.uvic.ca/vpac/diversity/criticalconversations2009.html for updates

Masters of Social Work – Indigenous Specialization

By Jessie Lane Metz | Fourth year social work student

In the summer semester of 2009, the School of Social Work at UVic, on Coast Salish Territories, will be launching the Masters of Social Work Indigenous Specialization, following the launch of the pilot program this fall. This degree, aimed at those who will be working in Indigenous settings, takes into account the difference between these environments, based on history and culture, as well as differences in administrative functioning. The program is a great opportunity to allow students to develop unique capacities in this area. I interviewed Robina Thomas, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work, for more information about the program.

Jessie: Can you tell me about the development of the program and how it came to be?

Robina: The School of Social Work Indigenous Program was approached by a group of social workers from various Indigenous child welfare organizations in the Cowichan area, and asked to deliver a community-based Indigenous Masters of Social Work (MSW). They wanted us

to centre Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and focus on social work issues specific to Indigenous children and families. From there, we began to develop a more permanent MSW program. We used the courses we offered as a template for the development of the proposal for the MSW. The MSW - Indigenous Specialization has been approved, and we plan on offering seats to students for the summer of 2009.

Jessie: Could you tell me what some of the areas of focus will be?

Robina: All of the courses will centre Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The program is open to non-Indigenous students if they have worked a minimum of two years in an Indigenous organization. We understand that, at this time, we do not have enough Indigenous social workers to meet the needs of our communities.

Jessie: Can you tell me why you are excited about the program?



Robina: I am excited about it because we are centering Indigenous ways of knowing and being. I struggled through all of my education—except my current PhD program in Indigenous Governance—because, for the most part, the curriculum was not inclusive and often irrelevant to the work that I wished to do. I am excited that students will feel that this is their program and they will have curriculum that is relevant and will support their own cultural and traditional ways of knowing and being.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Robina Thomas for taking the time to participate in the interview. For more information please visit: socialwork.uvic.ca/programs/msw/fnmsw.htm.

UVic Unity inclusive youth leadership retreat

By Kelley Logue, Chair | UVic Pride Collective

This May saw the success of the second annual weekend-long workshop/retreat engaging high-school-aged youth interested in community activism and queer advocacy. Unity's ongoing goal is to help young people better understand and identify the ways they can make a difference as leaders in their community and on campus in the future.

We had a turnout of 20 participants, with volunteer leaders from campus organizations including UVic Pride, the Women's Centre, the Resource Centre for

Students with a Disability, Counselling Services, the Equity & Human Rights office and the Office of the Diversity Advisor. Workshops were facilitated by the campus groups, along with community organizations such as the Anti-Violence Project, AIDS Vancouver Island (Outspeak) and the Island Sexual Health Society.

Workshop topics included the effects of homophobia, transphobia, racism, disability and violence in society, with a focus on promoting positive peer

interaction skills and community leadership. The most popular event was once again Shawna Logue's amazing campus photo-scavenger hunt, where groups of pirates, cow-folk, kings, queens, jesters and wizards scoured the campus in search of photogenic bunnies and elusive abstract artwork. A good time was had by all. Hey, if pirates and cow-folk can get along, there's hope for the rest of the world!

Reflections on a globalized world: passports to everywhere and passports to nowhere

By Sabine Scheurholz-Lehr | Office of International Affairs

I am an incredibly privileged person. I am in possession of a passport that allows me to travel easily to most countries in this world. Sometimes I have to obtain a visa from a particular destination country in advance, but in many cases, I just show up at the border, show my passport and have a visa stamped right into the document. Even when I have to get an advance visa, I have never encountered any difficulties. The legitimacy of my request to enter a particular country has never been questioned.

Many of our students, and others with whom we interact, are not so lucky. They can travel to very few countries without obtaining a visa prior to travelling. Those countries are typically located within their immediate neighbourhood, in the same geographic region. For all other countries, they need to go through lengthy processes to obtain visas in advance—not just for their destination country, but also for countries in which they touch down in transit.

How is this possible? I hold a passport issued by the Federal Republic of Germany under the umbrella of the European Union. It is one of the much coveted “passports to everywhere in the world.” Canadian passports are in the same category. I recently spoke with a student from an African country who needed three visas to come to Canada: one issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and two others from the U.K. and the U.S.A., since the student was travelling via these two countries. The visa process was arduous since she had to report in person to the respective diplomatic offices and wait for hours.

In comparison to my situation, her passport bestows much less power and a much diminished right to freedom of mobility between countries. Hers is a “passport to nowhere in the world,” the kind held by the vast majority of the global population (if they are in possession of such a travel document at all). Passports are powerful documents that can grant or deny status. We talk a lot about “global citizens” these days. Being a global citizen is easy for those of us with passports to privilege—much less so for those with passports that lack such license.



Who is worth our grieving?

By Sabine Scheurholz-Lehr | Office of International Affairs

Once again, we have recently been troubled by the news of two horrific natural disasters in two far-away corners of the world. The cyclone in Myanmar (Burma) on May 2 left almost 80,000 dead, and 10 days later, the earthquake in China's Sichuan province killed over 60,000. Once again, the most severely affected were the poor.

Such disasters raise important ethical questions for the outside spectator: how do we in “the West” decide with whom to grieve and with whom not to grieve? I venture to argue that the level of grief and sympathy we extend to

victims' families and survivors is directly proportional to the identity of those affected. This holds for our reactions on the UVic campus as much as for the general population. The attacks of September 11, 2001, albeit a man-made disaster (and I am using the gendered form deliberately in this case), triggered one of the most immediate and heartfelt reactions: a multi-faith outdoor memorial service in the afternoon on the very same day of the attacks. The victims: 3,000 mostly middle-class Westerners in the heart of a North American city—people “just like us.”

The massive tsunami in Southeast Asia on Boxing Day 2004 led to a few weeks of discussion at UVic around the appropriate way of acknowledging one of the largest-scale natural disasters (in terms of numbers of victims)

CanAssist

By Elsa Yan | Events and Volunteers Coordinator, CanAssist

Imagine not being able to surf the Internet, ride a bike or take your dog for a walk. For many of the 3.6 million Canadians with disabilities, this is an everyday reality. About 12.4 per cent of the Canadian population has a cognitive or physical disability that can make day-to-day living more difficult and affect other aspects of life—from finding meaningful and rewarding employment to developing and maintaining social relationships.

In response to these issues, Dr. Nigel Livingston, a former biology professor at UVic, decided to form the CanAssist program (formerly known as the University of Victoria Assistive Technology Team or UVATT). Based at UVic, CanAssist is a not-for-profit organization that develops and provides customized assistive technologies, devices and services for people with special needs. Services range from hosting a non-competitive soccer team for children with disabilities (Just for Kicks) to its new initiative of supported employment for adults with special needs. CanAssist's founding program is assistive technology/device development. Members of the community approach CanAssist with unique and challenging problems,

and CanAssist searches for and develops a "solution" for them, free of charge.

From customized hockey sticks for wheelchair hockey players to communication systems that detect electrical signals from muscle movements, CanAssist takes on projects with varying degrees of difficulty. No matter how simple or difficult a project is, each task is approached with the same enthusiasm and heart. "I enjoy working for CanAssist because I can exercise my creativity while also doing something meaningful for someone," says Darcy Lane, a former CanAssist co-op student who is now a full-time employee. "When you meet the individuals you are building devices for, you become inspired to build something wonderful to improve their quality of life."

Darcy is just one of the many inspired team members of CanAssist. Since 1999, CanAssist has grown from a small group of engineers to a large group of individuals from varying educational backgrounds,



age groups and experiences. With a combination of community volunteers, students and UVic faculty and staff, CanAssist is an all-inclusive group that views each individual as an important part of the team. A professor in music, a student from kinesiology, a volunteer with cerebral palsy and a retired communications engineer—each has contributed to CanAssist in unique and important ways.

Nonetheless, despite everyone's differences, CanAssist team members share one common theme—they all believe in creating a more accessible and inclusive world.

For more information about CanAssist, please visit www.canassist.ca.

in recent history. At the end of January 2005, we held a service in our campus Interfaith Chapel, involving various faith communities. The victims of the tsunami: many poor Thais and Indonesians, but also a fair number of western vacationers, including some celebrities (though none of the latter died in the tsunami). UVic students who were in the region during the tsunami and colleagues who spent their vacations there made this a very real event for all of us.

And now China (not Beijing, not Shanghai nor any other centre of "modern" China) and Myanmar. Who are the victims? Mostly poor Chinese and Burmese—faceless, all looking alike to the western eye. We barely know where Myanmar is located, but we can watch video of the human disaster on the BBC website or on TV at night, if we are so

inclined. We have not held a service for these victims, though, and we are unlikely to do so. Are they maybe not enough like us to warrant such an outward expression of grief?

One of the largest human disasters in the world, occurring on a daily basis in many parts of Africa and some other regions of the world, is the death of over five million people every year from water-related diseases (*UN World Water Development Report*). About 29,000 children under the age of five—21 each minute—die every day in lower-income parts of the world, mainly from preventable causes (UNICEF). Have we ever contemplated a service for these victims? We wouldn't because they are simply invisible. Are all people created equal, but some are just more equal than others?

Changing the way we see the world

By Robyn Fila | Program Coordinator, Cultural Management Programs

The Intercultural Education and Training Interdisciplinary Diploma Program, offered by the Division of Continuing Studies, is dedicated to providing participants with the opportunity to couple classroom learning with meaningful experience. It builds community and connections to civil society and the workplace through focus on principles and practices that emphasize diversity, inclusion and social change.

This program, which can be taken concurrently with undergraduate and graduate programs, is designed to engage students in a wide range of current issues, including intercultural relations, social justice and cross-cultural communication. The program aims to develop social responsibility and a clearer understanding and awareness of the complex issues at play in our increasingly multicultural society.

The program welcomes participants from varied backgrounds, including those currently involved in professional and volunteer roles in multicultural and cross-cultural settings, participants who would like to increase their knowledge and understanding of current social and culturally related issues, and current UVic students with an interest in these areas.



For more information on courses, including IET 420: Immigration and Refugee Studies: the Canadian Context (fall 2008) and IET 430: Facilitating Intercultural Relationships (spring 2009), or to register, please call 250-721-8462, email iet@uvcs.uvic.ca or visit the website at www.continuingstudies.uvic.ca/iet/.

"As an instructor, I value the opportunity to facilitate a co-teaching and co-learning approach to IET 430: Facilitating Intercultural Relationships. Many IET students bring a combination of their community-based expertise and academic experiences. All are eager to learn from each other and with their instructor. Together, we have been able to negotiate the challenging terrain of developing an authentic co-learning and co-teaching community, in the context of social justice and social change, in ways that have continued to make a difference in our lives and the lives of others. That's quite a feat!"

— Nirmala Lall, instructor in the IET program and UVic doctoral student in leadership studies

"I have been involved with Anti-Dote: Multiracial Girls and Women's Network (a grassroots, feminist organization based in Victoria) for over a year. My involvement with Anti-Dote as both a member and youth program (Gurlz Club) facilitator has necessitated a broad knowledge of issues concerning diversity, inclusion and cross-cultural communication. Through the classes I haven taken in the IET program, I have gained both theoretical knowledge and practical tools to implement and ensure inclusive practices in these areas. Through the IET 430 course I was introduced to Nirmala Lall, an amazing academic, skilled instructor and inspiring role model. Nirmala gave us the opportunity to take on the roles of both learner and facilitator, creating a well-rounded approach to a shared learning environment (which is extremely rare in a lecture-based university setting). IET has created a sense of community and knowledge sharing in my life, and has enhanced my youth work within Anti-Dote's programs. I strongly recommend the IET program to anyone who works with people—especially within Canada as we continue to support a dynamic, diverse and changing population."

— Shantelle Moreno, Anti-Dote Gurlz Club facilitator (www.anti-dote.org)

Solidarity in the face of adversity

By Ernest Morrow | Anglican Chaplain, UVic Interfaith Services

Sometimes we only become aware of something that needs fixing when it breaks.

This is the theme in the story of a remarkable show of solidarity by many elements of the UVic community in the interests of cultivating appreciation for diversity and in defense of human rights. The notice that something was broken occurred in the form of an article defaming Islam that appeared in the *Martlet* in March 2008. Though this was the spark, the story is not about the newspaper but about all the people, including members of the *Martlet* staff, who came together to try to effect some positive change. It is important to note that the *Martlet* eventually apologized and has worked to implement measures to guard against similar mistakes.

Initially, the article was brought to the attention of UVic Interfaith Services by several people, including Muslim students and members of the Muslim Student Association (MSA),

a recognized UVic Students' Society (UVSS) club. Though a Muslim chaplain was not currently on staff, Interfaith Services engaged the issues immediately and began to speak with representatives from the *Martlet*, the UVSS, the MSA and the Dean of Humanities Dr. Andrew Rippin, a well-known scholar of Islam. Although steps were needed to repair the damage of this particular situation, it soon became clear that this issue tapped into a much larger question about how to promote diversity and ensure the safety of all members of the UVic community regardless of their minority status.

The chaplaincy's conversation expanded to the Equity and Human Rights office, and momentum quickly began to build towards a meeting on how to move forward. The meeting included representatives from administration, faculty, staff and students, and many ideas for constructive action emerged.

The particular issue of secularism and religion was highlighted as an area of possible action. To that end, many of these partners have re-convened to collaborate with Interfaith Services in offering panel discussions for the 2008-09 school year, focusing on the difficult questions posed for religions by their critics.

This story is an example of the university at its best. Through dialogue and willingness to listen, the crack revealed by this situation was mended in such a way that the structure is stronger than it was before. The MSA and the *Martlet* reconciled, and different offices and departments have established relationships to enable increased communication and collaboration. There is a broad-based commitment to take steps to educate each other and promote a healthy culture for our mutual mission to be agents of positive change in the world.

Curriculum: Diversity by Design

On June 23-25, 2008, UVic hosted its first Curriculum: Diversity by Design workshop at the Learning and Teaching Centre. The three-day workshop for faculty covered a wide range of topics related to diversity and equity, shaped by the interests of participants. Featuring co-facilitators from a variety of disciplines, guest speakers and opportunities to collaborate on individual course re-design, participants left the course with hands-on experience, useful resources and a memory stick containing the core readings and presentations. Watch for the next offering of Curriculum: Diversity by Design in spring 2009.



WELL U

For Students Only:

Walk around Vancouver Island to the mainland and to Whistler for the 2010 Olympics. Count your steps. It'll keep you healthy, relieve stress and you can win a prize.

Log on at wellu.uvic.ca.

Inclusion, respect and welcoming from a religious perspective

By Moussa Magassa | UVic Human Rights Education Advisor

Our post 9/11 world has witnessed the tough return of a kind of religion embroiled in a reformative politico-social justice debate. The Gulf wars illustrate an example of religious values turned sour because of socio-political democratic ideologies. The result is a more intransigent religion organized around ideologies of power, ethnocentrism and economic greed.

At UVic, we have managed to avoid most of these political potholes. This may be due to our forward attitude toward the different religious denominations on campus, organized under UVic Interfaith Services. Here, the accent has always been on dialogue, which seems to encompass the same values the university strongly stands for: inclusion, respect and welcoming for all those who work and learn at UVic.

I see a religious dialogue as one that incorporates an open and peaceful conversation around these same concepts of inclusion, respect, tolerance and a welcoming environment. We can promote and advance an inclusive, respectful and welcoming religious coexistence by staying mindful of people who are not from the same religion. We can check with them about the music we want to play, the incense we want to burn, the images or decorations we want to put up. Are they offensive or disrespectful in any way? Will they interfere with the religious celebrations or activities of others? For example, as a Muslim, I observe the holy month of Ramadan, which means I fast during daylight hours. It would be easier for me to participate in events that do not include meals during the daytime (such as a lunch or coffee discussion).

Most importantly, if we check with people regarding their religious and political beliefs and preferences, we must take into consideration their feedback and recommendations. A workplace is not our private place but a shared environment that belongs to everyone. Let's strive to keep it welcoming, respectful and safe for all.



The 10th UVic Women's Conference Celebrating possibilities!

Wednesday, February 18, 2009
(during Reading Break)

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Keynote speaker: Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond

The conference provides opportunities for:

- personal, career and professional development
- networking and encouraging a strong sense of community
- breaking down barriers between operational areas
- wellness and work-life balance

For more information please visit web.uvic.ca/womennet/.

Spotlight on diversity

How can UVic make racialized students feel welcome on campus?

Do you have success stories in your department or area?

Suggestions or ideas?

Please send all comments to multi@uvic.ca.