

Fall/ Winter 2010

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Greetings

Thank you for reading the 9th edition of RADS Roads. This newsletter is written and edited by and for DS students and alumni. Everyone is encouraged to submit writing for the newsletter. Please share your updates/announcements, links to interesting news items and resources, reflective thoughts, poetry and pictures. In other words, send us anything you want to share with Ryerson's DS community. Many thanks to those who submitted to this edition of the newsletter. We wish you the best for the holiday season and for 2011!

Jennifer Paterson and Sandy Phillips, Editors of RADS Roads.

The Longest Minute of My Life: My First Conference Presentation

By Donna Mullings

"Up next is Donna Mullings. Her research paper is entitled *Race, Disability and Gender: A Critical Autobiography*", the facilitator announced. The dead silence of the room seemed to amplify the clicking sound my forearm crutches create as it hits the floor. The journey from my seat to the front of the room seemed as if it was the longest minute of my life. Click, click, click. All the devices that I now use to help me move around came equipped with their own musical melody. As I listen to each individual sounds: the squeakiness of my leg brace; the clack of my crutches; and the rattle of my wheelchair, I often feel like a marching band. The audience members sat quietly as I began my 15 minute oral presentation. In the few seconds I took to maneuver around the front of the room, my thoughts quickly reflected on my disbelief. I was a presenter at the University of Saskatchewan's Innovations in Qualitative Research Conference. As the recipient of the 2009 Bill and Lucille Owen Award in Public Policy, I was afforded an opportunity to present a paper at a conference. Initially, I was apprehensive about the presentation aspect of the award. I barely got through my DST99 thesis presentation, and I wondered how I was going to pull this one off. Professor Kathryn Church, my then thesis supervisor found numerous conferences for me to attend; however, we both settled on this one. Professor Church thought it was a perfect fit given that I had seeped myself in qualitative research for my thesis. I was not only excited because Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner were the keynote speakers but because I had read professor Ellis' work extensively for my research paper, and I was going to honour the work of the Owen's who dedicated their life to work in the area of social justice through public policy. I sat down and started with a short dialogue which conceptualized the intimate encounters I have had with strangers since the onset of my impairment:

- ❖ *Can I pray for you? God doesn't want his people to be like this, the stranger stated.*
- ❖ *No thank you. Be like what I thought.*
- ❖ *Nice to see you people out and about the onlooker said.*
- ❖ *I gave her a quick two second mile, but deep down I wondered*

Submissions for the newsletter should be sent to Sandra Phillips at s.phillips@sympatico.ca or s.phillips@nhcia.ca

what she meant by "you people".

- ❖ *Monster, monster, monster, a child points and yells when she sees me.*
- ❖ *I do not react, but the memory remains lodged in my head.*

I could feel the shakiness of my voice as I moved through my presentation. I had practiced numerous times: initially with professor Church who assisted me with the development and style of my presentation and also individually and with friends. However with Art Bochner, one of the leading academics in Ethnographic writing sitting in the audience I could not contain my nervousness. I found myself listening to my voice as it echoed the methodologies I used, a mesh of auto-ethnography and autobiography to understand my experience of disability. I raised the inflection in my voice as I spoke about disability as oppression using a social model lens which exposed me to language that grounded my experiences in oppressive structural relations rather than a result of my individual anatomy. Before I knew it, my presentation had ended. Art Bochner immediately raised his hand and asked "Why did you not do an ethnographic presentation with multiple layered voices"? I quickly explained that given the complexity of my topic and as a new student to ethnographic writing, I did not currently know how to effectively write my experiences in genre of ethnography. I answered several more questions and with the melodies of my mobility devices I made my way back to my seat, let out a sigh of relief, and sat quietly for the rest of the afternoon. I survived my first conference presentation.

Telling Our Stories

By Catherine Ryan

Ever since I began as a student of Disability Studies at Ryerson I knew that the program had the ability to change lives. I certainly came out of my two weeks of 501 as a different person. The ideas presented opened my eyes and my mind and I felt a sense of belonging that I have never felt before. That summer Out From Under was on display at the Royal Ontario Museum. Although I went with my class and enjoyed the perspective of attending with fellow students and teachers, it was not my first visit to the exhibit.

I work for a community living agency in a group home about an hour north of Toronto. One night earlier in the summer I was telling the men that I work for about the Out From Under exhibit and they expressed interest in going to see it. The woman I was working with that night went online to check hours and prices and discovered admission was free that evening. We hurried to get ready and drove down to the ROM.

While everyone had a good time, one of the men that I work for was especially moved by the experience. Barry was admitted to Huronia Regional Centre in 1947 when he was only seven years old, and lived there until his discharge in 1975. He was touched by the exhibit of the trunk, belonging to James who was at HRC at the same time that he was. He told me that he thought he remembered James. He sat in silence in front of that display for a long, long time. I stood next to him, quietly hoping he could feel my support as he wrestled with all the feelings the exhibit was stirring within him. Afterwards he told me how much it meant to him that his story was important enough to be told in the ROM, a place he has always admired as he considers Toronto to be his hometown.

The next fall, I took a class with Catherine Frazee, and some of the people who had been involved in the Out From Under project were also in the class. When I

Did you know...

Ryerson's Alumni of Disability Studies-RADS hosts events for students and alumni. Although the event, activity or information is generated from alumni it is intended for the benefit of everyone enrolled in the DS Program.

told Barry some of my classmates and my professor were responsible for the exhibit, he asked me to thank them, so I asked him if I could tell them a little about how he felt and why it meant so much to him. He agreed, as he always looks for an opportunity to share his story because he wants to be sure no more institutions are opened and all remaining ones are closed. When I told his story to the class and talked about how he likes to share his story, Sandra Phillips let me know that she had been in touch with a woman who was writing a book on HRC and she was looking to interview people who had lived there. Sandra passed her email on to me and before we knew it she was visiting Barry and interviewing him. During the interview he told the woman that he remembered being told when he was a teenager that his grandparents had died, but that he had no information about when exactly that was, or where they might be buried. Ever since Barry became part of community living in the 1980s he has been telling people that he wants to find out where his family is buried. He has no contact with any member of his family and this has always been a huge hole in his life. The woman who is writing the book told us that we could get Barry's file from HRC. I had been under the impression that we had received everything the institution had when he came into service but I discovered that we didn't.

We wrote to HRC and soon a thick file arrived at his door. We were very hopeful that we would find the answers we were looking for. The first thing we found was a few photocopies of pictures of Barry as a boy and a young man. This was very exciting because he didn't have any early photos of himself. It had copies of letters his grandmother had sent over the years. Unfortunately it did not have any information about when his grandparents passed away. We used the clues we had, the date of the last correspondence from his grandmother to do a search through Ontario Archives to find out a date of death. When we found the date, we sent away for the long form of the death certificate which had the name of a cemetery on it. I called the cemetery and found out that not only was his grandmother buried there, but so were his grandfather and his mother. The cemetery was in Etobicoke. We went to visit the gravesites, and Barry decided to buy himself a plot close to his grandparents so that he knows he will one day be close to his family again. This past Mother's Day he went to put flowers on the graves of his grandmother and his mother, for the first time in his life he was able to honour the women in his family.

Now I know that the Disability Studies programme changes lives, not just of the students who are a part of it, but of so many others, in ways we aren't aware of and could never imagine. What an honour to be a part of this programme and to be allowed to be an instrument in helping this wonderful man find peace in his lifelong search for his family.

["Real Homes: A social policy forum on eliminating barriers to people who have intellectual disabilities having homes of their own"](#)

By Sandy Phillips

This was the topic for a two day October 29 and 30th Forum at Ryerson University. Topics included affordable housing policy, ending discrimination in municipal zoning and labour union practices, residential support models, building code / fire code issues and avoiding institutional practices. The discussions were led by primarily people associated with Community Living and they gathered information to use in developing social policy in Ontario. There were four very focused and vocal Self Advocates who contributed and questioned the assumptions made by others. There were DST alumni present who not only had the opportunity to connect but also who added

To update your contact information with the alumni office, please visit:

<http://www.ryerson.ca/alumni/updateyourinformation/>

Another way to connect with alumni is to visit:

www.ruonline.ryerson.ca

to the discussions. Anyone interested in outcomes from this forum could connect with Sandy Phillips or Melodie Cook.

Age Friendly Communities

By Jennifer Currie-Roy

Saturday November 13th 2010 marked an important day for older adults with developmental disabilities in Ottawa, Ontario. Students from the Developmental Services Worker Program at Algonquin College hosted a critical discussion and cross sector dialogue. Representatives from Community Living, the developmental services sector, City of Ottawa staff, community and health sectors were invited. Hopefully disabled adults will be included in future planning initiatives. Louise Plouffe from Health Canada made a key note address outlining the Age Friendly Communities World Health Organization framework. The Council on Aging chair also spoke and a member from the Seniors Advisory Council. All participants viewed the poster presentations made by students, outlining several DS sector innovative services.

Students from the DSW program participated in social action, and were able to ensure the inclusion of older adults with disabilities was featured throughout the day. Data gathered from the workshop will be added to the OPADD website; please visit the website for updates.

Jennifer Currie-Roy has been teaching at Algonquin DSW Program since 2004 and is a DST Graduate of 2009. Jennifer recently co- presented research data to the World Autism Congress 2010.

RADS Midterm Mixer

On Friday, November 19th Disability Studies students, alumni and faculty attend the RADS fall midterm mixer. DST 99 students were on campus for their in progress seminar. The social was well attended with many 99 students mingling with alumni, Melanie Panitch (Program Director and Professor) and Esther Ignagni (Professor).

Students (right to left) Sabrina Williams, Catherine Ryan, Sandra Burns, Trisha Rogers and MaryAnn Bradshaw-Nolan



Keri Cameron (alumna) and Melanie Pantich.



Alumni Update

Heather Willis



Well look where Disability Studies has led me! After 25 years at Sunnybrook Hospital, I have accepted the challenge of becoming Ryerson's new Accessibility Coordinator. This is a new role at Ryerson and one that I look forward to developing with the goal of ensuring Ryerson's compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and supporting Ryerson to become the most accessible university in the city, province, country, dare I say world?

In my new role, I presented my sculpture, "Reinventing the Wheel" as part of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities festivities. I laughed when I got to the section on employment and was discussing the contents (a day timer and pay cheque) because I realized that when I made the pay cheque for my sculpture, I made it from Ryerson to me! It must have been a premonition!

If you have any thoughts or ideas to share with about anything to do with accessibility at Ryerson, please call (416)979-5000 ext. 4144 or email hwillis@ryerson.ca me, I would love to hear from you!

News and Resources

AMC Theatre and Geneva Centre Present Sensory Friendly Films

<http://www.autism.net/about-us/our-announcements/1788-amc.html>

Disability and the law

The Law Commission releases six papers on disability issues

http://www.cleonet.ca/instance_news.php?instance_id=1919

Leaving Evidence

Blog by Mia Mingus

An excellent blog documenting the lived experience of a disabled, queer, adopted woman

<http://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/>

Generations Ahead

Information on genetic testing and ethics

<http://www.generations-ahead.org/>

Neoliberalism and Impoverishment

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=10770>

Captioning

An open source site that allows you to caption and subtitle your content for free

<http://universalsubtitles.org/>

Graduate Disability Studies journal Critical Disability Discourse, Vol. 2

Open access <https://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/cdd/index>

Three Affordable Educational Events

January 28, 2011: i to I: Self Esteem and People with Disabilities

April 29, 2011: 5 Things You Really Need To Know About Intellectual Disability

September 23, 2011: Managing Problem Behaviour: Your Own and Others Around You

Location: Villa Columbo/Sala South 40 Playfair Ave.

Register: Rose Castronovo email: rcastronovo@vitacls.org

Telephone: (416)749-6234 ext.211

North Bay News:

Lack of funding leaves disabled adults with few options

<http://nugget.ca/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=2829860&#postbox>

The Art Gallery of Ontario Accessible Tours

The AGO offers a series of multi-sensory tours to visitors with vision loss, designed to increase their opportunities to engage with art.



Tours include tactile experiences with art, plus verbal descriptions, combined with objects, sounds and smells, which evoke connections to the collections. Tours occur on the first Thursday of the month at 2:30 pm and the first Sunday of the month at 11:30 am and last approximately 90 minutes. Tours are limited to 10 people and are free with admission; a companion accompanying the visitor with vision loss has free entry. Participants must register in advance either by calling 416 979-6660 ex 268. <http://www.ago.net/tactile-tours-a-new-way-of-seeing>

Offence Taken:

A documentary about how one community responded to the R Word:
www.selfadvocacy.com/offensetaken/

Keeping in touch

RADS continues to maintain a network list of alumni and students. The purpose of this list is to help students and alumni find each other according to city/province for networking and mentoring opportunities. The list can be found in the DST café in the general discussion forum, the “ask-a-grad” forum or you may receive a copy by email.

If you would like to sign on to the network or receive a copy, please email Jennifer jpaterso@ryerson.ca. **If you have already signed on the network before, you do not need to sign up again.**

Please help us keep our email list up to date by providing us with your recent email address. Students are encouraged to sign up before they graduate. If you are a student and aren't on the RADS distribution list, please email Jennifer.