

## In This Issue

- Welcome
- Remembering Emma
- Alumni Updates
- RADS Network List
- Resource Corner
- Events
- Alumni Writing
- Future Alumni
- Thank you

### Welcome

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of RADS Roads - the newsletter of Ryerson Alumni of Disability Studies. Send in your updates and announcements, birthdays, links to interesting topics, news about what's happening in your part of the 'world', reflective thoughts, poetry, pictures, travel reviews or questions for others. In other words, send us anything you want to share with DST alumni and students.

### Remembering Emma



On December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Emma Hardie, cherished member of our community, died suddenly in a car accident. Emma was taking 099 and was almost finished her degree. Kathryn Church was teaching Emma; her project was looking at the International Symbol of Disability, examining its public presence and its interpretation by people with disabilities. Emma is greatly missed by many in the DST community and beyond but fondly remembered. Emma will earn her degree posthumously in 2009, which her family will accept on her behalf.

Below are two pieces from Emma's friends. You are welcome to submit something about Emma for future editions so that we may continue to remember her and continue to celebrate her life and many gifts.

Did you know... Ryerson's School of Disability Studies "Ask a Grad" site on the Café is an excellent way to ask alumni questions and share information and resources. If you no longer have access to the DST café, please get in touch with Catherine Frazee.

Peace and Love,

Peace and love is what she wrote. Those words mean more to us than she will ever know. Her passion for humanity seeped right through her soul. Her love for her fellow brothers and sisters always reflected in her eyes and what she spoke. In her travels around the world, she always shared and taught us to do the same and to embrace our world. I will miss Emma, with whom I shared many memories - illness, our first loves, our marriages and children - so many to count. I will share those stories with her son to let him know what an amazing woman and mother he had and the incredible life she led. Till we all meet again, peace and love, my dear friend.

Grace Hope, Alumnus.

Emma,

Friend to all, doting mother to Cole, cherished life partner of Rob, loving daughter and sister of the Hardie family, activist and student in the Disability Studies program and community. We met in 2003 in an elective course and I admired her for all that she did. There is not enough space to write about all of the accomplishments Emma made in her short life. Emma exceeded in everything she did and did more in her short lifetime than most would achieve in fifty years!

As I got to know her, I learned that she worked three, sometimes five jobs while attending Ryerson. She travelled to Bangladesh to work with children. She survived cancer for the second time. She completed yoga instructor training, bought a home, married her beautiful partner Rob and had her miracle baby Cole about a year ago. You would think that a person so busy would not have time for anyone else but she did. While living her life to the fullest, Emma knew that people were a priority and she never took a moment for granted. Emma always made time for people and she made every single person she met know how special they were to her. Emma was full of love, warmth and kindness. I feel so blessed to have met her and to watch her grow as a new mother. You will forever be in my heart, Emma. We still have much to learn from you. Love and Blessings to Rob, baby Cole, and the Hardies.

Tricia Taylor, current student.

## Alumni Updates

### Karen Hall

Received approval to coordinate and run a 6 month certificate course in Disability Studies in partnership with continuing education at the University of Guyana. The course is called Disability Studies: Framework, Policies and Interventions. It is modified to suit local issues and is evolving in content. The test class was in September 2008, and the inaugural class began in January 2009.

Did you know...  
Ryerson's  
Alumni of  
Disability  
Studies- RADS  
hosts various  
events  
throughout the  
year. We  
encourage all  
students and  
alumni to  
attend. We  
welcome  
everyone,  
whether it's your  
1<sup>st</sup> year or your  
9<sup>th</sup>

#### Paula Murphy

Joined the team at New Visions Toronto on January 26, 2009 as the Director of Services. Paula is a DST graduate (2006) and was recently a member of the Senior Management team at Tobias House Attendant Care Inc. in Toronto.

#### Ivy Henriksen

Is working at Seneca full-time as a counselor and doing a side research project for YSSTAB (York South Simcoe Training and Adjustment Board [www.ysstab.on.ca](http://www.ysstab.on.ca)) which is an employer/accessibility study.

#### Maggie Stawarz

Recently had a baby boy and will be on maternity leave until the end of March 2010. She is also starting a Master's in Adult Ed in September.

### RADS Network List

In 2008 RADS began compiling a network list of alumni and students. The purpose of this list is to help students and alumni find others in their home city/province for networking and mentoring opportunities. To date, 40 students and alumni have signed on but we need more. The list can be found in the DST café in the general discussion or ask a grad forum.

If you would like to sign on to the network, please email Jennifer at: [jpaterso@ryerson.ca](mailto:jpaterso@ryerson.ca).

### Resource Corner

Marketing: Do you have a group of people who want to learn more about the Disability Studies Program at Ryerson? Do you have a contact person who would like to have someone in to speak about the program? If so, please email Jennifer at: [jpaterso@ryerson.ca](mailto:jpaterso@ryerson.ca) to arrange for someone to speak to your group about the program.

#### **Films**

##### ***Ties That Bind***

An Internet Documentary and Community Engagement Project.  
[www3.nfb.ca/webextension/tiesthatbind/-2007-05-31](http://www3.nfb.ca/webextension/tiesthatbind/-2007-05-31)

##### ***John and Michael***

A gentle tale of love told in halting words. A film about healing after profound loss, it pays homage to two men with Down's Syndrome who shared an intimate and profoundly loving relationship. Animated with clay backlit on glass, the film shimmers like stained glass in motion. Narrator Brian Davis, who has also been labelled with an intellectual disability, brings the men to life with great sensitivity. [www.nfb.ca/johnandmichael](http://www.nfb.ca/johnandmichael)

##### ***The R Word***

Chronicles the struggles of people with intellectual disabilities and their families to be recognized. It will be shown on public television on April 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM on the OMNI network.

To contact RADS  
please email:

RADS@ryerson.ca

To submit  
something to future  
editions of RADS  
Roads, please email  
Sandy at:

S.Phillips@NHCIA.ca

## Library Access for Alumni

Alumni must obtain an alumni card at the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs (416-979-5018) and bring this card and one other piece of photo ID to the Library Circulation Desk to apply for a Library barcode. The cost is \$50 per year. Loan periods vary with individual items borrowed, but generally books may be borrowed for 2 weeks. Alumni borrowers may borrow up to 10 books at one time, but may not borrow periodicals, reference or reserve items. This card does not include off-campus access to most of the Library's electronic resources. Alumni with an alumni card or an Alumni Library card can request a temporary account to use the computers in the library. Visit the library website for more information.

[http://www.ryerson.ca/library/info/borrower/cards\\_alumni.html](http://www.ryerson.ca/library/info/borrower/cards_alumni.html)

## Disability Studies Quarterly

This American based journal is now an open access journal, available online at no cost. [www.dsqsds.org](http://www.dsqsds.org)

DST student Jessica Hogan and Alumni Heather Willis and Jennifer Paterson were published in the fall edition of DSQ. Their article, *Vision, Passion, Action: Reflections on Learning to Do Disability Studies in the Classroom and Beyond* was published in the fall 2008 edition. The article can be found online along with other past editions of the journal.

## Events

March 31, 2009, will mark the closure of institutions for people labeled with an intellectual disability in Ontario. Join People First of Ontario, People First of Canada, Community Living Ontario and the School of Disability Studies in an event to mark this occasion. The film the Freedom Tour will be shown at 6:30 on campus at 245 Church Street, room ENG 103. At 8:45 there will be a candlelight vigil on the front lawn of Queen's Park. To RSVP please email: [anna@communitylivingontario.ca](mailto:anna@communitylivingontario.ca)

Eli Clare, author of *Exile and Pride* and *The Marrow's Telling*, will give a public lecture on Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 PM at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. His lecture is entitled: *Gawking, Gaping, Staring: Living in Marked Bodies*.

Summer institute will take place July 7<sup>th</sup> to July 18<sup>th</sup> this summer. *Art with Attitude* will be on July 16<sup>th</sup>.

## Out from Under

The City of Toronto awarded "Out From Under" one of their 2008 Access Equity Human Rights Awards with the following citation: "to recognize their public education initiative with the groundbreaking exhibition chronicling the history of disability issues." The awards presentation took place on Thursday, November 27 at City Hall. Many of the Out From Under exhibitors were present as Melanie, Kathryn and Catherine accepted the award along with representatives from the ROM.

For more information about how you can be involved with RADS contact Jenn Paterson at

[jpaterso@ryerson.ca](mailto:jpaterso@ryerson.ca)

## Fall 2008 Events

RADS hosted two events in the fall 2008 term. For the first time, one of the events was held outside of Toronto in Ottawa on November 18<sup>th</sup>. Another event was held on Friday, November 28<sup>th</sup> in Toronto.



Ottawa meet up from right: John Vroom (alumni), Jennifer Paterson (alumni), Melanie Panitch (Director of the School) Karen Mitchell (friend of RADS), Brigitte McCauley-Phillion (current DST student) Cindy Mitchell (alumni), Melinda Barstow (current student) and Rodney Walsh (alumni).

## Submissions from Alumni

**"Kindergarten was great but it was all uphill from there!"**

Virginia Dafoe, On-Line to Success graduate.

Virginia Dafoe is in her final year of the Concurrent Education Program at Queen's University in Kingston. She wants to be a teacher so she can positively impact students with learning disabilities like herself.

Virginia attributes her success to family support and a program she took in her Grade 12 year. The On-Line to Success Program targets students in grades 11 and 12 with learning disabilities who are planning to attend college or university. It is a 10 week transition course that incorporates research from the Learning Opportunities Task Force and delivers the content in both face-to-face and online components.

On opening day, Virginia met other students from her high school with learning disabilities, met with a learning strategist who helped her understand her learning profile and participated in group discussions. Virginia commented that she really liked the course: "it gave you freedom but you also had to be really disciplined, there was nobody there to tell you to get it done."

The Learning Opportunities Task Force was commissioned by the Ontario government to determine the experiences of students transitioning from secondary education to post-secondary education. For a more detailed description, please see the ATLC website.

Virginia has used On-Line to Success strategies throughout her degree at Queen's. When asked how university would have been different for her without the benefit of the On-Line to Success program, Virginia said she would have been lost in terms of knowing the rights that she has and knowing where to go for the services she required. In fact she is still discovering accommodations that are available to her. "It is so awesome at university when you meet someone else with learning disabilities to know you are not alone. You are not the only one that has to go to the teacher."

For more information please contact:

Robin Schock

Assistant Coordinator Transitions Programs Regional Assessment & Resource Center

613-533-6000 ext. 75220 or schockr@queensu.ca

ATLC website <http://accesstolearning.ca>

## Taking action on the R Word

As members of the Disability Studies Community, we are all very well aware of the danger of labels. In Canada, the label mentally retarded is, thankfully, obsolete. We still hear the "R" word fairly often though, as teens and adults use it as a common slang expression. In my role as a high school teacher, I hear it countless times each day. So how can you take action on the R word? I decided to tackle this issue in one of my courses this year and here's the advice I offered my students. Hopefully, it'll give you some ideas about how you can take action on the R word.

### **First, get informed**

The word handicapped actually came from the image of a person with a disability sitting on the street corner, cap in hand, begging. The terms dumb, idiot, spaz and lame, all came from medical terms for disability but even the dictionary has been revised to use the more common, derogatory meanings of the words. At one time, the word retarded was merely a medical label used for identification. Now, it's used as a synonym for so many other words, all of which are negative and incredibly demeaning.

*Stupid      Ridiculous      Weird      "You're so retarded"*

These are obviously not labels anyone wants to have, least of all, those with intellectual disabilities. The result? Both the word and the label carry with it incredibly negative connotations. How do we advocate for equality and inclusion, if society has accepted that people with disabilities are stupid, ridiculous and weird?

### **Still don't get it?**

If you're having trouble understanding what's so wrong about it, think about another problematic expression, "gay". The website Thinkb4youspeak.com suggests that as of December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008, there were over 1 500 000 websites that use the expression, "That's so gay". Of course, the majority of these websites have nothing to do with sexual identity. Rather, they use this word as a synonym for other negative words. If, the vast majority of the time, your personal identity is regarded by others in negative way, what does that do to your self esteem and self worth?

### **So what can you do?**

The first step is personal responsibility; so don't use these derogatory terms yourself. When challenged on the use of the "R" word, people often respond that they didn't mean it "that" way. Unfortunately, what people hear isn't always exactly what the speaker meant. It's far easier to just say what you actually mean.

### **Feeling a little braver?**

Then the next step is to actually intervene when others say it. This can be hard to imagine, but if you think about what you'll say in advance, you'll be more comfortable letting others know how you feel. Here are some scripts to consider. "... and that's how I ripped my pants!" (laughing) "You're such a 'tard, Brent." "Hey, don't use that word. Just because I'm not an athlete, doesn't mean I have a disability." "Come on, I didn't mean it like that." "Maybe not, but it's offensive to people. Drop it." "I hate that class. Mr. Johnson's such a retard." "Come on. That's not cool." "What's the big deal? Don't tell me you actually like Johnson!" "No but I don't like that word either." "What? Retard? Big deal." "It is a big deal. That word's like the N word. It's got history."

### **Still not sure?**

Surf on over to [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org) to see what they're doing to combat the "R word" or visit [Thinkb4youspeak.com](http://Thinkb4youspeak.com) to see the amazing resources, including some pretty funny PSAs they've created to combat the use of pejorative language.

Words can carry immense emotional baggage. Don't get caught up in the popular slang of today without thinking about the consequences of your words. By using the "R" word, you are contributing to the inequity, mistreatment and oppression of people with disabilities. Make a decision to be part of the solution.

Tracy Beck, Alumnus, 2004.

## Student Perspective: Life in Cape Breton

Looking out the window I see snow covered trees. All is quiet. Still. Not a house in sight.

It is a chilly East Coast morning here on Cape Breton Island. I just let my three-legged dog Oadi out for a pee and added a few logs to the fire. Most mornings I'm running out the door of my one room cabin for work, but today is Saturday, a well earned day off. It is my study day. I'm happy to spend the morning just sipping away on black tea and reading. I need these quiet mornings to catch up on the distance courses I'm taking through Ryerson.

I first moved to Cape Breton – a heavily wooded and lightly populated island on Canada's east coast in 2003 to join the L'Arche community. For two years, I lived with and cared for adults with developmental disabilities in the rural village of Whycocomagh. My life in the L'Arche community was rich. For a long time I had been interested in learning more about Disability Studies. It was at L'Arche that the Disabilities Studies program really started to appeal to me. I could live in the woods and go to university.

I would take one course a semester and then head into the hot city streets of Toronto for the July intensive. It was at the first July intensive I decided it would be nice to try living in Toronto and take electives on campus. I signed up with L'Arche Toronto to be a live-in student assistant and take courses on campus. It was exciting to think about, but it also meant leaving Cape Breton.

Just before leaving to attend university in Toronto, I sunk all of my university savings into a little plot of trees and grass. I saw it as an anchor for me in Cape Breton. I would return to the woods someday. After buying the property and returning to the city, I spent two years daydreaming about the acre while walking through the busy streets of Toronto and taking classes at Ryerson. I sketched out ideas on all sorts of scrap paper, asked farmers questions and consulted carpenters. I had a lot to learn. I wanted to treat the land properly. I even did a six-month internship on an organic farm and learning centre near Toronto called Everdale. Gradually, the gap between vision and actuality was getting smaller.

I was then offered an exciting job at L`Arche Cape Breton. I saw this as the perfect opportunity to go back to the woods, build a cabin, connect with L`Arche again and to continue to take courses online. I also spent a lot of time trying to convince my dad, who is a carpenter, that he and I should build a cabin together. He eventually agreed and got quite excited about doing the project together. We had three weeks.

When the cabin was standing and livable, it felt great and beautiful. Now, a year and a half since my first sleepless nights in the cabin, I have become known to some as "the little pioneer." There have certainly been some growing pains, but life on the acre is peaceful and simple. I have settled in. Oadi, who showed up on her three legs one day, has moved in.

The cabin is our home; and it is my act of simple creativity. I have many windows so I enjoy an abundance of natural light. Looking out my windows I see my snow covered yard – most of my acre is cleared – and beyond that spruce and maple trees on all sides. I've planted a few pear trees and there are old apple trees as well. There is a lake and a blueberry farm within easy walking distance. The nearest grocery store is six kilometers away. I bike there in summer and can borrow a car from my workplace in winter. Work is only a 10-minute walk from my cabin. Since I don't have electricity, I use my office computer after work to get school work done. It is a quiet place where I can read and connect with classmates on the world wide web. It is interesting to be so far from where the hub of students are, and to live so simply in the woods while being connected to Ryerson.

Each season has different highlights and challenges. Fresh veggies, campfires, mosquitoes and bats in summer; piling wood and having chipmunks building nests in the ceiling in fall; cozy tea moments, cooking on the wood stove as well as frozen water, dead plants and a really cold cabin if the fire goes out in winter; planting, new growth and overflowing rain barrels in spring. All the while, keeping up with Blackboard postings, assignments and July intensives. It has been a treat to leave the woods for a few weeks now and then to get back on campus, enjoy the lively discussion inside the classrooms and the vibrant city world outside.

I feel like I get the best of both worlds.

I am currently taking my last two courses before I start my final paper in September 2009. The countdown is ON!

Jen Kazda, Student.

## Future Alumni

Please encourage students you know who will be graduating this year, or students who have graduated and who you know are not connected to RADS to send us an email so we can keep in touch.

## Grads of '09: What Are You Doing After School?

Alumni Relations and its partners are coming together to showcase the perks of being Ryerson Alumni.

Start date/time: Wednesday , March 4 at 11:00 AM

End date/time: Wednesday , March 4 at 2:00 PM

Hub Cafeteria/ Snack Shop, Jorgenson Hall, 380 Victoria St.

Meredith Jordan [majordan@ryerson.ca](mailto:majordan@ryerson.ca)

<http://ryerson.ca/alumni/gradfair/index.html>

**Thank you...**To everyone who submitted articles and updates for this edition of the newsletter.