

Connecting Voices

Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers



Natuashish, NL. Photo submitted by Anja Spears MSW, RSW

Feature

A Letter from an Outsider

BY ANJA SPEARS MSW, RSW

A couple of years ago, my Innu colleagues and I participated in facilitator training for a provincial standardized parenting program. Shortly thereafter, as a Prevention Social Worker with the Innu Round Table Secretariat, I co-facilitated this parenting program in Natuashish.

The program was tailored to first time parents of young children in need of support and new learning. While it was informative and likely met the needs of some people, it was a 'one size fits all' approach, with very specific, restrictive, and inflexible material. Grounded in a Western colonized perspective, the program addressed how to raise little ones, and recommended supports and resources that it deemed necessary.

I quickly learned that parenting in Natuashish is unique to the Mushuau Innu and that providing support and information needs to reflect the community. Innu parenting involves the collective – moms, dads, grandfathers, grandmothers, aunties, uncles, siblings, extended family, foster parents, and more. It means caring for a cousin needing kinship placement; raising little ones when you already have raised your own; taking in a youth coming home to Natuashish; caring for a grandchild; or raising siblings when your parents cannot.

[See full story on page 5](#)

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Newfoundland & Labrador College of Social Workers

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Vision Statement

- Excellence in Social Work

NLCSW Goals:

- Regulate the practice of social work fairly and objectively
- Advance excellence in the practice of social work
- Promote the profession of social work

Editorial Policy

Connecting Voices is a publication of the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers that facilitates information sharing among the membership. It is published two times a year (January and July).

The NLCSW Editorial Committee accepts articles throughout the year. However, the deadline for article submissions for the January edition is November 1 and for the July edition the deadline is May 1.

The Editorial Committee is interested in articles, commentaries and book reviews that address some of the following areas:

- social work practice and promotion
- professional issues
- social and legislative issues
- social work research, theory, practice and education
- ethics
- community development
- social work leadership

The editorial committee reserves the right to reject any article or return it to the author for revision prior to publication, as well as to edit submitted material for clarity and conciseness.

Article submissions and photographs must be submitted electronically.

Advertising space by organizations, groups or businesses is available in the **Connecting Voices** publication.

Publication of articles and advertisements does not imply endorsement by the NLCSW.

A complete copy of **Connecting Voices Editorial Policies** are available on the NLCSW website
<https://nlcsw.ca/practice-resources/connecting-voices>

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| | |
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Editorial

Resilience and Social Work Practice

BY ANNETTE JOHNS MSW, RSW

I am a huge fan of Leonard Cohen. One of my favorite songs performed by Cohen is Anthem. "There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." This lyric resonates with me in so many ways. Nothing is perfect – there will be cracks and bumps along this journey we call life. But there is always light, always hope; change can be positive, even if it is not anticipated or expected. This lyric speaks to me in terms of resilience. As social workers, we see resiliency in our clients and communities, and the positive changes that follow adversity. We see our colleagues embrace change and do what is necessary to provide clients with the necessary services and supports they require – even when living and working through a global pandemic. COVID-19 hit the world unexpectedly and we had to quickly adjust. But where there was a crack, there was light, and as a profession we have continued to adapt, grow, and thrive.

This edition of Connecting Voices highlights the work of social workers in diverse fields of practice across Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). Amy Sheppard writes about a program through Stella's Circle that helps women who have been incarcerated obtain necessary identification and to set up bank accounts that allow them to transition back into their communities. Building Resilience. Jade Parady writes about the importance of adopting harm reduction in our work and how the Mokomi Status of Women Council in



Happy Valley-Goose Bay is embracing harm reduction. Building Resilience. Anja Spears writes about her work in Natuashish and how she continues to learn from the community to inform her practice. Building Resilience. This is only a snapshot of some of the wonderful articles you will find in this edition of Connecting Voices that speak to the concept of resilience and highlight the knowledge, creativity, and expertise of social workers in this beautiful and resilient province.

We also highlight our 2021 Award Recipients. Shelly Birnie-Lefcovitch PhD is the recipient of the Canadian Association of Social Workers Distinguished Service Award, and Tammy Manning MSW, RSW is the recipient of the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers Pride in the Profession Award. It is always so wonderful to celebrate our esteemed colleagues in the summer edition of our newsletter as their words are passionate and inspirational. Congratulations Shelly and Tammy.

Connecting Voices is an esteemed publication, and I am so grateful and proud of the work of the Editorial Committee in producing a high quality,

stellar publication that showcases social work practice in this province. While it takes tremendous planning to publish each edition of Connecting Voices, it is also a very rewarding experience. However, this publication and the work of the Editorial Committee would not be possible without the willingness of social workers throughout NL to write about their social work practice and professional experiences. Over the years, hundreds of social workers have shared their knowledge, expertise, and experience through Connecting Voices. This is our history; this is our profession. The Editorial Committee looks forward to continuing to receive articles from social workers across diverse fields of practice. We invite articles that explore social work interventions, theory, community-based practice, work with children, youth, or seniors, ethics and research related to social work practice. In addition, photo submissions highlighting our province's scenery and landscapes are greatly welcomed. More information regarding Connecting Voices including the Editorial Policies can be accessed at [Connecting Voices | NLCSW](#). If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at ajohns@nlcsw.ca.

We hope you enjoy reading this online summer publication of Connecting Voices. As you go about your summer, I encourage you to think about how you see resilience in your work, your communities and in your personal lives. Let's shine the light together; as things will grow where we never thought was possible.



Deadline for submission for the next edition of Connecting Voices is November 1 • 2021

Executive Director

Perception of Regulation

BY LISA CROCKWELL MSW, RSW

The **NLCSW Board of Directors** met virtually in June to develop the NLCSW strategic plan for the next three years. This level of planning usually happens at an in person meeting however like every other activity completed during this global pandemic, plans had to be readjusted. Despite the virtual format, board members were fully engaged in the process contributing their diverse perspectives while integrating feedback obtained from members, committees and staff.

During discussion, the topic of perception of regulation arose. This has special significance since the name of our organization changed to the NL College of Social Workers on September 30th, 2020. While the communication indicated

New Name: Same Mandate strategic planning was an opportunity to revisit the clarity of that regulatory mandate.

The conversation considered that NLCSW evolved from the Newfoundland Branch of the Canadian Association of Social Workers which was founded in 1951. The branch of the national association later became the provincial social work association, the Newfoundland Association of Social Workers (NASW). Volunteers at the time advocated for professional regulation and the name changed to the Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Social Workers (NLASW) when the organization was given the responsibility in legislation to regulate social work practice in 1992. The 2020 amendment to the

Social Workers Act to change to the Newfoundland & Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW) was intended to clarify the primacy of the regulatory mandate. Throughout this time the vision Excellence in Social Work has been retained.



Virtual Meeting of NLCSW's Board of Directors with Facilitator Lynn Morrissey

On a national scale these are changing times for the regulation of professions and there is a need to be clear regarding the role, scope, and importance of regulation. The perception of regulation which is guiding the development of the strategic plan is as follows: social work regulation is about knowledgeable practitioners acting with integrity and upholding the code of ethics and ethical principles in the best interest of the public. This perception is reflected in the mission statement and the values.

Professions are regulated to ensure that members of the public are receiving the services of qualified practitioners whether those services are offered in direct or indirect practice. Social work practice requires the advanced

knowledge and skill acquired through education (the accredited degree) – the populations we serve deserve no less. If regulation did not exist, title and practice would not be reserved for members of the profession. How would social work as a profession

thrive in this scenario? What would this say about the important work which is completed daily?

NLCSW embodies a broad view of regulation meaning that it is not only the role of regulatory bodies to register those qualified to practice but to support ethical and professional practice through practice resources, continuing education opportunities, practice support and working with all stakeholders. As we advance this strategic plan it will include an emphasis not only on the continued production of these resources

and activities but on working towards visibility and value in daily practice. Another significant conversation centered on the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion recognizing that these values are imbedded in regulatory documents which govern the profession - the social work code of ethics, ethical guidelines, and standards affirm the profession's commitment to these values. The continuing education sessions offered through NLCSW and available on our YouTube channel exemplifies how this is illustrated in practice. The thoughtful reflections of the board of directors will result in a strategic plan which will continue to emphasize integrity, respect, and collaboration: the NLCSW perception of regulation.



Cover Story continued

As social workers, we specialize in critical reflection. When working with Innu families, here are some questions we can ask ourselves – What are Innu parents saying they need? What challenges are parents facing? What is the history? What learning spaces feel safe? Who are the knowledge keepers that parents need as teachers? What supports are meaningful and healing for parents? What does it mean to offer standardized programs in community social work? What are the messages conveyed by facilitating Western, colonized, and rigid parenting instruction to Indigenous peoples? How do we move from identifying parents as the problem to lifting them up - while recognizing their unique challenges and their undeniable resilience and strength? How do we centre Indigenous culture in supporting parents and children?

Colonial government systems and policies have a long history of passing judgment and working to assimilate Indigenous families. Standardized, Western parenting programs fail to recognize the unique experiences of Indigenous communities and to provide relevant, Indigenous-led community supports. It is not only ineffective, but deeply harmful to try to mold Indigenous families into Western, colonized 'family'

experiences by teaching them to do parenting 'right.' Directing parents as to what they need to change, what they need to do better, and how their families need to look - in order to be 'good' - will not facilitate change.

There is a role for social work in collaborative, community-led practice. As a non-Indigenous social worker in an Indigenous community, I learned that my role is not to offer support as colonial systems have deemed necessary. My role is to take a back seat and create space for Indigenous-led supports and healing. Parenting supports need to shift from 'here is what I have decided that you need to know' to creating space for parents to recognize what they know already and what they have learned from those around them and before them. Parents are a source of immeasurable knowledge and expertise about the challenges and barriers facing Mushuau Innu, necessary supports, and, most importantly, the strengths and resilience of parents, children/youth, and the community.

My experience facilitating parenting sessions in Natuashish taught me that my role is not to tell people how to parent. It is to support parents, community helpers, health workers, Elders, and others in the community in sharing their knowledge and experiences of what Innu parents

and children need. It is to bring parents together, remembering that the community as a collective has always taken responsibility for children. The support of the entire community is vital in nurturing and enhancing the strengths of Innu parents and children.

We need to support healing; work together for family-centered solutions; centre culture as the foundation of parenting; share Innu wisdom, history, and experience; and ensure that parents and caregivers feel confident in their ability to raise children in healthy, positive, and supportive environments. Doing so, will foster growth and change in the community, in parents, and ultimately, in children.

As social workers, we must recognize that 'one size fits all' does not, in fact, fit all - and that community social work must centre community at the core of all support. Listen. Create space. Open your heart and your mind. Challenge yourself to unlearn. Make room for new growth and understandings of ways of living and healing.

To the Innu community – parents, children/youth, health staff, leadership, Elders, friends, colleagues – thank you for teaching me. The best part of this journey is knowing that the learning is endless and that I am learning every day.



Cultural Competence & Social Work Practice

BY ANNETTE JOHNS MSW, RSW

Respect for diversity is a core value outlined in the Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005) Code of Ethics. Social workers advocate for social justice and work to address inequalities, oppression, discrimination, and racism. Social workers also have an ethical responsibility to ensure cultural competence in their practice. This is outlined in the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW) (2020) **Standards of**

Practice for Social Workers in NL.

Social Workers in this province have a professional responsibility to be aware of and adhere to these Standards of Practice.

In terms of culture and diversity, the following standards are outlined in the NLCSW (2020) Standards of Practice:

- "Social workers demonstrate the use of effective intervention skills when working with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

- Social workers seek to understand the values, beliefs, traditions and historical context of clients and incorporate this knowledge into social work assessments and interventions.
- Social workers seek strategies to resolve potential communication misunderstandings and involve the proficient use of a cultural consultant and/or interpreter as necessary.
- Social workers engaged in the supervision of social work practice

integrate cultural awareness and sensitivity in continued learning and skill development.

- Social workers ensure that cultural issues are addressed when providing social work services through electronic technology" (p.13).

In addition to the Standards of Practice, NLCSW continues to develop practice resources and facilitate continuing professional education (CPE) sessions to provide guidance to social workers and raise awareness of the issues impacting diverse cultures. This includes the following:

Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice Explanatory Document

Ethical Compass – Cultural Competence in Social Work

CPE Sessions – Fostering 2SLGBTQ+ Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the Workplace

Effective Practice and Service Delivery for Inuit: Understanding Historical Trauma

Fostering Cultural Competence in Practice

Aboriginal Community Social Work: Committing to Anti-Oppressive Practice

As you review the standards, practice resources and education webinars, think about how this applies to your practice and what steps you need to take to continue to strive for cultural competence. As noted in the Standards

for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice Explanatory Document "Cultural competence is an on-going process of learning, reflection, and professional growth" (p.5).

References

Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW). (2020). Standards of practice for social workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. https://nlcsw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Standards_of_Practice.pdf

Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW). (2016). Standards for Cultural Competences in Social Work Practice Explanatory Document. https://nlcsw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Standards_for_Cultural_Competence_Explanatory_Document_1.pdf



Book Review

Neglected No More by André Picard (2021)

BY JUNE KIRKLAND-SMITH MSW, RSW

As someone who has not worked with the elderly population, my curiosity about the position of the elderly in society has been nudged during the pandemic. In the first wave of the pandemic, our country faced the loss of mainly elderly people, particularly those in long-term care arrangements. This was very distressing and I wondered what this says about how we treat and view senior citizens in this country.

André Picard, a Health Reporter and Columnist for the Globe and Mail, was interviewed recently and referenced his book, **Neglected No More: The Urgent Need to Improve the Lives of Canada's Elders in the Wake of the Pandemic**. I read the book and recommend it to any social worker. Although we may not all work directly with elderly people, we work with families and having a better

understanding of eldercare can only enhance our practice.

Picard describes the eldercare system as fragmented, underfunded and unsupported and attests that the system is long overdue for review and revision. He points to the numerous problems in eldercare exposed during the pandemic outlining inadequate personal care, abuse, overmedication and much more. The book provides several accounts of personal journeys into eldercare and family members' struggles to secure appropriate, kind, and loving care for aging parents. We receive a glimpse into the lives of several citizens who saved and planned for their later years only to discover that they never had enough to provide for their needs. There is information about the services provided in Canada and where our country falls short in meeting the full needs of the elderly. Picard highlights other eldercare services around the world and offers

suggestions as to how to better serve the elderly population.

Picard's writing is smooth and easy to follow. Although the book highlights some statistics and factual information, it provides accessible reading for anyone wishing to gain a deeper understanding of eldercare. It is a book that can prompt reflection on personal and professional values and how we may unintentionally participate in the structural processes that oppress the elderly. Through reading this book, we are forced to examine the aging process, how this fits with our values about society's vulnerable, our own families and at some point, ourselves. The book offers some hope as there are suggestions for ways to improve care and motivate the reader to reflect on the ways we can better show respect, gratitude and care to those who deserve more.



Ethics

Ethical Resources at Your Fingertips

BY ANNETTE JOHNS MSW, RSW

A client asks me not to record something in their file. What should I do?

What do we mean by cultural competence?

A neighbour just asked me for professional advice. How should I respond?

What do I need to document in terminating a social work service?

As a profession, it is our shared commitment to a code of ethics that keeps us ethically grounded and focused on the best interests of clients. It is in this spirit that the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW) Ethics Committee continues to examine ethical issues in social work practice and develop ethical resources that social workers can use in their practice. The questions posed above are some of the topics that have been covered in resources produced by the committee. The purpose of this article is to put a spotlight on these resources, as it is a professional responsibility to be aware of one's ethical obligations in practice.

In 2015 (updated in 2020), the Ethics Committee produced an [Ethical Decision-making Resource Guide](#). This guide, which is grounded in the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics and professional literature is a resource that social workers can use to navigate ethical complexities in practice and make ethical decisions. It captures best practices and presents an ethics informed process for decision-making. Yet it is succinct and user-friendly. It is the perfect desk reference along with the [CASW Code of Ethics](#) and [Guidelines for Ethical Practice](#) and [NLCSW Standards of Practice](#).

In this guide, you will find reference to the CASW Code of Ethics and NLCSW

Standards of Practice, explore the components of ethical decision-making, examine ethical theory and risk tolerance and how these impact one's practice, consider the importance of critical reflection and professional judgment, and find an ethical decision-making model that can be used in practice. This model provides a series of questions for consideration for thinking through the dilemma. You can refer to this document in your practice, when consulting with colleagues or a manager/supervisor, or when providing field instruction to social work students completing their field practicums.

The NLCSW receives frequent consultation requests from members pertaining to informed consent and documentation. In 2017, the Ethics Committee developed [Self-Assessment Tools for Informed Consent and Documentation](#). This document provides checklists that social workers can use to reflect on and evaluate their own practices pertaining to informed consent and documentation, and identify areas for continuing professional education. The checklists, while not intended to be included in social work records, can be used in discussions with peers, managers, and supervisors to identify best practices or provide the basis for social work documentation audits.

Since 2018, the Ethics Committee has also produced regular publications of the [Ethical Compass](#). The issues covered in this publication have been identified by social workers as part of the NLCSW ethical consultation process and from a review of ethical trends in practice, making this a timely and relevant resource for social workers across diverse areas of practice. To date, 13 editions of the Ethical Compass have been released covering a variety of ethical topics.

The Committee released a new practice resource called [Documentation Matters](#) in 2019. This resource offers documentation tips to social workers in a short and concise format. Seven publications of Documentation Matters have been released to date.

You will also find an ethics 'feature article' in publications of [Connecting Voices](#) that is written by members of the Ethics Committee. These articles address an ethical topic that is discussed by the committee and provide a framework for examining the ethical issues and complexities. Connecting Voices publications, dating back to 2008, can be found on the NLCSW website.

While the committee is busy developing ethical resources for social workers, it is important to note that the committee can also provide ethical consultation to members. If there is an issue you would like to bring forward to the committee for discussion, please connect with the Annette Johns, staff lead for the committee, at ajohns@nlcsw.ca. Also, if you have a topic idea or suggestion the committee should consider for a Documentation Matters or Ethical Compass publication, please let us know – we would love to hear from you.

This article highlighted some of the practice resources the Ethics Committee works diligently to produce to assist social workers in navigating ethical issues in practice. These resources complement the other practice resources developed by the NLCSW, including regular publications of [Practice Matters](#) as well as guideline documents on issues pertinent to social work practice.

As an added bonus, reading practice resources developed by the NLCSW can be claimed as CPE credits on your annual registration renewal. This would be captured as elective credits under self-directed learning.

Happy Reading!!





The Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW) has a wealth of practice resources available to social workers. Members can easily access the full range of resources at www.nlcsw.ca.
Make these resources part of your everyday social work toolkit!

Standards of Practice

Explanatory Documents

Guideline Documents

Interpretative Documents

YOUR SOCIAL WORK TOOLKIT EXPLAINED

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Standards of Practice | <p>Outlines the practice requirements that must be adhered to by social workers in Newfoundland & Labrador to ensure safe, ethical and competent social work practice. These are informed by the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics and Guidelines (2005).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards of Practice for Social Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador (2020) |
| Explanatory Documents | <p>Provides information and direction on the Standards of Practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice Explanatory Document (2016) Standards for Social Work Recording Explanatory Document (2014) Standards for Technology Use in Social Work Practice Explanatory Document (2012) Standards for Supervision of Social Work Practice Explanatory Document (2011) Standards for Child Custody and Access Assessments Explanatory Document (2007) |
| Guideline Documents | <p>Provides information and guidance on issues related to social work practice and affirms professional responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interjurisdictional Social Work Practice FAQ and Practice Guideline for Social Workers in NL (2021) Social Workers and Diagnosis Using the DSM-5 Practice Guideline (2020) Guiding Framework for Social Workers Concerned About the Professional Practice of a Colleague (updated 2020) Resource Guide for Private Practice (updated 2020) Informed Consent with Children & Youth (2019) Enduring Power of Attorney, Substitute Decision-Maker: What is the Role of Social Work (2019) Medical Assistance in Dying: What Social Workers Need to Know (2016) Social Work and Decision-Specific Capacity Assessments (2012) Complementary and Adjunct Therapies and Techniques: A Guide for Registered Social Workers (2011) |
| Interpretative Documents | <p>Provides information, clarification and commentary on professional and ethical issues in social work practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical Decision-Making in Social Work Practice (updated 2020) Self-Assessment Tools for Informed Consent and Documentation (2017) Practice Matter Series Ethical Compass Series Documentation Matters Series |

Clinical

S-E-X and Social Work

BY RICK PARSONS MSW, RSW

Foreplay

Do you have satisfying sex? When do you feel most 'turned on' and erotic with your partner? Do you feel sexual desire? How do you satisfy those desires? Do you feel close and emotionally connected when you have sex with your partner(s)? In individual, couples or relationship therapy, these are some possible questions to ask clients when addressing concerns about sexual function and physical and mental health, and in helping our clients to improve intimacy, attachment and processing emotions.

In May 2019, I completed the Intensive Sex Therapy Training Program at the University of Guelph. Within my private practice, I was noticing a pattern with clients seeking therapy to resolve sexual issues. Later, I completed emotionally-focused therapy (EFT) training, and recently, I completed a master class in EFT and Sex Therapy. These advanced trainings have enriched my clinical practice, increased my comfort level in asking sex-related questions in assessment, and improved my competency in doing sex therapy with clients.

When most of you read the title, you probably thought about malpractice within social work practice. This is not the case in this article. This article focuses on building a sex-positive approach and incorporating sex-focused assessments into your practice. Let's talk about sex (even when it's hard to do)!

What does it mean to be sex-positive?

It is important for social workers

to respectfully use our client's preferred pronouns, learn about our client's gender identity, and be non-judgmental about our client's sexual orientation. Being sex-positive means having or promoting an open, tolerant, or progressive attitude towards sex and sexuality. Sex-positivity is an attitude towards human sexuality that regards all consensual sexual activities as deeply healthy and pleasurable, encouraging sexual pleasure and experimentation. Being sex-positive means creating a validating, safe space in our practice for clients, and developing comfort with asking clients questions about sex in terms of pleasure, exploration, arousal, desire, and fantasies. It is critical for social workers to remain non-judgmental and not bring our own values into our practice with clients.

How do we practice being sex-positive and what are the advantages of incorporating it into our social work practice?

Asking sexual health and sex-focused questions can help clients feel safe and comfortable in sharing these more intimate aspects of themselves, and thus increase building a trusting relationship with their social worker. Asking specific questions about their level of satisfaction with regard to their sexual needs, degree of arousal and pleasure, erotic desires, vulnerabilities, and sexual fantasies can often provide us with information pertaining to their mental health, emotional needs, and quality of life. If our emotional and sexual needs are unmet, one may have increased feelings of anxiety, low mood, depression and decreased self-esteem and self-worth. Assessing emotional and sexual needs can help in understanding how infidelity may

occur when these needs are unmet.

How do you incorporate being sex-positive into your assessment and practice?

From a clinical perspective, enhancing your assessment to incorporate sex, first means asking for permission to ask about sex, starting with general questions and then getting more specific, learning about one's relationship with sex, asking about affection and physical touch, efforts to resolve sexual issues (discrepancies, desire, arousal, sexual trauma), and then asking more specific questions and details regarding sex if permission is given by the client.

Increasing your sex assessment with clients means gaining comfort in asking clients sex-related questions such as: Do you have any concerns about your sexual relationship? How important is it that we address that in our work? Can we talk about these concerns together? What have you tried so far to deal with the identified problem? When are you most likely to have trouble getting or maintaining an erection? Do you have trouble having an orgasm? Do you feel sexual desire? How do you satisfy those desires? Building a sex-positive culture in your practice means inquiring if your clients are having fulfilling sex with themselves or their partner(s).

Inquiring about someone's sex life can seem personal and very private to start, however isn't asking about physical health issues, mental health difficulties, and life stressors personal and private as well? Most people have a hard time being vulnerable and talking about our challenges and emotions. As a society, we have been working tirelessly on increasing

mental health awareness. Building sex assessments into our practice will help normalize sex, decrease the stigma and taboo of talking about sex, and improve one's mental health as our bodies respond to sex by releasing a "neurochemical cocktail" of happy and pleasant hormones such as dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin. Who doesn't want more of those good feelings?

As part of social work assessment, we can ask about sex to gain insight into their sexual health – Is it positive? Is it respectful? Is it free of coercion, discrimination and violence? Asking questions regarding sexual fulfillment can help us to understand our client's relationship with sex and their attachment history, and provide us with more information on the possible manifestation of physical and mental health issues – as sexual health issues can be displayed as physical and mental health issues.

Being Non-Judgmental

As social workers, it is essential to be non-judgmental in our practice. Not only is this one of our core values set

by the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics, it is important in building a space for our clients to feel safe and accepted as we work toward establishing a trusting relationship, and helping them to resolve their sexual and emotional challenges. Be non-judgmental toward relationship structures that are not considered "traditional" (i.e., straight, two-person relationship between a male and female). Be non-judgmental and open-minded of other relationship structures such as same-sex relationships, polyamorous relationships, triads also known as "troupeles", consensual non-monogamy, closed loop relationships, and mixed orientation marriages. Educate yourself and develop an awareness of potential relationship dynamics within these relationship structures by being curious with your client(s). Also, be aware that one may be interested in atypical sexual/erotic practices and interests different from our own – also known as BDSM or "kink".

Plateau

I could easily keep going but hopefully this helps in being somewhat more comfortable with inquiring about sex with your clients. Finally, be curious, respectful, and non-judgmental. If you remain uncomfortable or on uncharted territory, seek consultation or refer your client to a social worker, sexologist, psychologist, or physician who has experience in the area. If you are comfortable, go talk about sex! Being sex-positive in your social work practice normalizes sex and provides clients with an opportunity to talk about safety, intimacy and excitement as they work toward mental wellness and building secure attachment.

References

- Canadian Association of Social Workers. (2005). *CASW Social Work Code of Ethics*. Ottawa: Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW).
- Kleinplatz, P. (2012). *New Directives in Sex Therapy: Innovations and Alternatives* (2nd edition). New York, NY: Routledge.



NLCSW Private Practice Roster

The NLCSW maintains a voluntary roster of social work private practitioners. The following social workers have elected to be included on the roster. They meet the criteria for private practice in the profession of social work in Newfoundland & Labrador. Contact information for these social workers is available on our website – <https://nlcsw.ca/social-work-in-nl/private-practice>

Kayla Baker MSW, RSW
Maureen Barry MSW, RSW
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Angel Compton-Osmond MSW, RSW
Agatha Corcoran MSW, RSW
Tobias Dunne MSW, RSW
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Bonnie Hancock-Moore MSW, RSW
Darrell Hayward BSW, RSW, M.Ed., C.C.C.

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Practice

Are you Covered? How Social Workers can Protect Themselves from Risk and Liability

BY BMS GROUP

First let's start with a case study.

Farah is employed as a social worker in a hospital. Recently, she was notified by her provincial regulatory body that a former client had made a complaint against her alleging that Farah behaved unprofessionally and was biased in her provision of care. Farah turned to the hospital's professional liability insurance policy for representation and protection. Unfortunately, as is the case with many hospital policies, Farah is only covered if she is named in a Civil action. Complaints made to a regulatory body of social workers, such as claims of unprofessional attitude or improper conduct, are often excluded from an employer's policy. Farah is unsure what to do next and she's worried about her ability to finance an adequate legal defence.

A review of claims made to the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) liability insurance program suggests that regulatory complaints make up more than 70% of claims against participating social workers. Those relying on employer coverage would be left to independently secure legal representation to defend against these claims and would be responsible for the associated costs.

The above scenario illustrates one of the reasons why many social workers employed in public practice have decided to purchase their own independent professional liability insurance (PLI). Another common reason is to secure protection for work delivered outside of the employment setting, such as advice, volunteer work,

or when working in multiple places of employment.

The PLI coverage available through the CASW member insurance program provides insurance protection for actual or alleged injuries, negligent acts, errors or omissions arising out of the delivery of your professional services as a social worker. Coverage insures payment of both compensatory damages and legal costs associated with a claim.

PLI through the CASW member program starts at \$130/year for \$5M limits and comprehensive coverage, including for:

- Regulatory Legal Expense
- Criminal Defence Reimbursement
- Coroner's Inquest Legal Expense
- Abuse Therapy and Counselling Fund & more

For social workers providing e-services, it's important to note that the CASW PLI policy will extend to protect you for professional services you provide to your clients anywhere in the world, provided you are delivering these services from within Canada, and the claim or complaint is filed within Canada. Prior to working with clients in another jurisdiction, it is always important to verify with your regulatory body and the regulatory body in the province or territory in which your client resides to confirm that you are adequately licensed to practice in your client's place of residence.


If you are interacting remotely with clients and are managing your client files electronically, as many social workers now are, it's also important to be aware of additional exposures in relation to potential security breaches or cyber incidents, such as phishing emails or ransomware attacks. A privacy

breach can be triggered by something as simple as someone overhearing a teleconference session, or as complex as a computer hack that results in the involuntary disclosure of the private information of hundreds of clients.

Cyber security continues to be one of the fastest growing areas of risk, and the healthcare sector is not immune. Social workers may benefit from securing a separate Cyber Security and Privacy Liability insurance policy to better manage the risk of holding increasingly large quantities of personally identifiable data of clients, employees, and others, and to mitigate the reputational damage that could result from a data security breach.

Cyber, and other specialized insurance products, such as Commercial General Liability and business insurance, are available to social workers through the CASW program.

Participating social workers also have direct access to a range of experts including knowledgeable brokers at BMS Canada Risk Services Ltd. (BMS) for any coverage-related questions and pro bono legal services from Gowling WLG (Canada) LLP, one of the most highly recognized legal defence firms in medical defence and professional liability in Canada. This free, confidential legal advice is designed to help avoid or reduce the probability of a claim or complaint and is available to participating members should you have questions related to an actual or potential professional liability claim.

We encourage you to visit www.casw.bmsgroup.com for more information. You can also connect with BMS through the toll-free CASW line at 1-844-583-7747 or email casw.insurance@bmsgroup.com. 

Initiatives

A Fresh Start with Accounts that Count

**BY AMY SHEPPARD BSW, MGS,
RSW**

Have you ever lost your wallet? It is a painful process to replace all your IDs, your bank card, and cancel your credit cards. But we get it all figured out. For many of the women I work with, they lose all their personal items when they go to prison, and so much more. When women are released from prison without IDs or a bank account, it is difficult to rent an apartment, get income support, or look for a job. Basics such as replacing your bank card become huge barriers when already dealing with other challenges, like having no phone or home.

Launched in 2009, the Just Us Women's Centre, is a program of Stella's Circle that addresses the needs of criminalized women. We offer therapeutic groups, individual counselling and concrete supports both in the community and at the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women (NLCCW). The provision of services in the face of systemic barriers involves some creativity and partnerships with others who are able to "think outside the box." Such is the case with the banking partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Credit Union (NLCU).

During the past 12 years, staff at the Just Us Women's Centre have seen the challenges for women who leave prison from remand status. Remand is when a person is held in custody prior to a trial. The challenge for those who are remanded is that they have no release date, making planning for release complicated. A woman who has been remanded to

prison while awaiting sentencing could be released on the day she appears in court if the judge grants "time served." Without any release planning, the woman may be leaving the prison with no arrangements for housing or income, and sometimes with no personal IDs.

In 2018, NLCU approached Stella's Circle to see how they could help our participants and the pilot program, A Fresh Start: Accounts that Count, was launched. This program offers quick access to emergency funding to obtain IDs, assists women in opening a bank account with NLCU, and provides a small monetary stipend in their account. To date, we have helped 26 women open bank accounts and get IDs. We recently expanded the program to assist women leaving custody after provincial or federal sentences. Many women have experienced barriers to establishing bank accounts, not only those leaving remand.

Women who have participated in the program provided feedback that it is a needed service, and that they were treated with respect while dealing with staff at NLCU. As one woman noted, "The lady (at the bank) was so friendly and really nice. Now I can get some food for myself and some chocolate! I'm going to get a phone first, though. Thank you so much."

Working with NLCU to create an innovative partnership has resulted in a reflection of my own social work values and my practice. I see the stigma as a result of criminalization and it is disheartening to hear what women go through. However, through our partnership with NLCU,

I can see people willing to learn about how they can do more to make a difference. NLCU has been understanding of the many barriers involved and accommodating when working with our participants.

This innovative and collaborative program not only helps marginalized women connect with a business institution in their community, but also strengthens their relationship with the Just Us Women's Centre. Even for those women who do not complete the process to establish a bank account, there are still positive impacts. Any connection with the Just Us Women's Centre is helpful. The timing may not have been right, but the women now know that the resources at the Centre are available when they are ready. Recovery is not a linear journey, and the Just Us Women's Centre is there to help navigate community systems, when the time is right for them.

We often refer to the *Drop in the Bucket* analogy. Every time we help someone, we add a drop in their bucket. Sometimes the buckets are in disrepair and need mending. So, the first drop may not have much impact. Over time, however, many drops can make a difference. We don't always know at what stage we are intervening in a person's life, but we continue to add the drops as we work to help them fill their bucket over time.

NLCU employees are incredibly positive and supportive and we look forward to our continued work together to make a difference in our community.



Topics

Whistleblowing in the Field of Social Work: Accountability and Professional Practice

BY REBECCA FRENCH BSW, RSW

Over the past decade, the act of whistleblowing has picked up momentum due to the prevalence of high profile whistleblowing cases, where the anonymity of the whistleblower(s) has remained protected. Particularly, throughout 2019-2020, the world watched as an impeachment scandal unfolded with the then President of the United States at the center. This impeachment was initiated due to a staff member blowing the whistle. In the Canadian context, we have recently watched whistleblower complaints directed towards former Governor General, Julie Payette, result in her resignation and a final report which contained nine recommendations.

These cases and my current position as an Investigator with the Office of the Citizens' Representative (OCR) piqued my interest to research whistleblowing trends as it relates to social workers. I also hope to encourage dialogue around the significance of whistleblowing, particularly in professions who adhere to a Code of Ethics.

For those who are unfamiliar with the term "whistleblower," this is someone who identifies an unethical, unlawful, harmful, dangerous or injurious situation in the workplace and discloses it to someone who has the power to investigate the wrongdoing (McDonald and Ahern, 2002).

In July 2014, the Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act (PIDA) was passed in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL).

This legislation provides a confidential avenue for provincial government employees to request advice or disclose wrongdoing that is occurring in their workplace. As per the legislation, wrongdoing includes an act or omission that creates a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of a person, as well as knowingly directing a person to commit a wrongdoing. This legislation also prohibits reprisals against individuals who report wrongdoing. The OCR is the office tasked with investigating these disclosures under PIDA.

As social workers are often responsible for working with marginalized populations, much of the work we do is targeted at trying to ensure individuals are safe. However, members of the public service generally know when questionable conduct or activities are occurring in their workplace, specifically those which may place an individual at a higher risk of harm. Statistics show that 42% of Canadian workers have observed some form of workplace misconduct, and nearly half of them failed to report such misconduct (Ipsos Reid, 2013).

A 2017 study conducted by Raymond, Beddoe and Staniforth, found that social workers identified a variety of serious concerns in regard to unethical organizational practice that were believed to contribute to unsafe praxis. It was found that when practitioners are deterred from speaking out, harmful situations can escalate (Raymond et al., 2017). Therefore, Raymond et al. (2017) determined that social workers have a responsibility to

uphold ethical standards and may blow the whistle when faced with, what they perceive as, unethical conduct. Similarly, Getz (2013) believes social workers should ask themselves, "are clients/patients being seriously harmed [or at risk of serious harm]?", and if the answer is yes, they have an ethical duty to disclose the harm, even if that means implicating a colleague's misconduct or negligence.

Getz (2013) also reviews what steps should be considered before a social worker decides to blow the whistle. I have adjusted these steps to reflect the NL context.

Evidence: Is there any physical or documented evidence of wrongdoing? Are there others who will consider disclosing with you?

Impact: What are the potential consequences of the disclosure for yourself? What are the potential consequences for allowing the wrongdoing to continue unreported?

Motivation: Are you motivated due to your moral courage and strong ethical values, or are you motivated out of self-interest (e.g., seeking retaliation)?

Potential other alternatives: Have you spoke with any of the following to discuss your concerns prior to whistleblowing: HR manager, supervisor, regulatory body (NLCSW), union, legal counsel, the police, Occupational Health and Safety, or the Employee Assistance and Respectful Workplace Division.

I appreciate and acknowledge that one of the greatest challenges in

whistleblowing arises when the unethical practices occurring are supported by the employer or supervisor. However, we as professional social workers need to be able to do what is right by our professional Code of Ethics (Barsky, 2010). Thus, Barsky (2010) proposes that, "the key question is not simply 'Should I blow the whistle?' but 'How can I blow the whistle in a manner that is most likely to achieve my goals and minimize risks to myself and others?'" (p.4).

The OCR is committed to procedural fairness and the principles of natural justice in dealing with members of the public service. I welcome you to contact our office at 1-800-559-0079 or citrep@gov.nl.ca if you wish to discuss PIDA.

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Emotionally Focused Therapy Externship (EFT) Online Atlantic Canada

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or email: eftrainingatlantic@gmail.com

Did you know? [NLCSW's YouTube channel](#) is a valuable source of continuing professional education (CPE).

Any webinars viewed through the channel can be claimed as required credits under the workshop category.



Perspectives

Harm Reduction in Social Work Practice

BY JADE PARDY BSW, RSW

When you hear the term "harm reduction" what comes to mind? For most of us, we immediately think of harm reduction in terms of illicit drugs. Mitigating the risks associated with substance use is certainly of utmost importance amidst an opioid crisis in our country. However, this is not the only component of harm reduction. Chances are, you already practice harm reduction in your own life and may not even realize.

When we choose to wear a seatbelt in a vehicle, we are practicing harm reduction. In 2017, 1841 fatalities and 154,886 injuries were recorded from motor vehicle collisions in Canada (Transport Canada, 2017). We usually do not get into a vehicle with intentions of causing injury to ourselves, but there are certainly risks involved. For some of us, riding in a vehicle is simply unavoidable, much like substance use for those who are chemically dependent. So, we take the necessary precautions to ensure we are being as safe as possible despite the risk of injury.

This example of how we all practice harm reduction is highly accepted by society. The notion of keeping ourselves as safe as possible is so ingrained in us that we seldom even think about why we do these things. So why does society struggle with the same concept for people who use drugs?

Unfortunately, stigma surrounding addiction remains high. For some, harm reduction methods with people who use drugs can be controversial. Things like distributing safe injection supplies or inhalation kits are sometimes perceived as enabling. Others support harm reduction methods theoretically, but struggle with supporting real action in their neighborhoods or communities,

known as the "not in my back yard" phenomenon.

The lack of community support and acceptance creates a distrust between service users and providers, making it even more difficult to build relationships. This means we are all missing opportunities to provide lifesaving services and information. Imagine a world that promoted and accepted supervised injection sites and the distribution of safe supplies as much as the use of seatbelts - a world free of judgment, where people felt they were valued members of society regardless of their circumstances. Personally, I believe the answer to our opioid crisis begins with how we treat people in our work. Whether you work with people who use drugs or not, there are many ways to implement harm reduction in your practice. Survivors of intergenerational trauma, sexual abuse, and domestic violence can all benefit from harm reduction. Here are some tips:

Create a harm reduction policy at your place of work and implement it. Did you know that as of the end of 2015, Newfoundland and Labrador had only two provincial policy documents that mentioned the words "harm reduction"? These documents vaguely mentioned unspecified harm reduction 5 times, mentioned needle/syringe distribution twice, and did not mention anything else related to harm reduction (Hyshka et al., 2017).

Provide your clients with as much freedom of choice as possible. Even if you have exhausted all options and there is no choice to be made, your language and phrasing can make an impact.

Work on building genuine relationships with your clients. Assess their needs. Never make assumptions.

Remember that simply navigating the system can be emotionally harmful. Provide as many services in house as possible or support your clients by accompanying them to appointments elsewhere.

Ask yourself the following, "Is this the safest and least harmful way to go about this?" If the answer is no, what changes can you make to support the person's safety as much as possible?

The Mokami Status of Women Council (MSWC) in Happy Valley-Goose Bay recently received funding for harm reduction work from Reaching Home Indigenous NL. The funding has allowed MSWC to hire a Harm Reduction Researcher position for one year, followed by a Harm Reduction Coordinator for two additional years. Our aim is to increase our current programs and policies from a renewed harm reduction lens, as well as provide new additional programming to meet the needs of our community. If you have been doing work in harm reduction or have any input to provide in this area, I would love to hear from you! I can be reached at jade.pardy@mokamiwomen.ca.

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Issues

Harm Reduction Saves Lives

BY EMILY WADDEN BSW, RSW

When COVID-19 swept through North America, eventually making its way to Newfoundland and Labrador, the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador (ACNL) and the Safe Works Access Program (SWAP), watched with anticipation at how the provincial government would react; specifically relating to the operation of crucial community organizations and the services they provide. Fortunately, SWAP and other community-based organizations were able to remain open with the implementation of new COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions relating to daily operations, staffing, and/or the way we meet and connect with service users. Like many of SWAP's partner organizations (or Satellite Sites), we adjusted to this change seemingly overnight. We were grateful that, unlike during our province's biggest snowstorm to date (Snowmageddon), we did not need to close our doors for days, or what could have been weeks or months based on the worldwide uncertainty and public fears around COVID-19.

Operational Adjustments

While SWAP's office hours were reduced for several months, and then again for several weeks during our second wave, and with decreased staff in the building, no volunteers and no service users allowed in our physical space, we, like many other organizations brought our safe supplies and overdose awareness education and prevention further into the community.

For almost a decade, SWAP offered a mobile van delivery service

Tuesday and Thursday evenings. We recognize that where our space is located in St. John's isn't always accessible, and those who come to our main office at 47 Janeway Place are asking and needing hundreds of supplies such as, needles, water, ties, cookers, and pipes. Due to the lack of public transportation and restrictions on the number of riders, SWAP began delivering supplies as often as possible (e.g. day, evenings, after hours). We would receive a call requesting supplies and try to action that request within a number of hours. While this was not a flawless system, we did our best. Ultimately, we met with and served just as many, if not more, service users than we typically would prior to COVID-19.

As the SWAP Program Manager, I am not typically meeting service users in the community, as this is primarily handled by our Outreach staff. However, throughout the peak of COVID-19 and the following year, it was a pleasure and an honor to deliver supplies throughout St. John's. I had spoken with many of these people countless times over the phone but had never actually met or interacted with them in person.

Continuing to serve and check in on our service users during this time was crucial. SWAP understood that quarantine was, and continues to be difficult for everyone, let alone those struggling with drug use and/or mental illness. Both relapse and overdose rates rose nationally, with more drug related deaths across the globe (Bonn et al., 2020). As a result of increased drug poisonings, the Take Home Naloxone Program shifted to deliver distance training.

They provided, and continue to provide, individuals requesting kits with a variety of reading materials and online links to ensure people could be appropriately educated while organizations were not permitted to welcome folks into their physical space. Due to this shift in training (in person vs. self-taught), SWAP handed out more kits than in previous months. Additionally, we were and are still able to send kits to individuals in rural areas through our mail-out service when requested - something previously not in adherence with the Take Home Naloxone Program training guidelines and protocols.

While navigating the new normal of COVID-19 has been at times both challenging and tiring, SWAP firmly believes that Harm Reduction Saves Lives. During a period filled with uncertainty and isolation, harm reduction and social support offered through this lens have and continue to save lives in Newfoundland and Labrador.

2021

SWAP is grateful for the support from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, specifically the Department of Health and Community Services. They have allowed SWAP to continue our work, serving the individuals in our community throughout the pandemic. SWAP strives to forward social justice, respect, and empathy for both our service users and the community. This is consistent with the Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005) Code of Ethics.

It has been over one year since the beginning of COVID-19 in

Newfoundland and Labrador. Despite immense challenges personally and professionally for many people, the eagerness of individuals, groups and organizations to help one another during this time did not waver.

SWAP continues to expand in many directions, collaborating with local and other organizations and businesses, while continuing to support, and be supported by our service users and governing bodies. SWAP now offers increased outreach and access to healthcare services (without going to the hospital). At present, SWAP is open Monday to Friday from 9:00am-4:00pm (closed for lunch 12:30pm-1:30pm) island time, and our outreach van is now operating three nights per week; Monday (our new night, with medical staff on the van), Tuesday and Thursday. In addition to mobile medical services, our service users can see the Harm Reduction Nursing Team during clinic hours at their physical location (50 Mundy Pond Rd.) or contact them directly through their talk/text cellphone (709-682-2668).

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Community



TV Room at the Pottle Centre

The Pottle Centre: Promoting Friendship and Social Wellness for Adults Living with Mental Health Issues

**BY CAITLIN M. YOUNG
BSW STUDENT, MUN**

The Pottle Centre is a safe, lively and inviting place that promotes friendship, recovery and wellness for adults living with mental health issues, illnesses and addictions.

Members of the Centre participate in our enriching programs, activities and outings that promote socialization, empowerment, support and inclusion in the community. Our members are welcome to come and go under no obligations as long as the Centre is open. They may choose to participate in our organized activities, browse our

free boutique, socialize or enjoy quiet time watching television or reading. Regardless of what they choose, members are welcome to come to the Pottle Centre as their safe place to develop social skills and feel part of a supportive community.

As a third-year BSW Student, I am completing my first field placement with the Pottle Centre. I am the first social work student to complete a placement here, so I hope we can learn and grow together as this is a new experience for all of us. As the Pottle Centre is involved with some of the most vulnerable people in the

province, I believe that including a social work student not only provides students with a valuable real-life learning opportunity, but may also provide the Pottle Centre with a new perspective. While the Pottle Centre is fundamentally a recreational facility, I have already observed its immense and meaningful impact on some of the most stigmatized members of our community. I have identified a need through my interactions with the members and staff for the possibility of offering support and counselling within the Centre, which is an opportunity I am excited to work on together.

History of the Pottle Centre

In the 1950s, the need for de-institutionalizing patients from psychiatric care facilities was identified in Newfoundland and Labrador and a movement began to meet that need. Many of the patients who participated in the types of programs that were available at the time (community-based boarding care programs) were not emotionally able to cope with their remaining challenges after discharge.

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in collaboration with the Community Planning Committee on the Development of Services to Promote Mental Health (COPE) looked into setting up a social centre in St. John's that would serve several functions. With the guidance of COPE's Norman Report (Norman & Community Services Council, 1979), primary goals of the community-based after-care program were stated. The report highlighted housing, employment and social/recreational needs; including giving former patients a social setting, allowing for training programs and anything else needed to assist users to transition back into the community; and finally,

"to be the friend of" persons who would access the centre.

The Pottle Centre Now

The CMHA Social Centre was officially opened in February 1980. The Social Centre was described as the community base or focus for CMHA programs in the St. John's area; an information and referral centre for people who need help, a place of welcome for people who have been discharged from a psychiatric treatment service and a meeting place for people who need a warm friendly experience (Holland-MacDonald, 1986).

Our Programs

The Pottle Centre provides an array of programs and activities designed to enrich the lives of members and combat social isolation which is all too common in our adult population with mental health issues. Our activities belong to various programs that are made possible by grants and donations. The Centre has a weekly schedule of events and activities, and participation of the members is always voluntary!

Programs are designed to promote socialization and wellness for our members. We currently have an Empower Hour Group and a Journaling Group that promote mindfulness, positive self-esteem and wellness. A self-care group with the primary focus of developing strong coping skills is also in development. We also have bingo, card games, board games, crafting, nurse visits, and visits from other community agencies.

Our Culture, Sport, Art and Play Program often gives us the opportunity to get outside and go on outings together. Outings are a

favourite event among our members, and can include bowling, going to the movies, picnics, mini golf, and visits to museums and parks.

Our Get Fit Program encourages members to move their bodies, and includes gym sessions, swimming, yoga, and a walking group.

Our Nourish Program provided members with hot meals before COVID-19, but we have adapted it so that we can still "serve" our members food while also following health guidelines. We now offer our meals to-go so members can enjoy them at home. We also have emergency grocery options.

Where We are Going

While we continue to operate from 200 Water Street, St. John's, we aspire to have a new space. An ideal location would be completely accessible. We would like to have a larger, commercial-style kitchen and a backyard which would enable us to offer more activities. We hope to improve and grow the Pottle Centre to realize our full potential with the help of staff, volunteers, donors, and the community.

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School

News from Memorial University's School of Social Work

Leadership News

Dr. Heather J. Hair completed her appointment as interim dean as of June 30. The search for a new dean is ongoing.

Remote and In-person Learning

As we continued to ride out the COVID-19 pandemic, our dedicated staff and faculty continually adapted to offer the best possible remote learning experience to our students during the winter and spring semesters.

Planning for an anticipated return to on-campus, in-person learning for the fall 2021 semester is well underway across all of Memorial's campuses. Memorial continues to assess the evolving public health environment and will make any necessary adjustments to the fall semester.

We look forward to safely welcoming back our students, staff and faculty!

BSW, MSW and PhD News

The school hosted the annual BSW Pledge of Professionalism Ceremony in March, virtually. The Pledge of Professionalism Ceremony is designed to mark the entrance of BSW students into their first field practicum and is a special event for students, their families and friends.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, Memorial once again hosted an in-absentia convocation for spring 2021, during which 51 BSW as a first degree, nine BSW as a second degree and eight MSW students graduated. The school hosted a live, virtual graduation celebration in June for students and their families.

The MSW spring 2021 institutes will be conducted remotely as they were for the fall and winter semesters.

The MSW Admissions Committee has completed admissions for fall 2021. Admissions remain very competitive, with the school receiving 116 eligible applications. After careful review, offers were extended for the 30 positions available in the program.

The MSW Curriculum Review and Revision Committee (CRRC) has begun its review of the current MSW program. Drs. Catherine de Boer and Paul Banahene Adjei, co-chairs of this sub-committee of the MSW Program Committee, are pleased to have MSW student Jordanna Comeau assisting the work of the committee. As part of the review process, the CRRC is consulting with community partners, alumni, current students, and academic staff members for their perspectives about the MSW program and ways to improve it. The Committee meets monthly and will submit its report once the work is completed.

Congratulations to the following MSW spring 2021 graduates who have been awarded the title **Fellow of the School of Graduate Studies: Amy Martin, Kathlene White, Anja Spears, Lindsey Parker**. This award is made in recognition of their continued academic excellence throughout their program.

The 2021 PhD six-week spring residency was conducted remotely. The newest group of nine PhD students bring provincial, national and international experience to our school.

Field Education News

The pandemic has continued to create challenges for social work placements across the country as many agency staff are working remotely and have requirements for additional physical space.

Sixty-seven BSW and nine MSW students required spring placements. Once again many social workers and agencies have risen to the occasion and supported our students!

Across the province, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD), Regional Health Authorities, and various community organizations have worked diligently to accommodate BSW students during the spring semester when students are not typically completing placements.

New placements have been secured with agencies like the Pottle Centre, Iris Kirby House, Virginia Park Community Centre, Aurelia, Autism Society of NL and the Lung Association of NL.

Agencies such as Connections for Seniors, Empower, and Vision Loss Rehabilitation NL that have been long-time supporters of field education, have accommodated more students than they initially intended.

Graduate students have been placed in five different provinces and are ready to embark on the final stages of their graduate degree. There are also four BSW students placed out of province.

The Field Preparation Seminar Course was successfully offered through a synchronous on-line platform and students eagerly engaged in discussion and learning.

Announcing the Sheena Findlay Scholarship

The school is pleased to announce that Marian Walsh (BSW'76) and other alumni of the school have established a scholarship to honour Sheena Findlay, a well-known faculty member for more than 23 years. In addition to teaching

a wide range of courses, Sheena developed distance education courses, served as a MUN Extension Services consultant and was associate director of the school.

The Sheena Findlay Scholarship, valued at \$2000, is a wonderful way to recognize Sheena's contributions to the school and social work education. It will be presented annually to a BSW student with demonstrated financial need or who has overcome a mental health challenge.

Anti-Indigenous Racism Statement

At the School of Social Work, we believe that each of us is responsible to actively and constantly resist and work towards eradicating policies and practices of colonialism and racism within ourselves, within our relationships with each other, and within our institutions and society.

Collectively, our first step begins with the school's members being dedicated to the intentional transformation of our school.

Following collaboration between members of the school's Equity and Diversity Committee and others, the school has committed to the actions found in our Anti-Indigenous Racism Statement, which can be viewed at: <https://www.mun.ca/socialwork/news.php?id=14118&type=news>

Black History Month

The school's Equity and Diversity Committee hosted an inaugural annual event to celebrate Black History Month in February. Dr. Delores Mullings presented: Exploring the tensions between anti-black racism statements and the rejection of the authentic black body. The virtual public event was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Dr. Sobia Shaikh, with Dr. Delores Mullings, Dr. Paul Banahene Adjei, Dr. Sulaimon Giwa, and Dr. Paul Issahaku.



Submitted Photo.

Nunavut Arctic College Partnership

As part of the broader partnership between Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) and Memorial University, the School of Social Work is excited to announce that we have partnered with the NAC to offer graduates of the Nunavut Arctic College Social Service Worker Diploma program the opportunity to complete the Memorial University Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program.

Following a three-year commitment from the Government of Nunavut for \$1.8 million dollars for the delivery of an accredited BSW program in the Territory, we plan to begin offering the BSW program in fall 2021 with the first cohort in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. There exists a possibility of offering the program in additional Nunavut communities in the future, with an overarching goal of co-developing an accredited Bachelor of Social Work for NAC to offer independently.

Alumna Receives Governor General Meritorious Service Medal (M.S.M.)

Alumna Marian Walsh, M.S.M. (BSW '76) has been awarded the Governor General's Meritorious Service Decoration (Civilian) for "leading the physical and strategic redesign of the Bridgepoint Active Healthcare facility, resulting in improved patient care and outcomes" (The Governor General of Canada, n.d.).

Marian was appointed President and CEO of Bridgepoint Active Healthcare in Ontario in 1998. She established a bold vision for Bridgepoint to be a world leader in delivering complex care. This vision led to the construction of a new state-of-the-art, 464-bed, purpose-built hospital. Opened in 2013, the facility was designed to inspire health and innovation and support healing for rehabilitation and complex care patients. During Marian's tenure, Bridgepoint became a teaching hospital affiliated with the University of Toronto, established the Bridgepoint Collaboratory for Research and Innovation and in 2015, amalgamated with Mount Sinai Hospital to form Sinai Health.

Marian retired in 2016 and her legacy will impact the health care system for many years to come.

Stay in Touch!

Update your profile at <https://www.mun.ca/alumni/info/> and be sure to follow us on social media - Facebook: www.facebook.com/MUNSCwk, Twitter: @MUNSCwk for all the latest news and events.

Reference

The Governor General of Canada. (n.d.) *Meritorious Service Decoration (Civilian) – February 2021 recipients*. Retrieved June 9, 2021, from <https://www.gg.ca/en/meritorious-service-decoration-civilian-february-2021-recipients>



Social Justice

Our COVID-19 Response - Just Us Women's Centre at Stella's Circle Fosters Innovation and Connection with Criminalized Women

BY LISA CRANFORD BA, BSW, RSW

The Just Us Women's Centre opened in 2009, recognizing a gap in services in responding to the needs of criminalized women in this province. As one of the three Real Help programs at Stella's Circle, we have a mission to transform the lives of marginalized adults in our community. The Just Us Women's Centre offers therapeutic groups, individualized counselling, mental health and social supports, as well as guidance and education around the justice system to criminalized women.

Just Us staff spend two days each week delivering in-reach services to inmates at the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women (NLCCW) in Clarenville. We offer psychoeducational and therapeutic groups on topics such as Addictions, Anger Management, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Trauma, Anti-Shoplifting, and Grief and Loss. Our work extends beyond this to include outreach services to women upon their release to the community. Maintaining and fostering connections both inside and outside NLCCW is rooted in our philosophy as a social justice organization which promotes recovery and inclusion.

For many, the Just Us Women's Centre means connection to others. During the first wave of COVID-19 in the winter of 2020, Just Us staff faced challenges to respond to the needs of our participants. In particular, when our in-person services at NLCCW were suspended due to COVID-19 safety measures, we had to quickly identify new, creative, and innovative ways to deliver our services and maintain our connection to the inmates.

Many of our participants identified feelings of isolation during the pandemic as one of the most concerning factors increasing their vulnerability. With the absence of regular counselling and lacking an in-person social connection to staff and peers, our participants faced heightened impacts of the pandemic.

Inside the NLCCW, women were not immune to the effects of COVID-19. While we recognize inmates are generally more limited in their relationships to the outside world, COVID-19 threatened the women's sense of security and connection. Visits from loved ones were offered virtually rather than in person, and outside organizations that offer services for cultural or spiritual guidance, mental health counselling, and educational and social activities were all restricted or significantly reduced as per government regulations.

Using Eastern Health's Therapy Assistance Online (TAO), Just Us was the first community provider in the province to deliver virtual individual counselling and therapeutic group sessions. With our own Stella's Circle TAO platform, these virtual services were delivered inside the women's prison and to participants living in the community. We were fortunate to have community partners and donors provide some of the technology devices needed. The corrections staff at NLCCW were very accommodating despite challenges setting up this technology inside the prison. As a result, we were able to maintain our connection to the women, some of whom anxiously needed not only news from the outside, but counselling, reassurance, and empathy during this difficult time.

While we were able to provide our services virtually, we also worked with NLCCW to advocate and secure temporary absences for inmates and for those eligible for parole to be released from prison during COVID-19. With conditions in place, some women were able to return to their families, while others were permitted to enter treatment programs such as Emmanuel House, a residential counselling program at Stella's Circle. Decreasing the inmate population during the pandemic was beneficial in numerous ways.

Once Public Health alert levels lowered, we were able to resume our in-person services at the prison. We now operate with smaller groups while adhering to the Public Health guidelines of mask wearing, frequent handwashing, and physical distancing.

Guided by the core values of Stella's Circle, Just Us staff continue to rise to the challenges that COVID-19 has brought us, demonstrating our innovation and courage to implement new ideas, as well as the wisdom and connectedness to continue to support marginalized women. Our participants, too, show resilience and courage, and have been able to realize some of their own strengths and growth. While it brought uncertainty and fear, the pandemic also reinforced the importance of living our values and working toward social justice, not charity. We are proud to say that Stella's Circle did not close its doors for one single day during the pandemic. At a time when the world is still closing doors and retreating inwards, Stella's Circle and the Just Us Women's Centre continue to support those who need help most, perhaps now more than ever.



Innovation

Building Relationships and Providing Support One Whoof at a Time: An Interview with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary's Support Dog Stella

BY LISA WADE MSW, RSW, CST.
KRISTA FAGAN & STELLA, POLICE
SUPPORT DOG (PSD)

In July of 2020, The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) launched the RNC Support Dog Services, and introduced the first RNC support dog, Stella. Stella is a Portuguese Water Dog (PWD) and was born out of Charbr Kennels in Ontario. Stella has a special connection to social work and in May of this year, I sat down with Stella and her handler, Cst. Krista Fagan, to ask Stella a few questions about social work, building relationships and her role in providing support.

Lisa: Thank you Cst. Fagan and Stella for taking part in this article for Connecting Voices. Stella, I think I can speak for many people when I say that I love your name. Please tell us where you got your name. Who named you and was there any significance to your namesake and the role you provided with the RNC?

Stella: I received my name in honor of Stella Burry. Stella Burry was a pioneering social worker, who made an outstanding contribution to her community and to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). Because I will be working within our community with a vulnerable population, RNC Chief, Joe Boland, felt the name suited me and my role. I absolutely love my name and got my name at 7 weeks old in Ontario when I knew I would be coming to NL.

Lisa: Your name certainly suits you and your role within the RNC. What about building relationships? How important is it for you to build relationships, not only with your potential clients, but



the public in general? What have you been doing to build relationships?

Stella: Well my role is sort of like being a social worker and my training is much like going to school. I have learned theory, well my mom sort of does a lot of the theory part and I do the practical training with my mom, she's just not my driver you know! Since I arrived in NL, I have been socialized in numerous environments. We thought it would be a tough time considering COVID-19 restrictions, however the community has come together in assisting me and getting me used to each and every type of environment.

It's because of community partnerships that I have excelled, so I am told, in socialization practical training. I've visited the St. John's International Airport and have been behind the scenes there. That was very interesting because I got to see things to which no one else is privy. I've met with clients at the Dr. Leonard A. Miller Centre who have special equipment to aid in their movements and mobility. That is important because building a

relationship with someone who uses a wheelchair means I have to look past their wheelchair and all its moving parts. I've attended Long Harbour Vale Nickel Processing Plant with heavy equipment running and loud noises. Being calm around loud noises helps me focus on my work, boy oh boy that was interesting to study those loud noises. Each environment has different scents, floor textures and sounds which makes it so important in my training. So when I do get called to duty I will be able to deal with any environmental factors surrounding me. I have also been in everyday places where people get pretty excited to see me, I am pretty cute and adorable you know. My trainer Mike said, from the beginning, that it will be the community training me. Each person I meet and each organization I attend is another exposure to different factors. It's so important to have these partnerships in a community.

I get a lot of exposure on social media too, detailing where I have been and who I have met. Every time I post a message it brings awareness to these community partners and allows the viewer to be more aware of these valuable resources. The general public may not be aware of the tools and resources we have in the community and that is why it's so important for me to form these connections, just like a social worker.

At the end of the day, I think we all want to feel good about what we achieve at work and making a difference is what social work is all about, right? As Dr. Seuss said, "to the world you may be one person but to one person you may be the world!" I love Dr. Seuss.



Distinguished Service

CASW Distinguished Service Award Winner 2021: Shelly Birnie-Lefcovitch PhD

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Distinguished Service Awards are presented annually to remarkable social workers selected from the membership of CASW Partner organizations. The 2021 award recipient for Newfoundland and Labrador, Dr. Shelly Birnie-Lefcovitch, received this award in honour of his significant contributions to the social work profession. This award was presented during a virtual awards celebration held during Social Work Month 2021. The following are excerpts from Shelly's acceptance speech which has been printed with permission.

Thank you Glenda (Webber) for that very kind introduction. And, good morning everyone. Thank you for being here today to be part of this virtual award presentation during national Social Work Month. I am so pleased that Tammy (Manning) and I are receiving our awards on the same day. Tammy, you are a wonderful representative and promoter of our profession. So warm congratulations to you.

I don't know that there are words to express how pleased, how honoured, and how grateful I am to be receiving this Distinguished Service Award. But, let me begin by thanking Sheri McConnell, my very good friend and colleague, who initiated and submitted the award nomination, and the many others, both former students and colleagues, who contributed letters of support. I was very touched, and I am very, very grateful to all of you for taking the trouble to recognize my contributions to our profession. I also want to thank the Board of Directors of the NL College of Social Workers and



our national association for selecting me as this year's recipient for NL. There are so many members of our profession who are deserving of this recognition. Thank you for considering me worthy – I am humbled to know that I am in their company and in the company of previous award nominees and recipients.

This award is especially meaningful to me as I retire; believe it or not, after 50

years of professional service. I was in my late teens, probably 18 or 19, when I knew I wanted to become a social worker. And it was in 1971, spring, just about this time of the year, that I completed my MSW. Fear not, I'm not about to inflict 50 years of added recollections and reflections on you. I hope I've acquired some wisdom over that time, but the thought I want to leave you with today is not about the past, but something much more

contemporary, coming out of our current experience with COVID-19.

Have you noticed the values explicitly highlighted by our political leaders and especially our outstanding public health officials during this pandemic? Care for one another, be kind and generous, have courage – “hold fast Newfoundland & Labrador” says Dr. Fitzgerald our chief public health officer, and finally believe in science, or as we might put it, believe in thoughtful, reasoned, evidence-informed discourse. These are the lived values of social work; they are what has guided our practice every day, with every client, and by every professional social worker. I think it is absolutely remarkable that these values, which have always been so fundamental to social work practice, also are now seen as fundamental to our society’s ability to survive the disastrous health effects and the overwhelming human tragedy we have faced during this global crisis. These values have become essential at a broad, societal level. Those of you who know me, know that I could go on at length talking about each of these values in considerable detail, but again that’s not the focus I want to take today.


Rather, I’d like to link these values to

another idea, the idea of mentorship, because these values, which are so important to us as social workers, don’t just appear. They are learned and nurtured, primarily, though perhaps not exclusively, through social experience. We learn these values when we see them in action, when we are ourselves the recipients of care, kindness, courage, and reason, or when we see their effects on others - when we see someone reach out to another with care, kindness, courage, and reason. We have a very long tradition in social work of mentorship - of learning from our experiences of one another. We learn from our classmates, from teachers, from field instructors, from supervisors, from colleagues and team members, even from friends, partners, and our children. None of us should ever underestimate our ability to mentor another – we all have powerful influences on each other. Through our behavior, that is, through our relationships with one another, we can help each other become more caring, kinder, braver, and more thoughtful. Each of us has it within ourselves to mentor others, whether formally or informally. And, I encourage each of us to see mentorship as a central part of what we do each and every day.

I’ve been very blessed over my 50-year career, because I’ve had and benefitted from many personal mentors. People who were willing to let me walk beside them, to experience them, and to learn from them. I’m grateful to all of you for helping me become a better social worker, a better educator, indeed, a better person.

To conclude, as pleased as I am to be receiving this award today, I’m certain you all understand I would be immeasurably happier to have my most important mentor beside me today. My late wife, Vurla, also a social worker, one of the most capable social workers I’ve known, was the embodiment of the values of caring, kindness, fearlessness, and thoughtfulness. She was my constant supporter, in both good times and bad. And I know she also was an important mentor to others as a mother, sister, friend, and professional colleague. On behalf of all of us who benefitted from knowing and learning from her, I dedicate this award to the memory of Vurla Birnie-Lefcovitch.

Again, thank you so much for taking part in today’s event and helping to celebrate this award and Tammy’s. Happy National Social Work Month to all of you.



NLCSW encourages all members to avail of the *Update My CPE* option available through the MyNLCSW portal. Members can quickly and easily record and track completed CPE credits throughout the year with 3 easy steps:

1. Log in to the MyNLCSW portal
2. Click on ‘Update My CPE’
3. Record and save CPE details including event date, title, category, and number of credit hours

Promotion

NLCSW Pride in the Profession Award Winner 2021: Tammy Manning MSW, RSW

The NLCSW Pride in the Profession Award is presented annually to a registered social worker who promotes the advancement of social work in Newfoundland and Labrador and demonstrates outstanding pride in the profession. This award was presented during a virtual awards celebration held during Social Work Month 2021. The following are excerpts from Tammy's acceptance speech which has been printed with permission.

When Annette called from NLCSW to inform me that I was the 2021 recipient of the Pride in the Profession Award, we had just moved back into (COVID-19) Alert Level 5, parents were preparing for online learning, and employees were transitioning to working at home. It was a very welcome call in a tumultuous time, and I feel extremely honoured and humbled to be selected. Thank you to my inspiring colleague Jaspen Barker for the nomination, Kara Pinksen for seconding, my team members for encouragement and input, and Susan MacLeod Professional Practice Co-ordinator (Eastern Health), for supporting the application. A big thank you to the selection committee for choosing me from the many stellar candidates. I also thank my daughter Mia who provides me with inspiration and enthusiasm to bring to the workplace everyday. I feel very honoured to receive this award with Dr. Shelly Birnie-Lefcovitch who was a wonderful mentor to me in my social work education. He is so very deserving of the CASW Distinguished Service Award.

During the pandemic, social workers have embraced the change and risen to the challenge of continuing to work effectively using innovative techniques. It is very fitting that

the theme for Social Work Month is, "Social Work is Essential." Over the past twenty-one years, I have witnessed the determination of social workers actualizing solutions, even when it meant creating brand new pathways. Social workers are a strong, creative, and adaptable group, never backing down from challenge. I have been blessed to work beside many outstanding social workers who gifted me with their warmth, wisdom, and strength, and like a sponge I have assimilated some of their skills. I have also been fortunate to provide field instruction to BSW and MSW students, as well as to facilitate interprofessional education (IPE) sessions, opportunities which have allowed me to bear witness to the passion of emerging social workers. This has kept me fully engaged in this wonderful profession that I am so fortunate to be a part of. For individuals considering a career in the social work field, embrace this exciting choice. Social work is one of the most versatile and interesting professions with multiple practice areas to choose from and opportunities every day to witness growth and resilience.

I have been honoured to work with exceptional children, youth, and adults across the lifespan in various settings. I continue to feel energized and inspired by the strength, change, and wisdom that I witness everyday. For the past eighteen years, I have practiced in the area of Mental Health and Addictions. I have worked with many stellar colleagues and countless inspirational clients. As a therapist in the specialized clinical practice area of complex trauma counseling, I witness everyday the power of healing and the true strength of the human spirit. A call from a former client sharing news that they have achieved a goal, brings true amazement at the steadfastness of individuals overcoming adversity and achieving success. Those high five



moments are truly heartwarming.

I feel that bringing a sense of self is essential in order to be a proficient practitioner. Traits important to me in practice are genuineness, humour, curiosity, flexibility, and connection. My wise father coined the phrase, "Hurry up and take your time." Be compassionate and demonstrate a strong work ethic, but always take time to appreciate the special moments and the wins. Always finding something to be positive about, embracing change to promote transformation, and feeling truly invested has cultivated my pride in being part of this profession. As social workers, we advocate for clients, and it is also important to advocate for the profession. Maintaining good self care, investing in one's own mental health, and developing strong relationships with colleagues, allows us to continue to work optimally. Always stand up for what you believe in and surround yourself with those who support and inspire you everyday. I feel proud of my BSW and MSW degrees from Memorial University of Newfoundland. I feel proud and blessed to have worked with so many wonderful social workers and clients over the past twenty-one years, and I feel truly honoured and humbled to accept this award. Thank you.

