

## ***A Message from your 2012 CASWE Student Representatives...***

This past May, we were fortunate to have the opportunity to attend the Canadian Association of Social Work for Education (CASWE) annual conference in Waterloo, Ontario as representatives of SWSA and SWAGS. This year's CASWE conference was a first time for both of us and we found it to be a very rewarding experience overall. In existence since 1967, the CASWE holds the conference to bring together hundreds of professors, administrators, field coordinators, students, practitioners, and researchers in the field of social work from all over Canada. Participants are encouraged to convene and present their work, share ideas, and engage in debates and discussions on pertinent themes such as social justice, social work education, Aboriginal social work, international social work, and creative or arts-based interventions to name a few. The CASWE Annual General Assembly (AGM) that takes place during the conference serves as a forum to pass resolutions that advance social work education standards and practices across Canada. Student members in particular also attend the student committee meeting which unites students on issues related to field placement, and learning objectives and gives them a voice within the larger association to discuss strengths and weaknesses in diverse social work curriculums.

It was a whirlwind week, and we are happy to share some of the highlights of our experiences as CASWE student delegates:

- We were relieved to land safely aboard the unexpected miniature sized Bearskin Airlines aircraft!
- We were proud to have been part of the first cohort of students to present a motion at the CASWE AGM. On behalf of the CASWE Student Committee and students from Universities and Schools of Social Work across Canada, Andrea and a student of Université d'Ottawa, passed a resolution unanimously at the AGM that CASWE Members will enter into dialogue with concerned Students and Members alike about financial barriers to education. Find the motion and how you can participate in the action plan here:  
[http://www.caswe-acfts.ca/en/What%60s\\_new\\_46.html](http://www.caswe-acfts.ca/en/What%60s_new_46.html)
- We were inspired by innovative arts-based interventions such as:
  - Cirque du Soleil's "Social Circus" program that targets various at-risk groups including street or detained youth and women survivors of violence. Learn more about Social Circus here:  
<http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/about/global-citizenship/social-circus.aspx>
  - "Blue Print For Life" – a hip hop initiative as "a model for alternative education and healing" within First Nations and Inuit communities, particularly targeting youth but ensuring intergenerational participation. Check out the program at:  
[www.blueprintforlife.ca](http://www.blueprintforlife.ca)

- We were introduced to the MSW Aboriginal Field of Study program offered at Wilfred Laurier University and what it can look like to fully incorporate a “wholistic Indigenous world view” into social work education and practice:  
[http://www.wlu.ca/homepage.php?grp\\_id=1844](http://www.wlu.ca/homepage.php?grp_id=1844)
- Andrea joined the steering committee of SWAN – the Social Work Action Network Canada and subsequently, RECIFS in Quebec - networks of social work professionals, students, and service users united to challenge the neo-liberal agendas and austerity measures pervasive in our current governments. Stay tuned for information when the website launches this fall or contact [andrea.palmer@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:andrea.palmer@mail.mcgill.ca) for more info!
- In the spirit of the ‘Printemps Erable’, we ‘casserole’ down the streets of Kitchener, ON with Donna Baines, editor of ‘Doing Anti-Oppressive Practice’ and Colleen Lundy, author of ‘Social Work and Social Justice: A Structural Approach to Practice’ as part of a nation-wide demonstration in the pursuit of accessible education for all;
- Last, but certainly not least, we are very excited to have been elected as co-chairs for the CASWE Student Committee for the 2012-2013 academic year! As co-chairs we are eager to keep the momentum going over the next year and work collaboratively with the newly hired Executive Director of CASWE, Ms. Alex Wright. Some of our plans include: recruiting student representatives from each province, expanding the Francophone network and bilingualism within the country, continuing key debates (i.e. paid versus unpaid practicums), promoting CASWE nation-wide and ensuring the student voices of McGill’s School of Social work are well-represented at next year’s conference in Victoria, BC.

All in all, it was an invigorating week as we were inspired by and networked with progressive social work practitioners, professors and students from across the country and brainstormed concrete ways to collectively work together on direct action campaigns on local, provincial, and national levels. Ultimately, the conference shed light upon some of the great work being done within our profession, and reminded us that there are countless challenges in store and avenues to explore depending on your calling as a Social Worker!

Please feel free to email us or drop us a line with your ideas, questions, thoughts, concerns, or just to say hello.

Andrea Palmer, BSW U2 Student, SWSA Representative  
& Victoria Burns, PhD Student, SWAGS Representative

Learn more about CASWE at: [http://www.caswe-acfts.ca/en/CASWE\\_20.html](http://www.caswe-acfts.ca/en/CASWE_20.html)