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**News from the McGill School of Social Work**

From the Director, Dr. Wendy Thomson

**Homecoming 2012**

It's Homecoming at McGill and the School of Social Work is very pleased to invite you to meet our doctoral students and discuss their exciting ideas for advancing social work knowledge and practice. Please join us on Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> October at 5:00pm to meet old friends and renew contact with your alma mater. This year's annual Homecoming honors graduates of years ending in 2 and 7; that includes my MSW year so I hope to see many of my former classmates.

This may well be the last occasion to see Wilson Hall before it undergoes a major restoration made possible by an injection of 35 million dollars announced in the Quebec 2012 budget. Wilson Hall is a heritage asset, designed by one of the same architects that worked on the Canadian Parliament buildings. But for some years, it has been in urgent need of major works. The new provincial funding for Wilson Hall will allow McGill to address safety issues, and upgrade teaching and research facilities. Current plans are for the School to be moved into temporary premises as early as September 2013 before returning to the pleasures of a much improved Wilson Hall a few years later.

Homecoming is also an opportunity for me to give you some news about the School, which continues to enjoy many challenges and changes.

**New Programs**

We continue to review our programs and this September introduced a new "Qualifying Year" to enable people who hold a relevant degree to gain access to the MSW without having to do a BSW. Many excellent applicants decide to become social workers after they have completed their first degree in another subject and we are pleased to be able to offer them this graduate school option.

Our efforts continue to welcome the first cohort of students into a Masters in Couple and Family Therapy. This graduate program will be the first of its kind in Canada, developed in response to the recommendations made by the Trudeau Commission many years ago and Law 21 enacted last June. The process of gaining approval for new programs is challenging, but all that remains is a response from the professional social work order.

### **An International Focus**

Some of you will have been involved with the School's longstanding relationship with social work in Indonesia. This summer, Prof. David Rothwell attended a conference in Yogyakarta organized by McGill alumni associated with the State Islamic University of Indonesia Sunan Kalijaga (UIN) and the International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD) Asia Pacific Branch. Alumni Andayani Safwan and Ro'fah Mudzakir organized a reception where David conveyed the School's continuing commitment to partnership between McGill and Indonesian colleagues. Under a Memorandum of Understanding, the School has agreed to help with the publication of social work texts in Indonesia languages.



### **Faculty – Warm Welcomes and Farewells**

The School is pleased to welcome new faculty member Dr Heather MacIntosh, who joined us in fall 2011 in anticipation of the new Masters in Couple and Family Therapy. Heather brings a wealth of experience in clinical practice and supervision, and has a PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Ottawa. Her research interests and publications address emotionally focused couple therapy, trauma, and same sex couples.

Congratulations and farewells go to Dr Amanda Grenier who has been appointed to the prestigious Gilbrea Chair in Aging and Mental Health at McMaster University. Her research in the field of social gerontology made a valuable contribution to the School, and a formative contribution to the MSW stream on health and social care.

After more than 40 years service with the School of Social Work, Liz Ierfino decided to retire. We marked the occasion with a reception in her honour, attended by many alumnae and faculty from near and far.



The university has approved the recruitment of 2 tenure track faculty, and a search is getting underway now for new appointments to take up post in August 2013.

### **Achievements**

The School takes professional teaching and learning seriously and is delighted to see Dr. Tamara Sussman awarded the H. Noel Fieldhouse Award for Distinguished Teaching at the 2011 convocation. Congratulations are also due to PhD student Rosemary Carlton, well deserved recipient of the 2011-2012 Teaching Assistant Award!

The School is very proud of Dr. Sheila Goldbloom who was bestowed an honorary Doctorate of Humane letters at last fall's McGill convocation. Having graduated with a MSW in 1964 and taught at the School for nearly 30 years, Sheila has dedicated more than 50 years to community service with organizations such as the Foundation of Greater Montreal, Centraide, the Red Feather Foundation, the Queen Elizabeth Health Centre, Big Sisters and Big Brothers. Social work students continue to appreciate Sheila's wise counsel and support, in her role as field liaison.

Dr Myriam Denov is developing a *Research Group on Children and Global Adversity* with a team grant from the FQRSC and her new book entitled *Children's Rights and International Development: Lessons and Challenges from the Field* (with R. Maclure & K. Campbell) has recently been released. The book combines accounts of the experiences

and perspectives of marginalized children in ten developing countries with critical assessments of current child rights policies and strategies of intervention.

The Centre for Research on Children and Families continues to develop. Most recently the Director Dr Nico Trocme has received a Partnership Team Grant for over \$1.5 million from the SSHRC for Building Research Capacity with First Nations & Mainstream Youth Protection services in Quebec, as well as an infrastructure grant from the Canadian Fund for Innovation. The Centre continues to provide data about the outcomes of children served by Quebec's Centres de Jeunesses, a great example of university/community partnership.

In March, the Quebec government appointed Dr Wendy Thomson to chair an Expert Group on activity-based financing of health services. The Group is charged with introducing new financing initiatives in the short term, to follow with recommendations for full implementation thereafter. Quebec's interest in this area follows work being done in B.C and Ontario to use patient-based funding approaches to shorten wait times, improve service quality and patient outcomes.

### **Indigenous Access McGill**

Aboriginal students are a priority for the School, which has a longstanding commitment to offering relevant professional education for Aboriginal communities. Indigenous Access McGill provides a resource centre and academic support for Aboriginal students studying in social work and health related services. This year, there are 5 BSW and 2 MSW Aboriginal students, a group we have confidence will join the 8 BSW and 1 MSW students who have graduated in the last few years.



## Students

Alumni's generous contributions have allowed us to offer more graduate fellowships and helped to attract excellent doctoral candidates to the School who in turn have been recognized with prestigious grants and awards (e.g. Vanier Graduate Scholarships, Trudeau Foundation Scholarships, Fonds recherche société et culture Québec, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council).

## Events to Celebrate

Last October brought together the MSW class of 1971 to celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, marking also the last class to graduate from the one year Masters program. Penny Winship-Elias spearheaded the event, travelling from England to make the reunion and join former colleagues from across Canada. The weekend included a tea hosted by Dr Sheila Goldbloom, a tour of the downtown campus, lunch at Wilson Hall and dinner in old Montreal. The accomplishments and contributions to the field of social work made by the Class of '71 are a true testament to the path that McGill set them on those many years ago.



The Social Services department of the Montreal General Hospital marked its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary last fall, and hosted an event to honor current staff and alumnae and unveil a commemorative plaque. The School has shared its history and enjoyed a longstanding relationship with the MGH. As the MUHC looks forward to the far-reaching changes associated with the Glenn site and renewal of the MGH, the next few years offer exciting opportunities to shape social work in a modern health care context.

### **Accreditation and Review**

To ensure the quality and standard of the BSW and MSW, the School of Social Work is regularly assessed and accredited by the Canadian Association of Social Work Education. Our turn has come round again, and following the submission of a comprehensive self-study in April a review team from the CASWE will be making a visit this November to meet with McGill administration, faculty, students and supervisors.

The quality of Social Work scholarship is also to be assessed by an independent team commissioned by McGill through its regular cycle of Academic Unit Reviews. We are pleased to have a top caliber team appointed to review our teaching and research. They will also be meeting faculty, staff and students this November.

So much more news we could share but I hope this gives you a sense of what is happening here at the School. Hope to see you at Homecoming. We would also love to hear from everyone who would be interested in developing our alumnae network. Just let me know.

With best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W Thomson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "W".

Dr Wendy Thomson, CBE, FRSA.  
Director