cultural therapy & reasonable accommodation
Dr. Frederick Hickling, former Head of the Section of Psychiatry at the University of the West Indies (MONA campus, Kingston, Jamaica) and presently Chairman of the Steering Committee for the establishment of the Caribbean Institute of Mental Health and Substance Abuse (CARIMENSA) is the creator of an original technique of cultural therapy called psychohistoriography. Simply put, this is a process of group/community psychotherapy in which the members of a specific group/community tell their personal stories in relation to a cultural, historical issue that is of vital importance to them. These stories are then processed through various art forms, such as dance, music, song, poetry and storytelling, so that the outcome of the whole process is a unique performance, created and performed by this particular group/community. The performance, then, becomes the catalyst for a forum on this same issue, so that members of the community-at-large may dialogue more deeply on the same issue. This whole process is known as psychohistoriographic cultural therapy. The outcome of psychohistoriography is always a multivocal performance, presenting multiple perspectives. Over the past 30 years, Dr. Hickling has implemented his method of cultural therapy in diverse settings. At the 2500-bed Bellevue Mental Hospital in Kingston, patients under the direction of Dr. Hickling and his staff, reviewed the history (and their experience of it) of the treatment of mental illness in postcolonial Jamaica. The psychohistoriographic method was used to represent their collective story of this topic through drama, poetry, art, music and dance in large-group pageants with such titles as M sacrificed Irations Explosion, Vision- ated Penetrations, Madaptations, and Irrations Explosion. These performances were witnessed by thousands of people in Jamaica. More recently, psychohistoriography was used with a multicultural group in Montreal during the Annual McGill Summer Program in Social and Cultural Psychiatry.

Dr. Hickling has been invited by the co-sponsors to design a workshop, using his method to work with the issue of “reasonable accommodation,” currently being debated in Québec. Twenty participants will be recruited from culturally diverse community organizations in Montreal to participate in a two-day workshop in psychohistoriography. People representing all sides of the issue will be desirable candidates. The workshops will be free for those who commit to the full two-day workshop and the subsequent performance on November 15th at the amphitheatre of the Institute of Community and Family Psychiatry of the Jewish General Hospital in Côte-des-Neiges.

Dr. Hickling will be assisted by Dr. Hilary Robertson-Hickling, an organizational psychologist at the University of the West Indies, Dr. Jaswant Guzder, Head of Child Psychiatry at the Jewish General Hospital, and Dr. Stephen Snow, Coordinator of Graduate Drama Therapy in the Department of Creative Arts Therapies and a co-founder of The Centre for the Arts in Human Development at Concordia University. Dr. Snow will help to guide the development of the performance evolving out of the two-day workshop. The goal is for the performance to be a catalyst for a dialogue on the topic of “reasonable accommodation.”

Immediately following the performance on November 15, at 7:30 pm, at the Institute for Community and Family Psychiatry, there will be an open forum on “reasonable accommodation” for all in attendance, chaired by Dr. Laurence Kirmayer, Director of the McGill Division of Social & Transcultural Psychiatry.

Dr. Hickling and Dr. Robertson-Hickling also will present a lecture on the background of psychohistoriographic cultural therapy, on Friday, November 9th , at 7 pm. This will take place in EV 1.605, the first-floor auditorium of the Fine Arts building at Concordia University. Again, this lecture is open to the community.

The Three Events, then, are:

Lecture on Friday, November 9th, at 7 pm, at the Concordia Fine Arts Building, EV 1.605, 1515 St Catherine St., Montreal. Admission free.

Workshop, November 10th and 11th at St. Ignatius of Loyola, 4455 West Broadway (corner of Terrebonne), Montreal (There is no fee for the workshop but enrollment is limited to 20 and pre-registration is essential; contact Dr. Stephen Snow.)

Performance/Open Forum on November 15th, at 7:30 pm, in the amphitheatre of the Institute of Community & Family Psychiatry, 4333 Chemin de la Côte Ste. Catherine, Montréal. Admission free.

All of these events are co-sponsored by the Division of Social & Transcultural Psychiatry of the Department of Psychiatry, McGill University and The Centre for the Arts in Human Development at Concordia University, as a pilot project for a new program in the planning stages, the Initiative for the Advanced Study of Culture, Conflict and the Arts Therapies (IASCCAT).

PLEASE RESERVE!
Seats for the events on November 9th and 15th are limited, please e-mail the following address to reserve seats for the Lecture and the Performance/Forum:
cultural.therapy@gmail.com

For further information contact:
Dr. Stephen Snow
The Centre for the Arts in Human Development, Concordia University (514) 848-8616
or at the e-mail above.

Les présentations seront données en anglais, cependant la traduction française sera disponible sur place.