

*Welcome to the*  
**BETWEEN US/ENTRES NOUS**  
**Spring Edition – 2013**



*Enjoy!*

Your Between Us/Entres Nous Team  
Rose Anthony, Candice Lawrence & Shivon Raghunandan

# **Chair's Annual Report**

*Linda De Jong, Sheridan College*



The calendar says it's spring but it sure doesn't feel like it outside. It's been a long winter! I think it's safe to say that we're all looking forward to some nice warm weather.

It's just about the end of another academic year and time for reflection on all that we accomplished. I have a sense that some things are coming to fruition this year. As noted later in this report, the Ministry has announced funding for Innovation Mental Health initiatives. This has been a long time coming and I am happy to see some innovative ideas being implemented with the intention of replicating them on more college and university campuses.

The Psychotherapy regulation is also moving forward and looks like the legislation will pass next spring. I am most appreciative of the guidance we've received from Vinnie Mitchell and Shirley Porter. I am pleased to see the inclusion of a Master's degree as a minimum qualification for the Psychotherapist title.

This will be my last report as OCC Chair and it really is bittersweet, as I've enjoyed the experience so much. We have a great executive team of volunteers who go above and beyond because they care about College counselling.

I couldn't have done it without our Executive team and the guidance of past Chair, Jim Lees. He is an amazing guy who is everywhere and is doing everything. Jim is a wonderful mentor and I'm proud to call him my friend. Jim will be sitting on the Centre for Excellence Advisory Board as the OCC College representative.

It's been an honour and a privilege to work with such a group of professionals. I look forward to the next years Executive, some of whom will be elected at the May 22, 2013 AGM at Durham College. I hope many of you will consider getting involved in OCC. Listed below are some exciting projects I have been involved in this term:

1. Topic: **Addressing the prevalence of Mental Health issues**
  - **safeTALK:** 38 college counsellors have been trained in safeTALK and over 1800 people have been trained in the colleges. It has been an extremely positive experience. It looks like many Colleges are now supporting the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) model and we are looking forward to seeing how these 2 programs can better support our students.
  - **MHOP (Mental Health in Post-Secondary)** this working group is co-chaired by Su-Ting Teo of Ryerson and Jim Lees, OCC past Chair. I am also an active member. As such, we were involved in submitting a proposal for the Mental Health Innovation funding, which included a Centre for Change, expert resources for front line workers and a Community of Practice. As this proposal has been approved and Jim Lees is sitting on the Advisory Board, the work of MHOP may be morphing into supporting the new Centre for Excellence. Ontario is investing \$27 million over three years to provide new services and supports to postsecondary students at Ontario's colleges and universities. The funding is part of Ontario's comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. Ten projects from across Ontario are moving forward in round one of the Mental Health Innovation Fund, including a province-wide, 24-hour-a-day, 365 days a year helpline to provide support for college and university students with mental health concerns. Kids Help Phone is working with postsecondary institutions on this service, which is expected to be in place within the next year. As OCC Chair, I was also advising on the Innovation funding proposal

for a “Help Line” for Post-secondary students. Connex and Kids Help Line are moving forward with their preparations and will be launching in the fall, 2013.

2. Topic: **Research Project “An Analysis of College Counselling Services offered across Ontario”** conducted by OCC past Chair, Jim Lees in consultation with Dr. Peter Dietsche, OISE.

- Jim and Peter have collected a vast amount of significant information from the research and Jim gave a "snapshot" report to the OCC executive. The final report was released in November. There are some significant differences between the colleges in terms of delivery of service, specialization and contracting out of services. Jim has been asked to present at the OUCHA Conference in May and we will be using this report as a basis for discussion about the future of OCC and College Counselling on May 22 at the spring conference.

3. Topic: **Spring Conference in May at Durham College in Oshawa.**

- OUCHA has invited OCC to join their conference on May 22, 23 and 24 at Durham College. The theme is “Circle of Care” and will allow disability, counselling and health services staff to collaborate and share our knowledge base in one conference site. We have sent out the “Save the date” email and are awaiting further updates, Melissa Mask, our PD co-ordinator, is planning an “OCC day” on Wednesday May 22 with the morning portion focussing on the history of OCC, taking stock of our present status and looking forward to next steps/new directions. Several themes are cropping up, including Psychotherapy regulation, complex mental health/addictions issues and models of Counselling departments. We will hold our AGM and executive elections in the afternoon.

Hope to see many of you in May and I wish you all a refreshing and rejuvenating spring and summer!

## College Updates

### Algonquin College

*Submitted by Audrey Rosa*

Counselling Services at Algonquin continues to be challenged by the number of students seeking support and a complement of counsellors that has remained unchanged for decades. We are adapting to our vibrant new location and tweaking processes of access through our schedule, intake workers and the inclusion of interns for the first time in over 10 years. Like other colleges across the system, we struggle with the dilemma of how to meet expanding student need with limited resources while also maintaining quality of care.

As Counselling Services focuses on the challenges of meeting student demands, other areas of our service have been realigned with other departments. For example, the Test Centre, which used to have a dedicated counselling coordinator, is no longer a part of counselling services. It now has its own manager and staff and did not make the move to our new Student Commons building. As well, Peer Tutoring - one of our most successful programs,

developed by counsellors Sue Goldman (now retired), David Glickman and most recently Louise Legault - is now part of Learning and Teaching Services and will have its own full-time coordinator who will be responsible for both the administrative and training components of the program.

In the area of outreach, we have one dedicated counsellor, Mary Ann Hansen, who does outreach work 3 days a week. She and another safeTALK trained counsellor, Maria Taylor, conducted 8 safeTALK sessions since the fall and have 2 additional sessions scheduled. The majority of these workshops have been done for students (8 out of the 10). Interest has been fantastic and the feedback very positive. Other study skills and group dynamic workshops make up the rest of the outreach work.

Last, but certainly not least, Algonquin was the winner of a national competition where satirist Rick Mercer visited the Woodroffe campus to tape his show -The Rick Mercer Report! The show, featuring typical Mercer antics and our ecstatic students, aired April 2, 2013 on CBC.

Algonquin students were very proud about their collective

success of raising over \$40,000, which Mercer reported would help to save approximately 4,000 lives in Africa. He congratulated the college after students, faculty, and administrators raised the most money of any post-secondary institution in Canada for the anti-malaria campaign - "Spread the Net". Since it began in 2008, Mercer said, the charity has raised \$1.1 million to provide some 546,850 bed nets to Malaria stricken areas of Africa. The disease kills roughly 650,000 people a year, much of which is preventable by a simple bed net. It was great to be part of such a wonderful initiative and kudos to professor Lisa Roots who spearheaded the campaign with her Police Foundations class.

It has been a busy and exciting semester, but in the frosty capital, we welcome Spring and other good things coming our way.

### **Centennial College**

*Submitted by Jasprit Pandori & Eric Dunn*

#### *Staffing:*

We have a new Director of Career & Counselling Services, Dr. Tracey Lloyd. She has been with us since October 2012. The most recent addition to the counselling team is Catherine Chen, who will

work out of our Progress and Ashtonbee campuses. We will be saying good-bye and good luck to our placement student Jasprit Pandori who has provided our students with terrific support over the past academic year; she has been a valuable addition to the team.

#### *Initiatives:*

##### *Paws Your Stress Initiative*

The Counselling Centre at Centennial College has had the unique opportunity to collaborate with Therapeutic Paws of Canada (TPOC); a non-profit organization that provides animals for educational, motivational, and mental health needs, among others. Research indicates that spending time with therapy animals, especially dogs, can significantly reduce stress and anxiety levels and elicit feelings of relaxation, comfort, and happiness. In collaboration with this organization, counsellors at Centennial were able to hold continuous events across all campuses during exam week as a means to assist students in stress reduction while visiting with dog handlers from TPOC. As well, counsellors have been able to partner with Student Associations on campus including the CCSAI, and interested student volunteers, in efforts to provide additional

stress reduction activities, such as massages and stretching. The Counselling Centre is fortunate to be able to continue these events going forward and have had a huge student response thus far. Look out for future updates on this unique initiative!

### *LGTBQ Group*

The Counselling Centre at Centennial College's Progress Campus commenced an LGTBQ support group in January 2013 as a means to engage vulnerable students from this population. Students are able to engage in meaningful discussions of their choosing, including current hot topics such as communication in relationships, spiritual and religious beliefs, socializing strategies, among others. This opportunity has provided group members with a safe and accepting space to discuss pressing topics and support one another through an open, respectful discussion with the supervision of two trained counsellors. It has been a wonderful way to continue to boost inclusive activities at Centennial College and concurrently enhance student feelings of belongingness and group cohesiveness.

### *SafeTALK*

To date (past 1.5 years) there have been thirteen training

workshops for faculty and staff - mostly supported through COLT, our staff training department. We have conducted training sessions for our security officers and one session for our financial aid staff. Total faculty/staff trained to date – 218. We have conducted 25 sessions for students (all but one session have been in the Community/Health Sciences programs). A total of 581 students have been trained. We have 5 more sessions planned this semester.

### *Final Comments*

I am sure many of you can relate to our ongoing challenge(s) to provide the best service for our students and colleagues. The demands on our service have grown in number and intensity. We have regular discussions at team meetings about what we can/should offer based on those demands. A sometimes painful but necessary discussion. Once we close that door and get to work, it sure seems like it's all worthwhile!

We're almost there! (End of semester) All the best from Centennial Counselling, see you at the AGM in May 2013.

### **Conestoga College**

*Submitted by Lynn Robbins-White*

With another Spring upon us, we recognize another academic cycle has almost passed. The busy pace felt at all of our colleges this year has been true for Conestoga as well. Along with one to one complex mental health appointments, we have continued with our other outreach activities and group offerings. We held our annual *Beat the Blues* winter outreach event at the Doon and Waterloo campuses to provide education and strategies for coping with the winter blues.

This semester, our *Performance Anxiety Group* was offered by counsellors, Lydia Almorales-Ray and Marshall Chanda for students seeking strategies to improve their academic performance while dealing with test, public speaking, and/or performance anxiety. Our counsellors have also responded to requests for in-class workshops, offering workshops on stress management, culture shock, healthy relationships, conflict resolution, and orientation to services.

We conducted nine safeTALK sessions for 2012/13 with another scheduled for faculty/staff in June. This included four program groups; two sessions for student Respect Leaders and Peer Tutors; one health interprofessional

student group; one for the Student Association Board of Directors and employees; and one staff/faculty group. A total of 235 people were trained! We have continued to get funding for the participant booklets, primarily through our Student Association but also the local Suicide Prevention Council, Health and Campus safety Grant and our Professional Development Department.

Our upcoming *Stress Free Zone* before final exams is always a popular event for providing students the opportunity to alleviate stress with massage, reflexology, bath salts craft, and food!

Our counselling staff continues to respond to the counselling needs of students at our Doon, Guelph, Waterloo, and Cambridge campuses. Barb Kraler has announced her retirement commencing June 30th. Barb has been in the counselling department for over 25 years. She is looking forward to new adventures abroad and rest and relaxation. Barb will be sadly missed by her colleagues but we wish her a wonderful retirement.

Shawna Bernard will be returning for the fall from her professional development. She is currently completing her sabbatical leave

for the 2012-2013 academic year to study mindfulness-based cognitive therapy and stress reduction, with plans to bring new mindfulness initiatives back to the Counselling department for our work with students as well as group and workshop delivery. Shawna will be returning to Counselling Services as the Coordinator.

We welcome spring and look forward to warmer weather!

## **Durham College**

*Submitted by Dan Keeley*

Here at the Campus Health Centre we remain very busy meeting the counselling needs of Durham College and UOIT students.

Our current full-time staffing compliment remains the same as last year: 1 Counsellor, 1 Mental Health Worker and 1 Mental Health Nurse. We have added a part-time Outreach Worker located 3 evenings per week in our largest student residence – a very useful resource for students and a well-connected referral source to full-time staff. Students continue to have access to off-campus counsellors through their Student Assistance Plan. The vast majority of students choose to use on-campus resources.

Directors of the Campus Health Centre and the Centre for Students with Disabilities are currently working on a systemic approach to mental health at DC. Durham College recognizes the need for additional staff to meet rising enrolment and increased demand for counselling services and has approved new positions though they are not currently posted. In August 2013, Durham College will be hiring 2 full-time Masters level Counsellors, 1 full-time Mental Health Nurse and 1 full-time Outreach Worker. The Outreach Worker will work in student residence(s). The Mental Health Nurse will be assigned to the DC Whitby campus. 1 Counsellor will work at both the Oshawa and Whitby campuses. These are exciting and much needed changes/ innovations for both current and future needs.

A recent survey of both Durham College and UOIT students done by the DC Research and Innovation Department yielded encouraging results for staff serving DC and UOIT counselling needs. Students gave feedback about all aspects of Campus Health Centre services. The survey was administered over a 2-week period, January 14th through January 28th, 2013 and there were 1893 responses. 93.3% of

Durham College students and 89.5% of UOIT students reported that they were Satisfied/Very Satisfied with Counselling Services. It has been both validating and motivating for staff and management to receive such positive evaluation.

### **George Brown College**

*Submitted by Cristina Domingues*

The big news at George Brown College (GBC) is that we have welcomed a new Director of Student Affairs, Susan Toews. With a new Dean and new director at the helm, our Counsellors, along with our Disability Consultants, are gearing up for some exciting changes in line with a new vision within the Academic Services and Student Affairs (ASSA) Division. The details of how this is going to impact our staff and our work are still being worked through and we hope to get a clearer picture in the following months. There are many unknowns at this time, which can foster a gamut of feelings. A mixture of optimism and concern are about the direction of the work; motivation for these changes; and the potential overall impact on the students.

At the Casa Loma Campus (CL) we have been noticing, since the

fall, a great deal of problems with group work among students, particularly within the Fashion programs. Our Counsellors in collaboration with our Student Success Coordinator, have been actively involved in meeting with these students to problem solve around these issues.

At the Waterfront campus, our newest campus, student traffic in the first semester was slow in spite of several attempts to increase our profile. Difficulties included a lack of marketing materials (until mid- semester), being prohibited from posting notices of workshops due to our 'paperless' environment, lack of access to LCD screens where most student info is advertised, etc. The second semester has been much busier. One of the biggest contributions to the increase in traffic is the inclusion of the option to choose an individual counselling session rather than a workshop for students required to fulfill passport requirements by their programs. Secondly, programs that have used us in the past have also settled into the new campus and are now using our services more.

The St. James Campus counsellors have been steadily busy throughout this semester with individual counselling

appointments as well as workshops. We continue to see an increase in the number of students who are accessing counselling services to address personal issues.

### **Georgian College**

*Submitted by Greg Taylor*

The team of senior managers at Georgian has almost completely changed with the fairly recent hiring (last Fall) of our new President, Dr. MaryLynn West-Moynes. With these changes comes a new strategic vision and the college anticipates some significant changes in the very near future. After many years of external expansion, the College is now focusing on developing internally and reducing spending. At this point, it is uncertain how this will impact the Counselling office. It is hoped that this will be a positive change. Georgian continues to expand on the international front as well as looking at ways to build alliances with Universities.

Greg Taylor and Karen Phillips continue to deliver safeTALK to students and staff at various Georgian Campuses. Lynn Baine, the counselling coordinator, continues to be on sabbatical

leave until January 2014 and Greg Taylor is the acting coordinator until then. Kelly Woods has stepped into the vacant counselling position until January 2014. She has worked for several years at Georgian as a disability specialist, learning strategist and a teacher. One of Kelly's immediate contributions was developing a group called "Student Success Social Support Group". This group is targeted to ASD students or those with similar traits. The goal is to provide academic support, create a social environment with other peers, work on social/communication challenges, and have fun! We're really excited about having this resource available for our students.

At Owen Sound Campus, we have Melody Robinson providing summer coverage for Linda Thomas.

### **Humber College**

*Submitted by Liz Sokol*

Humber continues to evolve and change. With the 2013-2018 strategic plan underway (lead by Humber College new president Chris Whitaker), there has been some recent changes and additions to the senior administrative team, including a new Vice President of Student

Services position. The current vice-president of Corporate and Student Services (John Mason) is retiring, which will impact Counselling not only in terms of a new VP, but also potentially through the promotion of internal candidates within Student Services.

Our staff continues to evolve and change as well: Bohdan Turok has resigned from Humber in order to be a full time dad and to focus on other creative opportunities & Catherine Wilson Cheverie has retired to become a full time relaxed human. Catherine has continued working 2 days per week at the lakeshore campus but will finish her sessional term in a few weeks. They will be missed immensely as they were integral members of our department. We wish them the very best on their life journey!

Deborah Mandell has joined us as the new full time counsellor at Lakeshore and Orangeville; Andrew Poulos is on secondment as the Manager of Disability Services, Andjelka Palikucin-Reljin and Svetlana Lilova are working with us on a contract, and Brian Doyle (a Liberal Arts and Science faculty for about 30 years) is working with us 3 days a week. Camille Hannays King is on medical leave, and 2 counsellors

are now working across the North and Lakeshore campus to provide some coverage as a result of some of the above mentioned changes. Just a few changes....!!!!

We have also been busy delivering Mental Health First Aid workshops to Humber staff and faculty, which are becoming increasingly valued at the college as the word has spread and people have begun implementing it in their offices and classrooms. Humber (Jen McMillen, our Director) is also coordinating and providing MHFA 'train the trainer' sessions for staff and faculty in other 12 colleges through monies received from the Mental Health Innovation Fund (MTCU).

As students continue to flood through our doors, this feels like the busiest winter semester yet. Counsellors are seeing record numbers of students daily and many are in very high need or crisis. We are no longer doing learning skill workshops (learning skills workshops are now delivered through our Peer Tutoring department) but continue to deliver some personality workshops that are curriculum based and stress management workshops. There is currently a lack of clarity around students seeking career help – whether

they need to see a counsellor or a career advisor. We are trying to develop a simple, quick screening to help career students come/be referred to either a counsellor or a career advisor, depending on their needs. While much of the career exploration process can be done by others, many students still require the services of a counsellor in determining their career path.

We have not done SafeTALK trainings this semester as MHFA trainings are the priority; although the Residence is likely to continue to request it for their student-staff.

### **Lambton College**

*Submitted by Mickey Slood*

There are no new updates from Lambton, other than recognizing that the counselling department at Lambton is continuing to deal with a significant number of mental health issues presented by students, as has been the trend in recent years.

### **Loyalist College**

*Submitted by Adam Gosney*

Loyalist College continues to advance several Student Success, Wellness and Safe Campus initiatives.

During the December exam period we hired “Student Mental Health Ambassadors” whose job it was to canvas the school after hours, including the computer labs, study areas, common areas and library in search of students in distress. They handed out snacks, bottles of water and information on self-care. If a student self-identified as experiencing a psychosocial or mental health related challenge they were provided with the contact information for Counselling and Mind and Wellness services and encouraged to make an appointment to follow up. The student response was overwhelmingly positive and it also led to several students connecting with formal services where they may not have otherwise done so. Loyalist College continues to develop and formalize our peer support initiatives and has some exciting developments planned for the future.

Our Mind and Wellness Worker-Katrina Levasseur has partnered with the “Draw the Line” campaign. “Draw The Line” is a new initiative at Loyalist College. It is an interactive campaign that aims to engage Loyalist students in a dialogue about sexual violence. Through social media such as Facebook and Twitter student are given the opportunity to gain information and develop insight on sexual violence. The hope of

“Draw the Line” is to educate Ontarians on how to spot sexual violence and empower them to make a difference. The campaign challenges common myths about sexual violence and equips bystanders with information on how to intervene safely and effectively.

Loyalist College also continues to advance our Safe Campus initiatives through engagement in various training and implementation of a formal Violence Threat and Risk Assessment Protocol. Loyalist College was recently recognized by Kevin Cameron of the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response as being one of the first Post Secondary Institutions in Ontario to adopt and initiate a formal and functioning VTRA protocol. Kevin will be joining us again in May for a Level 2 VTRA certification. In addition Loyalist continues to offer specialized training in Threat Assessment Interviewing in partnership with Step Ahead Risk Management Services.

## **Niagara College**

*Submitted by Jason Burdon*

With the school year winding down once again it is a good opportunity to reflect upon the changes, challenges, contributions and

accomplishments of counselling services at Niagara College. With mental health issues being one of the most prominent health concerns on any college or university campus, Niagara College was thrilled to partner with Brock University to develop an online portal and face-to-face information sessions to address a broad range of mental health issues. The program will be funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, who has dedicated \$360,240 over three years to help address growing concerns about student mental health issues.

In other mental health initiatives, Niagara College recently sent 3 faculty and staff members to Mental Health First Aid training for trainers. The plan is now for these newly trained trainers to offer Mental Health First Aid training to other Niagara College faculty and staff.

In February Niagara College Disabilities Counsellor Trina Washington was recognized at Queen’s Park by the Honourable David C. Onley who nominated her for the Queens II Diamond Jubilee Medal for her significant contribution and achievements to people with disabilities, and particularly students with disabilities, over the years.

This year we will bid farewell to long-time colleagues, Jocelyne

Briggs and Georgina Tibbs, who have announced that they will be retiring at the end of June. We wish them well in their retirement.

### **St. Lawrence College**

*Submitted by Dwight Druick*

It gives us great pleasure to introduce Michael Whiteman as our new Associate Director, Counselling & Accessibility Services and Health Centre, effective Feb 11th, 2013

Michael joins us from Belleville's Quinte Health Care Corporation where he held the position of Manager of Patient Services for three mental health departments: Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACTT), Crisis Intervention Centre and the Parent, Child and Youth Clinic.

Michael holds a Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology with Post Graduate Certification in Psychological Assessments



## **Reflections of a Rookie**

*Cheryl Cnoop-Koopmans, Counsellor, Sheridan College*

This job can be many things. It can be a roller coaster, it can be a whirlwind, it can be a breath of fresh air, it can be the tipping point, or it can be the strength to carry on. Sometimes, when we are running from one day to the next, keeping on top of paper work, schedules, appointments, follow-ups, and phone calls, we can miss the big picture, day-to-day.

Probably like everyone else, you've been in high demand this year with crisis situations, full schedules, and complex cases, often so much so that it doesn't always leave time to pause and reflect when we may need it the most. This seems the perfect time of year to take a breath and think back. Like many other jobs, this job doesn't come with a cheering squad and a golden trophy for the hard work we do, there are definitely shining moments, especially at this time of the year, that stand out as bigger rewards than a marching band and our names written in lights: the students who pass their courses having faced a new mental health diagnosis or new medication this semester, the faculty member who notices a student in distress and brings them to counselling when no one else has taken the time to help, the student who finally graduated, even after years of struggling through failed

attempts or difficult times, the student who went from being hospitalized to running for student council, or the young woman who finally found the strength to leave her abusive relationship, and now sees a summer full of possibilities instead of a summer full of dread. These are the shining moments that make all those hectic days worthwhile.

We are in a unique position as we get to watch these students grow through their school year and get to see small snapshots of their lives. To have students be able to access counselling potentially for the first time in their lives, and to trust us with their most private stories and information, is a distinct privilege. Some days we take this for granted; sometimes we are too busy longing for our missed lunch hour that we forget that this is a privilege. Guilty as charged! But to be able to step back and pull all the stories and journeys together is truly inspiring. Each day and each student brings something new.

This job pushes you to grow, change, adapt, and develop in ways no other experience can match. Whether you are a rookie or a seasoned veteran, the self-growth we experience as a result of our interactions with students is invaluable. From uncovering new triggers to finding new passions, to discovering new levels of resiliency in ourselves and in our co-workers, this work gives back more than we could ever put into it. Sometimes we miss the day-to-day signs that we are growing and changing as a result of our work, but to step back and look at each of our personal journeys through the years tells the story itself.

Having had the opportunity to work with fabulous colleagues these last two years at Sheridan College, and the varying perspectives coming from those with a long history at the college mixed with some rookie perspectives such as my own, this time has been an inspiring mix of experiences. From learning together how to navigate the changing landscape of college mental health, to aspiring to emulate the confidence, self-trust, as well as vulnerability of more experienced colleagues, the myriad of rich experiences from this work is something worth reflecting on. Through multiple staffing changes and life changes for each of us this year, we have become a strange, eclectic, and quirky family that's in this ride together – for better or for worse!

Being a rookie myself, the learning curve has been fast and furious, but the rewards have been immense. To recognize that college counselling can

play a huge role in preparing the next generation to change the way we think about mental health is inspiring and motivating. These students are the leaders, the workforce, and the mothers and fathers of tomorrow; the ones whose ideas and assumptions will further shape the generation to come after them. We have an opportunity to help shape the future of mental health through the unique access we have to this group; to increase awareness and reduce stigma around mental health, and to have these students carry this forward in their lives.

In this regard, Sheridan is planning to make even bigger moves in the next year to continue to tackle the stigma around mental health. While we continue to take advantage of opportunities to engage the college in education around mental health, as always, we are looking for ways to make even bigger waves in the student population to really “start the conversation” about mental health (our slogan for counselling here at Sheridan). Start the conversation about counselling, about the stigma, about the realities of the life difficulties that we all face as humans, and to get the conversation going to support each other and take notice of those around us who may need to get connected to support services.

We are excited about the direction mental health awareness is taking. From the student initiatives to the general increase in public awareness, now is the time for real and meaningful change. From each student we see individually, to the outreaches we do, to the campaigns, programs, and awareness committees, we are making a difference. You are making a difference! Together we are helping change the landscape of mental health, from increasing the openness and normalcy of accessing counselling, to helping make the conversation about mental health more acceptable. Congratulations on another great school year, celebrate, and take a deep breath!

## **OCC Conference 2013**

**Melissa Mask, Counsellor, Fanshawe College**

The OCC Spring Conference & AGM 2013 in partnership with Ontario University & College Health Association (OUCHA) is scheduled for **May 22, 23, and 24.**

The purpose of OUCHA is to develop and pursue all measures, which will preserve and improve the health of university and college students and their respective communities. We certainly share in this desire to support student health, more specifically mental health, in our students. We often partner with health service professionals to coordinate services. This year allows us a chance to really explore this partnership and to share our common goals of care and service to the students who attend our colleges.

The executive has also worked to create a timely opportunity to explore college counselling and to have a facilitated discussion of current trends, best practices, and dialogue about enhancing mental health supports on college campuses across the province.

Registration for the OCC day is separate from the OUCHA conference registration allowing for streamlined handling of fees. Fees go towards all foods for the day, materials and to offset facilitator fees.

For more information on the OCC Conference and to register, please go the website <http://occ-conference-2013.eventbrite.ca>. If you have any difficulties, please contact me through my email or through the Eventbrite website.

And please consider a role on OCC Executive as described by Chair Linda deJong in the Chair's report. The roles of the OCC executive can be found on the OCC website at [http://occ-ccco.ca/mem\\_executive.html](http://occ-ccco.ca/mem_executive.html). Please contact Linda directly ([linda.dejong@sheridancollege.ca](mailto:linda.dejong@sheridancollege.ca)) if you are interested in learning more about OCC and the Executive positions.

Looking forward to seeing you in May!

## **What They Taught Me**

*Susan Qadeer, Counsellor, George Brown College*

This is a good bye to the work of counselling post- secondary students. For almost 4 decades this work has sustained me in a number of ways. I am thankful for a good salary (I thank the union for that). The work has been intellectually challenging and the rhythms of the academic year have added variety. Most of all, I feel I have matured by listening and talking with students. Perhaps this is best demonstrated with a few little stories.

Long ago when environmental courses and careers were almost unknown, a student told me how she wanted to work in this field. Knowing that most of her friends were pursuing very lucrative careers, I asked her how she felt about this possible income disparity. She said that all she really needed in life was a little gortex between her and the elements. I didn't know what gortex was then but I understood the draw of doing something meaningful. Another student was struggling with her relationship with her mother. She said her mother could spend days looking for the right pair of shoes. The student wanted something very different for her own life. She put me off shoe buying permanently and a lot of other time wasters too.

When I am faced with students whose life has been particularly difficult, I am reminded of a student. She was a 45-year-old woman with a new baby and a 16-year-old son. She had just left an abusive husband and needed to work to support the family while she started back at school part time. I was asked to help with career direction except that she already knew what she wanted to do. She said she needed to get a Bachelor's degree, then a teaching degree and then a Master's and finally a PhD. I asked how she would do this and she replied, "It's a piece of cake". Eight years later, she got hired after her Master's degree. Hard work, confidence and enthusiasm are a powerful combination, not to be underestimated. She set me straight.

And more recently, a young man knows he is in a consuming, turbulent and loveless relationship but is unwilling to leave, just yet. He slowly pieces back together some family support and reconnects with friends. He shows me that some anchoring can help before he/we are ready to face change. The work has formed me and changed me and given me a lifetime of ideas to churn over. Haven't I been fortunate?

Here are a few thoughts from working with students:

- Encouragement can come just from showing interest.
- Relax your boundaries a little, especially if it isn't important.
- Career counselling is a creative team of two. Allow yourself to share their enthusiasm. Most people know what they want to do.
- When you review a struggling student's weekly schedule, you both learn a lot.
- Listening and being present is often enough.

I'd love to hear a few of your thoughts. After June 30<sup>th</sup>, I can be reached at [susanqadeer@gmail.com](mailto:susanqadeer@gmail.com)



The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual **Student Pathways in Higher Education Conference**, held recently in Toronto, was highly **engaging and informative.**

*Sponsored by the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT), the presentations are now available at the following website:*

[http://www.ontransfer.ca/www/index\\_en.php?page=student\\_pathways\\_conference\\_recap](http://www.ontransfer.ca/www/index_en.php?page=student_pathways_conference_recap)

### **Overviews of Sessions I attended.**

*Judith E. MacKinnon, Counsellor, Sheridan College.*

**Session 1. The Ad-Hoc Ness Monster:** Dr. Charles Pascal, University of Toronto, reviewed the emergence of the current transfer system in Ontario. Referring to the system as “the Ad-Hoc Ness Monster,” - Pascal reviewed how the college system, designed in 1967, was not meant as a 2 year +2 year system but was designed as a form of education distinct from university. It was not until approximately 1982, that students began to apply to universities from college and request transfer credits. Many universities developed their own systems, hence, we now see a mixed and varied approach to credit transfer in Ontario.

Pascal's recommendation is that courses be reviewed and compared by learning outcomes. Our colleges have done well in defining learning outcomes for programs and courses while the university system lags behind.

**Session 2. Transformational Aspects of Transfer Students:** The session "RPN to BScN Transition", although focused on the RPN to RN experience, was revealing and findings could possibly be applied to other degree completion programs. Presented by Durham and Georgian Colleges, as well as UOIT, the research examined students at three phases: 1). Transitioning into the program 2). Transitioning through the program and 3). Outcomes following graduation.

**Phase 1. Bridging/transitioning in:** In their beginning year, or bridging semester, students first began with a level of frustration and resistance. (For example: We have already covered this and we are doing it yet again?). Additional challenges involved finances, travel and tuition expenses, logistics, and balancing family, work, and studies.

**Phase 2. Transition through the program:** During this phase, students often showed a decrease in resistance and an increase in confidence, determination, and resiliency. The attitude became: "What do we have to do now, to continue to do well?"

**Phase 3. Post-graduation and working as an RN.** Here graduates reported high professional and personal satisfaction. Individuals (and their families) felt proud of their achievements, their increased learning and responsibility, noticed a distinct change in their own self-regard and status, and definitely appreciated the increase in pay and professional job responsibilities and status.

The researchers were emphatic with their message "that this (school) is not forever" and to "hang in there, it will be worth it!"

**Session 3. Academic Performance of College to University Transfer Students:** Three studies, conducted by Brock, Lakehead, and Trent found that transfer students performed at least as well as direct entry high school students during their university studies.

Unique features of college transfer students included:

- 1). The average age of transfer students entering university was age 21.
- 2). The greatest year for dropping out was between second year and third year.
- 3). Overall GPA's of transfer students were as high as direct entry students, and in some cases, even higher.

4). Transfer students had an increased awareness of campus services and a desire for a similar level of service at the university level.

The message from this study is that our college students can handle the academics but additional factors (e.g. family responsibilities) may get in the way and impede success.

In conclusion, this was a very informative and worthwhile conference. To review other presentations, please check the Conference website, above.



## **The Asperger's Support Group Going Strong at Humber**

***Jeff Szmyr, Disabilities Consultant***

At Humber, there has been a 250% increase in students with Asperger's Syndrome who registered with Disability Services from 2009 to 2012. Other colleges in the GTA report similar trends. Disability personnel across colleges continue to express concern over service gaps in post-secondary institutions and their inability or lack of preparedness to meet the unique needs of students with Asperger's Syndrome. Yet, these students have a high aptitude for learning and capacity to succeed when the appropriate supports and services are in place.

Many students with Asperger's Syndrome have a difficult time adjusting to the social demands of college settings and run the risk of social isolation due to their challenges in forming relationships, relating to those around them and understanding the 'unwritten social rules' governing classrooms, residence and campus behaviour. As a way to address some of these challenges, Humber College created an Asperger's Support Group back in Fall 2010, meeting weekly during the academic year ever since. Jeff Szmyr, a Disability Consultant with specialism in supporting students on the Autistic Spectrum, formed the group which is attended by a range of students who have Asperger's Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorders and

high-functioning Autism, but also by other students who have a varying degree of social anxiety.

Asperger's Group sessions are skill-based in nature and are designed to address facets of communication and interaction that, traditionally, these students are not very comfortable or confident in, and that the 'neurotypical' population can grasp more naturally and intuitively. Sessions are delivered in a safe, supportive, relaxed, visual, structured and interactive manner, in line with the characteristic learning style of those with Asperger's Syndrome. Various topics have been explored since the onset of the group. Fall 2012 sessions focused on: getting to know someone new, being sensitive to the listener's needs (not boring them to death), how and when to ask someone on a date, how to tell if someone is interested in you, do's and don'ts

on a date, managing anger, and acting out vs. talking out your feelings. For Winter 2013, sessions involved employment-based themes which involved guest speakers from the Hawkin's Institute and also Humber's Career Centre, as well as discussion of suitable careers for students on the spectrum, the importance of maintaining a portfolio of work, job readiness skills and how to conduct oneself in an interview.

Jeff has also worked with a selected number of students with Asperger's this year to form a student run and governed club at Humber, a very first for the college. Named "The A-Team", students get together one evening a week to network, socialize and have fun.

If you have any questions about supporting ASD students at your college, please email Jeff at [jeff.szmyr@humber.ca](mailto:jeff.szmyr@humber.ca)

## **Maun, Botswana – Leave for Change Program (aka, a crash course in Culture 101)**

**Liz Sokol, Humber College**

I was fortunate to be able to participate in the Leave For Change Program this year, where you spend part of your vacation (leave) doing volunteer work ('for change') in a foreign country.

I went to Maun, a village in Botswana, Africa where I volunteered with an N.G.O called Women Against Rape (W.A.R.) My role was to work with the Counsellors there on specific agency needs and with other providers of counselling/advocacy/child protection services in the community; and to develop and deliver a 2-day workshop on Trauma, Rape, and Suicide.

Easy, peasy....right? These topics *are* well known to me, and I love doing workshops. However, the culture in Botswana in general, and Maun in particular, was absolutely new to me, and I had to try to understand it well enough in a very short period of time to be able to deliver a workshop – one that not only recognized and integrated the culture into the understandings of origins of behaviour, but also to provide clinical interventions within the cultural context. This was a big challenge and not only was I grilling the Maun Counsellors at every opportunity, I also cultivated a few acquaintances who introduced me to a number of women who were willing to answer all my questions and really helped me get a bit of a handle on how things work there.

While it was a whole lot of work and preparation both before and during, the whole trip was amazing; I would have happily turned right back around and gone back immediately.... It was a wonderful learning experience and next time (yup, I am determined to go back) it will be for a much longer time.

What I noticed upon my return, was having learned:

- Patience (still have a ways to go, but made some strides)
- New eyes on 'old' things (perspective shift)
- How assumptive my usual stance is
- Life (for me) is better when lived simply – recognize what is truly important
- Personal growth resulting from being (way) outside my comfort zone, both personally and professionally

I encourage all, if and when an opportunity comes up, to grab it. Not only did I meet some amazing, lovely people, I also squeezed in a weekend safari – you can't go all the way to Africa and not see elephants!!!

I've included a few pictures to help give a sense of what it was like. I would be happy to talk further about this with anyone who may be thinking about doing something similar. Please contact me at [liz.sokol@humber.ca](mailto:liz.sokol@humber.ca)

### **Botswana has been hit hard with the HIV/AIDS virus**



## Role Playing at the Workshop



## Workshop at W.A.R.



## Workshop for the Community



## Ivy and Mpo (W.A.R. staff)



**Don't Mess with These Guys...**



**The King – Night Safari Trip**



**Local fellow dropping by camp, for coffee...**



**Liz and Counsellor Tau – being serious and professional**

