

**Spiritual Diversity and Social Work:  
The First Canadian Conference on Spirituality and Social Work**

University of Toronto,  
May 25, 2002

**Abstracts of Workshops and Presentations**

**Workshop Session 1: Creativity and Spirituality in the Workplace: Rekindling the Zeal**

Many social workers begin their careers full of zeal and committed to the values of the profession. It has been our observation that many workers lose this zeal early in their working lives. Could it be that social workers find themselves in negative, destructive or unhealthy work environments where they close themselves off from a core part of their being? Perhaps social workers have not been provided the opportunity to nurture the spiritual component and their creative capacities.

In this workshop the facilitators will share activities and material used in workshops focussing on creativity and spirituality in the workplace. In this experiential workshop participants will be invited to explore the application of this workshop format in their workplace.

Linda Turner, MSW  
PhD Candidate,  
Memorial University

Brian Ouellette, MSW  
St. Thomas University

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**Workshop Session 2:  
Preparing Oneself to Help Others**

This workshop explores the central question facing those who seek to serve others -- how does one prepare oneself personally to help those in need? To help participants examine this question and explore their spiritual development, they will be introduced to an ancient form of prayer know as 'lectio divina'. This process divided into four steps (reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation), helps to integrate mind with spirit.

This workshop explores the central question facing those who seek to use their gifts in service to others -- how does one prepare oneself personally to help those in need? Examination of this question reveals that those who are called to help must be prepared to discover their own brokenness. Helping professions such as social work have concentrated solely on preparing their students academically. In doing so, however, they have neglected the vital spiritual dimension of a person's being. In order to help participants examine the central question and explore their spiritual development, they will be introduced to an ancient form of prayer known as lectio divina. The beautifully simple process of lectio divina helps us integrate mind with spirit. It is divided into four steps or levels: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. While time constraints will not allow us to proceed through all four levels, we will read, meditate, and discuss five key passages of scripture that are relevant to our theme. The passages focus attention on our gifts, problems or brokenness, the universality of suffering, our ultimate source of help for our brokenness, and the need to treat others as we would like to be treated. We will then tie this material into a discussion on the needs of those we are helping. It is my thesis that each helper must be prepared to discover his or her own brock. As Jean Vanier stated, "it took time for me to discover...my own poverty and my own wounds. Once you have realized that, either you run away or else you have to come to terms with it, with the help of brothers and sisters in community and with the help of God...People may come to our communities because they want to serve the poor; they will only stay once they have discovered that they themselves are the poor." We cannot help others with their problems or brokenness until we are prepared to deal with our own.

Eric Crowther, MSW  
Private Practice,  
Haileybury, Ontario

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### Workshop Session 3:

#### **Aboriginal Spirituality: a Foundation for Social Work Practice**

The aboriginal spirituality workshop will comprise both content and process, exploring the theoretical and practical issues of aboriginal spirituality.

This experiential workshop will explore the epistemological and ontological bases of aboriginal spirituality.

Aboriginal spirituality will be examined within the context of colonization and decolonization, exploring the paradox of drawing upon ancient spiritual identity and practices within the modern neocolonial context. Aboriginal spirituality as a critical aspect of the decolonization agenda will provide a theoretical framework for the session. Key concepts of aboriginal spirituality and their relevance to contemporary social work theory and practice will be explored, including 'walking the talk' in spiritual pedagogy, ownership, responsibility, and accountability, and the power of storytelling

The medicine wheel, as an ideology, philosophy, and tool, will provide the approach framework for the workshop, encompassing both the theoretical and practical tools shared with workshop participants. Traditional protocol will be explained throughout the workshop. Aboriginal spiritual teachings as a foundation for social work practice will be translated into concepts relevant for all social work practitioners and educators.

Raven Pelletier Sinclair,  
Ph.D. Student,  
University of Calgary

Mariah Skye Sinclair,  
BISW Student,  
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College

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### Workshop Session 4:

#### **Intuition as a Spiritual Tool for Social Work Practice: An Experiential Workshop**

The workshop will provide participants with an experiential journey into the world of spirit, healing and intuition. A combination of Traditional indigenous ritual, a sharing circle ceremony and psychodrama method will allow participants to explore and experiment with the potential for intuitive practice in all social work settings.

Participants will work collectively together, in a spirit of respect and co-operation to:

- Work in tangible ways with energy
  - Connect with the intuitive self
  - Explore the potential for a relationship between spirit, healing and social work
  - Explore and identify ways the profession can bridge a gap between western and holistic paradigms
- Experiment with intuitive practice as a bridge between cultural and spiritual world-views

Julie West-Hayes , RSW RMT

Julie has been working in the social work field for 20 years in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. She is presently working on her Masters Thesis, researching the idea of a holistic paradigm for social work and healthy leadership criteria for healing initiatives. She has a private holistic therapy practice, specializing in work that assists clients to release the stored memory of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual trauma. Julie works intuitively with her clients and in other social work settings. She also works with her partner as a community organizations and corporate consultant, developing needs assessments, empowerment evaluation designs, as well as organizing and presenting retreats and seminars. She also offers mediation, facilitation and team building work that promotes empowerment, co-operation, collective enterprise, respect and equality within various settings. Julie trained as a psychodrama director through the Australian & New Zealand Psychodrama Association and works intuitively as she applies this method in her seminar work.

Kerrie Moore

Kerrie has facilitated workshops for twenty-five years within the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community. She is currently an undergraduate social work student who has a Certificate in Adult Learning and a Diploma in Recreation Therapy. She is a Metis woman who presently works in Aboriginal communities as a Traditional

indigenous healer. She has worked extensively with Aboriginal women suffering from mental illness or who are going through the correctional services system. Kerrie's workshops incorporate Traditional teachings as well as empowerment methodologies. Kerrie is also a consultant and works with groups and individuals helping to heal the wounded spirit.

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Workshop Session 5:

### **Searching for the Spiritual in Self: The Use of Reflective Assignments**

Teachers preparing students to work in the fields of human and social services believe that self-awareness is the stepping stone to "other-awareness" and awareness of universal human needs. This is particularly true when dealing with diverse spiritual issues. Students need to explore in structured ways their beliefs and values, and how these impact their professional ideologies, perspectives and methods, and provide the frame of reference to give meaning and direction to what we do. In this interactive session, we will focus on classroom techniques that foster personal and spiritual understanding - connecting past, to present and future. We will discuss the use of guided auto-biography, story cards, the wheel of change assignment, the self-other letter and the personal genogram, music and journals. We will present individual and group exercises we have discovered or developed to foster an awareness of personal and spiritual development across the life-span, and will encourage the audience to share tools and techniques they have found useful in developing spiritual awareness skills for work in the human services.

Patricia Slade,  
Director,  
Social Work Programme,  
Redeemer College,

Laura E. Taylor, PhD  
School of Social Work,  
University of Windsor

Nancy Sullivan, PhD,  
School of Social Work,  
Memorial University

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Workshop Session 6:

### **Mindfulness-based Pedagogy for Critical Social Work**

This experiential workshop will provide participants with hands-on exercises of mindfulness meditation to be integrated into their social work teaching, especially the pedagogy for critical social work. Mindfulness is the heart of Buddhist meditation practice developed about 2,500 years ago. It is not an abstract concept or a theory or religion, but rather, a practice of stopping, paying full attention, and looking deeply into the present moment non-judgmentally. It is particularly useful in engaging students holistically - spiritually, emotionally, critically and bodily - in their learning.

Renita Wong, PhD  
York University

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Presentation Session 1:

**The Black Church as a Social Welfare Institution: Union United Church and the Development of Montreal's Black Community, 1907 - 1940**

Two distinct interpretations exist in Black Canadian history regarding the influence of Black churches. Winks (1971) in his classic work "The Blacks in Canada: A History" maintains that the church possessed a negative and harmful influence on Black Canadians. He asserts that the existence of separate Black churches acted as barriers to the ultimate goal; Black Canadians should have been striving for integration.

James Walker (1975, 1992) in his book "The Black Loyalists: The Search for the Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870" provides a positive interpretation of the role(s) that Black churches played in the development of Canada's Black communities. Walker contends that the establishment of separate Black churches was a reaction to the racist and exclusionary nature of Canadian society. He maintains that the creation of these churches represented a positive and courageous accomplishment. According to Walker, the Black church offered Blacks a positive identity, a sense of self-worth and ultimately a base from which to launch attacks against racism and discrimination encountered by the Black community.

This paper will explore the contribution of Union United Church, Montreal's oldest Black congregation, as a social welfare institution to the development and emergence of Montreal's Black community during the period from 1907-1940. The paper will also incorporate a discussion of the formation of Montreal's Black community, which will provide the context for the focus of the paper.

David Este, PhD  
University of Calgary

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Presentation Session 2:

**R.M. MacIver, E.J. Urwick, and Charles Eric "Chick" Hendry: Three Directors of the University of Toronto School of Social Work Walking Along the Road of Secularism.**

Using primary materials from the University of Toronto Archives and the Archives of Ontario, this paper analyses the lives of 3 directors of the School of Social Work at the University of Toronto: R.M. MacIver (director 1918-1920) E.J. Urwick (director 1927-37), and Charles Eric "Chick" Hendry (director 1950-69). Established in 1914, Toronto is the country's oldest school of social work, the alma mater of thousands of graduate professionals, and until the 1980s the country's sole locus of doctoral education. MacIver, a Scottish-born social scientist, was an agnostic who appeared to rebel against the Presbyterian piety of his childhood fishing village in the Outer Hebrides. Urwick, the English-born son of a Unitarian Minister, was an Oxford-trained philosopher with settlement house experience in east London, deeply committed to Plato and the Vedantas, and keenly interested in spirituality. Hendry, with graduate training in religious education from Columbia University, could have become an ordained minister, but settled instead for a career in boys' work, and later in social work education. More in tune with MacIver than Urwick, Hendry personified a post-World War II commitment to technology and progress. This analysis sheds evidence of the enduring place of religion in the lives of each social work educator, but also the growing presence, and tensions, of an increasingly secular approach to social work— a pattern that was neither linear, nor static. Indeed, seen along a historical continuum, the lives of these social work educators portray an uneven transition to secularism, and highlight tensions and paradoxes of a religious background in each of their thinking that reflected, and in some modest ways helped to shape, this transformation over a 50-year period. The paper makes a distinct contribution to the Canadian literature. In the nineteenth century, voluntary philanthropic and religiously motivated charitable personnel preceded the establishment of a twentieth century secular profession in Canada (Graham, 1992), the United States (Leiby, 1984) and United Kingdom (Woodroffe 1962), among other advanced industrialized countries. Recent Canadian scholarship likewise addresses the transformation of twentieth century social welfare ideology from religious to secular (Christie & Gauvreau, 1996). Yet no literature, to date, considers the social work academy's distinct role in the emergence of a secular approach to social service delivery in Canada – the subject of the present paper.

John Graham, PhD RSW  
Faculty of Social Work  
University of Calgary

### **The Use of the Hatcher (1982) and Danesh (1994) Paradigm of Spirituality in Social Work Practice.**

The Hatcher (1982 and Danesh (1994) paradigm of spirituality is introduced as a framework for addressing the spiritual dimension with social work clients. This paradigm includes an understanding of human nature incorporating the spiritual aspects, defines an understanding of spirituality and further elaborates on a process for developing spiritual growth.

Using the above paradigm of spirituality, a group intervention was implemented with a young Mother's support group in a legislated child protection agency. It was hypothesized that encouraging group members to explore their spirituality could result in increased psychological health. The group sessions examined how spirituality is understood, the impediments to practicing our spirituality, the concept of love, ways to practice our spirituality and educating our children about spirituality.

The group intervention was evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative analysis indicated that participants were interested and engaged eagerly in exploring the topic of spirituality. The quantitative measure however suggested little change in the participants' scores.

The Hatcher (1982) and Danesh (1994) paradigm offers an unique and stimulating framework for acknowledging the spiritual dimension of clients that can easily be applied across different social work settings. This practicum is part of the beginning exploration of spirituality within social work practice, promising to be an exciting endeavor with the potential to discover innovative healing interventions for the people social work serves.

Cathy Rocke, MSW  
Child Protection and Support Services  
Government of Manitoba  
Department of Family Services and Housing

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Presentation Session 4:

### **Are Ancient Eastern Methods Applicable in the West? Reflections on Some Hindu Philosophies and Practices**

The proposed presentation originates from our ongoing PhD research among the Hindu population in Montreal which pursues two general objectives: 1) to know and understand the Hindu culture as lived within the family; 2) to develop a model of intervention in cases of domestic violence which may be adapted to all cultures. Although our analysis is still ongoing, our interviews with key informants have so far revealed that Hindu ancient spiritual concepts and practices such as the search for balance in ayurvedic medicine, and the practices of yoga, breathing and meditation, hold some keys to efficiently helping persons with violent behaviour to develop more appropriate ways of communicating. We have also participated in courses given by The Art of Living Foundation, in which we have experienced the soothing and healing capacities of yoga, breathing and meditation practices. We have yet to experiment such practices in violent men therapy groups which we are attempting to achieve between now and mid-May 2002, on time for the conference. Our proposed presentation aims at presenting our findings and discussing Hindu spiritual means of helping violent persons overcoming their barriers to peaceful living.

Margot Loïselle-Léonard, MSW  
Joint PhD program,  
Université de Montréal/McGill

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Presentation Session 5:

### **Expanding Spiritual Diversity in Social Work: Perspectives on the Greening of Spirituality**

There is little doubt that social work has had a strong religious heritage. It has been associated with a Christian and Jewish sectarian service ethos from its early years (Canda & Furman, 1999).

While social work went through a fifty-year hiatus when focus shifted to secularization and professionalization, over the last decades this has begun to change. Many social workers are finding religion and spirituality to be important components of personal growth and professional practice (Sheridan, Bullis, Adcock, Berlin & Miller, 1992). Unlike the earlier period, the focus of this new phase has tended to be on broadening the definition of the religious/spiritual construct, making it more inclusive and honoring of diverse religious and nonreligious spiritual traditions (Besthorn, 2000c; Canda, 1998; Russel, 1998; Bullis, 1996; Ressler, 1998).

Fruitful new areas of emphasis in this resacralization of social work are efforts to establish linkages between a deeper ecological awareness and spiritually diverse practice (Besthorn, 2000a, 2000b). Social work has always had an ecological vernacular. Yet, social work's conventional models have never clearly envisaged the deeper connection between person and the natural environment. And, only recently have there been explicit attempts to couple a deep ecological sensibility with a spiritual or religious consciousness (Besthorn, 2000a; Besthorn & Canda, in press).

This presentation will assess the status of new international efforts to infuse green consciousness into spiritual and religious traditions. It will also evaluate the greening of spirituality in social work by focusing on the emerging partnership between spirituality and a deeper ecological awareness. It will suggest specific parameters of a new green spirituality and discuss implications on a range of social work practice domains.

Fred H. Besthorn, M.Div., MSW, Ph.D.  
Washburn University  
Topeka, Kansas USA  
and  
The Global Alliance for a Deep Ecological Social Work

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Presentation Session 6:

### **A 'Deeper', more 'Social', Ecological Social Work Practice**

While an ecological model of social work practice has been important to the profession since the 1970s, advances in ecological theory based on developments by Arne Naess in "deep" ecology and Murray Bookchin in "social" ecology inform a significantly different understanding of ecological theory upon which to base an emerging clinical and community practice. This new ecology emphasizes communal, non-hierarchical relationships, and the intrinsic value of individual human and non-human, organic and non-organic components of the environment. Earlier conceptualizations of ecology in social work, synonymous with mechanistic systems models, differ from the more mutualistic and emancipatory use of ecological principles found in this new ecology. These changes in our understanding of ecology account better for the critical, feminist, and post modern developments taking place in the social work profession which themselves reflect an evolving understanding of the person-in-environment and the dynamics of power inherent in transactional processes. The complexity, diversity, and symbiosis which characterise Naess' "ecosophy" was summarized by Naess in eight succinct statements, all of which share much in common with Bookchin's conceptualization of social ecology. These eight principles will be explored for their applicability to the practice of social work in mandated and non-mandated services

Michael Ungar, PhD  
Maritime School of Social Work  
Dalhousie University

Presentation Session 7:

### **From Counter-Transference to Transcendence – The Spiritual Intrusion**

Using the counter-transference as a site of engagement, this workshop explores the social worker's being as a person and as a professional within the context of "professional relationships." The interpersonal relationship between client and worker is heavily conditioned by professional discourses that produce mechanistic, reductionistic workplaces and prevent social workers from engaging with an identity that incorporates spirituality into their being. We try to problematize the dualistic thinking that locates spirituality only in the "other" – the client's life-world. We propose that when engaging with clients spiritually, counter-transference reactions are a necessary part of a joint exploration to deeper levels of intimacy, trust and connection both with client and with self. Unlike traditional notions of counter-transference that view social worker's reactions in a limited and negative way, spiritually-connected counter-transference reactions are necessary to a transcendental realm of experience and reality, thereby effectively challenging the worker beyond the confines of professionalism and compelling them to question the meaning of caring, empathy, subjectivity, connection, and love. In this workshop, we will use case vignettes to highlight spiritually-connected counter-transference reactions and how social workers can understand and cope with their reactions toward a deeper level of practice and professional self.

Thecla Damianakis, MSW  
PhD student,  
University of Toronto

A. Ka Tat Tsang, PhD  
Faculty of Social Work,  
University of Toronto

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Presentation Session 8:

### **The Interface of Spirituality and Practice – Practice Methods and Relationships**

My recently completed doctoral study developed a set of practice principles for social work and spirituality. Grounded theory analysis of interview data uncovered significant convergences amongst research participants' beliefs, values and practices. These unexpected commonalities invited a further analysis of the data, which produced the practice principles. The practice principles can be organized into three broad groupings – conceptualizations of spirituality and basic values; ideas about the processes of spiritual development and beliefs about the spiritual essence of human life; and spiritually influenced practice methods and processes. This paper focuses discussion on the third grouping of practice principles, which encompass issues related to practice methods, processes and relationships. Issues for discussion include the incorporation of spirituality into practice through shifting language and forming relationships with clients, and spiritually influenced practices such as making meaning, and fostering connections and experiences of self-love. Overall, the practice principles are relevant because they emerged from the participants' collective practice wisdom, represent a step towards helping to legitimize spiritual knowledge, can promote discussions about spirituality, guide practice, and provide a base for the future development of spiritually influenced frameworks.

Diana Coholic, PhD  
School of Social Work,  
Laurentian University

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Presentation Session 9:

### **Social Work Students and Spirituality: An Initial Exploration**

With few exceptions spirituality is non-existent in Canadian social work curricula reflecting indifference to the reality that spirituality is a foundation of client and personal wellness and an essential component of comprehensive social work assessment. This oversight also ignores spirituality's contribution to personality formation, cognition, life meaning and purpose, interpersonal relations, and the will to accept or change life and death concerns.

This study asked third year Bachelor of Social Work students and a comparison group of third year honours students attending a Catholic university their thoughts on spirituality and the role of spirituality in their academic lives. Participants also completed the JAREL spirituality scale. Social work students reflected traditional spiritual views, and followings, and typically stated that spirituality had a greater importance in their lives, education, career goals, and well-being than did other third year honour students. Social work students were also found to be more comfortable in discussing spirituality than were non-social work students. A statistically significant difference was also found on the JAREL scale. The mean social work student JAREL score was 106.3 while the mean of the comparison group was 99.0. The result of the independent t-test analysis was  $t=2.44$ ,  $df=49$ ,  $p<.018$  (2 tailed). Thus, it appeared that the social work students participating in this study had a greater sense of spiritual well-being than did the non-social work cohort.

Rick Csiernik, M.S.W., Ph.D., R.S.W.  
School of Social Work  
King's College  
University of Western Ontario

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Presentation Session 10:

### **The Preparedness of Canadian Social Work Students for Practice with Religious/Spiritual Clients**

The presenter's own experiences with the lack of spiritual/religious content in social work education led to this survey at one Canadian School of Social Work. Students were surveyed about their preparedness for practice with the religious and/or spiritual dimensions of clients. Respondents were asked to report on their past experiences with such clients and how well-equipped they felt to work with these dimensions. Students were also asked about their own spirituality and religiosity. The results will be interpreted in light of the literature as well as the presenter's own experiences as a social work educator. In particular, the challenges faced by Christian students in a public school of social work will be discussed. Audience participation will be solicited to enlarge the discussion to include experiences from other Canadian schools.

Sylvia Straka, MSW,  
PhD Candidate  
McGill University

Anna Pelosi, MSW  
U.N. High Commission for Refugees (Sri Lanka)

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Presentation Session 11:

### **The 'Faith Factor' in Social Welfare Policy and Legislation: The American 'Charitable Choice' Debate and its Relevance in the Canadian Context**

President Bush's faith-based human services initiative represents a new paradigm in government-mandated social service provision that explicitly promotes a significantly expanded role for religiously-affiliated organizations through the creation of new policy, legislation, and bureaucratic infrastructure. So called 'charitable choice' sections of the proposed legislation are the source of heated debate regarding the appropriate roles of faith-based agencies and the State in social welfare provision; the reframing of social and personal problems as moral issues; religious content in social services for non-religious clients or clients of other faiths; and the issue of determining what constitutes 'legitimate' religious agencies for the purposes of licensing and funding. Proponents of the initiative describe it as "leveling the playing field" in order to redress perceived historical biases against faith-based social service providers on the part of government funding bodies. Critics are concerned with the danger of proselytizing of vulnerable populations, a devaluation of professionalism and expert knowledge, and a value base that further stigmatizes people in difficulty by placing the blame on individual deficit while ignoring structural forces that create or contribute to social problems and human suffering.

This paper offers a brief history 'Charitable Choice', a presentation of the major themes in the debate, and a discussion of the relevance of some of these issues for social welfare in Canada.

Analee Weinberger, MSW  
Necessary Illusion, Montreal

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Presentation Session 12:

### **C. S. Loch and M. Richmond's Genesis of the Social Situation**

Charles Stewart Loch's scientific and charitable methods and definitions of charity as "interventionist" and as "caring social relations" between persons constituted a "socially situated charity." In turn, Loch's charitable framework influenced Mary Richmond's generation of the idea of the social situation and its social treatment within the emerging field of social work.

Loch discussed how reciprocal exchanges of charitable activities occurring in three-way relationships between Divine Agencies and individuals as well as betwixt individuals created a blended spiritual and secular realm. He used such a Paulian framework to define charity as interventions ("interventive charity") and as a set of helpful relationships ("organized charity") between God, The Holy Spirit and human participants. Loch indicates that charity was to be given in a methodical and knowledgeable manner accomplishing specific purposes. These charitable interventions were to be done in accordance with certain principles of charity as he conceptualized that charity itself occurred in accordance with certain laws of charity. In the Charity Organization Societies, six principles were followed in the giving of charity: Registration, coordination, cooperation, investigation, and friendly visiting and adequate relief. Loch states that charitable interventions performed by friendly visitors contained caring and helpful activities, kindness and services, engendering friendly feelings and attitudes in a charitable recipient. As a result, recipients developed "complex relations" and a social life. They also developed personalities exhibiting certain moral virtues and loving ways in their dealings with other persons.

Richmond stated that C. S. Loch's charitable helping occurred within three-way reciprocal relationships between helping persons (first friendly visitors and then social workers) intervening with troubled individuals and/or with their social relations constituting her own initial understanding of a social situation. Later, Richmond developed Loch's "situated charity" and "charitable method" into the entirely secular concept of the social situation; described its various social situational components and how they related to one another in social processes; and, identified rudimentary individual/family and helping social situations for social diagnosis and social treatment as a general method of helping within the field of social work. Overall, C. S. Loch's transmission of ancient and medieval ideas regarding religiously based and purposeful caring activities within charity, as practiced by Divine and human participants, established the basis for Richmond's development of the social situation and later social work theorists reworking of her concepts of the social situation and social treatment into distinctive social work methods.

These findings will be discussed in terms of their implications for social workers interventive practices within social treatment processes fostering mutual adaptations and social relations between Divine and secular persons as well as recipients development of functional behaviours within integrated and harmonious social situations.

Joel Majonis, PhD  
Renison College

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Workshop: Session 13:

### **Spirituality and Social Justice: Shaking the Foundations**

The recent re-engagement with spirituality has expanded our collective professional consciousness to a significant dimension of humanity and human experience. Professional discourses on spirituality, however, have to be reconciled with the profession's epistemological and value commitments. Metaphysically, spirituality has to resist becoming the waste-basket for a framework that only deals with the social, psychological, and biological dimensions of being human. There is also the risk of turning the spiritual as a catch all for anything that is positively valued by the practitioner, notwithstanding the possible differences in the client's experience. This workshop explores the epistemological and ontological foundations of spirituality vis a vis the knowledge and value base of social work. It covers (1) how to make sense of spiritual experience with regard to current theories of knowledge; (2) interrogating realities beyond the common sense world both in terms of materiality and language; and (3) the idea of community that takes spirituality beyond individual well-being to engage with the notion of social justice. Presentation and discussion will be illustrated and supported by actual practice examples from different levels of social work practice, ranging from the clinical to the structural.

A. Ka Tat Tsang, PhD  
University of Toronto

Thecla Damianakis, MSW  
Doctoral Programme.  
University of Toronto

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Presentation 14:

### **The Role of Spirituality/religiosity in the Creation of Personal Growth In Bereaved HIV/AIDS Informal Caregivers**

**OBJECTIVE:** To explore the experience of bereaved HIV/AIDS informal caregivers, and the role of spirituality/religiosity in the creation of personal growth.

**METHOD:** The study consisted of fifteen qualitative interviews in Ontario, British Columbia and Québec in English and in French. Face-to-face interviews explored the experience of HIV/AIDS caregivers and the factors that participants considered to have contributed to or detracted from their coping. The theoretical perspective of post-traumatic growth and the factors that play a role in its development provided the framework for the generation of questions. The data set is part of a larger project and participants were chosen according to their growth scores on the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory and the Stress-Related Growth Scale.

**RESULTS:** The caregivers self-identified as spiritual or religious or they sought meaning in life in a way that was considered to be spiritual. Spirituality was widely considered a factor in their coping. All but one participant had positive experiences to recount resulting from the loss and trauma involved in losing a partner. Many caregivers differentiated between religion and spirituality.

CONCLUSIONS: Growth experiences in traumatic situations are firmly anchored in spirituality and in some cases, in religion. Spirituality is a central component of social work practice of in the context of HIV/AIDS.

Susan Cadell, PhD  
School of Social Work and Family Studies  
University of British Columbia

Dennis J. Haubrich  
Ryerson University

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Presentation 15:

### **The Role of Spirituality in the Lives of Families Living with HIV**

This paper is based on a national study of HIV positive women and their families. In -depth interviews were conducted with 70 mothers and 27 fathers. The mothers and some fathers had HIV and perinatal exposure of one or more children had occurred. The purpose was to understand the psychosocial dimensions of HIV on the parents, children and family as a whole. We found that spirituality and the meaning of life were critical factors for parents living with HIV. Drawing on the voices of these parents we identify how they care for their families, prepare their children for the future, how they cope with uncertainty, illness and death. In our presentation we discuss how spirituality plays a part in ways of coping and how social workers can modify traditional approaches to address spirituality issues in practice.

Lilian M. Wells MSW, DASW  
Faculty of Social Work  
University of Toronto

Robyn Salter Goldie MSW, RSW  
Hospital for Sick Children  
Toronto, ON

Gloria Aykroyd MSW, RSW  
St. Joseph's Health Centre  
London, ON

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Presentation 16:

### **Ecology and Spirituality in Social Work: New Roots for Social Transformation**

The ecological crisis, which is forcing many of us to ask about the kind of future which awaits our children, has drawn substantial scholarly and public attention to the environmental crisis but only limited concern from the social work community. This presentation will briefly discuss the environmental crisis as the entry point to critique social work's embeddedness in modernity and argues for a new foundation of beliefs and values which sees people and nature as interdependent and all things as connected. Such a holistic perspective is fundamentally spiritual as it leads us to seriously examine what we hold to be of ultimate value. This presentation will review a new foundation of beliefs and values, a 'new story' rooted in ecology and spirituality, which can provide direction and greater hope for the future. Such a new foundation is transformative as it leads social work toward a role in creating sustainable and socially just communities.

John Coates, PhD  
St. Thomas University

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Presentation 17:

**The Spiritual Dimensions of Person & Environment:  
Perspectives from Social Work and Traditional Knowledge**

Western social work claims a dual focus on person and environment. In our own theory base, however, we may have emphasized the personal and neglected the environmental component of the duality. Over time, the "environment" of the equation has often been reduced to only the "social environment" as social workers assess client functioning primarily in the context of networks of human relationships. We have lost touch with the physical environment - with a sense of place and the energies or forces associated with particular locations. Traditional knowledge does not separate person and place the way Western thought has done. When person and place are understood as expressions of the same creation, then there is a profound spiritual connection that is missing in Western social work.

This paper compares the relationship of person and place in Western social work theory and traditional knowledge, with consideration of sacred sites, and locations associated with positive or negative energies. Central to the discussion is an acknowledgment of the limitations of the English language for expressing and exploring these spiritual relationships.

Michael Kim Zapf, PhD, RSW  
University of Calgary

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Presentation 18:

**Circles of Resistance: Spirituality in Social Work Practice, Education and Transformative Change**

My subject location is that of an Aboriginal woman who teaches in a School of Social Work and attends a PhD program in Sociology and Equity Studies. In incorporating spirituality into my work, I have had many uplifting experiences as a social work practitioner and hopeful ones as a recent educator and student.

Spirituality comes from within and outside the self. It is meant to assist us as individuals, families and communities. It is also about resistance and it connects us to the work of social change.

This paper suggests that since postmodern thought is conducive to other ways of knowing, it may be a more appropriate lens through which to look at spirituality in social work practice, especially as defined by Indigenous knowledges.

The topic of spirituality is an important dialogue which educators must have with their students. In my four years of teaching, I have brought spirituality into the classroom not only by speaking about it, but by doing it. What I have learned so far, is that if I open those doors by taking the lead, it creates a safe place where students can share their spirituality. Recent B.S.W. graduate, Greta Lewis, who was a student in my advanced practice class will address this component from a student perspective.

As important as spirituality is to each individual's well being and strength, each of us has a responsibility to use it in creating a better world. It is the role of the social worker to resist oppression and become involved in political activism. The structural social work model guides us in this role, but it lacks any spiritual dimension. What social workers need is direction based on action-oriented spirituality.

Cyndy Baskin, MSW  
Ryerson University

Greta Lewis, BSW

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Presentation 19:

**Teaching About Spirituality In Anti-Oppression Education:  
Using a Light Show as a Visual Aid.**

In this interactive presentation, we will introduce the pedagogy of using a light show, when examining concepts of spirituality in relation to structural oppression. This light show was developed by Liberation Practice International (L.P.I.) consultants to meet the requests of students, who wanted to discuss spirituality when exploring the practice of "working across differences". The visual aid is presented in conjunction with the L.P.I. model of self, which inquires into the spiritual, personal and systemic dimensions of person-hood. Considering a distinction between the 'systemic' and 'spiritual' self, the model highlights various constructions, as rooted within systemic power relations. The L.P.I. light show allows the social work student to quickly integrate concepts of spirituality and structural oppression, that are commonly discussed in abstract terms. Having such a concrete hands-on-model allows the student to develop their own paradigm of practice, when working with clients across all types of differences.

This 30 min. presentation is geared towards educators, practitioner and students involved with facilitating self-reflection/reflexivity within themselves or others. Space will be provided for participants to share insight and practice wisdom.

Dianne Prevatt-Hyles, MSW, Adv. Dip SW, RSW

Jana Vinsky. MSW

Consultants for Liberation Practice International. Liberation Practice International is an international organization located in Trinidad, England and Canada. L.P.I. provides equity and empowerment education for individuals, organizations and communities.