



# CSSSW NEWSLETTER

*The Canadian Society for Spirituality and Social Work - Winter 2022*

*The Winter Solstice is the time of ending and beginning, a powerful time - a time to contemplate your immortality. A time to forgive, to be forgiven, and to make a fresh start. A time to awaken.*

*– Frederick Lenz*

## Season's Greetings!

Good day, CSSSW members. We are eager to present our second winter quarterly newsletter!

As you may recall, this fall, we put a call out for volunteers to help with the newsletter. With this edition, we are delighted to announce and introduce our new newsletter committee: Meghann Cant, MSc, BSW, and Sarah Ritchie, BSW candidate. Meghann works in the animal welfare sector in advocacy, education, research, and policy, and comes to CSSSW with a background in science and social work. Sarah, in the fourth year of the BSW program at the University of Regina, has a background in infant and early childhood mental health and youth care work. Her areas of focus are gender-based violence, harm reduction, policy, advocacy, and activism.

In this issue, you will find details on our upcoming conference, some teasers from our society history project, a recorded meditation, and more!

If you know someone interested in becoming a CSSSW member, please invite them to visit the [membership section](#) of our website. Membership fees are currently being waived until June 20, 2022.



*What's in this newsletter:*

### WINTER SOLSTICE MEDITATION

### UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL WORK LEADERSHIP IN CANADA PROJECT

- NOMINATE A LEADER

### A GREETING FROM CASSANDRA AND HEATHER

- CSSSW CONFERENCE TEASERS

### SOCIETY HISTORY PROJECT UPDATES

- GET TO KNOW CSSSW'S PEOPLE

### CSSSW VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- SOCIAL MEDIA HELP NEEDED!

### RESEARCH CORNER

- NEW BOOK CHAPTER FROM CSSSW VICE PRESIDENT

# Happy Winter *Soulstice!*

For those who celebrate, the Winter Solstice is here: the 21st of December.

Reflect upon this quieting time of stillness in nature. This is the time of year when things stand still. The Winter Solstice is the shortest day of the year. The sun is low on the horizon in the northern hemisphere. This is a perfect time to go within, to focus on the messages of the soul, to centre oneself and to celebrate the darkness, and to sense its timelessness. There are gifts we can receive in the darkness if we open ourselves to this energy. This is also a good time to hold gratitude.

Take some time to reflect on the past year, and your endeavours, goals, and accomplishments. Hold space for gratitude of things you have already manifested or are in the process of manifesting. Experience the wonderful energy of gratitude and grace for all that you have achieved.

Trust your intuition. What might your inner guide be nudging you towards?

**Read** or **listen** to the full CSSSW Winter Solstice Meditation, composed by Dr. Heather Boynton, CSSSW Vice President.

# Understanding Social Work Leadership in Canada Project

**Understanding Social Work Leadership in Canada** (USWLC) is a research project at McMaster University exploring historical and contemporary understanding of leadership with the profession.

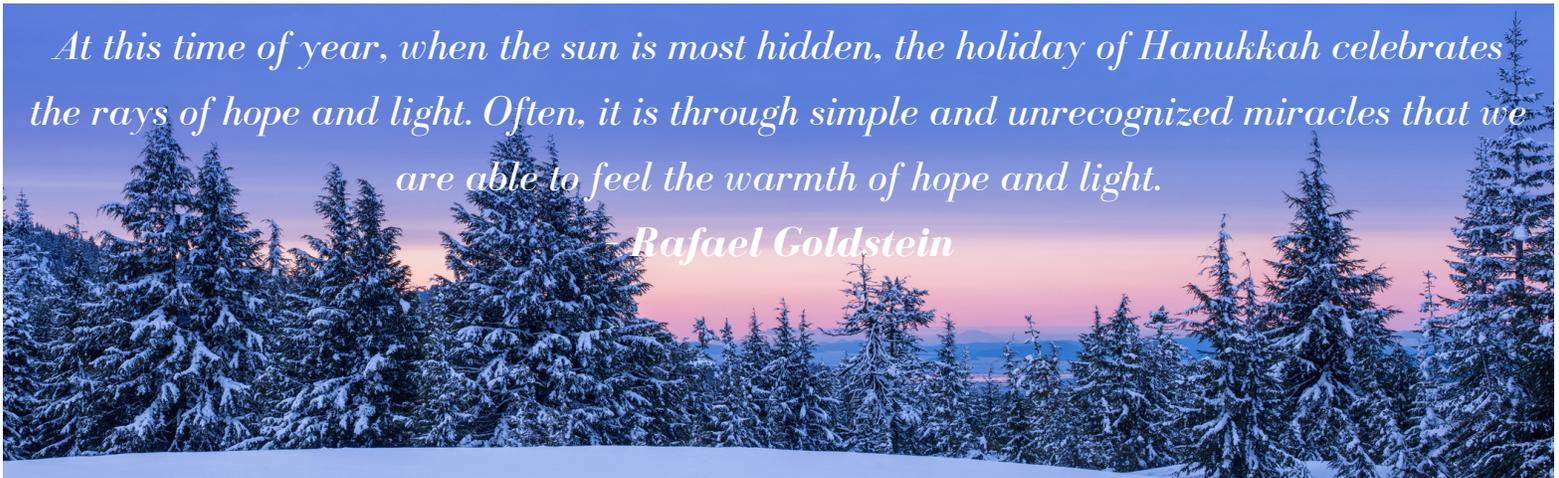
This project has digitized and curated oral histories from the **CASW Oral History Project**, which was undertaken in 1983/84, and plans are to complete an additional 50 oral histories in order to create a contemporary library of social leadership stories from across Canada. These stories will be analyzed and used to create a model for social work leadership education and training, and help to preserve the history of social work in Canada.

Additionally, the project is seeking **nominations** of social workers who have distinguished themselves during their careers, are over the age of 65, and retired or retiring in the next 12 months.

Dr. Tara La Rose, Associate Professor, and John Blyskis, USWLC Research Assistant, can be contacted with any questions or concerns about the USWLC project at **larost1@mcmoraster.ca** and **blyskija@mcmaster.ca**, respectively.

*At this time of year, when the sun is most hidden, the holiday of Hanukkah celebrates the rays of hope and light. Often, it is through simple and unrecognized miracles that we are able to feel the warmth of hope and light.*

*Rafael Goldstein*



# Online Decolonization, Social Work, and Spirituality Conversational Group

The CSSSW extends an invitation, open to all members – graduate and undergraduate students, practitioners, advocates, and faculty – to join an online topical conversational group. This online conversational group will focus on the intersections of decolonization, social work, and spirituality. It will most likely be a monthly gathering held via Zoom.

Please send questions, comments, and expressions of interest with the subject line “Conversational Group” to [info@spiritualityandsocialwork.ca](mailto:info@spiritualityandsocialwork.ca).

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

For each quarterly newsletter, we aim to feature a community member doing great things in the profession of social work. Do you know a practitioner, educator, or scholar doing interesting and innovative work and/or who can offer insight into the realm of spirituality and social work? Fill out our simple **CSSSW Community Spotlight Form** with a short write-up of the individual you are nominating, including their educational credentials, location, and their consent, and we will consider featuring them here in a future newsletter.

Let's get to know each other!



## Cassandra's Winter Solstice Reflections

Winter is here... I think! In Halifax, where and when I began to think about this message a couple of weeks ago, the temperature was above zero and it was pouring rain. There is green grass where it would normally be yellow by now. But the other day it was far too cold for rain. The skies were so densely grey, and the temperature dropped, I prepared for the first snowfall of the season. Yet no snow arrived. Today, it's raining again and above zero degrees. So... I really don't know if winter is here yet. Or better said, winter as we used to know it. The Winter Solstice, though, is here with revelations.



## Heather's Winter Solstice Reflections

I put my snow tires on my car just in the nick of time. Winter has certainly made its identity known from central to western Canada! There have been huge storms associated with power outages, cancellations in transportation, and freezing temperatures. Some find it difficult to find where to put all the snow. I did make it home for the holiday season just in time as well. As I write this, I am sitting in front of a cozy fire with beautiful lights on in the house and the birds are at the feeder as it nears dusk. Seems like a perfect time to make a cup of hot chocolate.

# A Greeting From Cassandra and Heather

As 2022 nears its end, with the new year soon upon us, we will be gearing up for our conference. We want to invite and encourage you all to get involved in the Tenth North American Conference on Spirituality and Social Work from June 21-24, 2023 at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. *The Spirit in Social Work: Toward Ecospirituality and Holistic Sustainable Social Work Practice* will be the first in-person conference since 2014, and we are eager to get together and hope to see old friends and colleagues and meet new ones. We look forward to reaffirming the place of spirit in knowledge creation and exchange. More than ever, society is looking to the social sciences and humanities to help understand and mitigate global challenges in the face of change. The central question we pose is: what is social work's role in all this, and how do spirituality and social work combine to help us work with people across diversity in a world with many upheavals and changes?

It's easy to get started. Begin by submitting an abstract online, ensuring you have related your topic to the conference theme. You can also post and redistribute the **CSSSW Call for Submissions** in your networks and talk about this exciting upcoming event to your friends, students, and colleagues. The deadline for the second call is January 22, 2023. Registration information will be available early in the new year.

The pre-conference day on June 21 recognizes this day as National Indigenous Peoples Day and will offer an opportunity to honour the heritage, diverse cultures, and outstanding achievements of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples (more details to come). Also on this day, we will offer a visit to the scenic Peggy's Cove for a grounding meditation on the ancient whale back rocks (more details to come).

June 22-24 will be two-and-a-half days of creative talks, presentations, workshops, and activities for the mind,

body, and spirit. The early call for submissions has garnered some great abstracts with a diverse range of topics, and we believe there will be something for everyone.

We understand that some social workers, practitioners, and scholars may not immediately see themselves in the theme of the conference regarding some of the topics such as climate change and related environmental issues. However, we feel that the urgency around climate change, the complex grief it causes for many, and the innovative history of deep ecology in social work natural environments and our relationships to the earth are pertinent to everyone. Topics on the environment and climate change are not part of core social work curriculum, yet they do emerge in practice in various ways. Therefore, we know that this conference is for you! It is for the novice learner about climate change and its effects on the mind, body, spirit, and wellbeing, who may be wondering about the very questions we need to ask. It is for the holistic practitioner who incorporates spiritual activities including mindfulness, walking meditations, and natural therapies and/or is guided by their spirituality or faith toward the potential for humankind to do better and to transcend. It also is for the researchers who are exploring unique aspects of spirituality across the life course and in different contexts around the world. This conference aims to be an inclusive and welcoming space for collaborative sharing and learning about the interconnections between social work practice, theory, policy, research, and nature, ecosystems, and human societies.

For all who are celebrating a holiday season, we want to wish you peace-filled celebrations. Happy Hanukkah, Winter Solstice, Kwanzaa, Merry Christmas, Yule and Christmastide.

Sincerely and with spirit,  
Cassandra and Heather

# Society History Project Updates

Curious about CSSSW's history? Here are some tantalizing tidbits we learned from our interviews with CSSSW founders and long-time core members.

## John Graham, PhD, RSW

*Professor of Social Work and former Director of the School of Social Work at the University of British Columbia*

Always drawn to spirituality, John spent a large part of his childhood attending a liberal Anglican church. In his youth, he thought he would become an Anglican priest and social advocate. However, he then became sidetracked with his graduate studies on the religious origins of social work – and never looked back.

## Jeannette Waegemakers Schiff, PhD

*Professor in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary*

Jeannette graduated from the University of Toronto with an MSW and a strong focus on mental health practice. She then faced challenges associated with obtaining her PhD and throughout this time also experienced some traumatic events.

In her academic work, Jeannette became aware of the lack of spirituality in social work and in academia in general. She feels this absence “does not allow for an opportunity to explore and understand how spiritual expressions, through religious or non-religious, are vital to the human soul and healing”. However, the experience of healing from her trauma led her to recognize the critical role of spirituality in this healing.

## John Coates, PhD

*Retired Professor and former Director of the St. Thomas University School of Social Work*

John tells us about his strong Catholic upbringing that inspired his interest in spirituality, along with attending seminary for a couple of years. John shares that he discovered social work as a young adult, and in his later adult years, found himself drifting away from the church. For him, spirituality and social work are a natural pairing due to his “working interests in environmental areas, becoming familiar with the issues and eco-social work and its basis in spirituality, and our interconnectedness to all of nature”.

## Barbara Swartzentruber, MSW

*Executive Director of Strategy, Innovation, and Intergovernmental Relations for the City of Guelph*

Barbara describes how her interest in spirituality emerged from fascinating debates with family members from different religious backgrounds, including the Catholic and Mennonite churches.

Barbara herself was raised in the Baptist church and later on attended the Lutheran church. In later years, she became interested in feminist spirituality, which led her to take a course from Mary Malone, a Catholic nun who taught at St. Jerome's University. This revelatory experience inspired Barbara to pursue further education in religious studies at Wilfred Laurier University.

Be sure to check our [website](#) for more updates on the project, including interviews, blog posts, and more!

# CSSSW Conference Updates

Interested in speaking at our 2023 conference? Submissions (in English or French) are due January 22, 2023, with notifications to successful applicants sent out by February 28, 2023.

Conference registration fees will include CSSSW membership from June 21, 2023 (the time of our conference) through to June 20, 2024. Links to registration will be available soon. Please continue to check the [CSSSW website](#) for updates.

Questions can be sent to Dr. Cassandra Hanrahan at [info@spiritualityandsocialwork.ca](mailto:info@spiritualityandsocialwork.ca).

## CSSSW Volunteer Opportunities

As our call-out for newsletter committee members was so successful, we are seeking more volunteers to join our social media committee! Please use the [CSSSW Social Media Volunteer Form](#) to sign up.

## WE ARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Feel free to follow us on whichever social media sites you use and please invite your friends to do the same!

 [facebook.com/CSSSW](https://facebook.com/CSSSW)

 [linkedin.com/groups/6567277](https://linkedin.com/groups/6567277)

 [@canspiritualityandsocialwork](https://@canspiritualityandsocialwork)

 [@CanadianSSSW](https://@CanadianSSSW)

 [linktr.ee/CSSSW](https://linktr.ee/CSSSW)

## RESEARCH CORNER

Check out this chapter on social work field education and spirituality written by CSSSW Vice President Dr. Heather Boynton and MSW students Emma De Vynck and Jill Ciesielski:

**De Vynck, E., Ciesielski, J., & Boynton, H. M. (2022). Supporting spiritual competencies in field education and practice. In J. L. Drolet, G. Charles, S. M. McConnell, & M. Bogo (Eds.), *Transforming social work field education: New insights from practice research and scholarship* (pp. 295-322). LCR Publishing Services.**

The book is available for purchase through the [University of Calgary Press](#).

Here, we feature recent articles (peer-reviewed or grey literature). Have you recently published or read any current and relevant literature in the realm of spirituality and social work? Please share with us using our [CSSSW Newsletter Submission Form](#)! Submissions should be 250 words or less.

### CSSSW Leadership Team

Cassandra Hanrahan (President)  
Heather M. Boynton (Vice President)  
John Coates (Co-founder, Treasurer, & Past President)  
Dani Sherwood (Administrative Assistant)

### CSSSW Board of Directors

Lucille Villaseñor-Caron	Buetta Warkentin
Eric W. Crowther	Sherry Dale
Susan Cadell	Theresa Smith
Indrani Margolin	Kim Sedore
Jeannette Waegemakers Schiff	Meital Siva-Jain
Hazel Kabibi Palmer	Stefani Kolochuk
Veena Khatri	

For more details regarding our team members, including our biographies, please visit the [governance section](#) of our website, which continues to be updated.



## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS DUE JAN. 22, 2023

### *The Spirit in Social Work: Toward Ecospirituality and Holistic Sustainable Social Work Practice*

The 2023 CSSSW conference *The Spirit in Social Work: Towards Ecospirituality, Holistic and Sustainable Social Work Practice* aims to explore social work's role in the emerging climate and associated mental health crisis. Understanding and practicing ecospirituality is perhaps more crucial today than ever. In sounding a clarion call calling climate change "the single biggest health threat facing humanity," the World Health Organization (2021) reported "health professionals worldwide are already responding to the harms caused by this unfolding crisis". But where is social work in these worldwide responses?

The new accreditation 2021 standards, released by the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE-ACFTS, 2021), list "environmental sustainability and ecological practice" as one of the eleven core learning goals (p.16), while the professional values and ethics include an understanding of spiritual and cultural contexts in relation to working with people and communities. These standards must be implemented by July 1, 2023. This timely conference will offer critical and creative spaces in which to think about how we might begin to incorporate climate health and environmental justice – not currently part of core social work and allied health and mental health curricula, nor the typical scopes of practice– from an intersectional non-anthropocentric lens to foster and support sustained individual and planetary wellbeing.

#### Possible topics of interest include but not limited to:

- Social work and global environmental movements (e.g., Paris, COP 260).
- Holistic spiritualities -ceremony, ritual, chant, meditation, prayer, observance, and art as pathways to connection
- Inter-faith worldviews, spirituality, environmental activism & social work
- Nature/land-based therapeutic approaches to mental health and spiritual wellbeing
- Eco-anxiety/climate grief/fury: Body and spirit care
- Earth as central spiritual context
- Traditional experiences of sacred space in nature and re-imagining non-utilitarian practices
- Contemplative/reflective practice for climate resilient social work educators, practitioners, and activists committed to environmental justice
- Environmental racism (how spirituality and social work can guide this work)
- Indigenous worldviews and perspectives
- The spirit and decolonization
- Holistic therapies and practice

## The Tenth North American Conference on Spirituality and Social Work Pre-Conference June 21, 2023 June 22-24, 2023

Hosted at Dalhousie University (Halifax, NS)  
Co-sponsored by the Dalhousie School of Social Work, and the Society for Spirituality and Social Work (USA).

With a spotlight on our interconnectedness and dependencies, we encourage you to conceptualize what ecospirituality is (and is not), and to consider how it and related holistic practices might be practiced and sustainably implemented in different contexts, across the lifespan. This conference will bring together researchers, practitioners, educators, students, and advocates from various disciplines, in person and online, for an enriching hybrid exchange and dissemination of scholarship, practice ideas and the arts– exploring ways ecospirituality can inform social work in becoming a more germane profession in the face of the many complex issues affecting the world today, threatening the essential ingredients of good health - clean air, safe drinking water, nutritious food supply, and safe shelter.

#### Sessions will include the following formats:

- Scholarly paper presentations
- Conceptual talks; Research Findings
- Student-authored paper presentations
- Panel Discussions
- Experiential and interactive workshops
- Creative Contributions (e.g., Storytelling, Poetry, spoken word, song, dance, comedy)

*Submissions will undergo double-blind, peer review and must include submission title, format, whether it will be in-person or online, a brief abstract, brief presenter bios and contact information, as well as three learning objectives.*

Visit [linktr.ee/CSSSW](https://linktr.ee/CSSSW) to upload your submission. Final call for submissions due January 22, 2023, acceptance notification by Feb. 28, 2023. For conference updates check CSSSW website [spiritualityandsocialwork.ca](https://spiritualityandsocialwork.ca). For questions, please contact Dr. Cassandra Hanrahan at [info@spiritualityandsocialwork.ca](mailto:info@spiritualityandsocialwork.ca).\*\*\*Submissions in French are also accepted.\*\*\*



## APPEL À SOUMISSIONS

Date d'échéance: 22 JANV. 2023

*L'esprit dans le travail social :*

*Vers l'éco-spiritualité et la pratique du travail social holistique et durable*

Le congrès CSSSW 2023: L'esprit dans le travail social : Vers l'éco-spiritualité et la pratique du travail social qui est holistique et durable vise à explorer le rôle du travail social dans le climat émergent et la crise de santé mentale qui y est associée. Aujourd'hui, la compréhension et la pratique d'éco-spiritualité est peut-être plus cruciale que jamais. En faisant résonner l'alarme sur le changement climatique qui est « la plus grande menace pour la santé l'humanité », l'organisation mondiale de la santé (2021) a rapporté que « les professionnels de la santé du monde entier répondent déjà aux dommages causés par cette crise en cours ». Mais où est le travail social dans ces réponses mondiales?

Les nouvelles normes d'accréditation 2021, publiées par l'Association canadienne pour la formation en travail social (CASWE-ACFTS, 2021), liste durabilité environnementale et la pratique écologique comme l'un des onze objectifs d'apprentissage, tandis que les valeurs et l'éthique professionnelle incluent une compréhension des contextes spirituels et culturels par rapport au travail avec les gens et les communautés. Ces normes doivent être mises en œuvre d'ici le 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 2023. Cette conférence offrira des espaces critiques et créatifs dans lesquels on pourra réfléchir à la façon dont nous pourrions commencer à intégrer les sujets de la santé climatique et de la justice environnementale – qui ne font pas partie en ce moment de la base du travail social, ni des services paramédicaux de santé, ni des programmes de santé mentale, ni des champs d'exercice typiques - selon une perspective intersectionnelle et non-anthropocentrique pour favoriser et soutenir la durabilité du bien-être individuel et planétaire.

Les sujets d'intérêt possibles incluent, mais sans s'y limiter :

- Travail social et mouvements environnementaux mondiaux (ex. Paris, COP 260)
- Les pratiques du spiritualités - cérémonie, rituel, chant, la méditation, la prière, l'observance et l'art - comme voies à la connexion
- Visions du monde inter-religieuses, spiritualité, environnement, activisme et travail social
- Approches thérapeutiques basées sur la nature/la terre pour santé mentale et le bien-être spirituel
- Éco-anxiété/climat chagrin/fureur: Soins du corps et de l'esprit

## La Dixième Conférence Nord-Américaine au Sujet de la Spiritualité et du Travail Social

Pré-conférence: 21 juin, 2023

Conférence: 22-24 juin, 2023

Hébergé à l'Université Dalhousie (Halifax, N.-É.)  
Co-parrainé par la Dalhousie School of Social Work et la Société pour la Spiritualité et le Travail Social (États-Unis).

En mettant une emphase sur nos interconnexions et nos interdépendances, nous vous encourageons à conceptualiser ce qu'est l'éco-spiritualité (et ce qui ne l'est pas), et d'examiner comment celle-ci et les pratiques holistiques pourraient être mises en pratique d'une manière durable dans de différents contextes, tout au long de la vie. Cette conférence réunira des chercheurs, des praticiens, des éducateurs, des étudiants, et des intervenants de diverses disciplines, en personne et en ligne, pour un échange hybride enrichissant et pour la diffusion de l'érudition, de la pratique des idées et des arts – explorer les façons dont l'éco-spiritualité peut informer le travail social en devenir une profession plus pertinente face aux nombreux problèmes complexes qui affectent le monde aujourd'hui, menaçant les ingrédients essentiels d'une bonne santé - l'air pur, l'eau potable, l'approvisionnement alimentaire nutritif, et l'abri sûr.

Les sessions comprendront les formats suivants :

- Présentations d'articles scientifiques
- Entretiens conceptuels; Résultats de recherche
- Présentations d'articles rédigés par des étudiants
- Tables rondes
- Ateliers expérimentiels et interactifs
- Contributions créatives (par exemple, contes, poésie, création parlée, chanson, danse, comédie)

*Les soumissions seront choisies selon un examen par les pairs en double aveugle et doivent inclure le titre de la soumission, le format, si elle sera en personne ou en ligne, un bref résumé, une brève biographie du présentateur et coordonnées, ainsi que trois objectifs d'apprentissage.*

- La Terre comme contexte spirituel central
- Expériences traditionnelles de l'espace sacré dans la nature et réinventer les pratiques non-utilitaires
- Pratique contemplative/réflexive pour les travailleurs sociaux que sont éducateurs à propos du climat, praticiens et praticiennes engagés pour la justice environnementale
- Le racisme environnemental - comment la spiritualité peut guider ce travail
- Visions du monde et perspectives autochtones
- L'esprit et la décolonisation

Visitez [linktr.ee/CSSSW](https://linktr.ee/CSSSW) pour télécharger votre soumission. Date de l'échéance : le 22 janvier, 2023, notification d'acceptation avant le 1 mars, 2023. Pour les mises à jour de la conférence, consultez le site web du CSSSW: [www.spiritualityandsocialwork.ca](http://www.spiritualityandsocialwork.ca). Pour toute question, veuillez contacter [info@spiritualityandsocialwork.ca](mailto:info@spiritualityandsocialwork.ca).