

CURRENTS

MENNO SIMONS COLLEGE • SUMMER 2012



Contents

- 1 Associate VP's Message
- 2 Making Waves
- 4 Currently Speaking: IDS
- 6 Currently Speaking: CRS
- 8 Alumni Reflections

MSC Currents is a publication of Menno Simons College, published twice a year.

Editor: Monica Derksen

Communications & Marketing Director: Nadine Kampen

CMU Designer: Craig Terlson

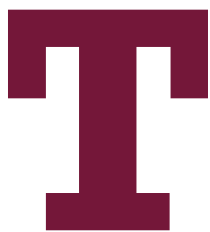
Contributors: Ruth Taronno
Richard McCutcheon,
James Janzen, Tyler Morden,
John Derksen, Danielle Miller,
Monika Allen, J.P. Neufeld

Cover Illustration: Craig Terlson

Please direct submissions or queries to:
Menno Simons College
520 Portage Ave
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0G2
Ph. 204.953.3855
www.mscollege.ca

MSC is a College of Canadian Mennonite University; Affiliated with The University of Winnipeg.

Message from the MSCSA



he MSCSA is excited about the potential next year will bring! With a totally new and renovated student lounge and association office, we are hoping to have the opportunity to get to know our peers better and, in turn, strengthen the Menno Simons College community even more. We look forward to hosting a number of events, including fundraising events for local and international causes!



MSCSA Executive (l-r): Communications–Rachel Hammerback; Initiatives–Sydney Kaminski; Facilitator–Caitlin MacHutchon; Events –Ruth Vanstone. Missing: Secretary –Campbell Maclean

Associate VP's Message



Ruth Taronno

| Associate VP, Menno Simons College |

Spring is here! The fresh warm breezes of spring are rejuvenating our winter-worn souls! Wait a minute – did we even have a winter? While non-Winnepeggers might think that we did, indeed, have winter weather, locals may be forgiven for thinking that winter passed us by. Global warming and northern winter road conditions aside, most of us were quite happy to bask in the relatively warm temperatures of this strange winter. Spring really is here, and we are set to enjoy all the wonderful things a Manitoba summer brings.

It is perhaps trite to say that spring is about rebirth and renewal, but it really is, isn't it? Yet, for those of us in the university setting, the real spring does not happen in March or April or May; it happens in September, when the influx of new and returning students brings life and excitement to our offices and classrooms. Remember that first day of classes? Even for students in

the “six year plan,” that first day was ripe with promise and excitement. This September, the first day of university will be even more special as we open the doors to our brand-new reception and student services areas, new and refurbished classrooms, and a spacious new student lounge. What a way to celebrate the beginning of a new school year!

While we are excited about the changes, I also am well aware that just as “clothing doesn't make the man or woman,” a building does not make a community. Menno Simons College has always been a special place, even when we were just a few offices and classrooms in MacNamara Hall (remember carefully dodging toddlers in the daycare as you walked between the two buildings?). It is the people who make the difference, and we have been so lucky to attract wonderful, committed individuals – faculty, staff, and students. Thank you for being part of Menno Simons College in the past. We hope that you will stay connected in the future.



Microfinance: The Illusion of Development

MSC Welcomes Guest Speaker
Dr. Milford Bateman on Campus

| Danielle Miller, MSC Graduate 2012 (IDS 4-year) |

M

icro-credit has often been labelled the ‘miracle cure for poverty.’ It is the latest innovative strategy to promote sustainable, economic stability in developing nations across the globe.

On January 24, British economist and author Dr. Milford Bateman gave a persuasive argument against this widely accepted tool of development. Bateman has published many articles and books which critique the use of microfinance in many development strategies.

During his presentation, Bateman revealed his beliefs about the realities and failures of microfinance by highlighting the popular myths surrounding its achievements.

He began by briefly narrating the success stories of microfinance in the 1970s, explaining how micro-loans quickly became a major part of foreign aid and development. This led to the formation of the Grameen Bank, which is in operation today. Massive investments in microfinance led to an oversupply of ‘free money.’ This meant that anyone in developing nations could receive a loan, regardless of intention or situation.

Bateman compared this situation to the

sub-prime mortgage situation in the United States. He outlined the system’s inevitable collapse, based on many examples of oversupply. According to Bateman, the loans were meant to supply entrepreneurs with an opportunity to launch their businesses into sustainable economies, yet realistically, most micro-loans are currently used for consumption spending.

This increases poverty, where the poor fall deeper into debt due to high interest rates and achieve no new sources of income. He went on to expose a number of myths about the so-called success of microfinance, concluding with his opinion that the real motivation behind microfinance is the greed for profit by the lenders.

A period of questions followed Bateman’s presentation, including inquiry about Bateman’s own experiences with large organizations that deal in microfinance. Several questioners challenged Bateman’s harsh critique, giving examples of positive cases. Acknowledging these possibilities, Bateman

responded with alternative options that could produce similar results.

Bateman captivated the audience of students, faculty, staff and guests with his realistic and intellectually stimulating account of a major piece in the field of international development today.





Students to Benefit from MSC Expansion

| James Janzen, MSC Graduate 2012 (CRS 4-year; IDS 3-year) |

As I graduate with a double-major in the two programs offered by Menno Simons College, I am both saddened to depart and excited to know that students will have a brand new space in the fall term. The learning that goes on at the College transcends the classroom walls in the relationships that are built between fellow students. The physical space where these relationships grow is so important.

While my experience at MSC has indeed been academic, some of the most important learning and growth opportunities have not come from a textbook or lecture. We students often find ourselves involved in progressive teaching methods. Group work, skills sharing, role-playing, and intensive dialogue sessions

have been integral to my progression as a student.

The College is a place of growth. Students learn from each other, and it is important that we have a welcoming, safe, and suitable area for that to happen. Without this expansion, the College lacks student space – there is no reason to stick around after class or come early. I can begin to imagine the great possibilities of a more connected MSC community; a more vibrant and capable student body; a place for student association meetings and events; space for group work, discussion, and debate; study areas; and a renewed sense of belonging.

I hope you can imagine this as well.

Please join us in making it happen.

MSC Welcomes New IDS Instructor

Corrie Lynn McDougall is the newest instructor in the International Development Studies program at Menno Simons College. She has a PhD in development and international relations from Aalborg University in Denmark, with a specialization in non-profit sector management and development assistance.

As a teen, McDougall was exposed to a variety of cultures from around the world. She was particularly interested in Latin America and the plight of the street child. Consequently, via Change for Children (Edmonton), she connected with an educator in Southeastern Brazil who welcomed her into the community.

Upon returning home, she carried out a number of presentations to raise awareness and funds to help build a volunteer-run school. After this life-changing experience, McDougall carried out similar initiatives in two other impoverished schools in Cuba and India. McDougall then returned to Canada to finish her BA at the University of Calgary, continuing her work as an outreach worker for youth

at risk at the Calgary Young Offenders Centre, Enviros, and the AIDS Calgary Awareness Association.

In her travels, McDougall made some strong friendships with a group of Danes, and after learning more about their commitment to development assistance, chose to continue her education in Denmark. While completing her graduate work, McDougall interned in Ethiopia for UNICEF's HIV/AIDS Section as the Youth Expert conducting needs assessments with community-based stakeholders. She has also carried out research on the World Bank's Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program in East Africa. During her PhD studies, she shifted her research to the realm of food security and conducted a program evaluation of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank's food security program in Kenya and Tanzania. Her research encompasses the political ecology of hunger and strategic responses of non-profit organizations.

For over a decade, McDougall taught at Aalborg University and Roskilde University in Denmark. She instructed in areas relating to the global food system, applied research methods, the project cycle, and non-profit organization and management. Non-profits have not only been of academic interest to McDougall, she has also been volunteering in social justice initiatives around the globe and has extensive experience in coordination and cross-cultural relations. She has assisted several non-profits in their strategic planning, program evaluation, and communications. McDougall also works as a consultant in program development and evaluation in the non-profit sector. She combines her education with 15 years of international experience, having worked and lived in Northern Europe, East Africa, and Latin America – and is happy to now call Winnipeg home.

Originally from rural Manitoba, McDougall and her fiancée have just recently moved to Winnipeg. McDougall grew up in Dauphin, the daughter of two high school teachers. During her childhood, she also spent time at the family farm in Southwestern Manitoba. After graduating from high school, McDougall moved to the Okanagan to go to college, working during the summers as a bilingual interpreter for Parks Canada at Riding Mountain National Park.





Jerry Buckland, April 2012 launch of *Hard Choices* at McNally Robinson Booksellers

Book by Menno Simons Professor Shows Banks Exclude the Poor

| J. P. Neufeld |

A

new book by CMU's Menno Simons College Professor Jerry Buckland reveals how Canada's banking system excludes the poor.

In *Hard Choices: Financial Exclusion, Fringe Banks and Poverty in Urban Canada*, published this year by The University of Toronto Press, Buckland takes an in-depth look at the tough

choices low-income people living in Canada's inner cities face.

Data demonstrate that over the past 30 years mainstream banks and credit unions are abandoning low-income neighbourhoods, while the business of fringe financial services such as pawn shops, cheque-cashers and payday lenders booms. These fringe banks often charge far higher service fees. Payday lenders in Manitoba, for example, charge up to \$51 on a \$300 two-week loan.

"Low income people often do an amazing job of managing a very tight budget, frequently without access to credit or any reasonably priced credit," says Buckland.

Buckland's research team conducted interviews with people facing financial challenges in inner-city neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, Toronto, and Vancouver. Though the qualitative interviews don't serve as statistical data, they depict the real-life "perspective of low-income Canadians and the hard choices they have to make about financial services," Buckland says. He fleshes out the big picture using data from national surveys, statistics, and policy documents. The field research was funded by a major grant from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of

Canada. The book is the first major study of fringe banks and urban poverty in Canada.

But Buckland hesitates to heap too much blame on fringe bankers themselves.

"I'm ambiguous about fringe bankers. I'm unwilling to say that just because they're operating a fringe bank they're exploiting poor people," he says. "But I'm also unwilling to say that low income people aren't being harmed. It's systematic exploitation when poor people end up paying more for dead-end financial services. The system is failing."

Part of the problem is that most mainstream banks aren't very interested in serving the poor. Federal law requires any registered bank to open an account or cash a registered cheque for anyone with appropriate identification. But Buckland found that staff at banks don't treat low-income people as well as middle-income earners and don't understand their specific financial needs.

"Banks just aren't very interested in having low-income people saving money so they don't set up the systems needed to do so," he says.

"We need to broaden our concept of basic banking to encompass more than just opening accounts and cashing cheques," says Buckland. "Let's talk about how we can make banking more appropriate, more accessible and more useful for low income Canadians."



University for Peace Costa Rican University Ideal for Studies, Research, and Teaching

| Dr. John Derksen, Associate Professor (CRS) |

Menno Simons College's Dr. John Derksen spent three enjoyable and stimulating weeks at UPeace in February 2012. He researched the global history of peacemaking, attended classes on nonviolent action and the Arab Spring, and offered lectures entitled "Religion, War, and Peace." His lectures considered why religion is so often a major part of wars, grappled with how to respond when some religious scriptures urge peace while others seem to urge war, and investigated worldviews that undergird people's religious outlooks.

Tiny Costa Rica is rightly famous for its beaches, its volcanoes, its wildlife, and its coffee. Two other facts are important: (1) 24% of Costa Rica is national parks, and Costa Rica is leading the world in efforts to preserve its environment; and (2) Costa Rica abolished its army in 1948. Money that might be allocated for the military goes toward health care and education. As a result, in international relations, Costa Rica relies on diplomacy and, within the country, citizens enjoy free education through high school, as well as free medical care. Furthermore, Costa Rica's president, Oscar Arias, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987 for his work in bringing war-torn Central American countries together under a peace plan.

Another sign of Costa Rica's peacemaking leadership is the presence on a scenic hilltop of the University for Peace. Founded in 1980 and mandated by the United Nations, UPeace offers courses at the Master's level in areas such as Peace and Conflict Studies, Peace Education, Gender and Peace, the Media and Peace, Human Rights, Ecology and Peace, and Economics and Peace – much like Conflict Resolution Studies and International Development Studies courses at Menno Simons College. Through education, training, and research, UPeace hopes to help people "build the foundations of peace and progress and . . . reduce the prejudice and hatred on which violence, conflict, and terrorism are based." (www.UPeace.org)

With courses taught by professors from all over the world, and 150 students from many countries, UPeace feels like a friendly, mini-United Nations where people know each other. Courses, taught in English, are normally two or three weeks long.

The University for Peace welcomes professors on sabbatical, and encourages fourth-year undergraduate students to take UPeace courses to broaden their learning at another institution and in another culture.





Grace and Gratitude

| Dr. Richard McCutcheon, Dean of Menno Simons College |

As I look back over the past two-and-a-half years, the word that first comes to mind is gratitude. Staff, faculty, and student colleagues have accomplished a great deal of work. This has been done gracefully while working under the common pressure of resource scarcity in higher education today. When difficult issues arise, it always gives me heart to see faculty and student colleagues trying to use the very tools we teach to address a wide range of issues that arise under these conditions.

For the next year, while on sabbatical, I am looking forward to a time of reflection and writing on subjects that have held my attention for decades: why does violence remain such a strong presence in our local and global communities? How do we conceptualize war in cultural terms? And how can violence and war be understood in terms of processes into which we can insert effective nonviolent action?

For much of the past thirty years, I have often said

that a central and consistent passion that guides my work and life has been children. First it was the children living in such absolute poverty in India's urban centres. Then it was the children of Iraq that broke my heart open to the suffering endured by the people of that beleaguered country when I spent time there in 1991 and later in 2000. And later, as I walked through Palestinian cities, I saw how children's lives are shaped and shattered by the ravages of violence and occupation.

The birth in March of my son Declan has shed a whole new light on this central guiding passion. Perhaps, as an elderly Quaker once said to me, our children truly are bridges between all of us and bridges between past and future.

In them I see innate grace and experience the original gratitude. May we, for the sake of all our children, find the wisdom and means to transform conflict, reduce violence, eliminate poverty, and end war.





Journey Towards Social Change

| Tyler Morden, MSC Graduate 2010 (IDS 3-year)|

In my final year of high school in a rural Manitoban town, I anxiously awaited moving to the city and beginning university. I had been accepted to an academic institution with no concrete plan of study, when an acquaintance dropped the words “international development studies” in a conversation and immediately caught my attention. Since completing a world issues class in grade eleven, I had been flirting with the idea of studying something related to the course content, but I had no idea what that would be.

A few days after our chat, I found myself applying to The University of Winnipeg and Menno Simons College. Little did I know, this acquaintance would eventually turn into a close friend and become my first connection to the MSC community.

My initial reaction to MSC was a mix of nervousness, intimidation, and excitement. Never before had so many passionate, intelligent, and diverse people surrounded me. I quickly settled into the new environment, opened up, and began a process of sharing and learning that would span across five years in the classroom, four continents, and continues to this day.

The MSC community, made up of a strong and supportive network of social justice-oriented people, guided me through my journey in understanding my role in humanitarian work. Through student connections, I became aware of the study abroad opportunities through The University of Winnipeg and spent a semester studying International Relations in Turkey. Upon my return, I applied for my first non-profit job in Winnipeg, notified of the opening by a staff member of MSC.

Following that contract, I was hired by another non-profit organization working in refugee settlement, run by a team of staff of whom the majority were MSC graduates. Encouraged and supported by MSC faculty, I completed a contract in Sri Lanka, working on a reintegration project with former child soldiers; another in Uganda, working in advocacy and victim assistance for landmine survivors; and attended a conference on international human rights in Norway.

Today, as a social work student and proud MSC alumnus, I hold a strong appreciation for the MSC community support that I still experience. As many of my close friends are my former classmates, sharing and learning about new and exciting opportunities and advancements in social justice work have become a part of my daily routine.

To me, MSC is about support, collaboration, and community. With a strong network of academics, researchers, community workers, and students sharing passion for human rights and social justice, our continual support for one another will lead us through our journey in creating collective social change.



MSC Practicum Influenced Career and Life

| Monika (Neumann) Allen MA, CCC; MSC Graduate 2007 (CRS 4-year) |

I remember feeling a nervous excitement when I heard that Mennonite Central Committee had created a practicum placement for me. I was told “the position includes working with a gang rehabilitation program for a peace and justice organization in Honduras.” Little did I know of the personal and professional impact this experience would have on my life.

My practicum included providing support for an HIV education program, as well as developing and presenting workshops on various conflict resolution topics. It would take time spent over a few cups of coffee to share the many lessons I learnt from this experience. This time fuelled a new energy for my involvement in related projects.

Upon my return home, I became involved in Winnipeg’s inner city, with youth vulnerable to gang involvement. I have, since then, taken numerous opportunities to return to Central America, applying my newfound Spanish language skills by translating for a non-governmental organization in rural Mexico. Continuing with my interest in HIV prevention, I prepared a sexual health presentation that I shared with communities in India, during my season there, years later.

More recently, I completed a portion of my Master’s internship at

Nine Circles Community Health Centre, where I continued to learn about, and attempted to ameliorate, the challenges and conflicts facing individuals with HIV/AIDS. Being passionate about improving relations among youth, I also engaged with the Youth Peacebuilding Project; I conducted my thesis in the area of program development and evaluation for the project.

At present, I am enjoying integrating my skills at an individual and family level, with my work as a counsellor. Each of these endeavors has built on the last. I look forward to discovering added value from my time at MSC on personal and community levels, both locally and internationally.

*Monika Allen currently works as an Associate Counsellor at Riverbend Counselling in Winnipeg.
monika@riverbendcounselling.ca*



*A College of Canadian Mennonite University
Affiliated with University of Winnipeg*