

MSC CURRENTS

Summer 2017

Menno Simons College



| Celebrating Success

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MSC Currents is a bi-annual publication of Menno Simons College.

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MSC is a College of Canadian Mennonite University, affiliated with The University of Winnipeg.

We are constantly being shaped by our vision even as we continue to shape it.

On the cover:

Kimia Towfigh (IDS '17) was accepted to the faculty of Law at McGill.

From the Associate Dean

NEIL FUNK-UNRAU



Where would we be without some sense of a guiding vision? We move forward more clearly and confidently, shaping and articulating our vision as we consciously or unconsciously choose what to see and respond to it. As we move, we are also constantly being shaped by our vision even as we continue to shape it.

For students, faculty, and staff, Menno Simons College (MSC) has become a place to express and expand a particular vision of preparation for active engagement in peacemaking and community development on both local and international scales. Through vigorous classroom discussions and energetic debates with fellow students and instructors, we are challenged to open our eyes to new possibilities and new places, to dare to ask the questions not yet fully seen or considered. Then, at various points during the rhythm of the academic cycle, we gather to celebrate where our visions have taken us—whether it be the graduation of another group of students, or the launch of another new research publication.

To stay vibrant and alive, any vision also needs periodic renewal. It is not enough to glory in all the past and current successes of MSC; we also need to adjust our vision to see more clearly the changing times and contexts, and to better respond to these new realities. For those of us who work here at MSC, a one-day gathering on a cool overcast day in May provided the opportunity to further this necessary re-visioning of the college.

We were challenged to view more clearly and critically the contours of the fields of conflict resolution studies and international development studies, to begin to vision programs that better articulate the questions and possibilities that will influence these studies now and in years to come. We acknowledged the social and financial factors that will continue to shape who we are and what we can do, along with the potential for new creative synergies between program and within MSC as a whole. Together, we resolved to continue to move forward, celebrating what we have accomplished, encouraging each other in our individual and collective journeys, and shaping the vision that will take us into the future.

This magazine provides one more way to honour our collective vision of MSC as a learning and an actively compassionate community. Within this magazine we celebrate reports of several different research projects, stories of lives changed and enriched through their participation in the life of MSC, and reflections and images of the special events that punctuate the rhythm of daily and weekly classes. We invite you to celebrate with us and to become part of this vibrant, growing and changing vision.

Former child soldier named MSC's Distinguished Alumni

ALISON RALPH

Menno Simons College is pleased to award David Atem its 2017 Distinguished Alumnus Award.

A former child soldier from South Sudan, Atem came to Canada as a refugee in 2001. He graduated from MSC in 2007 with a Bachelor of Arts in International Development Studies.

"I arrived in Canada with a lot of expectations of what I could do for my community back home," he says. "It wasn't easy to secure the things I needed to support myself, my children, and my community."

Since graduating, Atem has contributed to the wider community in Winnipeg and in South Sudan.

In 2008, he worked to establish a bursary for students of African



descent, to ease barriers to education at the University of Winnipeg.

Later, he founded a forum for dialogue on South Sudan, bringing together scholars, researchers, activists, politicians, and policy makers, to support peace and development in the world's newest country.

"David overcame tremendous personal challenges to not only complete his degree, but was also instrumental in forging meaningful and successful partnerships between the African and Canadian communities, all while raising three children as a single father," says Ruth Taronno, Director of Practicum at MSC.

Today, Atem works as an Academic Advisor with immigrant students at the University of Winnipeg. At the same time, he is working to complete his Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba.

"Making a difference is measured through helping people," Atem says. "And there is nothing more important than helping a fellow human being."

Inaugural MSCSA Scholarship Awarded

ALISON RALPH

The Menno Simons College Student Association (MSCSA) is pleased to announce Brigitte Sabourin as the inaugural recipient of the MSCSA Scholarship.

"I am beyond excited to be receiving this award!" said Sabourin, who is entering her third year of a four-year Bachelor of Arts in Conflict Resolution Studies.

The MSCSA Scholarship is awarded to a student enrolled in at least two Conflict Resolution Studies or International Development Studies

courses, and is actively pursuing the values of the MSCSA, including principles of peace, justice, equality, social action, and community.

Sabourin plans to pursue postgraduate studies, and hopes to work in mediation and conflict management with at-risk youth, women, and families.

"I want to provide guidance that empowers victimized people, and restores relationships and self-worth."



Photo: Brigitte Sabourin

MSC professors awarded prestigious federal grants

ALISON RALPH

Two MSC professors are recipients of prestigious federal grant funds through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

Dr. Jerry Buckland, Professor of International Development Studies, received a grant worth \$263,000. Dr. Kirit Patel, Assistant Professor of International Development Studies, received \$75,000.

“These successful grants are a testament to the impressive research track-records of these two professors,” said Dr. Neil Funk Unrau, Associate Dean of the college. “For MSC, it is an affirmation of the academic community that sustains and supports the work done by our researchers.”

Buckland’s grant is for a five-year project using financial diaries to better understand the finances of vulnerable Canadians, with a view to financial empowerment.

In two phases, Buckland and his team will explore the economic, social, and regulatory implications of financial products and policies for vulnerable Canadians.

The first phase will look at the financial patterns of participants from Winnipeg and the surrounding area, over an 18-month period. The second will follow participants for a further 18 months, but this time, the team plans to intervene providing financial tools for financial empowerment.

“The economy is becoming more financially challenging,” Buckland said. “There are more financial products, more decisions to be made.

We’re facing more complicated choices, so we want to understand how vulnerable people work through these complicated choices and difficult challenges.”

It is an affirmation of the academic community that sustains and supports the work done by our researchers.

Patel’s grant of \$75,000 will go toward researching the impacts of Green Benches of State High Courts and National Green Tribunals on disadvantaged communities in Tamil Nadu, Kamataka, and Gujarat states in India.

“Just as divorce cases go before the Family Court, and criminal cases go before the Criminal Courts, in India, environmental cases go before the Environmental Courts,” Patel said. “It’s an innovative idea, and we want

to understand the intended and unintended impacts.”

In this initial phase, Patel will examine participation in the environmental judiciary through the lens of local NGOs, women, and the science of Environmental Impact Assessments.

“In developing countries, issues of poverty and the environment are overlapping more and more,” Patel said. “And in these cases, there are often tradeoffs between the environment and the poor.”

SSHRC mandates the training of students, whether undergraduate or graduate.

To that end, Patel and his team have hired three MSC undergraduate students as research interns.

In the fall, Buckland and his team have plans to hire senior undergraduate and graduate students to participate in data collection from the financial diaries.

Both professors are excited to receive funding from SSHRC.

“It was a long process. I would say it was a year in the making,” Buckland said. “SSHRC has a highly acclaimed process for vetting applications. That I got this the first time I applied, I was just thrilled.”



Left: Jerry Buckland; Right: Kirit Patel

Making hope persuasive in Mali

JONATHAN SEARS, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

In April 2017, I traveled to Mali for a month of research with the ‘Stabilizing Mali’ project through the Centre Franco Paix (CFP), at the University of Quebec in Montreal. This was my fourth trip to the country, located in the West African Sahel region.

In recent years, Mali has become better known because of crises, conflict, and on-going challenges.

The past five years have seen the confluence of an independence insurgency, a coup d’état, international interventions of uneven effectiveness and vision, routinized transnational trafficking, and multi-group, self-proclaimed jihadist violence.

These dynamics have left the Malian state shaky at best: weak public services and low legitimacy in the eyes of many Malians, concentrated particularly in the northern and central regions, and in rural areas where people’s basic needs often go unmet.

During this most recent trip, I had the opportunity to speak to government and non-government actors, with roles in and insights into the peace process. Many of them emphasized the problem of ‘impunity’ for wrongdoers in public service, private enterprise, and NGOs.

The need for leaders’ conduct to change was regularly acknowledged, and often emphasized with



proverbial local language wisdom: a fish rots from the head down.

This indicates to me an abiding sense among Malians that broadly inclusive consultations need to be ongoing in the peace process.

My research going forward, as part of the CFP team, centers on a somewhat formidable task: to make hope persuasive.

As precisely, realistically, and critically as possible, I want to make persuasive the hope that the restored authority of the Malian state will indeed enable better governance, and that the peace agreement implementation process will bear fruit: the peace desired and deserved by people throughout Mali. People seeking to mend relationships in the face of direct and structural violence; people longing to overcome the logic of vengeance, and live into

the reconciliation enshrined in the admittedly flawed and slow-moving peace process.

Malians live their lives in each season. Work is done, even as opportunities are scarce. Food is grown even as the rains are unpredictable. Marriages are celebrated, even as fewer guests come from out of town. Babies are baptized even as their futures are uncertain. Funerals strive to honour lives lived. In reminiscence of friends, colleagues, and those who have claimed me—a stranger—as a son and brother, I think of benedictions for the coming seasons: May the first and last rains come at the right time. May we work in good health. May the harvests be good. May we eat in good health. May peace be your companion.

Photo: Jonathan Sears in Mali

Engaging in new areas in the field of conflict resolution

STEPHANIE STOBBE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION STUDIES

The Conflict Resolution field has grown tremendously over the past 25 years, with many exciting new developments. One area I have long been interested in is the connection between Conflict Resolution Studies (CRS) and International Development Studies (IDS). In collaboration with Dr. Jerry Buckland (IDS), Jan Schmidt (Jan Schmidt & Associates), and Sandra Wiebe (MA student), we sought a linkage between the theory and practice from the two disciplines.

In the resulting article, “Moving from Awkward to Integral: Building a Culture and Practice of Healthy Professional Conversations,” we combined IDS expertise in program evaluation with CRS knowledge of workplace and organizational conflicts to help evaluate the effectiveness of a communication skills training program for a major corporation in Winnipeg.

Using the framework of Action Evaluation, developed by Dr. Jay Rothman, a scholar in the field of Conflict Resolution, we looked at how theory and practice inform one another in the evaluation of the training program. Our goal is to explore how this evaluative tool can be used for future projects in the areas of CRS and IDS for reflexive practice and to establish criteria for success.

A second focus of my research and teaching has been on refugees and other forcibly displaced

people, following the hosting of the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (CARFMS) 2016 Conference. This conference shed light onto the many and complex issues surrounding this topic in terms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, human rights, and development.

This spring, I’m teaching a new course on “Exploring the Refugee Challenge” for the Canadian School of Peacebuilding. Then in 2018-2019, the CRS program will offer this as a new course on “Refugees and Forced Migration”, which will explore the topic from an interdisciplinary perspective and discuss responses from local, national, and international communities.

Finally, I have recently been invited to be the Lexington Book Series

Editor for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Asia, a much-needed research topic in the field of Conflict Resolution.

The first book of this new series will be an edited book, *Mediation and Other Cultural Models of Conflict Resolution in Asia*, highlighting 10 different countries from the region. I’m very excited to be working with amazing scholars from India, Nepal, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines; and including my own chapter on Laos. I hope that this series will add to the literature on cultural processes of dispute resolution that can help build peace and encourage reconciliation.



Photo: Stephanie Stobbe

Congratulations graduates!

FALL 2016

CONFLICT RESOLUTION STUDIES

Three-year BA

Iorkyase Aboiyar (with 3yr IDS)
 Sheena Catcheway
 Monybuny Chuol
 Dylan Cohen
 Emily Epp
 Damien Ozechowsky
 Santino Ring
 Nicole Verluis

Four-year BA

Brittany Moroz
 Jordyn O'Dunn Orto
 Asha Miriam Reimer Stobbe

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Four-year BA

Gurpreet Dhillon
 Carly Savoie

WINTER 2017

CONFLICT RESOLUTION STUDIES

Three-year BA

April Aburto
 Sherrod
 Chester
 Anjelique
 Dacosta
 Shannon
 Eisbrenner



Four-year BA

Cindy Streilein

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Three-year BA

Genevieve Giesbrecht
 Hyejin Jeon
 Benisia Whenzle

Honours

Natalie Dyck

SPRING 2017

CONFLICT RESOLUTION STUDIES

Three-year BA

Asmahan
 Abdirahman
 Ila Barker
 Andrea Berg
 Justin
 Carruthers
 John Cochon
 Emily Derrett
 Charlotte Fisher
 John Fox
 Thomas Howell
 Kristin Jacobson
 Michael Julien
 Stephanie Kosowan
 Lily Maryssa Levesque
 Katelyn Rach
 Rosa Robert
 Samantha Shefchyk
 Mark Stewart
 Rahasin Walaliyadde
 Heather Wiebe
 Rachel Wonnek



Four-year BA

Courtney Bear
 Corrine Clyne
 Meredith Done
 Olivia Dubeski
 Rebekah Letkeman
 Amy Linklater



INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Three-year BA

Larissa Chubenko
 Shafagh Daneshfar
 Courtney Klassen
 Caroline Maritim
 Shanley Spence
 Kimia Towfigh
 Nebiyat Yohannes (with 3yr CRS)



Four-year BA

Denzel Boxill
 Barbara Bucheli
 Daadir Faarax (with 3yr CRS)
 Ndeye Aminata Kane
 Megan Marques
 Samantha Neufeld
 Brooke Zelcer



Daadir Faarax: from refugee to community organizer

ALISON RALPH



At 16, most young people dream of being on their own. For Daadir Faarax, it was a reluctant reality.

Faarax moved to Canada as a refugee from Somalia in December 2007, shortly before his 17th birthday. His parents and two sisters remained in Mogadishu.

“It was tough. I had a lot of responsibility on my shoulders,” he says. “I had to stand up for my family and for my future.”

Young and alone, Faarax quickly found a place in Winnipeg’s Somali community.

“I had a lot of help,” he says. “The Somali community is strong in Winnipeg, and we take care of one another. There’s a collective sense of responsibility. If someone from the community is in need, we take care of them as if they were a family member.”

In high school, Faarax created recreational programs for Somali youth, through the local community.

Coupled with his experience growing up in a warzone, this experience sparked an interest in community development, but he wasn’t sure what kind of degree that would translate to in university.

Still, he registered for classes at the University of Winnipeg in 2011, where he met David Atem, an MSC graduate and academic advisor working with immigrant students. Atem directed him to MSC.

This year, Faarax graduates from MSC with a Bachelor of Arts in International Development Studies, with a minor in Conflict Resolution Studies.

“I enjoyed every minute of my time here at MSC,” he says. “The skills I learned here took the work I was doing in the community to a new level. My programs are more structured, more skillful.”

In Somalia, the history of colonialism, and ongoing conflict means development is often understood to mean government.

“I learned that development is more than just government,” he says. “It comes from the community—I learned the power of the grassroots.

Beyond the classroom, MSC provided another community for Faarax to immerse himself in.

“Everyone knew me, and I knew them,” he says. “There are a lot of great teachers and students here. I will miss this place.”

Faarax now works at the NEEDS Centre in Winnipeg. As an Instructor with the youth program, he facilitates afterschool programs.

“We work mostly with newcomers so there can be a lot of challenges,” he says. “Many have experienced trauma as refugees, so we help them to integrate into life here in Canada.”

His time at MSC gave him the tools to problem solve.

“Now when I’m struggling with an issue at work, I do research on it. Nothing can stop me.” he says with a chuckle.

While in university, Faarax worked as a security guard to support his family back home, and eventually sponsored them to come to Canada in 2016.

In the future, Faarax hopes to work internationally doing humanitarian aid in warzones.

“I want to help people. I know how helpless it feels to live in a warzone.”

Photo: Daadir Faarax

Building stronger communities

BRITTANY GRISDALE, ONASHOWEWIN JUSTICE CIRCLE

I became interested in restorative justice when I reconnected with a sibling who was separated from me by the foster care system. We shared similar experiences in foster care but it was clear they experienced a gap in support. Where we are in life reflects that.

My sibling has been in and out of the juvenile corrections system, and this has followed them into adulthood. I have seen the struggle first-hand and have felt powerless to offer the support that my sibling needed when they first got in trouble. I am still there for my sibling, but I want to be a part of making sure the struggles they face are not shared by others.

Indigenous people are over-represented in correctional facilities and rates of recidivism are high. The justice system is supposed to be a deterrent, but clearly it is not working. The current system, along with the history of colonization, and

systematic racism contributes to these high rates.

The Onashowewin Justice Circle is working towards lowering these rates, and building stronger communities.

My practicum placement there lasted from January to April 2017. The experience served to expand my interest and passion in the field of restorative justice.

Onashowewin is a welcoming organization to all walks of life. They use approaches to restorative justice that give individuals who once made negative choices, a chance to move forward and become upstanding members of their communities once again.

One of the most important factors for participation is that the individual who committed the offence accepts responsibility for their actions. When an individual holds themselves accountable it

opens the doors for forgiveness, healing, and growth.

I have seen first-hand how the retributive system starkly paints the “offender” in black and white terms. It does not allow space for insight into who the offender is, or why they committed the offence. Onashowewin goes beyond the black and white, and moves towards accountability and forgiveness.

Through the legal court system individuals are often stigmatized, labeled, and dehumanized. Onashowewin aims to keep the individual accountable, and find pathways to repair the damages, and restore them to the community. Here the doors are open to anyone who is willing to move on and receive support from a holistic Indigenous perspective.

Sometimes a second chance is what we need to push us in the direction that allows us to lead positive and fulfilling lives. I believe that although people may make a bad decision, it does not determine the type of individual they are.

My practicum placement at Onashowewin was a great opportunity to see first-hand how restorative justice methods impacts real people in the community. It was a great experience and I recommend it as a future practicum placement for the next student.



Photo: Brittany Grisdale



Above: Participants at the 11th annual Social Justice Fair held at the University of Winnipeg.

11TH ANNUAL SOCIAL JUSTICE FAIR

In February, Menno Simons College's 11th Annual Social Justice Fair brought together over 30 local organizations engaged with social justice both in Winnipeg and around the world.

The event is a chance for current students, alumni, and community members to network.

MSC ALUMNI ENTER GRADUATE STUDIES

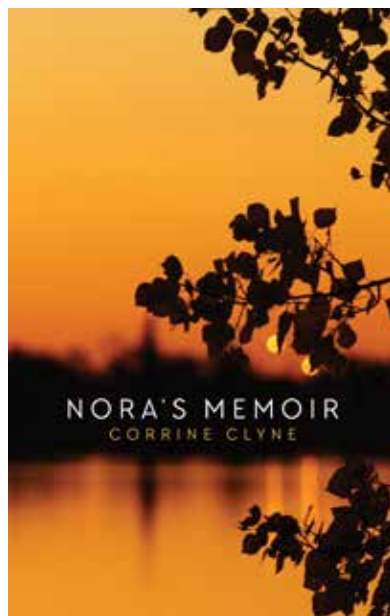
In September 2017, Genevieve Giesbrecht (IDS '17) heads to Osgoode Hall Law School at York University, while Ashley Hayward (CRS '17) plans to enter the Joint MA in Peace and Conflict Studies at The University of Winnipeg and The University Manitoba. Kimia Towfigh (IDS '17) was accepted to the faculty of Law at McGill, and Becca Ward (CRS '15) to the Faculty of Law at University of Ottawa.

ALUMNI JOIN AS MSC STAFF

Alison Ralph (IDS/CRS '11) joined MSC as Social Media Coordinator and Writer in April 2017, while James Cheng (CMU '11) began his role as Administrative Coordinator in June 2017.

TWO COURSES NOW OFFERED AS UW INDIGENOUS COURSE REQUIREMENT

MSC is pleased to offer a second course that meets The University of Winnipeg's Indigenous course requirement. IDS's Indigenous People And The Industrial state joins the CRS/IDS cross-listed Conflict And Development Issues In Indigenous Communities, creating more opportunities for learning and reconciliation for current MSC students.



CORRINE CLYNE (CRS '16) PUBLISHES BOOK OF POETRY

Nora's Memoir is a collection of poems released in April 2017. The book is a tribute to her mother who passed away when Clyne was 13 years old, and to her family and home community in Norway House, northern Manitoba. The book is available through McNally Robinson and Goldrock Press.

JACKIE HOGUE (IDS '96) FACILITATES MSC VISIONING DAY

In May 2017, MSC grad Jackie Hogue facilitated a Visioning Day with MSC staff and faculty, guiding a renewed vision for the future of MSC. Hogue was the first to graduate from MSC with a four-year degree in IDS and is now a principle at the consulting firm J. Hogue and Associates.

NEW COURSE: REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES: WEST AFRICAN SAHEL

In 2017-18, MSC is offering a new course taught by Dr. Jonathan Sears. This dynamic course will tackle, in his words, "the 'nexus' of development and security, including: environmental impacts on livelihoods, insurgency and counter-insurgency, democratic governance and human rights, and religious and ethnic diversity."

NEW COURSE: REFUGEES AND FORCED MIGRATION

In 2018-19, MSC has plans to offer a new course called Refugees and Forced Migration. Taught by Dr. Stephanie Stobbe, the course will, in her words, "explore the topic from an interdisciplinary perspective and discuss responses from local, national, and international communities."

MSC ACADEMIC ADVISOR ATTENDS NACADA CONFERENCE

MSC's Gina Loewen attended The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) conference held in Winnipeg, Manitoba in May 2017. The regional conference is an opportunity for advisors from across the Prairies and Mid-Western United States to network, learn, and develop new skills to better support students' needs.

MSC opens doors for mom of four

BY ALISON RALPH

When Rosa Robert decided to go back to school and enrolled at MSC, she knew it would take careful planning. A mother of four, Robert took two courses each semester while working full-time.

“It was challenging at times, looking after my kids, being in school, and working full-time,” Robert says. “I had to be very organized.”

Robert’s organization has paid off. This year, she will graduate from MSC with a three-year degree in Conflict Resolution Studies.

The community at MSC was key to Robert’s success.

“The professors are wonderful,” Robert says. “The skills I learned here help me understand myself, other people, and how to communicate across differences.”

Robert is considering pursuing a Master’s degree in Peace Studies. She hopes to one day work with newcomer families who have children with disabilities.

As the mother of a child with autism, Robert knows the challenges parents face getting the support they need.

“Having a child with disabilities can be overwhelming,” she says. “It’s hard to know where to look for support.”

For families who are not familiar with the culture or the language, the challenge is even greater.

Robert says the courses she took at MSC left her feeling empowered. Now she wants to empower others with the knowledge and tools they need to be successful.

“Education opens up so many doors, so if you get the opportunity, just go for it,” she says.



Menno Simons College Student Association Scholarship

You can support the success of students like Brigitte Sabourin (p3), as they pursue peace, justice, equality, social action, and community.

Donate online today: mscollege.ca/donate

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Visit mscollege.ca to follow our news and events, to make a donation, or find out about career opportunities. If you know someone who might be interested in what MSC offers, you can also arrange a campus visit or register for courses.

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