

Backgrounder

CAFA DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC AWARD RECIPIENTS, 2009

Dr. Reginald W. Bibby, a Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Lethbridge, has been chosen to receive this year's **CAFA Distinguished Academic Award** in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the wider community beyond the academy over the course of a long and distinguished career as a scholar, teacher, and public intellectual.

Dr. Bibby, who holds the Board of Governors Research Chair in Sociology at the University of Lethbridge, where he has taught for over three decades, has been monitoring and analyzing Canadian social trends and attitudes since the mid-1970s through a series of periodic nationwide surveys of adults and teens. This groundbreaking and often-cited body of research, developed in his twelve books, as well as numerous refereed journal articles and monographs, has generated a wealth of pioneering and historic data on social issues, intergroup relations, religion, and quality of life in Canada, and has earned Dr. Bibby a well-deserved reputation among his colleagues as 'the academic's academic.'

Never content to address his findings solely to other academics, however, Dr. Bibby, in the words of his department chair, has reached out 'regularly, willingly, and with a purpose' to engage with a wider, non-academic audience. His bestselling books, frequent appearances in the media, and extensive public speaking engagements, attest to his commitment to communicate his scholarly findings to the general public, as well as to educators, family organizations, and religious groups, among others. To quote another of his colleagues, Dr. Bibby 'has contributed conspicuously to the popular understanding of social trends in Canada while writing the most careful, prescient, and sophisticated sociological analyses of religion, youth and demographic change in Canadian society.'

More than 140,000 copies of Dr. Bibby's books have been sold to date. The latest, entitled [The Emerging Millennials: How Canada's Newest Generation is Responding to Change & Choice](#), was released in April 2009. A follow-up to his earlier [The Boomer Factor](#) (2006), this new book draws on Dr. Bibby's most recent national survey of teenagers, Project Teen Canada 2008, in examining the impact of the 'Boomer' era on teenagers today. [The Emerging Millennials](#) has garnered widespread media attention, including a cover-story in [Maclean's](#) magazine – the third time Dr. Bibby's work has been accorded this recognition.

The recipient of many honours, including an honorary doctorate from Laurentian University, Reginald Bibby was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2006, in recognition of the contribution which his work in monitoring social trends, values and attitudes has made to our understanding of Canadian identity. Underlining the extraordinary impact he has had beyond the academy as a social commentator and public intellectual, Venture Magazine has twice in recent years named Dr. Bibby as one of Alberta's fifty most influential people. A colleague writes that '...if a poll were to be done on Albertans, asking them to name one university professor, I am certain the name most often mentioned would be Reg's.'

Dr. Candace Nykiforuk, an Assistant Professor in the Centre for Health Promotion Studies, School of Public Health, at the University of Alberta, has been chosen to receive the **CAFA Distinguished Academic Early Career Award** in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the wider community beyond the academy through her innovative, community-based research exploring the relationships between the environment, the development of appropriate interventions, the healthy choices available to community residents, and chronic disease prevention.

Dr. Nykiforuk, who took up her current appointment at the University of Alberta as recently as 2006, based her doctoral dissertation (University of Waterloo, 2004) on research into the relationships between municipal tobacco by-laws, local policy and community characteristics. She subsequently held post-doctoral fellowships at McMaster University, UBC, and the University of Alberta's Centre for Health Promotion Studies, where she served as Research Coordinator for the 'Healthy Alberta Communities Project,' designed to evaluate community-based strategies for obesity and associated chronic disease prevention.

In 2007, Dr. Nykiforuk, as principal investigator, received funding from the Heart and Stroke Foundation for a major, multi-year research project to examine obesity prevention and the built environment in four Alberta communities. The project involves 'developing, implementing, and evaluating community-based participatory interventions aimed at specific environmental barriers that have been identified by members of the community.' As a colleague points out, community-based research can be a lengthy process, with all 'the inherent risks of working with community stakeholders,' yet Dr. Nykiforuk has participated in no less than ten research projects (five provincial, four national, one international) in five years, as a principal or co-researcher, with total funding of over \$12 million. Four of these projects will continue beyond 2010.

Building on her expertise in community-based research, and her interest in healthy public policies, Dr. Nykiforuk has already been recognized as 'one of Canada's leading scholars in defining and advancing the Canadian policy landscape.' In 2008, the Alberta Cancer Board awarded Dr. Nykiforuk, and her co-principal investigator, Dr. Kim Raine, a Population Health Innovative Intervention grant of \$1 million to establish the Alberta Policy Coalition for Cancer Prevention. Bringing together a multi-sectoral, interdisciplinary team of practitioners, researchers and decision-makers, the Coalition is designed to provide leadership in the development, implementation and evaluation of policy-related interventions for cancer prevention in Alberta communities. In the words of a fellow researcher, 'The leadership, enthusiasm and dedication that Candace has provided to this project are a testament to her character, and its early success demonstrates her outstanding potential in merging academia with community practice and policy interventions.'

Dr. Nykiforuk was a leading member of the pan-Canadian policy research network, 2008-09, hosted by the National Cancer Institute of Canada, and is credited with having been 'instrumental in helping define the policy agenda for the newly created Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute (to replace the NCIC).' Dr. Nykiforuk's growing national reputation has been further enhanced by her work in developing protocols for using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to support tobacco control and chronic disease research and evaluation. She continues to serve as a mentor in the CIHR Strategic Training Program in Tobacco Research, and as an Affiliate Scientist with the CCS/NCIC Centre for Behavioural Research and Program Evaluation.

Dr. Sara Dorow, Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Director of the Community Service-Learning Program at the University of Alberta, has been chosen to receive the **CAFA Distinguished Academic Early Career Award** in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the wider community beyond the academy through her groundbreaking work in founding and developing a community service-learning (CSL) program at the University of Alberta.

Dr. Dorow, who was awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor by the Faculty of Arts last year, received her first appointment at the University of Alberta in 2002. ‘As soon as she was hired,’ according to the Chair of her Department, she introduced the idea of community service-learning to the University of Alberta, where ‘virtually all of our professors and administrators were completely unaware of the concept.’ CSL integrates community-based projects, most often in the non-profit sector, with student academic course work. While these projects are designed to meet the specific requirements of participating community organizations, at the same time they provide students with opportunities to enhance classroom learning and to develop new critical thinking, research, communication, and leadership skills while working as volunteers in the community. As the Associate Dean (Undergraduate Learning) of the Faculty of Arts notes, CSL is ‘an innovative pedagogy that brings teaching, learning, research and community action together in a variety of ways.’

Building on her own strong interest in the scholarship of engagement, and demonstrating a remarkable ability to work across disciplines and sectors, Dr. Dorow was able to sell the idea to her colleagues and get an experimental CSL program up and running within two years. The U of A’s CSL program was officially launched in September 2005, and under Dr. Dorow’s direction has continued to develop and expand, with major funding from The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation and additional support from the University and the Faculty of Arts, as well as the Edmonton Community Foundation. By 2008-09, some 30 U of A courses incorporated CSL as part of the curriculum; these courses were spread over fourteen disciplines in three different faculties, and involved over 300 students and 86 community partners.

The development of strong connections to the non-profit sector, through a partnership with the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, has been one key to the CSL program’s long-term success; another has been the effective team Dr. Dorow has built to provide training and administrative support both to instructors and participating community organizations. With only a small permanent staff, the program continues to evolve. In addition to courses incorporating CSL components, the U of A also offers dedicated CSL courses in the theory and practice of CSL, a formal ‘Certificate in CSL,’ and non-credit opportunities. Dr. Dorow, who has worked tirelessly to ensure a sustainable future for the CSL program, has been active in launching the Network for Community-Engaged Learning, to support and promote community-engaged learning practices across the university.

Apart from CSL, Dr. Dorow continues to pursue a variety of other academic research interests, including transnational adoption (the subject of her well-reviewed first book), and globalization and community. Currently, she is leading a major SSHRC-funded research project ‘which uses global ethnography to study formations and limits of community within the broader political economy (especially labour migration) of the northern Alberta oilsands.’ Community service-learning plays a role in this project.

In 2008, Sara Dorow was honoured with the Public Sociology Award of the Sociology Research Institute of the University of Minnesota, for her work with the CSL program at the U of A.