



## Human Ecology Annual Report 2011-2012

The Department of Human Ecology welcomes the opportunity to share our annual accomplishments and activities with our alumni, current students and staff, other university members and the wider community. Based on extensive media coverage of Human Ecology events and research over the past year, we are excited about the level of interest generated in our work. We are pleased to highlight some of these stories and to reflect on some of the reasons for our success in this report. We welcome you to learn more about our undergraduate and graduate student projects, research and awards; descriptions of on-going faculty research; our degree programs and upcoming events.

### 40 years into practice

One critical factor that distinguishes the undergraduate student experience in Human Ecology is the integration of academic study with real-life practice that takes place in the Practicum program – a 200 hour, non-paid, work placement in partnering agencies or businesses for students in their final year of study, under the supervision of carefully selected practicum supervisors who generously give of their time. This year marks the 40th anniversary of this program. In honour of this milestone, we would like to provide an overview of the role of experiential learning, its meaning and benefits and describe how our Department has been a pioneer in and strong advocate of this form of learning.

**Human Ecology** is an interdisciplinary applied field that uses a holistic systems approach to examine the many contexts of people's lives. In particular, we focus on the dynamic relationships people have with their near environments: clothing, family, home and community. Our mission is to create healthy human environments that enhance the quality of daily life.



### Practicum Practice: Reaping the Benefits of Experiential Education for our Students since 1972, including opportunities to:

- Develop practical skills
- Develop self-directed learning skills
- Achieve personal growth
- Develop interpersonal skills
- Develop problem solving abilities
- Enhance academic learning by bridging theory and practice
- Clarify purpose and increase motivation for classroom learning
- Gain a realistic view of employment
- Understand expectations of the workforce
- Enhance insight into future career



## Experiential Learning Definition

Experiential learning is “*knowledge, skills, and/or abilities attained through observation, simulation, and/or participation that provides depth and meaning to learning by engaging the mind and/or body through activity, reflection, and application... Ultimately it provides for affective and behavioural, as well as cognitive learning ...*” (Craig 1997). Experiential learning can take place in many different settings with different objectives. While there is a lot of current buzz about the advantages of such learning in both academia and the corporate training world, its advantages have long been recognized in our Department, beginning in 1972. The first Practicum Coordinator was **Dr. Dianne Kieren**, now Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta.

Practicum experiences in the workplace sometimes take our students outside their comfort zones into new territory and new environments, giving them opportunities to apply their skills in new contexts and become aware of social realities. As one of the goals of the Human Ecology undergraduate program is preparation for professional life, the use of experiential learning provides the testing ground for a students’ learning - their ability to transfer, apply, and use the knowledge they have gained.

The expectation of taking part in experiential learning ideally also heightens the relevance of classroom instruction for our students as they must consider the practical applications of the theories they are learning.

How each student benefits from a particular experience will be somewhat outside the control of the instructor. Therefore, the role of the instructor, or in our case, the Practicum Coordinator,

is critical in helping to provide an optimal experience. **Kathryn Chandler**, Practicum Coordinator since 1985, has been instrumental to the development, growth and ultimate success of Human Ecology’s Practicum Program. In a study by Kathryn and Deanna Williamson, findings from focus group interviews with recent graduates, practicum supervisors, and faculty members confirmed the importance of her role. Three design



KATHRYN CHANDLER

features were identified by all stakeholder groups as fundamental to ensuring the success and achievement of the practicum goals: 1) the organization of the program, 2) the dedicated preparatory course, and 3) the practicum coordinator’s on-going support of both students and field supervisors.

To further mark the significance of the 40th anniversary of the Practicum Program, this year’s **Empey Lecture (March 2013)** will focus on “New Horizons in Experiential Learning”, featuring expert scholar **Dr. Tara Fenwick**, University of Stirling, Scotland, and will include recognition of the remarkably generous contributions of practicum supervisors who mentor our students each year.



## Practicum Student Reflection

*“I was able to meet many different people and gain new relationships that will hopefully aid in my future career path. I don’t think I could have had a better work experience anywhere else. Especially working in a city like New York – a main hub for many business and economies in the world, I feel that I have grown professionally and have learnt many important qualities...”*

Kaila Imada, April 2012 (re. her Practicum placement with Silhouette Group –an event planning & lifestyle marketing group in New York City)



## Hecol 462 Class Project Exhibit

Dr. Megan Strickfaden's students in HECOL 462, *Material Culture in Home and Community*, study the roles and effects of material culture on individual, familial and community living.

These issues are examined through a combination of seminars and group work culminating in an end of term, student-produced gallery exhibit. This year's project, entitled "Greetings from ... exchanging cultural ideals through tourism" sparked a great deal of media interest - radio, TV and newspaper reports covered the opening. The exhibit showcased objects from the Department's Clothing and Textiles Collection as well as items that students and staff members collected during their own travels, including tourist T-shirts, musical instruments, and handcrafted artifacts. These artifacts were collected to explore the relationships between objects, places and the travelers who collect them.



EXHIBIT ARTIFACTS WINTER 2012  
PHOTO CREDIT: RICHARD SIEMENS  
UNIVERSITY PHOTOGRAPHER

## Experiential Education in an International Context

Undergraduate student **Vanessa Green** writes about her experience with the 2012 Mexico Service-Learning Trip:

*"I am in my third year of Human Ecology, majoring in Family Ecology with a minor in Aging. In March, I was presented with the opportunity to participate in a Service-Learning trip to Cuernavaca, Mexico with the Faculty of ALES. The focus of the trip was to utilize my three years of classroom knowledge and enhance it through real life experiences. It was an opportunity to see first-hand the ways that families in other cultures interact with and are impacted by their environment. I felt that it was an opportunity that I could not pass up. I have a keen interest in working with families that are experiencing poverty and adversity. In my future career I want to work with families who are experiencing inequalities and try to help them overcome adversity. The Mexico Service-Learning trip further enhanced and solidified my interest in working with such families. While working with the families in Cuernavaca, I witnessed first-hand how living in poverty impacts families and how the issue of poverty affects Mexico as a whole.*

*The trip included a range of activities focusing on social inequalities and social injustices within Mexico, as well as throughout the world. The activities challenged us to think critically about what we perceive and how information is presented to us, including stereotypes concerning Mexico and poverty. In addition to our activities we participated in a number of hands-on learning opportunities. We were given the opportunity on numerous occasions to interact with and learn about families living in Cuernavaca. As a Family Ecology student, having the chance to interact with, work with, and help the families were the highlights of the*



SERVICE-LEARNING TRIP TO CUERNAVACA, MEXICO

*trip for me. I would highly recommend to students that have the opportunity to take part in Service-Learning trips to take advantage of them. This trip was rewarding in so many ways. It was an excellent learning opportunity and I met some really amazing people".*

Human Ecology students Kirsten Dembicki, Terra Kipps, Rebecca Rogers and Amanda Thorson also took part in this project.

*Independent Study Student Exhibit:*

### **Waste Not Want Not. Creating Through Recycling**

The Human Ecology Gallery housed an innovative exhibit related to the very topical subject of sustainability and clothing creation. An exhibition of quilts from the Department's Rosenberg Quilt Collection and contemporary garments designed by Clothing and Textiles undergraduate student **Lauren MacDonald** from recycled materials, examined the relationships between textile reuse in the Great Depression and textile reuse today. Preliminary to creating the exhibit, and under the supervision of **Dr. Arlene Oak** and **Vlada Blinova**, Lauren studied the commodification of hobbies during the Great Depression, with a focus on quilting.



FALL/SPRING EXHIBIT SEPT 2011 - MARCH 2012

## AGING

## Graduate Student Profile

– Pursuing an interest in improving the experience of ageing-well for older adults: Sarah Lucas



*"I became interested in gerontology during my undergraduate degree due to related coursework and personal experiences. Since then I have worked as a Recreation Therapist in long term care as well as for the Faculty of*

*Nursing doing research in senior's care. I was interested in furthering my knowledge in gerontology and was looking for a program that fit my interdisciplinary interests and goal of making a difference in the lives of older adults. In September 2009 I started my Master's of Science in Aging degree with Dr. Norah Keating as my supervisor. The program has afforded me many exceptional opportunities including a practicum with the National Film Board for their production, "The Elder Project", involvement in the Research on Aging, Policies and Practice program and the opportunity to present at the Canadian Association on Gerontology annual conference. My particular interests include family and friend caregiving for older adults and the health and social consequences that caregivers experience. Throughout my program, I have also been the recipient of many awards including the Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship, Thelma R. Scambler Scholarship, Louise Davies Memorial Scholarship, Alberta Advanced Education and Technology Graduate Student Scholarship,*

### Graduate Student Program

Graduate student enrollment in Human Ecology numbers in the mid 40s, comprising a diverse mix of Canadians and international students from China, Germany, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Jamaica, Malawi, Iran, India, and Pakistan.

The Department offers a PhD program in Human Ecology with streams in Aging, Children, Youth & Families; Material Culture and Textile Science. Course-based and Thesis Masters programs include:

- MSc in Aging
- MSc in Family Ecology & Practice
- MA in Textiles & Clothing
- MSc in Textiles & Clothing

*and the Alberta Association on Gerontology Award.*

*My passion for gerontology has also led me to other roles including student board member of the Alberta Association on Gerontology, Chair of the Alberta Centre on Aging Student Liaison Group and University of Alberta Representative for Canadian Association on Gerontology Student Connection.*

*As I progress through my graduate program I am looking forward to applying what I have learned in my studies. This degree is interdisciplinary and thus there are many different ways that I could apply the knowledge I gain from my Master's work. Eventually I would like to work in a community, government or health services position that allows me to improve senior's quality of life or to help them accomplish it on their own. As the population ages and there are more people living longer, I am confident that there will be a need for the type of expertise I will gain through my studies, especially in the service, policy and health industry. I am passionate about working to improve the quality of life of older adults so that we can all reach our full potential".*

### Textile Science

Doctoral graduate students **ShuQin Wen** and **Farzan Gholamreza** joined **Dr. Guowen Song** to attend the 5th European Conference on Protective Clothing held in Valencia, Spain in May 2012. With strong representation from the Department, four graduate students, as first authors, had oral presentations accepted for the conference (ShuQin Wen, Farzan Gholamreza, Han Zhang and Sumit Mandal). Yehu Lu had a poster accepted. ShuQin gratefully acknowledges PCERF (Protective Clothing & Equipment Research Facility) for trip funding.



SHUQIN WEN, DR. SONG, FARZAN GHOLAMREZA

### Graduate Student Activities

**Annah Jaricha**, a Master's student in Family Ecology & Practice, was the first graduate student at the University of Alberta to complete the requirements of the Community-Based Research and Evaluation (CBRE) Certificate Program, offered by the Community University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families in the Faculty of Extension. Once she completes the requirements of her Master's program, she will receive the certificate. The purpose of the program, initiated in 2010, is to provide graduate students with the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills for engaging in community-based research and evaluation projects. The certificate program comprises courses in CBRE concepts and theories. Program participants apply the knowledge they acquire through course work in a supervised CBRE practice experience. For more information see:

<http://www.cup.ualberta.ca/cbre/cbre-certificate-program>.



JANET FAST, DONNA LERO

## Janet Fast -Vanier Institute of the Family Award 2012

Dr. Janet Fast and her research colleague Dr. Donna Lero (University of Guelph) were the inaugural recipients of the Mirabelli/Glossop Distinguished Contributor Award for “exceptional and sustained contribution to the work of the Vanier Institute of the Family” related to their research on the economic costs associated with family/friend caregivers. The award is named in honour of Alan Mirabelli and Bob Glossop, former co-directors of the Vanier Institute of the Family.



TRICIA FRENCH, CHAIR DEANNA WILLIAMSON, RACHEL MCQUEEN, VLADA BLINOVA, ARLENE OAK

## Teaching Awards 2011

Tricia French was the recipient of a Faculty Teaching Award. Tricia’s work in the area of family finance was widely applauded by her students. Rachel McQueen, Vlada Blinova and Arlene Oak were all named as Teachers of the Year, reflecting top student evaluation scores.

## Arlene Oak Design Studies Award 2011

Dr. Arlene Oak is the 2011 recipient of The Design Studies Award, given annually, jointly by the Design Research Society and Elsevier Science, the publishers of Design Studies, for the best paper published that year. The paper was titled, ‘What can talk tell us about design?: Analysing conversation to understand practice’. The criteria for the Award, in order of priority, are: contribution to the development of the field of design research, originality of



research or scholarship, breadth of relevance, clarity and style of presentation. Votes for the Award are cast by the journal editors and officers of the Design Research Society.

## Donation results in new grant to support International Education

With funds donated to the Department of Human Ecology by Mrs. Betty Lortscher, a 1958 Home Economics alumna for whom international outreach is important, the Department will provide undergraduate and graduate students with the opportunity to receive grants (\$500 - \$1,000) to facilitate student engagement in international education and/or research activities including practica, community service learning, and cross-cultural research. Thanks to our generous donor!

## Awards and Scholarships and 2011-2012

*Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship::*

**Sharon Anderson; Sarah Lucas**

*Louise Davies Memorial Graduate Scholarship; Mary Louise Imrie Graduate Student Award; Engberg Graduate Scholarship in International Home Economics: **Mayeso Lazaro***

*Alberta Advanced Education & Technology Graduate Scholarship Program: **Melissa Daniels; Therese Martinez-Yu***

*Dianne Kieren Graduate Award in Human Ecology; U of A Doctoral Recruitment Scholarship: **Bill Semple***

*Helen Desilva Buchanan Memorial Scholarship in Clothing & Textiles; NSERC Industrial Postgraduate Scholarship: **Myles Van Keulen***

*J. Gordin Kaplan Graduate Student Award: **Yin Xu***

*David and Marion Duggan Memorial Scholarship: **Lesley Stafiniak***

*Betty Crown Graduate Scholarship in Textile & Apparel Science: **Sihong Yu***

*Doris Badir Graduate Research Fellowship in Human Ecology; Ivy A. Thomson & William A. Thomson Graduate Scholarship: **Laurel Sakaluk-Moody***

*Profiling Alberta's Graduate Students Award: **Melissa Daniels***

*U of A Master's Scholarship: **Han Zhang***

## 2011-2012 Graduates

November 2011

June 2012

**Lidan Song, MSc.**

**Ksenia Svechnikova, MSc.**

**Shahid Jalbani, MSc.**

**Satomi Yoshino, PhD.**

AGING

## Connecting the world on global issues of aging

While on sabbatical, **Dr. Norah Keating** has worked with colleagues in Africa, Europe and Asia/Oceania to develop networks, facilitate training and create knowledge concerning three themes of the Global Social Initiative on Aging. These are liveability including access to adequate material resources; supportiveness of families; and care to those with diminished capacities.

Activities in sub-Saharan Africa included creation and dissemination of a comprehensive GSIA Africa strategy; organization of research colloquia on care at the IAGG

Regional Congress in Capetown in October 2012; and plans for a workshop on state of knowledge about later life families in 2013.

Norah Keating and Master's student Nicole Gaudet, will work with colleagues at the University of Western Australia on legal issues related to liveability and access to appropriate housing for older persons. Scholars from Tsinghua University in Beijing will visit in November to discuss caregiving—an issue of great interest in China given radically changed family structures stemming from 40 years of China's one-child policy.



MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK ON RURAL AGEING AND THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON SOCIAL EXCLUSION, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, GALWAY, APRIL 2012

## Welcome to Dr. Pushpanjali Dashora



**Dr. Dashora** joined the Department in the fall of 2011 as assistant professor, family science. She completed her doctoral work at The Ohio State University in Human Development and Family Science. Her current research focus is on homelessness and families and she is now engaged in a research project in Fort McMurray.

MATERIAL CULTURE & DESIGN

## A Focus on Material Culture and Disability

*Spring Session 2012 Special Topics Course*

**Dr. Megan Strickfaden** and visiting professor **Dr. Patrick Devlieger**, from the University of Leuven, Belgium were the co-instructors of an innovative special topics course titled, Investigating Disability through Material Culture offered to senior undergraduate and graduate students. With Professor Devlieger's anthropological perspective added to the mix, the students were afforded a great opportunity to interact with this pair of scholars who have been collaborating for some time on research about design, and the understanding of space and disability interactions. They recently published a paper investigating how artifacts and the built environment are designed for and with people who are blind or visually impaired in the context of navigation and orientation systems for the Brussels metro.

(Strickfaden and Devlieger, Design Studies, 2011).



CLASS PHOTO WITH CO-INSTRUCTORS DR. MEGAN STRICKFADEN (YELLOW SCARF) AND BEHIND HER, DR. PATRICK DEVLIEGER.



DR. SUSAN ASHDOWN, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

## Empey Lecture September 2011

**Dr. Susan Ashdown** was the invited speaker for the Fall 2011 Empey Lecture, held during late September as part of the Alumni Weekend activities. Dr. Ashdown is a leading member of the Cornell University Body Scan Research Group where she directs a research program which bridges several topics including the interactions between technology and apparel design, and topics related to sizing, fit and, developing new technologies for the apparel industry. Her lecture had audience members contemplating the future possibility of mass produced, perfectly fitted clothing for all bodies as she discussed *“New Dimensions in Apparel: Research on, with, and around 3-D Body Scanning”*.

## Empey Lecture March 2012

A decision to permanently alter the scheduling of the annual Empey Lecture from the fall to the spring, resulted in the delivery of two lectures within a 6 month span this year. The Department was honoured to host **Drs. Carolyn and Philip Cowan**, Professors Emeriti, University of California, Berkeley for the March Lecture. For more than three decades, family-systems psychologists and husband and wife team, Phil and Carolyn Cowan have conducted longitudinal studies of couples' group interventions. The central theme of their work is that positive couple relationships play a central role in creating a positive context for parenting, and help to enhance children's development. The lecture drew a wide audience of students, family support practitioners, government policy makers and academics interested in the work of the Cowans, particularly its connection with ongoing Alberta projects related to father involvement in families.



PROFESSORS EMERITI, CAROLYN AND PHIL COWAN, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY.

## Material Culture Symposium May 2012

*“Materiality & Independence: Disability, Ability & the Built Environment”* was the title for the May 2012 annual Material Culture Symposium organized this year by **Dr. Megan Strickfaden**. Featuring a series of presentations by University of Alberta scholars, international guests and local architect Ron Wickman, the symposium addressed topics such as the accessibility of museums and galleries, and the material culture of disability within global environments.

Megan Strickfaden and Cindy Couldwell co-curated an innovative exhibition held in conjunction with the spring Symposium, showcasing the works of visually impaired photographers. The exhibit, titled 'In Focus' featured photographers from the University of Alberta and CNIB clients across Alberta.



PARTICIPANTS FROM L TO R : LINDSAY EALES, DANIELLE PEERS, RON WICKMAN, DR. MEGAN STRICKFADEN, CAROLYN LIEFFERS, DR. PATRICK DEVLIEGER, REBECCA MCGINNIS, MUSEUM EDUCATOR & ACCESS COORDINATOR, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK, LINKED IN ELECTRONICALLY TO JOIN THE SYMPOSIUM.



## Chair's message



DEANNA WILLIAMSON, CHAIR

Once again, we had a very good year in the Department of Human Ecology. The annual report provides but a glimpse into the numerous education and research endeavours and the successes of faculty members and students. As you have read, experiential education opportunities comprise a central dimension of our programming. Driven by goals to enhance workplace-readiness of graduates and to prepare reflective, critical-thinking professionals, faculty members in Human Ecology, in collaboration with community, industry, and government partners, provide students with a variety of opportunities to apply theoretical and empirical knowledge to practice. In addition to the practicum placement that students complete in the final term of their degree, a number of experiential education opportunities are provided to students through course assignments. For instance, Family Ecology students work with community agencies and businesses to develop a program plan, and Clothing, Textiles and Material Culture students design, prepare, and install exhibits. Students in both majors also have the opportunity to design and conduct research projects, including the collection and analysis of data. And some Clothing, Textiles, and Material Culture students have the opportunity to conduct textile testing and analysis for clients of the Textiles Analysis Service, which is housed in the Department.

I'd like to thank faculty members and our partners for your ongoing commitment, hard work, and creativity in providing interesting, relevant, and high quality experiential education opportunities to Human Ecology students. It is through these opportunities that our students enhance their capacity to use their "book learning" in support of the Department's mission to create healthy human environments that enhance people's quality of everyday life at home, work, and in the community.

## Upcoming Events, Mark your Calendar!



**Alumni Weekend – Clothing & Textile Collection Tours – Book ahead for Friday, September 21, 2012.**

**Join the 'Fashion Culture Network' - a new group in Human Ecology which weaves together U of A staff, students and anyone in the community who shares an interest in clothing, the idea of style, and the value and history of textiles, led by Dr. Anne Bissonnette, Curator of the Clothing & Textile Collection.**

**To join the Fashion Culture Network, e-mail [colleen.borden@ualberta.ca](mailto:colleen.borden@ualberta.ca)**

**March 2013 Empey Lecture – "New Horizons in Experiential Learning" with Dr. Tara Fenwick, Stirling University, Scotland.**



**Keep up with Department news by viewing our website at:**

<http://www.hecol.ualberta.ca/>

## Undergraduate Program

### BSc in Human Ecology

#### 1. Family Ecology Major

Minors:

- Aging
- Child and Youth Studies
- Community Diversity
- Community Ecology
- Community Nutrition
- International Development

#### 2. Clothing, Textiles & Material Culture Major

Minors:

- Material Culture & Design Studies
- Fashion Merchandising
- Interiors
- Textile Science

## Graduate Program PhD program in Human Ecology

With streams in Aging, Children, Youth & Families; Material Culture and Textile Science.

Course-based and Thesis Masters programs include:

- MSc in Aging
- MSc in Family Ecology & Practice
- MA in Textiles & Clothing