



Research Feature

History and Social/Political Movements Theme

The early vision of Ontario workers' compensation as a no-fault, non-adversarial, employer-financed system to provide prompt and fair benefits for workplace injuries resulted from the concerted efforts of injured workers and the labour movement in the early 1900s. RAACWI recognizes the importance of remembering and learning from this history. It has devoted an entire theme to the study of the history of injured worker activism in Ontario.

Under the leadership of Dr. Robert Storey (Academic Lead) and Sabrina Puccini (Community Lead), the theme looks at the relationship between social/political movements of injured workers and their experiences with workers' compensation in Ontario from the 1960s to present. The research builds on the work of the Injured Workers' History Project (IWHP), a voluntary group of injured workers, advocates and researchers. Following is a brief summary of the four projects housed by the theme.

Injured Workers' Movements in Ontario, 1900-2005 analyzes the relationship between individual injured workers' struggles to get their claims recognized and injured workers' collective action to reform the system. Essentially, the study looks at the reasons behind injured workers' motivations for public action.

Medical Science and Practice within the Ontario Workers' Compensation Board, 1960-1995 seeks to understand how workers' compensation board doctors saw their role in

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adjudication, appeals and the development of workers' compensation legislation and policies. The data for this study was collected from Ontario legislation, board policies, Ontario Medical Association documents, reports, journal articles, and in-depth interviews with injured workers, board doctors and board officials.

Injured Workers and the Labour Movement analyzes the interface between the injured workers' movement and the labour movement. The project uses materials from selected industrial and public-sector unions and in-depth interviews with union officials who have represented members at the workers' compensation board.

Injured Workers and the Right to Appeal, the newest project under this theme, examines
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The Research Action Alliance on the Consequences of Work Injury (RAACWI) is a community-based partnership undertaking research on the workers' compensation system and its role in the economic, social and health consequences of work injury.

the changing nature of the appeals process and how decisions by the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal (WCAT)/Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal (WSIAT) have affected injured workers and others in the appeals process. Researchers will examine cases and decision-making processes and interview WCAT/WSIAT adjudicators and staff. 🔄

Research Update

***Marital Dissolution Study:
A Synopsis of a Study Underway within the
Health and Well-being Theme***

Does Permanent Impairment from a Workplace Accident Increase the Risk of Marital Break-up?

Principal Investigator: Emile Tompa
Co-investigators: Heather Scott-Marshall, Miao Fang, Claire de Oliveira

Work injury resulting in permanent impairment is a major negative life event and stressor. Consequences such as chronic unemployment, prolonged adjudication of workers' compensation claims, and ongoing physical and mental health challenges associated with managing disability can affect the well-being of both injured workers and their families. Yet only a handful of studies have examined the social consequences of permanent impairment from a work injury.

In this study, researchers examined the effect of permanent impairment from a work injury on marital stress and, in turn, on the likelihood of marital dissolution. They used a unique database derived from a linkage of administrative data from Ontario's Workplace and Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) and WorkSafeBC to the Statistics Canada Longitudinal Administrative Databank (LAD). The sample consisted of married (legal and common law) claimants who sustained a permanent impairment due to a work injury from

1990 through 1994 in Ontario and British Columbia. A matched sample included married but uninjured individuals drawn from the LAD. The researchers did statistical modelling of the time from injury to marital break-up to determine the impact of permanent impairment on the probability of break-up.

The study found that permanent impairment significantly increased the likelihood of marital break-up for both men and women, even after controlling for other factors that contribute to the probability of break-up. The increased probability of marital break-up was between 22-25%. This finding indicates that work injury and permanent impairment have important social implications that merit further exploration and attention. 🔄

Building Academic Capacity

3rd RAACWI Post-Doc Awarded

In the fall of 2008, RAACWI posted a third call for a post-doctoral fellow. The "Meredith Post-doctoral Fellowship" is named in honour of Sir William Meredith who, in 1913, formulated the five key concepts that are the foundation of workers' compensation in Canada. They are now known as the "Meredith Principles."



*Fergal O'Hagan
Meredith Post-Doctoral
Fellow*

The third post-doc was awarded to ***Fergal O'Hagan*** in the fall of 2008. Fergal will be joining the RAACWI initiative in May 2009. He has been working in the field of occupational rehabilitation since 1988 following the completion of a BSc in physical education (Saskatchewan) and a MSc in adapted human biodynamics (McMaster).

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Currently, Fergal is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Trent University. He recently completed a PhD at the University of Toronto on the subject of work adaptation of people with cardiac illness. He is also participating in the Work Disability Prevention Strategic Training Program at the Université de Sherbrooke, which is funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research.

Fergal will be working with Dr. Peri Ballantyne on the Injured Worker Health Survey, which is a large-scale survey undertaken within RAACWI's Health and Well-being Theme. He plans to conduct in-depth interviews with workers to explore how the system, particularly deeming, impacts their health. 🌱

Building Community Capacity

RAACWI Speakers' School Update

When RAACWI developed its five-year plan in 2004-05, it realized the need for training community members to become full participants in the community-university partnership. Many injured workers were unsure of their ability to participate as researchers next to academics. They needed to build their confidence and skills in order to level the playing field. This required training in public speaking and leadership.

As well, RAACWI's knowledge transfer and exchange strategy (the "action" part of the Action Alliance) wanted to share the knowledge being acquired with its target audiences — the larger injured worker community, decision-makers in the provincial government and workers' compensation system, and the public.

After receiving funding from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council in the spring of 2006, several of RAACWI's community leads began designing training programs for

community members. One of programs was the Injured Worker School — a series of full-day workshops over several months that focused on the history of the workers' compensation system. Another program was the Speakers' School, which began in the winter of 2007. It was a 10-week course offered one evening each week. Subsequently, the two programs were combined into what is now known as the Injured Workers' Speakers' School. This new 12-week program meets one evening a week.

New sessions of the Injured Workers' Speakers' School continue to be offered every few months. The most recent graduation ceremony was held on February 11, 2009. The packed audience celebrated with the 12 graduating students, who each talked about their personal experiences, knowledge of workers' compensation history, and hopes for the future.

Graduates from previous sessions are becoming RAACWI's future community leaders. They are more actively involved in research and knowledge mobilization. Plans are underway to develop "train the trainer" sessions to expand the program into other Ontario communities.


The next Speakers' School is scheduled in Toronto for early October 2009. Anyone interested in taking part or wanting more information should contact Steve Mantis, the RAACWI Community Lead (smantis@tbaytel.net) or Orlando Buonastella, a RAACWI community researcher, at 416-461-2411. 🌱

Knowledge Mobilization

Symposium on the Consequences of Work Injury: May 22, 2009, Toronto, Ontario

RAACWI will be hosting its first symposium on Friday, May 22, 2009 at Oakham Lounge, Ryerson University.

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The symposium will bring together initiative partners, policy-makers, researchers and members of the injured worker community to hear about RAACWI's research and knowledge mobilization activities. The symposium is meant to share information, prompt discussion, explore policy options and build relationships. Key messages from the symposium will be featured in the next issue of the e-newsletter. For more details, contact the RAACWI coordinator at coordinator@consequencesofworkinjury.ca. 

Report from the RAACWI Community Forum

The Community Forum is part of RAACWI's capacity-building activities and is designed to increase injured worker involvement in the initiative. Community Forums are held six to eight times each year. Dates are posted on our website at www.consequencesofworkinjury.ca.

On March 13, 2009, RAACWI met at Injured Workers' Consultants (IWC) for one of its Community Forums. The guest researcher was Dr. Peter Smith, a scientist from the Institute for Work & Health (IWH). He presented findings from a research project, which he recently completed with several colleagues at IWH, entitled "An examination of the working conditions and risk factors for work-related injuries among immigrant workers in Ontario."

While immigrants are an increasingly important segment of the Canadian labour market, little research has been done in Canada on the occupational health and safety risks faced by immigrant workers, or the consequences of work injuries for immigrants compared to Canadian-born workers. The WSIB-RAC funded project led by Peter is one of the few on the topic.

The project resulted in five research papers. The first focused on underemployment. Compared to Canadian-born workers, recent immigrants were more likely to be underemployed in relation to:

- the hours they work per week (i.e., working part time but wanting to work full time);
- the weeks they work per year (i.e., working less than 40 weeks in the year); and
- the ability to use their skills (i.e., having a higher level of education than a job requires).

The second paper focused on work-related conditions that may be associated with an increased risk of injury among immigrants. Six factors were examined that have been shown to be associated with increased risk of work injury, such as working in a non-union workplace, in physically demanding occupations and/or in small workplaces. The key findings were as follows:

- Recent immigrants (up to 10 years in Canada) were more likely to work in physically demanding occupations and small workplaces. Those in Canada less than five years were also more likely to be in temporary jobs.
- Immigrants in Canada up to 20 years were less likely than Canadian-born residents to be members of a union.
- Visible minority workers were more likely to be in physically demanding occupations, regular shift work and temporary jobs.
- Two factors - having neither English nor French as a mother tongue and earning the last educational credential outside Canada - were associated with a higher probability of physically demanding work and with regular shift work.

The third paper found an elevated probability of work-related injury requiring medical attention among immigrant men compared to male Canadian-born workers. This finding is remarkable given that recent immigrants are generally less likely to use health services.

The fourth paper examined factors associated with pursuing compensation after a work injury. It found that approximately 40% of recent *...continued on next page*

immigrants (in Canada 10 years or less) did not receive any type of payment during their week of absence from work.

The last paper examined the probability of being employed in a job in Canada with greater physical demands than the job held before coming to Canada. The risks posed by a more physically demanding job may increase for a person who has no previous experience in a job with similar physical demands. The findings showed that new immigrants to Canada – in particular those with poor language abilities, lower education, and those who are refugees – were the most likely to be employed in jobs with higher physical demands after arriving in Canada.

The next RAACWI Community Forum is scheduled for the afternoon of May 14, 2009 at Injured Workers' Consultants. For more information, contact Steve Mantis, the RAACWI Community Lead (smantis@tbaytel.net). 🌱

Community Researcher Profile

John McKinnon
Executive Director
Injured Workers' Consultants

John McKinnon began working in the community legal clinic system as a volunteer when he was a law student 30 years ago, and has continued to work in clinics throughout his professional career. He has been with Injured Workers' Consultants (IWC) since 1989, where he represents injured workers in appeals.

John co-chairs the Ontario Legal Clinics' Workers' Compensation Network, which is active in law reform, and training and skills development for community legal clinic caseworkers. He has been involved with the Ontario Network of Injured Worker Groups (ONIWG) since it began, and currently serves on its Conference and Education

Committee. This has allowed RAACWI to feature its work at ONIWG's 2007 and 2008 annual conferences. John also co-chairs the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario (ACLCO), which represents community legal clinics across the province.

John helped Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO) and the Industrial Accident Victims' Group of Ontario (IAVGO) develop a training manual for injured worker advocates. He often writes articles for the IAVGO reporting service and newsletter.

John is currently the Community Lead for the Financial Security Theme and is involved with the History Theme. He has also assisted with several RAACWI Community Forums and sessions of the Speakers' School. He finds his work in RAACWI to be an extremely valuable learning experience, and is pleased to find that much of the research is consistent with observations of the injured worker community. 🌱

Academic Researcher Profile

Robert Storey
Associate Professor
Labour Studies & Sociology
McMaster University



"An injury to one is an injury to all." — Motto of the Industrial Workers of the World

The animating force in **Robert Storey's** academic and

community work is finding the reasons for, and solutions to, social, economic and political inequalities. Born to working-class parents in Hamilton, Ontario, Robert learned first-hand how capitalist democracies provide different opportunities to people based on the jobs they do
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Robert Storey
History and Social/Political
Movements Theme
Academic Lead

and where they live. In university, where he studied work and political sociology and became involved in various social movements, he learned how these same societies also structured lives along the axes of gender and race.

Since earning a PhD in sociology at the University of Toronto, Robert has been a part of the Labour Studies Program and the Sociology Department at McMaster University. Over the years, his research interests have evolved from workers and unionism to occupational health and safety and, most recently, to the history of injured workers and their struggles for justice within Ontario's workers' compensation system. His studies into occupational health and safety and workers' compensation highlight, to varying degrees, that all workers are obliged to trade their health for profits. When injured, too many confront a system that treats their access to benefits and care as contingent, like an insurance system, rather than as a right, which is what it was meant to be when it was first established in the early years of the 20th century.

Robert is the Academic Lead of RAACWI's History and Social/Political Movements Theme. His research into the historical struggles of injured workers in Ontario has been fundamentally enriched by — and, in fact, could not be accomplished without — the members of the Injured Workers' History Project. 🌱

Partner Profile

The Bancroft Institute

The Bancroft Institute was established in 1997 as the Injured Workers' Institute. In 1999, it changed its name to the Bancroft Institute for Studies in Workers' Compensation and Health and Safety. The new name was in honour of Fred Bancroft, vice-president of the Trades and Labour Council in the early 20th century and the key voice of labour unions at the 1913 Meredith

Commission. The Institute's objective is to promote education and research about workers' concerns in Ontario. It is a voluntary group that receives no external funding.

The Bancroft Institute was an important force in the creation of RAACWI. In December 2003, the institute hosted a meeting of injured workers, activists and researchers to explore joint research projects. The impetus for the meeting was the injured worker community's recognition that policy decision-making by the WSIB and government departments was increasingly relying on research evidence. The idea of a genuine partnership between injured workers, their representatives and academic researchers was an exciting way to fill the gap of community-based research on workers' compensation. Three years after that first meeting, the formal partnership known as RAACWI emerged.

For more information on the Bancroft Institute, consult the RAACWI website at www.consequencesofworkinjury.ca or call Injured Workers' Consultants at 416-461-2411. 🌱

Research Action Alliance on the Consequences of Work Injury

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