



Introducing RAACWI

With this newsletter, we introduce the work of the Research Action Alliance on the Consequences of Work Injury or RAACWI. It may be surprising, but there is very little research on the long-term consequences of work injury. "We see the effects of injury, such as unemployment and depression, in the large number of workers we help, but we don't know what the scope of the problem is," says Steve Mantis, RAACWI's community lead and volunteer with the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers' Support Group. With a \$1-million dollar research grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, RAACWI plans to change that.

Over the next four 4 years, this alliance of injured workers, academics, and community representatives will conduct more than 20

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research projects to get a comprehensive view of the consequences of work injury. Research projects are organized under four themes: Legislation, policies, and programs; financial security and employment experiences; health and well-being; and the role and history of political activism in the injured worker community. RAACWI came together in December 2003 at a meeting of injured workers, academics, and community representatives.

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Building Capacity...

...In Universities

"Capacity building" means providing opportunities for people to develop their skills and interest in a certain area. By providing "buy-out" time for professors in universities, research grants such as RAACWI's allow professors time away from their duties to conduct research. Such grants also provide funding for graduate students, research assistants, and "post-docs". Post-doctoral fellowships are awarded to people who have recently completed a PhD to allow them to

conduct research in their area of expertise. RAACWI expects to fund four post-doctoral fellows over the 5 years of the initiative.

Agnieszka Kosny is RAACWI's first post-doc. Her PhD in Public Health Sciences from the University of Toronto looked at working conditions and worker perceptions of risk and safety in non-profit social service organizations. She is primarily a qualitative researcher interested in compensation systems and in marginalized and non-profit workplaces. At the Institute for Work & Health, a key RAACWI partner, she has been

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The group decided to apply to a prestigious federal research program called the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The CURA program is different from other research programs because it encourages academics and community members to work together as equal partners. RAACWI has a community lead and an academic lead for the overall initiative, as well as for each of the four theme groups.

CURA funding also encourages capacity building in both the injured worker and academic communities. RAACWI is training injured workers to gain the skills to stay active in research. As well, a number of graduate



RAACWI's Steering Committee
 Top Row: Ellen MacEachen, Marion Endicott, Pat, Steve Mantis, Alice De Wolff.
 Bottom row: Bonnie Kirsh, Emile Tompa, Alina Gildiner. Missing: Sabrina Pacini, Robert Storey, Bonnie Heath

students and several post-doctoral fellows are working on the initiative, thus gaining expertise while expanding research capacity on the subject matter. CURA also encourages action on the findings of the research. To that end, says academic lead Emile Tompa, a scientist at the Institute for Work & Health, “We are working with policy-makers from the earliest stages of the initiative.”

Knowledge Mobilization: *Easy Money!*

Research shows many public policies, popular beliefs—even medical practice—are not always based on the best scientific evidence. Knowledge Mobilization (also called knowledge transfer and exchange) is the process of getting research findings into the hands of the people who can put them to the best use. It is also a required component of the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) grant held by RAACWI. With so much competition to get research results noticed, theatre has become an innovative way to get the attention of a broad audience.

“Easy Money” is a play about the “return to work” process of the workers’ compensation system in Ontario. Developed under the RAACWI umbrella, it brings to life research on the impact of the return to work on injured workers, their families, and their communities. The research was done by Joan Eakin at the University of Toronto, and Ellen MacEachen and Judy Clarke from the Institute for Work & Health. As the title suggests, the play takes a satirical look at the misperception that injured workers prefer to

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EASY MONEY
 a play created by
Injured Workers Theatre Collective

Steve Mantis, Community Lead

Steve Mantis is the Community Lead for RAACWI. Steve lost his left arm in an industrial accident in 1978. As he went through the workers' compensation system, he saw firsthand how it failed for many injured workers—many workers with a permanent disability live with chronic unemployment, poverty, and depression.

In 1984, he helped start the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, and he remains active with them to this day. Steve is serving his fifth term as Secretary of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups (ONIWG). In 2001, he received the Judge George Ferguson Award for “contributing in an outstanding way to enabling equality and full community participation for people with physical disabilities throughout Ontario.” Steve also received the Canada 125th Anniversary Medal from Veterans Affairs for Canadians who have made “a significant



RAACWI's Community Lead, Steve Mantis (right) with “Easy Money” director, Kate Lushington

contribution to their fellow citizens, to their community, or to Canada.” Steve began to build links between the academic and injured worker communities by working on a few individual research projects that investigated a number of the problems that injured workers face. His community work and a growing interest in research led to his involvement in RAACWI. Steve brings his lived experience as an injured worker, his unfailing optimism, his passion, his leadership, and his many connections across Ontario to RAACWI. 🌱

Emile Tompa, Academic Lead

Emile Tompa is the academic lead of RAACWI. Emile is a labour and health economist, a scientist at the Institute for Work & Health, and a professor in the Department of Economics at McMaster University. As the academic lead, Emile not only does research, he also works closely with the community lead, Steve Mantis, and initiative participants to coordinate the work of the 20+ research projects, academic capacity building, and RAACWI's many other activities.

Emile has an MBA from the University of British Columbia, an MA in Economics from the University of Toronto, and a PhD in Economics from McMaster University. In his work for the Institute for Work & Health, Emile's research



RAACWI's Academic lead, Emile Tompa

looks at how legislation, policies, programs, and practices in workers' compensation and occupational health and safety affect workers and employers. He also looks at ways to evaluate workplace occupational health and safety programs from an economic point of view. He has also undertaken research on the impact of precarious (meaning insecure or unstable) employment on the health of workers.

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involved in a series of research projects looking at how injured workers navigate their return to work, the health care system, and the compensation system. During her 2-year post doctoral fellowship, Iggy (as she is known to RAACWI) will conduct research on the role of health care providers in the compensation system and return to work, the experiences of immigrant workers after they have had a work injury, and occupational health and safety and workers' compensation coverage in non-profit organizations.

***RAACWI Speakers' School
Graduates 2007***

Beryl Brown

Sylvia Clarke

Maria Machado-Keglevic

Monique Machado-Keglevic

Robert MacKay

Abdulkarim Muslem

Marian Nazemi

Lena Piner

Myra Strzalka

Deborah Sinclair

Sandra Sinclair

Eddie Tilley

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With all this experience, it is not surprising that Emile is directly involved in six research projects under three of the four RAACWI themes. In addition to his academic credentials and relevant research experience, Emile brings great energy, enthusiasm, and leadership skills to RAACWI. 🍀

*Building Capacity (continued)****...In the Injured Worker Community***

What makes a Community-Academic Research Alliance (CURA) grant different from many others is that it also funds activities for community members to build their skills. Over the next 4 years of the initiative, RAACWI will offer training in public speaking, dealing with the media, research skills, leadership skills, and negotiation skills.

RAACWI is proud to announce the graduation of 10 injured workers (and two family members) from its first Speakers' School. Through 12 weekly training sessions, injured workers learned the skills and gained the confidence to speak to various audiences, from MPPs and the WSIB to students in classrooms and community groups. Many of the graduates have already successfully spoken to such audiences including Human Rights Commissioner Barbara Hall, WSIB representatives, Minister of Labour Steve Peters, and classes at McMaster University.

Sabrina Pacini, an injured worker, was the coordinator for the first Speakers' School. She describes the experience as fun, interactive, empowering and "filled with laughter and sometimes tears, healthy snacks, and too much pizza!" She also recognizes the contributions of the many people who made it possible, including the community advisory committee (consisting of Steve Mantis, Kate Lushington, Orlando Buonastella, and Audrey Parkes) and Correen Di Fiorio from Injured Workers Consultants. Most important, Sabrina salutes "each graduate who took a risk to learn something new and share something of himself or herself to better his or her world and the world we all live in."

The Speakers' Bureau Committee has brainstormed and summarized the graduates' evaluation for an even better Speaker's Bureau in 2007–2008, which is open to all injured workers. For more information, contact Steve Mantis. (See the back cover for contact information.) 🍀

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rely on workers' compensation as a source of "easy money" rather than to work for a living. Written and directed by Kate Lushington and designed by Red Pepper Spectacle Arts, professional actors portray the frustration of many injured workers as they wade through the paper work, go through retraining, and deal with the deeming process.

One character in the play is particularly popular with audiences—the Deeming Fairy. With a wave of her wand, she magically transports injured workers into their new vocations—whether they have found jobs or not. As such, she characterizes the arbitrary and elusive aspect of deeming, which determines benefits based on

work an injured worker has been deemed to be *able* to do rather than on actual work with a real pay cheque.

Easy Money has already been performed several times, raising laughter and a few eyebrows. Regardless of reactions to the play, there is no doubt it has been a compelling way to mobilize knowledge. RAACWI is looking for ways to fund future theatre projects based on its research. 🌱



*Easy Money's funders:
Toronto Arts Council,
Ontario Arts Council,
Ontario Federation of
Labour, Ontario Network of
Injured Worker Groups,
Canadian Auto Workers,
OPSEU and Institute for
Work & Health.*

Partner Profile: Injured Workers' Consultants

Injured Workers' Consultants (IWC) is an independent community legal clinic funded by the Ontario Legal Aid Plan and governed by a community board. It has been providing free-of-charge services for injured workers dealing with the workers' compensation system since 1969. As a *community* legal clinic, it works to involve injured workers in addressing the problems they face with the system. Over time, IWC observed that law and policy makers relied more and more on "what research shows" to make their decisions. Neither the staff of IWC, nor other injured worker advocates, nor injured workers themselves, felt they needed research to understand the problems with the system. They see

the problems every day! But they could see the value of research in deepening their understanding of the system, developing new knowledge, and documenting their concerns.

IWC is a significant partner organization in RAACWI. It participates in the initiative in many ways—hosting steering committee and RAACWI community meetings, providing educational sessions for members, providing participants for research projects, helping to develop the research themes, and generally engaging the injured worker community in the project. Marion Endicott, an Injured Worker Advocate with IWC says, "This is a big project. It's a lot of work—but well worth it!" 🌱

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Research Action

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Do you have something for the
RAACWI Newsletter?

Contact Bonnie Heath, Coordinator
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Web site
www.consequencesofworkinjury.ca

The Research Action Alliance on the Consequences of Work Injury 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.

Our dynamic relationship builds on the expertise of all involved to produce insights into the compensation system that will influence policy development, education, and further investigation.

Partner Organizations

Bancroft Institute

Injured Workers' Consultants

Institute for Work & Health

McMaster University

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers

Office of the Worker Adviser

Ontario Federation of Labour

Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups

University of Toronto

Participating Organizations

Industrial Accident Victims Group of Ontario

Lakehead University

Toronto Injured Workers' Advocacy Group

Toronto Rehabilitation Institute

Trent University

United Steelworkers

University of Ottawa

York University