



**The Work and Learning Network  
for Research and Policy**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2004**

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### Introduction

From January to December, 2004, the *Work and Learning Network for Research and Policy* enjoyed a full slate of activities in its second full year of operation. Activities were designed to support the three main areas of focus defining *WLN*:

1. Identify, support and disseminate findings of research projects of various issues integrating work and learning.
2. Give visible presence to research integrating work and learning issues within in the University of Alberta and among collaborating individuals, organizing and institutions.
3. Encourage collaboration and partnerships among researchers, practitioners and policy workers engaged in works and learning issues.

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### Website:

Launched in 2003, the Work and Learning Network website ([www.wln.ualberta.ca](http://www.wln.ualberta.ca)) continued in 2004 to undergo changes in the design and function of the site, an initiative led by Val Mayes. At the time of this report there have been 3072 hits to the website. The site includes:

- information about the Work and Learning Network – mandate, activities, Board
- upcoming events and archives of our seminars
- information about our grants
- a resource center (abstracts and full text versions of relevant papers, links to other resources),

New this year is a Members List including their interests in practice and research.

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### Seminar Series:

This was a very active year for the *WLN* seminar series. The following seven seminars were offered:

#### **April 7, 2004: Work and Learning Perspectives**

**Presenters:** Alison Taylor, Susan Brigham, *School -to-Work Transitions* and Janice Wallace, *Equity Issues in Schools as Workplaces*.

**May 13, 2004: The Work-Life Balance - Rhetoric vs. Reality**

**Presenter:** Linda Duxbury from Carleton University, Director of the Carleton Centre for Research and Education on Women and Work, and co-author of the national study "*Voices of Canadians: Seeking Work-Life Balance*".

**June 30, 2004: Relational Interdependence between the Individual and the Social: Theorising Learning and Development of Self through Work.**

**Presenter:** Stephen Billett from Griffith University in Australia. Stephen is the Director of Adult and Vocational Educational Studies, and author of "*Learning in the workplace: Strategies for effective practice*"

**September 17, 2004: Skill Development for the New Economy: Who Benefits?**

**Presenter:** Jane Cruikshank, Professor in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina. Her research is on lifelong learning and New Economy issues.

**October 5, 2004: The Politics of Difference: Non/Recognition of Foreign Credentials and Prior Work Experience of Immigrant Professionals in Canada**

**Presenter:** Shibao Guo, Professor, Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta

**October 20, 2004: Action Research in the Workplace: Pedagogy or Pragmatism? That is the Question**

**Presenter:** Stewart Hase, Director, Southern Cross Institute of Action Research, Southern Cross University, Australia

**Nov. 17, 2004: Learning Corporate Social Responsibility:** A panel discussion followed by questions and discussion.

**Presenters:** Winston Gereluk, of Athabasca University, Academic Coordinator for Industrial Relations and Human Resources programs.

Robin Schlese, representing Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC).

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**Research:**

The *WLN* network supported a number of research opportunities this year.

***1. Inclusion and Participation of Persons with Disabilities through Workplace Learning Communities***

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2005-2007

**Janice Wallace, Tara Fenwick, Dick Sobsey, Katy Campbell**

Objectives are to develop new research questions towards collaborative action research to help transform current thinking around employability and training of persons with disabilities. The focus is building inclusive learning communities in the workplace. Four community agencies serving persons with disabilities plan to participate in the project.

**2. *Developing Essential Skills: Changing Contexts and Perspectives: A Workshop on Essential Skills Research***

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2004-2005,  
**Tara Fenwick, Katy Campbell, Shibao Guo** plus partner-collaborators (University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan)

The purpose of this workshop is to enhance the quantity and quality of policy-relevant research in essential skills by bringing together researchers and key stakeholders from across Canada for discussion, information sharing and network building. *WLN* will be hosting this event in April 2005. Participants will include representatives from seven SSHRC- funded research projects from across the country, as well as community groups, government representatives and students.

***Outcomes to date:***

- Three-day Workshop Symposium, attended by all grantholders across Canada (45 participants) held April 25-27 2005
- Symposium Proceedings, to be produced by June 30, 2005.

**3. *Learning Social Responsibility in Micro-Enterprise: A Collaborative Exploration of Expansive Learning in Practice-Based Networks***

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2004-2007  
**Tara Fenwick, Lynette Shultz, Sarah Pocklington** (U of A), **Beth Lange** (Concordia University-College), **Lee-Anne Ragan** (Community Works, Vancouver)  
Research is in progress.

This study uses a collaborative action research approach to study corporate social responsibility practices that develop among small business owners. One group has been meeting in Vancouver since November 2004. Another group is about to start in Edmonton. Project purposes: (1) to create a network of self-employed people to develop and experiment with practices of corporate social responsibility tailored to micro-enterprise; (2) to identify effects (economic, personal, social and ecological) of CSR practices in micro-enterprise; and (3) to examine the learning processes by which self-employed Canadians develop and implement practices of CSR.

***Outcomes to date:***

- Presentation to the Academy of Human Resource Development, February 2005
- Presentation and paper to the Adult Education Research Conference, June 2005

#### ***4. Negotiating Transitions: Immigrant Women's Work and Learning in the Garment Industry***

Humanities, Social Sciences, and Fine Arts Research Grants.

**Tara Fenwick, Joan Schiebelbein**, along with partners Ground Zero Productions, Alberta Labour History Institute, Edmonton: A City Called Home, **Catherine Cole Associates**

Research is complete.

Through interviews with over 35 women working in Edmonton garment plant, this research is exploring their learning processes in various work-based transitions they have experienced, in identity, knowledge, sense of place and sense of vocation. The project is part of a large multi-partner network exploring the labour history of this plant.

##### ***Outcomes to date:***

TWO large displays. One is being shown at May Week 2005, at Congress in Ontario May 29-31 2005, and at venues in Edmonton throughout the summer-fall 2005. The other was displayed at May Week 2004 and at Research Day, Dept of Ed Policy Studies, April 2005.

ONE play with multi-media (historic pictures, factory sounds, folksong commissioned from Maria Dunne) presented to Congress in Ontario, May 2005.

ONE paper (Tara Fenwick and Joan Schiebelbein) published in Proceedings of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education, 2005).

ONE visual museum of historic GWG artifacts (in negotiation, seeking other sources of funding)

#### ***5. Effectiveness of Formal and Informal Processes of Learning Essential Skills: A Study of Immigrant Service Organizations***

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada: Strategic Initiatives, 2004-2006.

**Shibao Guo, Tara Fenwick, Katy Campbell, with Ev Hamdon, Zenobia Jamal, and Tara Gibb** \*U of A), and **Yan Guo with Elizabeth Kuva** (University of Calgary)

Research is in progress.

This project focuses on both formal (classroom-based) and informal learning processes related to employability that occur through volunteer work, classes and client counseling at immigrant service organizations. Four case studies of service organizations are being conducted in Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver.

***Outcomes to date:***

Presentation to the Essential Skills Workshop, April 2005.  
Presentation planned to the International, September 2005.

**6. *Knowledge Networks of Portfolio Workers***

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada: Strategic Initiatives, 2002-2005.

**Tara Fenwick with Jean Walrond Patterson, Lee Ellis (U of A), Kiran Mirchandani with Michelle Fortin (OISE/University of Toronto)**

Research is complete.

This study interviewed 42 self-employed people in BC, Alberta and Ontario to understand their development and use of knowledge networks, and the relation of these networks to workers' overall business development and conditions of work. The nature of these networks was further explored through online group dialogues. Issues of race and gender were examined in particular.

***Outcomes to date:***

Three articles published: *Studies in Continuing Education*, *Adult Education Quarterly*, *Journal of Education and Work*.

Website posting research methods, results and publications  
[www.ualberta.ca/~tfenwick/Project/knpw.htm](http://www.ualberta.ca/~tfenwick/Project/knpw.htm)

Two more articles submitted: *Mind, Activity and Culture*, *Career Development International*

Two conference presentations: Working Life Learning Conference, Copenhagen, Nov, 2004, Adult Education Research Conference, May 2004

**7. *The School-to-Work Youth Transition Process*, part of *The Changing Nature of Work and Lifelong Learning in the New Economy***

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council  
**Alison Taylor**, Project Leader.

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**Infrastructure:**

It was agreed that Board members would normally serve for a one year period (renewable) from Jan.1 to Dec 31. New members would be nominated by the existing Board in late fall and invited by the Director to join the Board before January.

The Advisory Board consisted of 10 members. In fall 2004 the Board moved that this be expanded to include where possible: representatives from non-Education faculties, provincial government staff, not-for-profit organizations, corporate training personnel and health care. Three new invitations were extended to potential Board members for 2005.

The *WLN* Board met as a whole four times in 2004 to oversee *WLN* activities, provide advice and approve major expenditures and decisions. The Director was empowered to make everyday operational decisions without consulting the Board. Additional work was conducted in sub-committees as required.

Following up on a recommendation made in 2003, a paid administrative support position was created to support and organize the day-to-day activities of the network. On January 1, 2004, Val Mayes was hired for this position, and continued to serve until Dec. 31, 2004.

Terms of Reference for the Advisory Board were not yet developed by the end of 2004, but the Board suggested they be developed in 2005.

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### **Partnerships:**

*WLN* expanded its mandate toward collaboration in research and policy.

- A. Partnership with Center for Studies in Education and Work (CSEW) at OISE/University of Toronto to jointly deliver a conference, *The Future of Lifelong Learning in Work*, in June of 2005.
- B. In November 2004, *WLN* partnered with CSEW to submit a Letter of Intent to develop a project called “Learning to Build Community Unionism in Three Canadian Cities”.
- C. Partnership with Alberta Labour History Institute, Ground Zero Productions, and Catherine Cole Associates. Together *WLN* with this group conducted the history of work and learning at the historic GWG/Levi’s plant in Edmonton. See Research Project #4 above.
- D. Partnership with University of Regina (Marion Jones, John Graham) and University of Saskatchewan (Adrian Blunt, Carol Henry) to plan and host the Essential Skills Research Workshop Symposium at the University of Alberta in April 2005.
- E. New partnership initiated with Faculty of Extension (Katy Campbell), Dick Sobsey (Dept of Ed Psych) and four community organizations (*Canadian Centre on Disability Studies*, *Employabilities*, *Alberta Committee on Citizens with Disabilities*, and *Persons with Developmental Disabilities*) to study issues of learning in work related to integrating persons with disabilities. See Research Project #1 above.