



Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

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Relational & Youth **Child Care** Practice

(formerly *The Journal of Child & Youth Care*, established 1982) is committed to promoting and supporting the profession of Child and Youth Care through disseminating the knowledge and experience of individuals involved in the day-to-day lives of young people.

This commitment is founded upon the belief that all human issues, including personal growth and development, are essentially "relational".

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Relational Loss and Beauty

Rika Swanzen

This has been a year of personal loss for the editorial team of *RCYCP*. In our small team three members lost their parents in 2017, one of whom was our beloved Brian Gannon. While there will be many more special issues in various Child and Youth Care (CYC) journals to celebrate the tremendous contribution he made in CYC, some of the authors and *RCYCP* Board members wrote about what Brian meant to them, in a short commemoration piece included in this issue.

The messages speak of Brian as an interesting, witty, deep and inspirational man. He is described as a lover of classical and Adagio music, a father, grandfather, pioneer, friend, electronical pen-pal, mentor, hero, nurturer, and networker. After hearing of this CYC giant, I was also thoroughly in awe when I was given the opportunity to meet him personally in 2015. Being surrounded by my other CYC heroes who were reconnecting with 'the giant' during this visit, I thought I will just 'go in for a quick photo', but so like how he is described, he insisted on chatting with me. It is clear that he always sees the person inside any individual encounter. He left us with so much of himself that is forever engraved in the hearts of those who was touched by his life.

In *Much Ado about Nothing*, William Shakespeare said that "Everyone can master a grief but he that has it". And Vicki Harrison says that "Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim."

The vision of this journal has always been to celebrate and share about practitioners and academics who learn to swim in mostly overwhelming waters. In the atmosphere of

nostalgia, generated by incidences of loss, it is interesting that many articles in this issue focus on relational practice and residential care, as if on some collective wave between South Africa, Ghana, Canada and Ireland we remind each other about staying focused on – and getting good at – the basics that gave our profession its unique start.

Brown stirs us by asking whether our relational focus places unreasonable expectations on the young person. She explains our relational concepts around this question and reminds us of the importance of ‘hanging in’ when there may not be a willingness to engage with the practitioner. MacGiollaRi and McGrath reflect on their experience of a faculty exchange. From a relationship built by lecturers in two different countries, these authors relate how they appreciated the ‘other’ and how you improve your own self when you step out of your comfort zone.

In the personal space of caring in which CYC practitioners find themselves Aguiar shares what personal and organizational susceptibilities exist in vicarious trauma (VT). She also shares methods that have been found to help practitioners manage and treat VT with a specific discussion on the role of supervision in the prevention of practitioner burn-out and compassion fatigue.

A reflection piece by Hann speaks to the impact of change, how the practitioner’s milieu can shift and how this immediately leads to the seeking of connections – either between the new and the old or between uncertainty and shared purpose. The impact of processes and terminology that affects communication and productivity finds a somewhat humorous expression in this piece. Even our book review by Leon talks to the Love Languages of Teenagers according to Chapman – a further reminder of the ingredients of successful relationships.

Three academic articles address aspects around residential care in CYC. From Ghana Ayete-Nyampong shares the results of her ethnographic study and narratives of disjuncture observed from the experiences of youth in correctional centres and from practitioners in the criminal justice system. One main disjuncture she found is the willingness of these youth to share their life stories and the lack of interest in them shown by practitioners and authorities. The other major disjuncture is between the programmes being offered to help the youngsters rehabilitate and their very apparent disinterest in these programmes.

From Canada Head and Preyde explore the relational support youths receive when being discharged from mental health institutions. Worryingly it was found that the support

network declined after the youth spent time in an intensive treatment programme, which includes the loss of connections to peers from the programme. The youth and practitioners in the study, acknowledged that the biggest need after discharge is a long-term relationship that is stable and positive

From South Africa Harris and Human-Hendricks share the result of a systematic literature review on the effects of the statutory removal of children on parents. Five informative studies previously published were used to obtain significant findings that could be applied to the improvement of services to families. Parent participation during the process emerged as an important theme in the majority of studies. Identified as an influence on the parents' behaviours, parents indicated the wish to be proactively involved, but their perceived exclusion from decisions about intervention is experienced as disrespectful and social workers as frightening.

We are reminded that being taken into care is also a loss that has very emotional consequences. Washington Irving said that: "There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love." Anne Frank stated that: "I don't think of all the misery, but of all the beauty that remains." While many of us mourned this year, we are also reminded of the beauty in the resilience of mankind, even more so with those members of society that face immense challenges in their everyday life. Here's to a thoughtful end to 2017 and a resilient 2018!

Quotes obtained from *21 Absolutely Heart-wrenching Quotes on Loss and Grief* by Johanna Mort, <https://thoughtcatalog.com/johanna-mort/2015/05/21-absolutely-heartwrenching-quotes-on-loss-and-grief/>



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Sharing spaces: faculty and friends

Denise MacGiollaRi and Jenny McGrath

Like many good ideas it arose out of a conversation! In February 2016, during an annual MacEwan University (MU) study tour to Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), the faculty had discussions about how we might add new dimensions to our eight-year partnership. One of the possibilities was a short two-week faculty visitation where a MU faculty would travel to Ireland and an AIT faculty would travel to Canada, each to teach in the other program. Both AIT and MU supported the initiative and planning began. Prior to our travel, we communicated regularly, and this helped us arrange a schedule for the other. In doing so, we clarified expectations and were able to prepare for our classes, meetings and social events.

We were confident this process would offer an opportunity to share knowledge about our respective programs and to learn from each other's courses; Social Care (AIT) and Child & Youth Care (MU). While this was true in many respects, we soon discovered personal benefits that we had not anticipated. We agreed to host each other so we would reduce costs and live the life 'in the groove' of the other. We have many things in common such as being university lecturers and doctoral students, but we are also very different in many ways, especially considering that Jenny lives alone and Denise is married with four active children. This would make for very contrasting yet authentic 'living' experiences.

We have decided to share some of our experiences because we encourage others to take this leap. Doing so, can enrich your educational program but can also provide the participating faculty with renewed energy and motivation. It certainly did this for us!

Jenny's highlights

I flew from Edmonton to Dublin on November 6, 2016. I stayed in Dublin the first night to present the following day at the Unity Conference with Ashling Jackson (senior lecturer at AIT). Following a busy conference day, we traveled to the Irish Midlands, where Ashling dropped me at Denise's home. I was excited to meet my host family and knew it would add a unique dimension to this trip.

Prior to this visit, I had been to Ireland many times (five in fact), and four of those trips involved a visit to AIT. I had met the Social Care faculty and was familiar with the campus. I was excited about spending more intensive time there so I could immerse myself in the program and build on my prior connections. Even though I was familiar with AIT, Athlone and Ireland, this trip was different in that it was the first time I felt like a visitor rather than a tourist. The most significant reason for this was that I stayed with Denise and her family who welcomed me into their home and made me a part of their daily living. In the evenings, I was able to help her children with homework, visit their school and crèche, and learn some Irish dancing through private lessons in the living room. I decided to travel to Killarney on the weekend to visit a part of the country I had not yet experienced, and upon return was greeted by a 'welcome home' dessert made by one of Denise's children. I was also fortunate to share meals with several other colleagues, in their homes, the campus coffee dock and at local restaurants. All this Irish hospitality enriched my experience in a way that has not been possible on prior trips.

I was kept busy over the next two weeks at AIT observing classes, lecturing on Child and Youth Care (CYC) in Canada and meeting with AIT faculty and administration. One of the highlights for me was observing a few of Denise's classes. In particular, was a fourth-year interactional approaches class where the students completed presentations on their art-based collaborations with community partners. Throughout the semester, each student organized and facilitated two art projects for a community agency. In the presentations, students discussed the process, linked the experience to classroom theory and illustrated their learning about the benefits and challenges to art-based work. These projects were sophisticated, and the presentations were very interesting and informative. I found this class relevant because I teach activity programming at MU and was able to see how I could integrate some of Denise's ideas into my class and assessments.

I was invited to present to numerous classes about various aspects of CYC in Canada. For example, I talked to the MA students about 'Child and Youth Care as a profession in

Canada'. I shared information about our professional associations, certification/legislation models, education programs, conferences, and academic publications. The conversations in all classes involved discussions on varying models of practice and looking at similarities and differences in Ireland and Canada.

I also met several times with four Irish students who would be traveling to Edmonton in spring 2017 to complete their final practicum. I provided examples of potential agencies and gathered all information needed to start planning for their arrival. They expressed excitement about the opportunity and were eager to begin the process of gathering required paperwork, securing housing, connecting with Canadian students and learning about their respective agencies. I assured them that I would maintain regular contact and would meet them again when I returned with my students in February 2017. Supporting AIT students in a Canadian practicum is always an enriching experience and another benefit to our ongoing partnership.

Another perk for me occurred when I attended an Irish Heritage class led by Dr. Harman Murtagh, an accomplished Irish historian. I met Harman several years ago as he is often our guide when we tour Birr Castle during our annual study tour. The class is designed specifically for international students and is an accepted elective course in most programs offered through AIT. In this class, he discussed Irish literature and links between German and Irish history, all while connecting the information to various field trips he organizes on the course. I wonder if MU could offer something comparable to our international students. A few days after this class, I was treated to a cultural tour funded by the AIT International Office. Harman was the tour guide, as this was one of several field trips offered in his Irish Heritage class. This was a very informative day as I sat with Harman on the bus, creating space for conversation about politics (the US federal election was the night before), religion, literature, genealogy, economics, and many other topics. We visited the quaint town of Trim where the film *Braveheart* was filmed, Muiredach's High Cross (stonework from early medieval times), and Newgrange (a megalithic passage tomb over 5,000 years old).

I found it challenging to capture the essence of this trip but will say that the benefits (both personal and professional) exceeded all expectations. I left Ireland on November 17, 2016 with a renewed passion for my work and more importantly, with stronger connections and friendships. When I returned in February with the MU student study tour, I felt like I was going home and happily reconnected with everyone.

Denise's Highlights

Staying with Jenny was by far the best part as it offered time to fully live the life of the hard-working University lecturer.

Going to Canada was daunting and I knew it was going to take me out of my comfort zone. With four children, classes to cover, assignments to deliver and a PhD paper to write, there was a lot to organise before I went. I set out on the 11th March 2017 from Dublin airport via Amsterdam to Edmonton. I arrived sleep deprived but it didn't dampen the magnificence of the winter in Canada. Cold but a 'dry' cold, as they say, compared to the Irish dampness!

I have been a lecturer in AIT since 2002 and teach the creative art module on the social care course. Having studied for a degree in ceramics I subsequently qualified as an art therapist in the UK and began working with marginalized groups and disadvantaged children and families before I began teaching. My experience of practice at the 'coal face' in particular has given impetus to the view that creative practice within social care offers valuable opportunities for growth and self-determination. I encourage students to develop their own creativity, so they can respond and encourage others to use their innate creativity as means of expression, and as a driver of personal change. The Canada trip offered an opportunity to experience a different culture and understand the Canadian approach to social practice as well the particular approach undertaken in teaching CYC, within McEwan University.

Social care in Ireland is on the cusp of state registration, offering recognition as an official profession and protection to the public. It's a time of impending change in the sector and an international influence by way of the exchange was timely. As I have had a role in AIT as a placement tutor I welcomed the opportunity to visit a number of the placement agencies AIT students were going to in the following weeks. Meeting the staff on the front line, working with marginalised groups, brought home to me how similar the agencies were to Ireland, but the issues were larger in scale, typical of large urban areas.

The embedded approach of creative activities within the modules in CYC was a revelation, giving rise to a seamless theoretical understanding of the capacity of activities to develop self-reflection and teamwork skills. The student's ability to actively and openly reflect upon their own processes and the impact on practice was particularly impressive. Like our students many are young and given that the work is challenging, both personally and professionally, self-care is of critical importance.

The passion of the staff within the department about student's welfare and for the care of the self was inspiring. Being part of the fabric of the department for the ten days offered the best opportunity to see the similarity and differences between the two courses. The visits to placements were also insightful. There were many take home moments of both teaching and learning practice I learned from. I was immersed in the possibilities presented by observing new approaches and thinking. I wondered about the cultural origins and recurrent practices that underpin these and I was in constant comparison mode. Would this work in our course? If so how and if not, why not? What are the barriers to new practices? What 'solutions' have been attempted in addressing the social issues in a large city in Canada and how does this compare with Ireland? What structures underpin the support for practices? What makes us different? What makes us the same?

I presented two lectures on the Irish family and the Irish traveller. I was very fortunate to have the input of Dr Ashling Jackson (AIT) on the lectures presented. It was enlightening and daunting to present material to students at 8am on Monday morning while I was jetlagged! The students' questions were very insightful, prompting a thought provoking discussion about how the social construct of the 'family' has changed, and the differences and comparisons of marginalised groups within Canadian and Irish societies.

The trip would not have been complete without a visit to Jasper in the Rocky Mountains. Stunning scenery and wildlife abound, amidst the pure whiteness of the snow and tranquil calmness – a truly wonderful experience.

Final thoughts

This initiative was a success due to the willingness of both of us to immerse ourselves in the lives of the other. We believe had we stayed in a hotel, a more distant and less responsive engagement would have occurred. The other factor for success was the willingness of the wonderful staff in both programs to welcome us personally into their working lives, and in doing so they became ambassadors for CYC at MU and Social Care at AIT. We now have a more thorough understanding of each other's programs and have discussed how we can remain innovative, so the connections made here continue to grow. We want to thank everyone who had a part in making our experience possible. It has been both personally and professionally fulfilling.

Ultimately experiences change us and this one did more than we expected. We now have many references to moments of learning and exemplars of genuine and profound practices both spoken and actioned. Our students and programs will benefit from us stretching our comfort zone, sharing our experiences and building on our creativity. A model of tutor exchange for the future? We think so!



Denise MacGiollaRi

has worked for the last 15 years as a lecturer of creative art in Social Care & Early Education. She was an art therapist for over 10 years with families and children at risk and within disabilities services. She completed her MA in Art Therapy from Cork IT & Hertfordshire University and a PGDip in Learning and Teaching. She is currently a PhD student in the Higher Education Research, Evaluation and Enhancement (HEREE) programme at Lancaster University, UK. Denise has an interest in creativity, higher education policy and evaluative practices. She has published in the areas of student feedback, the benefits of using creative art in social care and encouraging research in social work.



Jenny McGrath

is a faculty member in the Child and Youth Care Program at MacEwan University in Edmonton, Alberta. She is also a doctoral student at the University of Victoria.

Brian Gannon: A commemoration

Brian loved music. He played the piano and the organ. He was self taught. I had occasion to stay with Brian at his Marina home in Cape Town, got up early, made a cup of coffee and looked through his collection of CDs. Compact disks were new to me – I was still using tape cassettes. When Brian came down he pulled out a CD saying, 'Try this.' He had to show me



how to put it into the player. It was an Adagio movement of a transcription for oboe from a Bach harpsichord concerto – slow, plaintive and very beautiful. 'We need Adagios sometimes,' he said. 'There was a boy at St John's Hostel, who would knock on my door saying 'I need some Adagios' and I would play them for him'. Then, 'Go get yourself a copy of Max Bruch's *Kol Nidri*. But when you do, take a pack of tissues with you'. I have always thought that this said so much about Brian Gannon ... the man. The photograph was taken during a family visit to Brian. We had in depth conversations about publication and the children played on an upturned boat at the water's edge. When we left my daughter made this observation, 'For all that Brian has been through, he has an inner calm. He seems somehow to be at peace within himself'. My son-in-law agreed.

Barrie Lodge

I first heard of Brian Gannon in 1997, shortly after he and Thom Garfat co-founded CYC-Net. Brian was described to me by a colleague as “a big deal” in South Africa. Through CYC-Net I was able to access Brian’s writing and learned for myself what the big deal was. Brian had the rare ability to take complex concepts and relay them in a way that made them accessible and useful – his “Practice Hints” were an example of this. He was a pioneer, an advocate, a teacher, a leader. Brian was someone who really cared about children and youth and wanted to make their lives better, not in an abstract, theoretical way but in a tangible, practical, “let’s play soccer together” kind of way. Brian was someone who made a difference. I had the opportunity to meet Brian, at his home, while in South Africa in 2015. He was gracious, generous, kind, intelligent, wise, and humorous – everything I expected him to be. It was a great honour to spend time with him and I will treasure those moments always.



Heather Modlin

Brian Gannon was my friend – well, he still is. We met in Vancouver at the first International CYC Conference and an instant connection developed. We shared common values, beliefs and aspirations for the field. We worked on numerous projects over the years, including CYC-Net and CYC-Online among others. Like all good friends we



debated, argued, shared joy and found each other unreasonable and ridiculous at times. We drank 'garage wine' late into the night. He came to Canada and discovered Tim Horton's (thanks to Ernie and friends). He had Syl and I come to South Africa and opened my world up in many ways. He was a friend of the field – and a visionary leader in all ways. I will miss him. But more important, the field will be less because of his passing. He was a giant of caring and love for the field. Others will recall his accomplishments – me, I just want to recall his presence.

Thom Garfat

Brian Gannon and I first met at an early international child and youth care conference in Vancouver, B.C. It may have been one of only a few times Brian left South Africa and I learned later that his 'conference expenses budget' did not extend to meals in the hotel, so he bought white bread sandwiches at the basement food court. We never met again in person until



much later, in the post-Apartheid era, and it reaffirmed his life journey dedicated to Child and Youth Care, and to support for carers who receive little else. I came to know Brian as a thoughtful Anglican priest who lived a comparatively simple life and enjoyed classical music. This legend was as well read as anyone I ever knew but his interests lay in the application of ideas, not discussion of ideas in isolation. A wry sense of humour, Brian had a vision of what child and youth care might become in South Africa. He also had a vision about sharing knowledge and networking amongst Child and Youth Care workers throughout the world using The International Child and Youth Care Network @ www.cyc-net.org. I wonder who might join me in seeking to establish a Brian Gannon Memorial Educational Trust to which child and youth care workers – and those working in and

around the field everywhere in the world – might contribute towards supporting front line child and youth care workers with continuing professional development opportunities – at no cost. That was Brian's vision. Let's celebrate Brian's legacy and establish the Brian Gannon Memorial Educational Trust in 2018!

Leon Fulcher

My fondest memories of Brian are his writings, classical music, his deep knowledge and care for children, and his razor-sharp wit! To me he is South Africa's – and an international – unsung Child and Youth Care pioneer and hero, leading and nurturing our fledgling profession without compromise during the apartheid years, undaunted by a government that could care less about the majority of South Africa's children. His leadership and teaching grounded those of us who followed in his footsteps. You couldn't help but 'catch' the Child and Youth Care 'bug' from him. He could inspire and teach like no one I've ever met since. Absolutely brilliant! He'd have you laughing one minute and deadly serious the next and you'd walk away with a new nugget of information, inspired and determined to do better. I've forgotten quite a bit over the 40 years of being in child and youth care, but I've never forgotten his teachings and encouragement from way back when I was a young, new worker. I'm forever grateful for the privilege of having had him as my mentor, colleague and friend.

Lesley du Toit

I remember Brian very fondly as an intelligent man, a strong advocate for children and for Child and Youth Care, and above all as a deeply caring person. It was a privilege and a pleasure to know him, and share some precious moments with him. My favourite photo with Brian captures us chuckling about something at a CYC conference tea break in Cape Town – Brian had a



terrific sense of humour and a quick, dry wit. He was not only the founder and prime mover of CYC in South Africa, his writings and personal example continue to inspire many of us around the world, and his legacies will continue to grow and expand as CYC spreads across the continent of Africa. I can imagine Brian chairing the founding meeting of the Angelic CYC Association with Carol Kelly, Martha Mattingly, Mark Krueger, Jerry Beker and many other CYC greats sitting in the circle.

Jim Anglin

It was the middle of a South African winter when I finally met Brian Gannon. A small group of colleagues attending the National Association of Child Care Workers gathered at his home just outside of Cape Town. His health was declining due to a series of strokes yet he seemed to enjoy the company and aware of his impact around the globe and our appreciation of his life work.



We weren't many kilometers from the twelve acres of woodland on the slopes of Table Mountain where he was selected to serve at St. Johns Hostel in 1967. At 27 years old he already had experience as headmaster of St. George's Home in Johannesburg, schoolmaster of St. Barnabas College, and the founding headmaster of St. Nicholas Home for Colored Boys. He served at St. Johns for another fifteen years, where he was credited for creating smaller living groups for the boys, less regimented routines, more experiences of childhood and adolescence in everyday life, and a focus on developing meaningful relationships with one another.

This meaningful work at St. Johns was extended through his leadership in seeking an end to segregation in the CYC workforce. He also gave us, along with co-founder Thom Garfat, a solid foundation for the growing resources of the International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net).

Brian had many roles in his life. Most importantly he was a father, grandfather, and dear friend to many. He is also one who has left us a legacy from the past which is relevant to our present and future. We honor that heritage when we read, network, and apply what we learn to become better at caring for today's children and young people.

James Freeman

If it makes sense to have a 'warm' but distant relationship, that would describe my friendship with Brian. Although I had very little occasion to spend 'face time' with him, we were always bound at the hip by our mutual love for Child and Youth Care work. We made for good electronic pen pals and saw eye to eye on our vision for the field. He lived a life of strong purpose with great integrity, and gave of himself to the colleagues and clients he served. Our world is 'less' without him, but more because of him. If you were not privileged to know him, you have nonetheless benefited from his commitment and kindness. His caring spirit will continue to bless us.

Lorraine Fox

I was fortunate to be part of Brian's life for 42 years. I was introduced to him when I was 8 years old. I had been offered a place at St John's Hostel in Cape Town – a children's home for 64 boys, where Brian was the "headmaster". I was led by our social worker into the entrance hall of the house where I would be staying, and next to me I noticed a very official looking document on a pinboard. I remember it had something to do with tasks for each boy for the week. At the bottom were the initials "BG". Of course, I had no idea what this BG meant. And little did I know how important those two letters would become in my and so many people's lives.

BG's was a life punctuated by giving, sacrifice, modesty, insight, wisdom, music, and of course, humour.



Yet, through all the memories and recollections I have had since his passing, it really has been about the story of BG the father, grandfather, mentor and inspiration.

Nothing gave him greater pleasure than spending time with his family, and especially being a doting grandpa to Kirsten and Tamara.

It is an honour and privilege to have shared 42 years with such a remarkable person. Our family is truly blessed.

Martin Stabrey

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