

## **John Dobson Award 2020**

### **Adam Baden-Clay**

I am thrilled and honoured to be the 2020 recipient of the John Dobson award, which honours the legacy of John Dobson, a faculty member who died tragically in Mexico while a member of the adult education department in the 1980s. The award is given annually to a student whose research topic has an international focus.

I am currently in the final stages of the Master of Adult Education program. This has been, and continues to be, a tremendous personal and professional learning journey for me. The program has continually informed and elevated my practice of educating adults, and this began immediately after the Foundations Institute, when I incorporated much more deliberate and considered reflective practice into the introductory components of the fellowship that I coordinate.

I have worked at the Coady Institute at StFX for a little more than nine years now, in youth leadership programs. For the past six years, the principal component of my work at Coady has been to coordinate the OceanPath (recently renamed Pathy Foundation) Fellowship, an intensive 12-month opportunity for graduating Canadian students who have an existing meaningful connection with a community anywhere in the world and an innovative initiative idea to strengthen that community. We provide fellows with comprehensive training, dedicated ongoing support, and up to \$40,000 to make a sustainable impact in their chosen community and to support their growth as active and effective leaders and change-makers. Many fellows' projects are internationally based, including none other than John Dobson's grandson, John Paul, who in 2017-18 completed his fellowship in Taxco, Mexico—continuing a decades-long family connection with Mexico that began with his grandfather.

In my master's research, entitled Transformative learning in the OceanPath Fellowship: A case study of alumnx experiences, I was interested in understanding whether transformative learning occurs for fellows, and if so, which specific elements contribute to this learning, and its impact on them.

## **Marie A. Gillen Award 2020**

### **Lesley Anne Clarke**

As a student of adult education with a focus on women and social justice, I am honored to be this year's recipient of the Marie A. Gillen Award. After fourteen years as the Executive Director of the Nanaimo Women's Resources Society I made the leap back into formal education, currently pursuing a Master of Adult Education at St. Francis Xavier University. During my tenure I was given lessons from a wide range of remarkable women who taught me about resilience and creative leadership. My mandate was to support the participation of all women in decisions regarding poverty mitigation, health, education, and every aspect of the social and cultural life of the community. This work inevitably led me to adult education, where I saw the potential to engage in a collective discourse inclusive of feminism, decolonizing processes, and critical theory. My journey into adult education has served to help me develop a more critical and expansive practice.

The focus of my studies and research at St. Francis Xavier University is on an arts-based exploration of the conditions that support the capacity of older women to be agents of change in their communities. I am concerned with how groups of older women might define their learning and organizing while engaged in collective social action, specifically how they imagine the potential for collective learning between diverse groups of older women. A wide array of adult education takes place in the community apart from formal learning environments such as non-profits and other community organizations. Unfortunately, such efforts often fall short of creating learning environments that are inclusive of diverse worldviews and bridging discourses. There is an important presence of literature related to learning in diverse communities of older women in adult education, which is often inclusive of arts-based, performative, and narrative study subjects and inquiries (Butterwick & Elfert, 2016; Roy, 2016). However, there are identifiable shortcomings within community organizations to recognize a social justice discourse across groups of older women. This gap manifests as underrepresentation of the subject in adult

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education literature. My objectives are to broaden the understanding of how community stakeholders transformative potential of the fellowship. It also affirmed the efficacy of the fellowship and the supportive environment in creating conditions conducive to transformative learning. The program's design was also shown to align well with social change-focused models of leadership development and youth engagement and empowerment, linking and combining elements of several of these to form an effective model of its own. By demonstrating the transformative potential of the fellowship, and providing details of the program's construct and fellowship environment, there is potential, with further research, for this program's model to help inform practice in similar programs.

The significance of my research as it specifically relates to this award is that many past fellows worked internationally, and many future fellows will also doubtless be working in an international context. In this way, I hope that my research and its findings and outcomes will support international development and social change work in the future, as those alumnx impacted by the fellowship continue their good work in this field.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to my wonderful advisor, Dr Carole Roy, and to all the terrific faculty in the adult education department; to my fantastic cohort for the support and the bond we have developed together; and finally of course to the Dobson family for their great generosity in offering this award.

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can support this discourse and the equitable inclusion of older women using an adult education framework. I am grateful that the work of women in adult education is recognized, and research on women's learning is supported through the Marie A. Gillen Award. Inextricably, societies that are inclusive and enable women to participate in decision-making are healthier, more innovative, more peaceful, and more prosperous for everyone.

#### References

Butterwick, S., & Elfert, M. (2016). Exploring the learning and wisdom of elder social activists in Atlantic Canada: Learning liberation. In D. Clover, S. Butterwick, & L. Collins (Eds.), *Women, adult education, and leadership in Canada: Inspiration, passion, and commitment* (pp. 58–70). Thompson Educational Publishing.

Roy, C. (2016). More than laughter: Raging Grannies and creative leadership. In D. Clover, S. Butterwick, & L. Collins (Eds.), *Women, adult education, and leadership in Canada: Inspiration, passion, and commitment* (pp. 230–243). Thompson Educational Publishing.