

Helen Carswell Chair
in
Community Engaged Research in the Arts



End of Year Report

November 21, 2017

Submitted by Karen Burke, Associate Professor

The journey begins

When I was notified in the summer of 2016 by the Chair of the Music department that our then Dean of the School of Arts, Media Performance and Design (AMPD), Shawn Brixey wanted me to be the Endowed Fellow for this unique three-way partnership, I had no idea what to expect.

The year 'plus' that has ensued has been filled with productive meetings, completed projects and increased networking, laying the ground work for what promises to be monumental milestones in the Jane & Finch community.

Working with Dr. Allan Carswell, his team and the team from Regent Park School of Music and RPSM director, Richard Marsella has been a particular honour as we flesh out the mandate laid out in the initial agreement.

After initial meetings in the fall of 2016 with stakeholders and interested faculty members and the opportunity for me to meet and rehearse with RPSM students, the official announcement of the Carswell Endowment took place on November 16, 2016.

Support systems

Very soon after this, my Research Associate, Dr. Karen Cyrus was hired. Dr. Cyrus's long history of community involvement, mutual interest in music education combined with her voracious appetite for research made her the ideal choice and she continues as an integral part of my support team.

Aims

There are 4 primary goals of this partnership outlined in my appointment letter to facilitate in collaboration with a multi-disciplinary research committee (1) Increase the reach of RPSM in the Jane & Finch community, (2) Significantly benefit children from high-risk neighbourhoods and fortify community music programs globally through publications and knowledge mobilization, (3) Engage and help drive new knowledge and practice to community based groups serving children in the Jane/Finch community (4) Conduct rigorous academic research exploring the benefits of community music programs and the links between music and learning

Achievements

(1) Increasing the Reach of RPSM

During the spring and summer of 2017, I worked closely with Karen Cyrus to familiarize us with all of RPSM's curricular offerings including the Summer Camp held by RPSM at York University for five weeks during July and August. I also supported and participated in a major fundraising event for RPSM and made efforts

to connect RPSM to other major stakeholders and current community music programmes in the Jane & Finch community.

During this past spring and summer, Karen Cyrus and I also set about on our own quest to meet those leaders who had long standing roots in community arts programming in the Jane-Finch area. Our journey began by visiting Lorna Schwartzentruher, manager of the Community Education Centre located in the Yorkgate Mall in partnership with TD Bank and York University.

Lorna was a wealth of information, furnishing us with the names and contacts of the leaders of community organizations with long-standing history and respected deep roots in the Jane-Finch area such as PEACH (Promoting Education and Community Health) and JustBeGraphic.

(2) Benefiting children by fortifying music programs

My work through the university and on behalf of the Carswell Chair continues to take me into schools across the GTA to present workshops and support teachers over the past 15-20 years. I have developed and nurtured many long-standing relationships with many educators, including music educators in the Jane-Finch community. I often bring teachers and students onto campus for special workshop days and have been renewing these collegial ties in support of the vision of the Carswell Family. I look for ways to engage students and to provide them access to music experiences that they might otherwise not have. Most recently, over 100 students and teachers from high-priority neighbourhoods were given complimentary tickets and free bus transportation to attend a major collaborative concert event, "Gospel & Jazz: A Family Reunion".

(3) Driving new knowledge

One of the first major tasks to be completed through the generous gift of the Carswell family was to arrange for an official environmental scan of the needs and desires for community music education in the Jane & Finch community and illuminate possible gaps in research with regard to youth and community based music programming. This important survey was undertaken by a York Consulting Group (YCG) led by MBA Candidate, Levin Maaskant from the Schulich School of Business and under the supervision of Professor Jim McKay.

Levin delivered phase 1 of the York University-RPSM report by the YCG to us on August 25. It was a massive undertaking of over 125 pages including the results of two internal surveys of current RPSM students and their parents as well as conducting a competitive scan of the local market for education programs in the Jane-Finch area.

At the beginning of Phase 1, YCG identified and researched this partnership's key stakeholder groups in the Jane-Finch area including children and teenagers; parents; teachers and principals; parent groups and parenting programs; church groups; and existing after-school and summer programs.

The information presented also included clearly laid out quantitative summaries of their results, seven resulting recommendations and several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). I am awaiting word on the progress of Phase 2.

(4) Conducting rigorous academic research

The first step in embarking on the rigorous research potential of this project was to gather a group of academics that would provide guidance and input from various fields of discipline. This group would be known as the Advisory Working Group as per Appendix “B” in the MOU. Throughout the month of May, my main task was to invite faculty that had initially shown interest in this partnership at its outset, ‘back to the table’. In addition, I personally connected with and recruited new faculty members, many of which already had a vested interest *in* and established connections *to* the Jane-Finch area. Our first official meeting was held on June 15. A subsequent meeting to discuss the preparation of the first call for research proposals was held on August 23.

The Advisory Working Group is an integral part of the success of this partnership representing the breadth of the research proposals that the Regent Park School of Music envisions will strengthen their overall programme and subsequently community arts programming globally. It has been my honour to work over the past few months with this group which currently includes professors from the following faculties: Uzo Anucha and Narda Razack (Liberal Arts & Professional Studies), Carl James (Education), Honor Ford-Smith and Jenny Foster (Environmental Studies), Gordon Flett (Health), James McKay (Schulich School of Business), Mary Fogarty and Bill Thomas (School of Arts, Media, Performance and Design – AMPD). We also have input from Michael Johnny, Manager of Knowledge & Mobilization and Ken Rogers, Associate Dean of Research (AMPD).

Late spring, Shawn Brixey left the position of Dean of the School of AMPD and we welcomed Norma-Sue Fisher-Stitt as Interim Dean. Dean Fisher-Stitt dove right in, familiarizing herself with the partnership, its mandates and offering leadership by writing the first draft of the call for research proposals.

Moving Forward

My appointment as the first Endowed Fellow of this partnership was officially announced to the York community in a wonderful event prepared by the Advancement office and before an enthusiastic audience during the Summer Institute held by the Faculty of Education. There is palpable excitement as we all anticipate the potential of this joint venture between the Carswell Family, York University and the RPSM working together to support best practices for community music education.

The Executive Committee, made up of myself (Endowed Fellow), RPSM Director, Richard Marsella and AMPD Interim Dean, Norma-Sue Fisher-Stitt, work together to

represent each entity as we move this project forward. In consultation with Richard and myself, the first call for research proposals was sent out to our Advisory Working Group and subsequently to York's Faculty and Graduate community to garner interest re submitting research proposals for consideration.

An information meeting was offered on October 3 to provide context and information about the RPSM and to answer questions about the research proposal submissions in general. While the turn-out wasn't as robust as expected, RPSM's Executive Artistic Director, Richard Marsella did have the opportunity to provide information about the RPSM and the key players were able to fortify strategies and confirm next steps.

The successful late October call, for research proposals that align with the goals of this partnership, resulted in 10 submissions. Members of the Advisory Working Group had the opportunity to meet and adjudicate the proposals. Now that the recipients of the first round of successful research proposals have been notified, it is our hope that they will form the nucleus of a unique new research community at York. In consultation with both the Executive Committee and the RPSM, we hope to have 'boots on the ground' by early 2018.

Well over a year in the making, if the progress thus far is any indication, the success of this exciting partnership will become a reality.

Humbly submitted,

Karen Burke
Endowed Fellow
Carswell/York/RPSM Partnership