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Newsletter of the
Canadian Poverty Institute
at Ambrose University
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Children in the Crosswalk

A stop sign was recently installed at the intersection near my house. Adjacent to a school at the juncture of two main streets, the intersection always seemed a bit dangerous so the sign is a welcome addition. In order to alert drivers to its impending installation, warning notices were erected several weeks prior to ensure nobody would miss the new sign.



Now stop signs, being large and red, would seem rather hard to miss, and the consequences of missing one can be dramatic. Yet, people do miss them, particularly when they appear in unfamiliar places. We become accustomed to our routes, driving out of habit, often not paying attention to where we are. Warning signs alert us to what is coming and what has changed. The thing about stop signs is that they exist for our mutual protection. If I fail to stop I run as great a risk of harming a child in the crosswalk as I do of being harmed myself by an oncoming vehicle.

Or, sometimes, I take my turn as a pedestrian, vulnerable, trusting the traffic to pay attention to the signs. At some point in our lives we've all been children in a crosswalk. When we fail to see, to notice, we endanger ourselves, our children and our future. This failure to pay attention to what is around us afflicts us in many ways. Busy and preoccupied with our lives we can similarly become accustomed to what should jar us. People on the corner asking for change become invisible and we walk past without seeing. Reports of homelessness or swelling lines at the food bank become noise and we tune them out. Unemployment rates are reported like the weather and the unemployed are faceless statistics. We become accustomed and drive by, increasingly unaware of the signs.

The noted American theologian and faith activist Jim Wallis refers to people in poverty as the canary in the coalmine. Like the canaries that were brought into the mines to warn, by their condition, of dangerous gases, so too does the suffering of others tell us something about the environment we're

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Updates / What's New



> The Canadian Poverty Institute is pleased to announce the launch of its new website www.povertyinstitute.ca. This new online resource will provide information and resources about poverty along with news and updates on the work of the CPI.

> Over the past several months work has continued to advance on the CPI's *Child Poverty Definition Project*. The aim of this project is to develop a multidimensional definition of childhood poverty that can improve

our response to it. Interviews with families with children and service providers were conducted throughout the fall which provided rich insight into the experience of poverty for families and children. These insights have contributed to an understanding of poverty as a spectrum of conditions, not a single experience. The various "types" of poverty people experience are informing new definitions that better capture the complex realities of poverty for different people in different circumstances. Watch for a draft report to be published soon.

> In October, Rolland Weisbrot, undergraduate research assistant to the Child Poverty Definition Project, completed an historical scan of child welfare policy in Alberta. The report *In the Shadow of the Poor Law: A History of State Responses to Child Poverty in Alberta* was presented at the 30th Biennial Meeting of the Conference on Faith and History at Regent University in Virginia.

Subversive Conversations Among Strangers

This past September, over 75 people gathered at Ambrose University for a conversation with Walter Brueggemann, John McKnight and Peter Block, three thought leaders in the areas of community development and theology. Their relationship has born the fruit of a call to folks of all faiths, or no faith, to consider our embeddedness within a consumer culture, its costs and the beginning articulations of a way to An Other Kingdom, the title of their recently released book.

It felt just a tiny bit subversive to be having this conversation in the company of such a diverse group of people, strangers from different contexts: young and old, students and academics, neighbours and social workers, church leaders and community leaders. It was emboldening to be questioning the tenants our consumer capitalist society and teasing apart how this way of “making a living” – in the broadest sense of money, lifestyles and meaning – may actually be “making a dying.” We are hurting the planet, our neighbours (on the other side of the world and next door who carry the true costs of our consumer culture by their undervalued labour), and ourselves as we flail within the confines we have created – confines of double incomes, time scarcity, and meaning based on the accumulation of stuff and the fulfillment of bucket lists.

To continue reading about this event please visit:
<http://newscoopyc.coop/subversive-conversations-amongst-strangers/>

Sarah Arthurs, NewScoop

Chew On This!

In October, Ambrose University participated in the *Chew On This* campaign, devoting a bi-weekly Chapel service to a discussion of poverty. Speaking at Chapel was Ambrose graduate Amy Matychuk who challenged us to hear the voice of the poor.



“Chew On This” is a national campaign to raise awareness of hunger in Canada in honour of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The campaign calls on the federal government to include the voice of people living in poverty as it drafts its new anti-poverty strategy.

If food banks, soup kitchens, and other frontline agencies across the country were to shut down tomorrow, poverty and hunger would become much more visible.

- 852,000 people in Canada visit the food bank each month.
- 1 in 3 people helped by food banks in Canada are children.
- Food banks were started in Canada in the early 1980s as a temporary way to address hunger. They were never intended to be a permanent measure.
- 1 in 8 people in Canada experience some level of food insecurity.

Children in the Crosswalk *(continued from front page)*

creating for ourselves. When our preoccupation with property values, tax rates and the latest technical gadgets blinds us to the struggles of our neighbours, we’re in danger of missing the signs that should warn us.

The signs are around us if we choose to see. Every child at a food bank or woman in a shelter should be a sign. Every time we blame someone for not working hard enough or for making bad decisions, we should see a sign. Whenever we’re forgiven for our own bad decisions or fail to be present for our family and community because we’re working too hard, we should see a sign. Whenever our pre-occupation with things overrides our innate sense of justice we should see a sign. And whenever people become things to be used and manipulated rather than unique individuals with whom

we are in relationship, we should see a sign. The signs are telling us to stop; something is coming and something has changed. It is said that “my neighbour’s strength is my strength.” Although we prize our independence, the truth is we’re all inter-dependent, knitted together in the fabric of community, and a tear in one part weakens it all.

For one day we too may be in a shelter, or a food line, or in need of compassion or forgiveness. So, as we venture into this New Year, let’s do so with our eyes, ears, hearts and minds wide open. Pay attention to the signs. The canaries are in the mine. And our children are in the crosswalk.

Derek Cook

Director, Canadian Poverty Institute

Meet the Institute

Dr. Monetta Bailey, Faculty Associate

Dr. Monetta Bailey is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Ambrose University in the Behavioural Science department. Her area of specialization is Criminology and Race and Ethnic Relations.

“Growing up I have always been interested in achieving social change and social justice to improve the lives of those around me”, she says. Dr. Bailey has always had a passion for working with youth, especially marginalized youth who are at risk of experiencing barriers to reaching their full potential. As someone who migrated to Canada as a pre-teen, she knows well the feelings of not belonging and struggling to find a place in a world that is larger than we are. This has inspired her career over the last 15 years as her goal ultimately is to improve society for those who are marginalized.

As a sociologist, Dr. Bailey has had the opportunity to research the lives of people, gaining an understanding of how we can collectively solve some of the problems that keep people from thriving. “As a professor”, she says, “I enjoy encouraging students to think about the world analytically, critically and scientifically, in order to gain new perspectives on the world. Together, these have led to my participation as an Associate with the Canadian Poverty Institute. The work that the CPI does to promote social justice through addressing the issue of poverty, which has been shown to be associated with several additional social problems, is work that I consider incredibly valuable for the city of Calgary and the kind of work about which I am excited.”

Dr. Bailey’s research focuses on the intersection of race, ethnicity, immigration and the justice system, and the factors related to youth becoming involved in the justice system, as well as the experiences of these youth once they are in the youth justice system. Her interest in the justice system was sparked during her undergraduate degree pursuit at the University of Calgary where she studied Political Science. Through gaining both her MA and PhD in Sociology from the University of Calgary, she has been able to expand her interest in the justice system to look to the social institutions that interact with the justice system. Dr. Bailey recently completed her doctorate where she explored the ideas of restorative justice among racialized immigrant youth who are referred to the Extra-Judicial Sanctions Program in Calgary.



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Upcoming Events

February 10-11

Conversations for the Common Good

Learn about asset based, place and neighbour friendly approaches to support vibrant neighbourhoods and resilient citizens. Sponsored by NewsCoop. For more information visit: <http://newscoopyyc.coop/category/neighbour-friendly>.

April 4 – 6

Vibrant Communities Summit, Cities Reducing Poverty – When Business is Engaged (Hamilton Ontario)

This annual summit brings together major business leaders, community organizers, mayors and municipal staff, federal and provincial/territorial governments, Indigenous leaders, as well as funders, policy makers, and persons with lived experience to focus on ending poverty. This year’s summit will examine the role of business and multi-sectoral approaches to poverty reduction from across Canada.

For more information and to register, visit <http://events.tamarackcommunity.ca/crp>.

June 5 – 23

Inaugural CPI Summer Institute

Join students, practitioners and ministry workers for an exciting three weeks of learning about poverty and best practices in poverty eradication. For more information, visit www.povertyinstitute.ca.

June 5

Eyes to See Congregational Leaders Training

Are you interested in leading your congregation in a study series on poverty? Eyes to See is a congregational resource produced by Compassion Canada for churches that want to think deeper about poverty. Join a congregational leaders training for people who want to bring this resource to their own congregations. For more information, visit www.PovertyInstitute.ca.

Support the CPI

The Canadian Poverty Institute welcomes individuals and organizations who wish to support the Canadian Poverty Institute financially. If you wish to become a supporter, please visit <https://www2.ambrose.edu/donate> and indicate you wish to designate your gift to the Canadian Poverty Institute.

The Canadian Poverty Institute is a community partner of Sponsor Energy. Customers of Sponsor Energy can direct a portion of all profits from their utility bill to the Canadian Poverty Institute. For more information, please visit: <http://www.sponsorenergy.com/community-partners/cpi>.

New Reports and Resources

The following reports have recently been published by the Canadian Poverty Institute.

- Yembilah, R. and C. Lamb (2016).
Planning to Eliminate Child Poverty: Thematic Overview of Child Poverty Policy in Canada.
Calgary: Ambrose University, Canadian Poverty Institute.
https://ambrose.edu/sites/ambrose.edu/files/child_poverty_policy_report.pdf
- **Effective Approaches to Poverty Reduction: Brief to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.**
https://ambrose.edu/sites/ambrose.edu/files/cpi_brief_to_the_huma_committee_2016.pdf

About the CPI

The Canadian Poverty Institute is an inter-disciplinary research and teaching institute housed within Ambrose University in Calgary. Our mission is to contribute to the healing of poverty in Canada through teaching, research and public education. We are grounded in the Christian tradition of extending compassion while seeking justice and reconciliation for the marginalized and oppressed.



The Canadian Poverty Institute is a member of:

- Vibrant Communities
- The Metro Alliance for the Common Good

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Updates / What's New

> In June, the Canadian Poverty Institute will launch its first *Summer Institute*. Over three weeks, students and practitioners will gather at Ambrose University for a series of courses that address the economic, social and spiritual dimensions of poverty. Courses include:

- Shock Poverty
- The Psychology of Poverty
- Collaborative Leadership for Social Change
- Community Mobilization
- The Theology of Justice
- Human Rights and Poverty
- Intro to Co-op Development

> The Canadian Poverty Institute is excited to partner with Compassion Canada on the launch of their new poverty education resource *Eyes to See*. This resource is designed for church congregations that want to explore the issue of poverty and their response to it. In June, the CPI and Compassion Canada will be providing training for those who would like to facilitate poverty workshops in their own congregations.

For more information contact PovertyInstitute@ambrose.edu

> In partnership with York University, the Canadian Poverty Institute is developing a national *Poverty Hub*. The Poverty Hub will be an online repository of research on poverty in Canada. The Poverty Hub will be integrated with the national Homeless Hub which provides access to a rich collection of research and resources on homelessness in Canada. Watch for the launch of the Poverty Hub in the Spring of 2017.