Motivation and Purpose by Carole Morrison

Mature women students who are served at the Ban Righ Centre say they benefit from the peer community, quiet work spaces, soup, student advising, and financial support. Special initiatives like the Writing Studio, the Winter Bazaar, and Faculty Mentoring strengthen the sense of community too. Another long-standing tradition at the Ban Righ Centre is the Speaker Series. Each of these activities fosters learning and helps mature women students feel that they have a place on campus designed with them in mind. A place they belong.

But why are these targeted efforts so important? It is widely acknowledged that lifelong learning is beneficial to both individuals and to their nations’ economies. “Countries with lower skill levels risk losing in competitiveness as the world economy becomes more dependent on skills” (OECD, p. 6).

Women in Canada continue to access post-secondary education in ever higher numbers, yet it can be challenging for women who have not gone directly into higher education, are older than the traditional cohort, and/or who have family responsibilities. Some female students express feelings of isolation and stress. In a recent study women said that one of their main reasons for returning to school is that “a college degree would allow them to provide a better life for their children” (Deutsch & Schmertz, p. 490 & p. 487). Employment is clearly a motivation for continuing education. And the purpose of education is often self-investment, “valuing of self enough to believe that personal growth, learning, and education are needed and deserved. It includes an investment of time, energy, and funding in oneself, not merely toward a degree” (Vaccaro & Lovell, p 173). Each of the reasons alone would be enough to justify our collective efforts. Thank you for sharing in this work.

References
On October 20, the BRF held its annual Inspiring Women celebration. With thanks to an anonymous benefactor, the Foundation has plans to celebrate each year for 5 years and perhaps beyond. Shining a light on amazing women inspires us all!

**Student Research Profile**

by Mandi Veenstra

My doctoral research is a comparative project that examines mothering practices alongside child welfare policy and programming in Ontario and Finland. With a passion for dissecting Canadian social policy
and its impact on mothers, this research places the voices of women at the centre of the analysis. Biological mothers remain the primary caregivers of children. This attributed responsibility is amplified in the marginalization of mothers involved with child welfare. By comparison, the Finnish context serves as a fascinating example where an emphasis on preventative programming reflects the state’s valuation of caregiving and commitment to gender equality. As calls for child welfare reform echo across Canada, it is critical to seek reform that implements the voices and lived experiences of marginalized mothers, and takes into consideration family service paradigms in other nations.

**Student Experience** by Zoya Islam

I completed my Bachelor of Arts Honours in Gender Studies at Queen’s University in 2012. After graduating, I worked in the anti-violence against women sector, locally and abroad, before returning to Queen’s to do my Masters in Gender Studies in 2014. I completed my Masters in the Fall of 2017, and I am currently working in the anti-violence sector in Toronto. My experience as a graduate student at Queen’s was sadly not an easy one. While dealing with the usual amount of academic stress and anxiety that one typically experiences as a graduate student, I also faced many challenges in my personal life. When things escalated to a tipping point, I sought out the Ban Righ Centre (BRC) at the recommendation of a friend, to seek support in dealing with all my overwhelming struggles. Periodically, I met with staff members who listened to me when I spoke about my problems. They also assisted me with planning, and advised me about on-campus resources. They not only provided me with financial support as a mature woman student, but they were also always there to offer emotional support when I needed it. The BRC supports and rewards strong women who overcome challenging situations. I was no exception. I am incredibly grateful to the BRC at Queen’s.

Photo: Zoya Islam
Supporting Women’s Education

Warm thanks go to Dr Janet Farooq, who has recently established The Janet and Ghazi Farooq Bursary. This bursary continues a generous cycle of support and will enable the contributions of future students.

“My late husband Ghazi Farooq stressed the crucial importance of education for women for the development of any country in his 1970 PhD thesis on labour force in Pakistan. He continued to do so throughout his long United Nations career. And I know that, without the assistance of a substantial bursary in my final year granted to me by Jean Royce, Registrar, I might not have completed my undergraduate degree at Queen’s nor gone on to a PhD and a United Nations career myself. We trust that this award will encourage women to pursue their education and contribute to progress in their chosen field.” Janet Farooq

The Ban Righ Centre is grateful to the Farooqs, and as staff members we are proud to share in their noble quest.

Winter Bazaar

Thank you to the Ban Righ Foundation board members, former board members, staff in the Society of Graduate and Professional Students Office and Human Rights Offices, as well as community members and local businesses, who donated wonderful items for student families. On December 1st we had such fun seeing children select gifts for their loved ones. Parents had time to connect with one another and help children to shop for and wrap gifts.