An International Rental Scam

Maureen McDonald

Blake Noyes knew it wasn’t going to be easy to find an apartment for September first. Though she and her boyfriend both held down jobs and provided references from previous landlords, there were a few things against them. September leases are not easy to find, and the couple’s current lease was running out at the end of August. Following problems with previous basement apartments, they didn’t want another, eliminating some of their already limited options. And then there was the matter of Charlie, the cat they had rescued earlier in the year. Not all landlords welcome pets.

Brief Hope

When they responded to a Kijiji ad for an attractive apartment in late July, they quickly established a rapport with the landlord, but rather than sensing an end to their long search, Blake saw nothing but red flags.

Most of the other landlords had been detached in their dealings with the young couple. While not unfriendly, their communications had been businesslike throughout the process, whereas this man sent long emails describing himself—including a picture of his family. He explained that because he lived in the United Kingdom, Blake would need to send

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Inspiring Women 2018

Photo Credit Bernard Clark

On October 25th we gathered at the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts to celebrate some of the inspiring women in our community.

Congratulations to the winners of our Leadership and Mentorship awards, Mara Shaw and the late Kim Renders.

This ceremony has been made possible by a generous donation from an anonymous benefactor.

Poets Alyssa Cooper and Linda Stitt

The children of the late Kim Renders accept the Mentorship Award on her behalf

Keynote Speaker Kristin Cochrane

Some members of the 2018/19 Ban Righ Foundation Board of Directors

The Cantabile Women’s Chorus
Meditation and the Neutral Mind

Sarah Murphy

Buddhism has much to offer in terms of understanding the human mind. One of the main insights of this tradition is that the mind is in a constant state of flux. That is, that thoughts and emotions are constantly shifting and changing. Buddhism offers practitioners tools and techniques for slowing down the mind’s chatter, and for developing emotional stability. Various meditation techniques, or mind training techniques, are said to help develop a calm and neutral mind. According to the Buddhist perspective, this calm and neutral mind can improve overall well-being and increase contentment. In the contemporary context this means that through meditation practices, we can develop a relationship with our mind, and learn to regulate thought and emotion, rather than being swept away by the waves of our own thoughts and emotions.

Getting Started

The first step is to learn to observe the contents of one’s own mind. Any meditator, whether novice or master, will report that during meditation thoughts do not cease. The trick is to notice when a thought comes, rather than being carried away and losing oneself in thought. This takes practice. Meditation is a practice that over time allows one to observe both thoughts and emotions. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) research has shown that the act of observing and labelling emotions leads to greater emotional regulation as well as less physiological reactivity. For example, the act of labelling anger reduces the experience of anger both emotionally and physically. Meditation allows practitioners to develop the skills required to label and thus regulate emotional experiences.

Join meditation hosted at the Ban Righ Centre Wednesdays at noon. Facilitated this year by Dr. Jacqueline Davies.

Into the Archives

Cutting the ribbon on the Ban Righ Centre - 1974
Spotlight on Students: Motherhood and Academics

Maureen McDonald

When she isn’t in class, Chris Pardy can often be found in the second-floor computer lab at Ban Righ Centre, coffee-thermos at her side, intently studying human anatomy slides. She already has a Bachelor of Education degree, and her goal now is to obtain a Master’s degree in physiotherapy. This time, however, she is the single mother of three young children, and attending university as a parent presents challenges she didn’t face the first time around.

In overcoming these obstacles, her family has learned to embrace routines. When her children are in school, Chris is a dedicated student; when they are all home she focuses her energy on being a good mother. At 8:00 pm, when her children are in bed, she starts studying again.

The stories of young mothers returning to school resonate with Gamila Abdalla, one of the Ban Righ Centre student advisors. Gamila was the mother of a toddler son and was expecting her second when she returned to university in 1994. Now she advises other women on a similar path to the one she once walked.

One of these women is Helen Obilor. Helen, a nurse, always knew she wanted a full education. For her, that meant not stopping until she had achieved her PhD. She earned a Bachelor’s degree in her native Nigeria, then returned to work in order to save the money to go back for her Master’s degree. By then she was already learning the art of juggling motherhood with education, as her first child had arrived.

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When the opportunity to come to Queen’s for her PhD arose a few years later, Helen was expecting her fifth child. Accepting the offer was a hard decision, but with the full support of her husband, who would stay in Nigeria with her four older children, Helen came to Canada to fulfil her lifelong passion. She arrived in Kingston in December 2017, seven months pregnant. Her son was born in Canada, and has been at Helen’s side.

We invite students with children to join our Student-Parent Networking Group on Facebook.
since while she works on her PhD. She maintains contact with her family via Skype.

Helen continues to face her challenges head-on. She has course deadlines that must be met, and seven-month-old babies aren’t always cooperative. But for Helen, the sacrifices are worth it. In a few years, with a PhD under her belt, she will be able to return to Nigeria to work as a lecturer, providing a better life for the children from whom she is temporarily separated. In the meantime, she is looking forward to a three-month return to Africa, when she will be able to introduce her older children to their baby brother.

Badriyya Yusuf is on a similar path. She has a Master’s degree in international studies, and is working on her PhD- and she is doing it with a newborn daughter. Her youngest child was born in October. It isn’t easy, but a PhD is necessary if she is to advance in her chosen career, so she persists. Like other mothers, these dueling responsibilities have forced her to become very good at prioritizing. She plans well-ahead for events she wants to attend on campus in order to overcome her biggest obstacle- finding affordable and reliable child-care for baby Maryam. It isn’t always possible. While she enjoys the support of her husband and older children, she has no other immediate family in the area, and she is grateful for the friendships she has cultivated with women who have helped/supported her through the process. She also enjoys the services offered by the Ban Righ Centre to mature women at Queen’s. For her, the Centre offers support and a level of comfort that have proved essential to her as a mature student.

Chris Pardy echoes this sentiment of the importance of nurturing support systems. Originally from the East Coast, she has no extended family in the area. Chris leans heavily on the relationships she has developed among her church family, and is

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Winter Bazaar

Blake Noyes

The third annual Winter Bazaar was held on December 7th and as always, was a big hit with our student-parents. Parents were happy to take some time to enjoy a meal and relax after a long semester with like-minded peers and BRC staff. The children thoroughly enjoyed "shopping" and choosing gifts for their family and friends. Special thanks to the donors in the Queen's and Kingston community who supplied gifts and made this event possible.

![Having fun at the 2019 Winter Bazaar](image)

Motherhood: Continued from page 5

grateful for the emotional and physical support she receives from them. She studies at Ban Righ Centre because the space and the student advisors appeal to her – so much so that she hasn’t bothered to investigate other spaces to study.

All three women are unanimous in one further piece of advice to mothers considering the return to formal education: Do it. Ignore the voices telling you not to, and if those voices are internal, take them on–look past the obstacles and find a way to make it happen. The sacrifices are temporary, and the long-term gains for you and for your children will be positive.

For Gamila, whose children are now grown, advising women in the space she once attended as a student, and watching the challenges and successes of other mothers who are jumping at the opportunity to further their education, the experience has come full-circle. She knows first-hand the sacrifice these women are making, and she knows they will succeed – just like she did.
a deposit to him, and in exchange he would ship a key to her. She had seen pictures of the unit, but due to what he called security reasons, he wouldn’t give her the street address until he received her deposit. When she asked how she could be sure she’d get the key, or why he hadn’t talked to any of her references, he fell silent and stopped responding. That this was a scam was confirmed when Blake saw a Reddit post about an identical series of overly-friendly emails sent by a supposedly UK-based doctor about other apartments in other cities, complete with family photos.

An International Scam
For Joan Jones, the scenario is all too familiar. Joan has been the Student Community Relations Coordinator at Queen’s University for 19 years. The rental scam that Blake experienced is international; the scammers create ads all over the world, and are savvy enough to research the areas in which they are posting their ads. Unfortunately, not everyone will recognize the warning signs in time. In the 2017/18 school year alone, Joan met with four students who had lost money this way. She suspects there are others she didn’t hear from.

Joan’s advice to apartment-seekers is clear. Arrive in Kingston with enough money to stay in a hotel until you can find your new apartment. Take time to meet the landlord and assure yourself that they are the legal owner of the building, and that the unit is as described.

For those who have already lost money, the likelihood of getting it back is low. To start, you must contact the police in the country from which you were scammed. Because this is an international fraud, police in Canada will not be able to help, unless you were in Canada when you contacted the scammer.

A happy ending
For Blake and her boyfriend, it all worked out. They eventually found an apartment that welcomed Charlie, and were able to move in on September first. She advises apartment-seekers to follow Joan’s advice, and to branch their search out further from campus, where they will find nice units at reasonable prices.
2019 Spring Celebration

Join us as we celebrate student success.

Please save the date:
The Ban Righ Foundation Spring Celebration will be held on Saturday, April 27, 2019 in Wallace Hall.

Watch our website and social media for details.

Writing Studio 2019

Graduate and Professional Students

Do you need a quiet place to write?
The Ban Righ Centre supports and encourages the educational goals of mature women students. The Writing Studio will allow for dedicated writing time in a distraction-free environment.

Watch our Facebook and Twitter pages in April to reserve your space.

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