



## **CASEA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Ottawa, Ontario – June 1, 2015**

### **MARGARET HAUGHEY MASTER'S THESIS AWARD COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Margaret Haughey Master's Thesis Award is presently annually by CASEA to the author of the best master's thesis, report, project, or graduating paper completed in the area of educational administration and leadership completed at a Canadian university during the previous year. The purpose of the award is to recognize superior research and writing by master's degree students working in the area of educational administration and leadership.

#### **Committee Members**

Dr. Bruce Sheppard, Memorial University

Dr. Jim Brandon, University of Calgary

Dr. Gerald Galway (Chairperson), Memorial University

#### **Review Process**

The call for submissions was made on the CASEA Listserv in October and the Awards section of the CASEA website was updated. Reminders were sent to the Listserv in December and January. Two nominations were received by the February 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. All three committee members reviewed each of the three nominations on the basis of five criteria: significance of the topic to the field, methodological design, quality and articulation of the theoretical or conceptual framework, significance and coherence of the conclusions, as well as writing quality and organization of the work. The Committee met on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to make a decision on the award.

#### **Award Recipient**

The Committee's selection for this year's winner of the Margaret Haughey Master's Award is Samantha Jo Shewchuk. Ms. Shewchuk's thesis, *Children in Need of Protection: Reporting Policies in Ontario School Districts* was supervised and nominated by Dr. Amanda Cooper, Assistant Professor, Educational Policy and Leadership in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University.

## **The Thesis**

The study, undertaken in the Ontario context, examines the factors that influence teaching professionals when deciding to report children suspected to be in need of protection to children's aid agencies. The study utilizes a two-phase approach; the first being a policy document analysis of abuse reporting policies from some 64 Ontario school districts and the second, a series of semi-structured interviews with individuals who were mandated to report instances of suspected child abuse and who had made at least one report. The research was grounded in a recognized decision making ecology framework augmented by a policy analysis framework. Ms. Shewchuk's findings demonstrate that there are substantial gaps in the information available to teacher and educational professionals in a large proportion of the Ontario school district policies examined. She suggested several tangible mechanisms to improve communication among the school districts, parents, teachers and Children's Aid Societies.

In reviewing Ms. Shewchuk's thesis, the Committee was struck by the quality and scope of the work: strong introduction, compelling warrant for the research, thorough literature review, and a well-structured manuscript. The methodology section was well articulated and appropriate to the goals of the study. Committee members felt it was a very ambitious study and in spite of a number of articulated challenges (e.g., the absence of a defined registry of reported cases at either the Children's Aid Societies or the appropriate ministries), the research makes a valuable contribution to the field. The study limitations are clearly stated and within that context, Ms. Shewchuk offers several considered recommendations with important policy implications. Overall this work has "high impact" potential.

On behalf of CASEA, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Bruce Sheppard and Dr. Jim Brandon for their careful work in reviewing the two nominations and helping to select the 2015 Margaret Haughey Master's Thesis Award winner.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Galway", written in a cursive style.

Gerald Galway  
Memorial University