

perspectives



Features

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Winter

By Rebecca Clifford



Winter. We're stuck with it, so we might as well enjoy it.

Winter, blessed winter, that blinkin' time of blasting blizzards, behemoth snow banks, and blaspheming bus drivers. We're stuck with it, so we might as well enjoy it. Or find some ways to survive it and, at the same time, keep from making a permanent dent in the sofa cushions.

1. Try a new winter sport. Chopping wood may be good exercise, if you have wood to chop. If skating or skiing isn't your thing, why not catalogue the contents of your spice rack and entering everything into Excel. As with all activities, remember to stretch before hand. Paprika can be murder on those abs.

2. Gaze on a winter sky. On these navy blue nights, when the air is clean and crisp, why not take a pair of binoculars or a telescope outside with you.

In terms of celestial bodies, if hunky neighbour boy closes his curtains, you can always look at the stars. Seriously, if you've got an opportunity to ponder the clarity of a winter sky, it can make for an amazing evening. We are blessed with the proximity of numerous green spaces and the escarpment where we can dodge the urban glow and check things out over our heads. A few minutes drive can get you to an ideal spot.

3. Plan for gardening season. If you take a look at your garden now and don't see any interesting architecture, you might want to consider planning something to add to the landscape come warmer weather. It's a great time to scope out seed catalogues and garden centre offerings for shrubs like red dogwood that leave us "bones" for winter interest.

4. Play games. Have a long distance chess game with a friend who lives far away. See if you're still friends after you ring him up at 3am to say "checkmate". Do a jigsaw puzzle - nothing spells togetherness than you and your significant other hammering little bits of sky into the surface of the dining room table. Host a board game party. Rotate players from game to game at the sound of a bell. Like speed dating (not that I would know). Play monopoly for real money. Might be ethically questionable to appropriate Grandma's townhouse and toss her out into a snowbank for the sake of winning the game. On-line poker is tame by comparison, but this variant only works if you have real money left after paying your Christmas bills.

5. Spice things up gastronomically. Attend community eat-events like spaghetti and pancake suppers. Host a chocolate tasting party. Check out Niagara's ice wine festival - we've had perfect weather for a stellar grape crop. Add a 1/2 teaspoon of maple syrup to your hot chocolate on a frosty evening. If it's been a particularly trying day, substitute a shot of Bailey's in your coffee instead of milk. Caution: Using Bailey's as a milk substitute on Monday mornings is discouraged by the management.

6. Get real vitamin D. Drink some milk. It does a body good. We can't all afford a trip to warmer climates.

7. Read a good piece book. Watch a good movie. Join an e-book club if getting out is a problem. Write an on-line review. Get your virtual vitamin D by watching warm weather flicks. *Weekend at Bernie's* may not be great cinema, but it's cathartic if nothing else. I recommend we skip *Ice Station Zebra*, *Cold Comfort Farm*, *Scott of the Antarctic*. Nothing gets you out of your ennui better than something inspirational. Chris Robertson's book, *To The Top Canada*, is a journey of perseverance across our beautiful country that captures the heart and soul of its people. *Better still, register for Inspiring Within, February 21st or 22nd, to meet Chris and hear him speak.*

There *are* advantages to these cold and bitter days. No black flies, no mosquitoes, no poison ivy, no heat rash, no hay fever, no sunburn, no sand flies. We can store ice cream on the porch when the fridge is full.

Inspiring From Within Energized in 2008!

By Rebecca Clifford

On January 29th, I eagerly signed up for the Inspiring from Within Conference (Feb 21st & 22nd) and looked forward to catching up with old friends and making new ones. I saw the day as an opportunity to recharge myself. I knew there would be good information, physical activities, and laughter. I was not disappointed.

My first heap of praise and thanks go to the conference committee and organizers who brought together a diverse group of presenters and set up the day perfectly. The timing of the sessions and length of breaks in between sessions was ideal.

The morning keynote speaker, **Tony Conte**, woke the room up with tales of choices, risk taking, family ties and perceptions, and boldly imitated his cute Italian mom, dad, granddad, aunt and an unnamed (possibly imaginary) tour guide from his university days in the best Robin Williams style. Complete with props (musical magic wand and talking Tigger book) Tony told us his *doveri* - "must do's" for life - Not our obligations to others, but what we must do for ourselves. You must bring your true self with you; you must take risks, starting with small, incremental steps; you must keep up your energy - laugh, dance, twirl; and that you already have what you need inside you to succeed. The more Tony told us about his cute Italian mom, the more I saw my cute Dutch ma-in-law (who once gave me a mug from someone named Myrtle Beets); Sonia Hawrylyshyn saw her mum; others saw a Greek uncle; a Danish aunt; a Scots brother-in-law. Regardless of our cultural differences, we all gave knowing nods and raucous laughter as Tony's anecdotes continued. Tony had no problem convincing me that laughter was not only the best medicine but also the best exercise. As tears rolled down my face, I decided right there it had been a good decision not to wear make-up.

My first session was Break Dancing - The Freshest Method of Diversity, led by **William Chan** and **David Yi**, McMaster health sciences students. The fellas, on their way to change the world via law and medical degrees, did some top rock, power moves, stalls/freezes, all way beyond my athletic ability, and challenged session participants about the way they may have previously viewed break dancers (aka B-boys, B-girls). David and William both believe that break dancing transcends culture and language, and can transmit their message (anger, fear, joy, hope) through this manner of athletic non-violent jousting open to any one in the world. I got the sense they saw this as a new idea, but I saw elements of Ukrainian (red boot) and other folk dances, ballet, tap, jazz in their moves, and as they instructed us in some basic top rock moves, I felt the stroll, the slush, the 12th street rag, and variations on country line dancing coming back into my foot memory. Chain step, grapevine, reverse, clap. Any form of dance, like any form of music, can convey messages and emotions, and transcend culture and language. More power to 'em.

Winter Contest

How do you deal with stress?

We want to know your strategies! Tell us how you reduce your stress in 50 words or less to be eligible for a prize. See [Fun Stuff](#).



The theme of the 2008 "Inspiring from Within" conference was "Get Energized".

Merelle Rodrigo, a morning presenter at Inspiring from Within, lifted spirits with her Play that Funky Music session. Music affects us all the time - in the elevator, at the movies, on the dance floor, in church. We use it as catharsis and as pacifier. Merelle's message paralleled Tony's - you have what you need to succeed within (*If it is to be, It's up to me*) and that you can change your emotions and your environment right now, in the present, through the strategic use of music to your psychological benefit, to find your fit and your true self. Merelle stressed to her entirely female audience that since we can't change our past, we need to take charge of our present; the future? Who knows!

Opposite these sessions was a tour of the **Art Gallery of Hamilton** (always a calming, interesting, and pleasant treat) and a session on Identity Theft, ably presented by McMaster's own **Milena Head**. For a run down on how best to protect your self from identity theft, check out her list of [presentations](#) available on the DeGroot School of Business website. A visit to the gallery can clear a cloudy day - simply click [here](#) for more details.

After a leisurely buffet lunch with vegetarian options, a lot of milling around and constant chatter, we all dispersed for our afternoon breakout sessions. I found my way to the basement room for a session in **Living Rhythm** with djembe drums. Our facilitators, Terri and Shara, gave us a few pro-preceptor exercises as we passed egg-shaped maracas from left to right, some basic beat instruction and a few variants. Being a musical person, I had no problem establishing and varying rhythms. Every bad boss I'd ever had got a bonk on the noggin as I wailed away on that drum. The catharsis was excellent! I did have a little trouble sticking with my specific instructions and kept trying other rhythms and variants as I grinned at my compadres around the circle. However, I play well with others so they let me stay. In fact, I was having so much fun I stayed the whole session instead of popping into the others to get a flavour of what I was missing elsewhere. Before I hear your gasps of horror, a) I did have permission from the organizers to do a synopsis of the conference, and b) I did not run with scissors.

I heard great things about McMaster Alumnus **Joanne Malar's** session on Getting in Tune with your Body, with a nutritional focus. This is a session I'd take next chance I get. In the meantime, I plan to check out her website of her company, [La Sante Life](#).

I had heard Bee Dynamic from McMaster's **Geraldine Voros** at a previous opportunity and know it to be an inspiring talk.

The most points go to the interactive sessions - The participants who got a Taste of the Mediterranean with the Sheraton's Executive Chef, **Daniel Lamy**, whipped up a sumptuous Thai Chicken Salad that was likely repeated as the main course in many Hamilton area homes this past weekend. One said she'd have skipped lunch had she known what she was in for.

I saw the budding artists returning from a print making session at the Art Gallery. Words like inspirational, freeing, I'm-framing-



A standing ovation from enthusiastic and energized "Inspiring from Within" conference attendees.

Enter **Chris Robertson**, self-promoter, ultimate fan of this wonderful country we live in, who entered to fanfare and applause wearing a red and white track suit, waving a large Canadian flag and spoke to us passionately about just how far the human spirit and the strength of your convictions can take you. While his personal quest to travel Canada south (Point Pelee) to north (Tuktyuktuk) under his own pedal power was originally undertaken to mark the millennium, his ardour to make Canada a better place has not wavered. His *To the Top Canada* expedition story carried with it the messages that Tony, Merelle, and others had repeated to us all day - ***we already have the power, the ability within to succeed, "If it is to be it, It's up to me", to do so by taking risks in small incremental steps, and bring our true selves along for the ride.***

Chris's enthusiasm was palpable as he spoke about the people he had met, the geography he had covered, but it soared as he spoke of Hamilton, his hometown. The question he left us with was the question he had asked everyone he'd met on his *To the Top Canada* expedition - What can you do in your lifetime to make Canada a better country? He challenged us again asking, what can you do to make McMaster a better university? And as I looked around the room I knew we were already doing it. We left energized and inspired. Count this conference as a success.

Editorial

“Where’s Your Mug?”

A couple of weeks ago on my way to get morning coffee, like most of us do, someone made a comment to me that has made a positive impact.

She made me rethink about my morning coffee routine when she asked, **“Where’s your mug?”**

My mug? She was referring to reusable mugs that were handed out at last December’s Holiday Open House. Well, a freight train of thoughts traveled through my head trying to recall what I did with it. Is it on my desk, rolling around on the floor of my car or is my son using it to build one of his castles at home?

“The mug was handed out as an effort to reduce the number of cups and lids going into the garbage on campus,” she continued.

The locomotive leading my train-of-thought came to a grinding halt and the boxcars piled up behind it. Of course! The cups were sponsored by WSI, McMaster’s waste management services contractor. How could I have missed that?

I decided to follow up with Karen Belaire, Vice-President (Administration), to find out more information.

She did confirm the mug initiative and stated, “Recycling efforts have been increasing over the past 5 years, I do hope that we can continue to improve and we can reduce our impact on landfill by recycling. You will see more efforts to communicate recycling information to the community later this year.” The University has made many changes to reduce utility consumption and looks at alternative energy sources.

If the University is making an effort to reduce waste on campus, then I can too. I’ve found my mug and though I still occasionally forget, I make an honest effort to use it. At 2 cups a day, I can save around 500 un-recyclable cups a year going into the garbage. That’s me, as one person trying to make a difference. I also save about \$50 a year because I save 10 cents on every purchase when I use my refillable mug on campus.

So now, I’m asking you, **“Where’s your mug?”**

There is still a supply of mugs available - you can drop by Gilmour Hall Room 202 to receive a mug. You will also get a coupon for a free first purchase with the mug complements of the VP Administration office.

On a separate note: I would like to welcome a new writer to the Perspectives Newsletter team, Rebecca Clifford, and she does use her WSI mug! Make sure you read her article entitled “[Winter](#)” and her report on the [Inspiring from Within Conference](#).

Written by: Madeline Barr

Mac Facts

The Popularity Factor

New Leisure Reading Section added to Mills Library

By Tamara Monster

Prior to the fall of 2007, McMaster University Library did not make popular fiction available, of the variety generally purchased and made available in public libraries. In the past and present, English literature material is purchased for Mills Library that "supports undergraduate and graduate course instruction programs, the graduate thesis research program, and research activities of faculty." Emphasis is placed on buying Canadian literature (and English literature from the 15th century through to the nineteenth century). Literature that is acquired for programs can generally be found on the fourth floor of Mills (Library of Congress call numbers beginning with PS), or in Research Collections (depending on the age of the material and various other criteria). The [collection policies](#) of the library can be reviewed online.

Last summer, the library made the decision to provide ready access to leisure reading such as mysteries, graphic novels, and other popular fiction as an increasing number of users expressed an interest in having popular titles available to borrow. In August, a team of library staff, led by Associate University Librarian Vivian Lewis, set out to select the first 150 or so titles for this new section, based on recommendations from library staff and local booksellers. "[Popular Reading](#)" was set up outside the entrance to Learning Commons (also

known as the McLay Reading Room), located on the second floor of Mills. McMaster staff are entitled to a three month borrowing period. Popular Reading books have been extremely *popular!* Within a period of two months, some titles had circulated seven times. In the future, the library will look at a possible leasing agreement with a vendor who can provide the library with a rotating collection of titles in the most popular genres.

Below is a list of some of the titles available in Popular Reading. I read these books last fall and thoroughly enjoyed and recommend all three!

Pig Island, by Mo Hayder

Journalist Joe Oakes makes a living exposing supernatural hoaxes. A born sceptic, he believes everything has a rational explanation. But when he visits a secretive religious community on a remote Scottish island, everything he thought he knew is overturned. Questions mount: why has the community been accused of Satanism? What has happened to their leader, Pastor Malachi Dove? And perhaps most important, why will no one discuss the strange apparition seen wandering the lonely beaches of Pig Island? Their confrontation, and its violent and bloody aftermath, is so catastrophic that it forces Oaksey to question the nature of evil, and whether he might not be responsible for the terrible crime about to unfold. (Summary

The Brief History of the Dead, by Kevin Brockmeier

In a not-so-distant future, a deadly virus kills off every human on Earth, except for Laura Byrd, a wildlife specialist on an expedition to the South Pole. Readers quickly learn that the dead move on to another life in a fantastic city on another plane of existence; there, they live out a second life free from aging and disease until every person who knew them on Earth dies. The chapters alternate between Laura and those in the city of the dead, often showing how these individuals connect to her. (Review from [School Library Journal](#), © Reed Business Information)



"Popular Reading" is located outside the McLay Reading Room on the second floor.

The Devil and Miss Prym, by Paulo Coelho

The characters who populate the village of Viscos, a moribund community struggling to maintain its ever-elusive spiritual identity, are thrust into the centre of the timeless conflict between right and wrong when a stranger bearing 11 bars of gold and accompanied by the devil arrives prepared to challenge the citizens of the town with an intriguing moral dilemma. Will the townsfolk succumb to temptation, confirming that man is inherently evil; or will goodness triumph over evil, proving that every human being has the capacity to make his own choices and decide his or her own destiny? (Review from [Harper Collins](#))

Employee Health & Wellness

Get MACTive

By Deridor Collier

Introducing McMaster's first activity challenge – MACTive! This challenge, created by the Healthy Workplace Group promotes physical activity, supports participants who want to make a change in their activity levels, encourages participation in activity with weekly prize incentives and helps to motivate by measuring self activity levels. MACTive has been my first opportunity to be engaged in an organized McMaster activity during the "winter". It has been a great opportunity to challenge and raise my level of physical activity as well as enjoy the camaraderie of my teammates and other MACTive team within the department. It was a good natured scramble signing up team members within my department. *"Darn it! John Doe and Jane Doe decided to join the other team."* That's OK; we might just resolve things on week 10 with a "friendly"

The MACTive organizing team has done a great job with Get MACTive. You can challenge yourself as an individual and still be part of a team. This is the first time immediate family members can be part of the team. I also like the fact that I have two opportunities to win a prize each week (thanks to the sponsors), even though winning isn't everything.

For me, it is fun coming up with creative and engaging ways to raise one's level of physical activity each week. There is walking for lunch one day a week, water fitness exercise class twice a week, a dog paddling session at family swim time, walking the surrounding conservation area with my neighbour and walking around the McMaster campus

and Westdale with co-workers. For those really cold days, the Indoor track at the David Braley Athletic Centre is the place to be. Working through the suggested activities at www.workingatmcmaster.ca/mactive/ will add variety to the weeks. I also look forward to the [Curling Bonspiel](#) this March to increase my weekly minutes. I feel physically lighter, more agile with the added benefit of better stress management.

I had an opportunity to speak with a member of the MACTive organizing team about the event to date. MACTive sprung out of the walking group activity held in the summer. The turnout of 401 is great for a first time winter event and a quarter are men. Most participants are just the regular folks, so they are engaged in striving to meet or exceed the weekly target. Some work teams are diverse and include staff, faculty, TMG and senior management. Every McMaster University location has a team participating. Look at the creative [team names](#) and try to figure out the department. Can you figure out what team spans multiple departments?

The [MACTive website](#) is great and contains interesting information such as ways to raise your physical activity, calculating and tracking minutes, team standings, weekly e-news and official rules. [Athletics and Recreation](#) created special programs just for the MACTive challenge and membership is not required.

I have heard the question does "an evening with your partner <wink, wink>" count? It may, if it lasts longer than 10 minutes, but please read the fine print and consult with your doctor before attempting any strenuous physical activity.

Get MACTive! Visit the [website](#) for updates. The plan is to have MACTive become an annual winter event.



The Healthy Workplace walking clinic warms up.