



Russian Delegation receives Hands-on Learning

Five academic practitioners from Russia spent nearly two weeks in Winnipeg, Manitoba, also visiting Calgary, Alberta, in January 2004 observing Social Work, Disability Studies and community-based social services' programs as part of the Canada Russia Disability Program (CRDP) led by the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS). The CRDP, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has set program objectives including the development of models of education and preparation of university faculty, professionals, community leaders and people with disabilities in disability studies, social work and mental health. The goal of the CRDP is to contribute to the social inclusion of Russians with disabilities through education, demonstration models, policy analysis and information exchange.

The January visit was filled with site visits to universities, health care facilities and government offices. The social work portion of this visit set out to analyze existing Russian, Canadian and international social work standards and the accreditation process in Canada; observe social work practice in the area of disability and mental health, and to begin to develop these areas of specialty in Russia.

The delegation was hosted by a number of community-based and governmental agencies, observing the role of social work in these settings and discovering the social approach to disability issues.

At the invitation of the University of Manitoba Masters Program in Disability Studies, Dr. Olga Krassioukova-Enns, CCDS International Program Director, delivered a Public Seminar dealing with international disability issues. Her address provided a brief historical background of models of disability in Russia, and then dealt with current issues, including ideological changes being grappled with in Russia. One participant's observation was that "the dialogue between the delegation and the students demonstrated the change in thinking that was taking place as they worked at answering the students' questions about their methodology and philosophy as well as their practice." The Russian delegation took particular note of the interdisciplinary Disability Studies Masters program at the U of M, with view to developing a similar program in Russia.

The study tour resulted in significant gleanings for the delegation: what is working in this collaboration; why are we working at changing our philosophy/methodology; and what must be done back home and how do we do it?

George Dyck, CRDP Director and Chair, CCDS Board wrote this about the Calgary portion of the visit:

"The trip to Calgary turned out to be a team building exercise extraordinaire. The psychiatrists brought over by the Mental Health stream were able to meet the academics brought over through the Social Work and Disability Studies stream. Through a joint sight-seeing tour of the

Rockies, a semi-formal introductory session, a public presentation event and a wind-up dinner, the Russian and Canadian partners opened up to each other and gained understanding and respect for each others' mission and for the difficulties each other faced due to existing circumstances. The Calgary area sets a fine example indeed for the de-institutionalization in Mental Health practice, as does the Winnipeg scene for provision of social services. The Canadian Management Team of the Canada Russia Disability Program was immensely satisfied with the way the Russian partners readily assimilated the concepts demonstrated and immediately began to think of ways to adapt them to their own situation. The separation at the airport was an emotional one, and I know we will be greeted warmly when we return the visit in March."

Among the exciting assignments for the next six months for CRDP participants is the beginnings of an on-line discussion (across Russia and internationally) on the standards of social work and social services delivery. They will also establish the basis for an interdisciplinary Disability Studies Program at Russian universities involving the faculties of Humanities, Sciences and Arts.

The leadership group of CRDP is also beginning the planning process for year two of this four year program.

**Information about this groundbreaking program can be obtained by contacting
Dr. Olga Krassioukova-Enns at
internationaldirector@disabilitystudies.ca**



(l-r) Dr. Michael Firsov, Dean-Faculty of Social Work, Moscow State Social University (MSSU); Dr. Lev Mardakhaev Head-Department of Social Pedagogy, MSSU; Dr. Vladimir Tkachenko, Assistant Professor of Social Work and Sociology-North Caucasus State Technical University (NCSTU), Stavropol; Ms. Irina Dymnik, CCDS; Dr. Valerii Shapovalov, Head-Department of Social Work and Sociology (NCSTU); Ms. Amina Chotchaeva, Ph.D. student of Social Pedagogy, MSSU and Dr. Olga Krassioukova-Enns, CCDS at the public seminar.



Dr. Aldred Neufeldt (l) University of Calgary and George Dyck, CRDP Director and Chair of the CCDS Board of Directors addressing a session in Calgary.



Michael Firsov (standing) addressing the Public Seminar at the University of Manitoba.