

HAUNTED FORGETTING: Unsettling Genealogies in Intergenerational Life Writing

a lecture by **Dr. Janice Williamson**

Friday, February 2, 2018; 15:00 - 16:30

Senate Chamber
(3-26 Arts and Convocation Hall)

ABSTRACT

This talk explores a White settler woman's life-writing project in the twenty-first century. Reimagining the fractured logic of personal and cultural memory, it explores what is left out of conventional genealogical archives.

When diagnosed with Alzheimer's, Williamson's mother imagines her own demise and poignantly renames it "the disappearing disease." Williamson writes of the grief that becomes a kind of haunting as she pieces together the missing links in her mother's history before she "disappears."

As research into this memoir progresses, intersecting narratives evolve: abject poverty generates migration; genocidal settlement marks the legacy of "the white possessive"; racism endures against variable groups of immigrants; and, the deadly destruction of misogyny echoes through generations of #metoo.

Questions matter most in writing through the fog of memory and lived experience. The haunting of the disappeared and a longing for connection orients autobiographical narrative's fierce and tender reach towards a listening ear.

BIOGRAPHY

Janice Williamson has been working as a writer and public intellectual since the 1980s starting as peace activist in nonviolent civil disobedience and as editor of the interdisciplinary *Up and Doing: Canadian Women and Peace* (Women's P, 1989, with Deborah Gorham.) She has written on feminist social and cultural issues in talks and published works including print/video *Pedestrian Notes on West Edmonton Mall* (1990); sexuality & rape culture, *Tell Tale Signs: fictions* (Turnstone P, 1991); intersectional feminist poetics in *Sounding Differences: Conversations with Seventeen Canadian Women Writers* (U Toronto P, 1993); autobiography & trauma narratives *Crybaby!* (NeWest P, 1998); and mothering & transracial adoption (essays 2001-2015.) By the early millenium her justice work had turned to focus on Canada's war on terror and Islamophobia, culminating in the multidisciplinary anthology *Omar Khadr, Oh Canada* (McGill-Queen's UP, 2012). Her monograph in progress is a biotext. As current AASUA Equity Chair, she takes up social justice work in an institutional context advocating for workplace equity and diversity accomplished through inclusion.

