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Elizabeth Sacca

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# *Mentor's Introduction*

**ELIZABETH SACCA**
**Concordia University**

Alana Stelker's children were born, one in the last years of the flower children, and the other in the mid seventies. They spent their earliest years on an Ontario farm where the family restored their farmhouse, raised goats and grew their own vegetables, surprising their city friends with their country ways.

Their hard work, self-sufficiency and craft reflected generations of farm tradition. The children's great grandparents had been farmers, or the children of farmers, who had immigrated to Ontario and Quebec from Germany, Ireland and Scotland. The Scottish were Highlanders expelled by the British following the Battle of Culloden. Their children, Alana's parents, grew up in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, married and eventually left the farm for Montreal to a factory job for him and housekeeping and child rearing for her. This was the first move between country and city in generations, and a number would follow in relatively rapid succession.

When Alana was five, the family moved to a village of summer cabins located near the juncture of the Saint Lawrence and Ottawa rivers some miles out of the city. The village closed up every winter. The family lived in a shed cooking out-of-doors and pumping their own water for two summers as they built the first of the winter houses, "Arrochar," named after a Scottish town. The ethic of hard physical work was adopted for all family members. At the same time, Alana's older brother and sister showed no special interest in building. As she did, she was tutored by her father. Her children's father showed similarly varied interests and was coached by his mother in baking and flower gardening and was given piano lessons.

The crossing-over into nontraditional areas led to their commitment to include the father completely in the child rearing and to encourage their children to accept the non traditional roles Alana discusses.

As the children grew, the family evolved, the father living in the country and commuting to city work and Alana living and working in the city.

At each moment in the life-histories of these families, inter-woven themes appear: family cohesion, individual autonomy; gender roles, personal identity; self-reliance as a family unit and as an individual; relationship to the land and its cycles; cohesion between life style and natural environment and the craft that elucidates that relationship. On the farm and in the studio the plethora of work addresses these issues. At the same time, the women's movement suggests many definitions of the family and individual while opponents advocate father and one model of the family as sovereign.

In this context Alana's children and all of us around them sift through these issues. We try to imagine what these children's future lives might be like and how their lives might reflect their family histories. We wonder what forms their

visual work might take. We speculate about what effects this work might have on their identities.