

# TRENT CENTRE FOR AGING & SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2017 • VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 2



Seniors' Summit 2016

## The TCAS Network

Much has happened since the inaugural edition of the TCAS newsletter. The most exciting news is the announcement of our upcoming move to the top floor of Bata Library as part of Trent's federally and provincially funded development of the Bata Research and Innovation Cluster. This will happen in Fall 2018 and our new space is looking really great, with panoramic views across the Otonabee River.

We welcomed scholars from Tasmania, British Columbia and New Brunswick to speak as part of our Aging & Society Seminar Series, and our membership continues to publish top quality work and be awarded significant research grants and professional accolades. The Centre is also about to launch a **Collaborative Specialization in Aging Studies** at the graduate level in autumn 2017, and we have become the subject of considerable political interest. You can read about all of these stories and more in this edition of the TCAS newsletter.

Indeed, sharing these kinds of stories and fostering a sense of connection is

what this newsletter is all about. This is especially true given how busy all of us are with research, teaching and community leadership. To that end, we are delighted to follow the recommendation of one of our newest members, Dr. Elizabeth Russell (Psychology), who suggested we go beyond the newsletter and also organize a face-to-face membership symposium. It would be a day for us to get to know one another and share our interests, projects, successes and more in a relaxed atmosphere. We think June is a good time to organize just such an event and we would appreciate your feedback.

Acknowledging the collegiality of our membership is particularly important, as the Centre would not have achieved so much in just four years without it. A great example is the contribution of Dr. Kevin Peters, whose generosity as a leader is celebrated on page two.

As always, your ideas are welcomed and much appreciated. As are your story submissions. Please keep Justin up to date on your work so he can include you in our on-going communications initiatives (a current CV is helpful).

– Mark and Justin

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### TCAS

An interdisciplinary team of more than thirty faculty, students and community stakeholders working together to build dialogue around issues related to aging and critically informed aging research.

### Vision

To make Trent University one of the international leaders in interdisciplinary aging studies.

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TRENT CENTRE FOR AGING & SOCIETY

## Thank you Kevin Peters

Though he isn't really going anywhere, it is only appropriate that we wish Dr. Kevin Peters well as he steps down from his role as one of the founding members of the TCAS executive committee. Kevin has taken on the important role of chair of the Psychology department, one of Trent's largest undergraduate programs and will remain a valued member of the Centre.

Interested in aging and cognition since he was a graduate student at the University of British Columbia, Kevin is a respected dementia researcher currently working with undergraduate students to examine the statistical power of studies in mild cognitive impairment. What they have found thus far has a number of implications for the reliability of research in that area.

A respected and insightful voice on the executive, Kevin's commitment to the development of TCAS was invaluable to

our successful launch and extraordinary first years. We sincerely thank him for his efforts and wish him well as the chair of the very busy Psychology department.



Kevin Peters

## General Updates

**October:** Organized by the Peterborough Council on Aging and hosted by TCAS, the fourth edition of the Seniors' Summit focused on the pressing issues of housing affordability and what an aging population needs to successfully age in place. The summit's keynote speaker, Dr. James Dunn is a professor and chair of the department of Health, Aging and Society at McMaster University, as well as a scientist

at the Centre for Research on Inner City Health at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. Dunn spoke to how urban infrastructure is failing the growing population of urban adults who don't drive, and how housing, and transit solutions can help seniors remain mobile and independent.

Other speakers at the day long summit included, Arlene Etchen, a knowledge transfer consultant with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation who discussed integrated, accessible and adaptable design solutions for aging, and designing for housing affordability as well as Jess Mitchell, a senior manager in research and design with Ontario College of Art and Design University, who spoke about how inclusive design can make the world work for us all.

**November:** Dr. Mark Skinner was among 80 new members named to the College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists by the Royal Society of Canada, only the second Trent faculty member to earn this prestigious honour since its inception in 2014. As a Royal Society member, Mark

will work with other experts from across the country to provide guidance on issues of importance to Canadians, and promote Canadian achievements in the arts, humanities and sciences.

**December:** Dr. Elizabeth Russell and Mark Skinner were awarded a SSHRC Internal Operating Grant (\$4,055; Trent University) "to engage and elicit perspectives of community leaders involved in supporting their communities in becoming more age-friendly: more accessible to, and inclusive of, their aging population."

The objective is to document leaders' perspectives about the strengths and challenges of implementing age-friendly programming, the importance of capacity building in program development, and to elicit expert process and sustainability recommendations, to produce a framework for expanded future research. Key informant interviews with targeted age-friendly community leaders in Eastern Canada (the Atlantic

provinces, Quebec, and Ontario) will seek to identify barriers to implementing sustainable programming.

**January:** Mark Skinner was awarded \$477,178 over four years to study the social inclusion of people with dementia and their carers. Funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) in partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Canada, Mark's project was ranked first among its competitors. Dr. Rachel Herron, Trent alumna and current Assistant Professor in Geography at Brandon University is Mark's co-investigator on the project.

Remarking on the grant, Dr. Neil Emery, vice-president research and innovation at Trent said, "Dr. Skinner's substantial grant, and its ranking in the competition, is yet another example of the research excellence being fostered at Trent University. In particular, through the innovative work being done by members of the Trent Centre for Aging & Society,

we are becoming known for leading

edge aging related research, which bodes well for attracting students interested in studying with the best in their field.

**Currently:** After an absence of more than a decade, the Trent Psychology department has resurrected the Adult Development and Aging course (3rd year), which demonstrates a shift toward including aging in the curriculum at Trent.

With Elizabeth Russell at the helm, the resurrected course is now underway and she reports, "students are incredibly keen on the topic, and there is lots of interest in doing future research. As a result I plan on proposing a new 4th year course that will include intergenerational aspects." This/these courses are great examples of the interdisciplinary foundations we are building for the **Emphasis in Aging Studies Program** ([undergraduate](#)) or the new for Fall 2017 **Collaborative Specialization in Aging Studies** ([graduate](#)).

## Later life Career Change

Dr. Suzanne Cook's latest work finds her delving into the sometimes thorny, often exciting issue of later life work transitions, something she has dubbed "redirection." The transference of skills, knowledge and experience into new avenues of work has emerged as a critical social issue as it becomes ever clearer that older workers sometimes need and often want to work into older age.

Cook's new film, *Redirection: Movers, Shakers and Shifters* examines the experiences of five such people as they undergo their own redirections. According to Cook, "Society needs to address older worker unemployment and underemployment. There are some social barriers for older adults who want to continue working and there is a need for social policy to address these issues. Redirection is a common experience. The film helps people talk about later life work options and some of the issues people face as they enter this phase of life."

After Cook finished a first research project that investigated redirection among older adults who were



Suzanne Cook

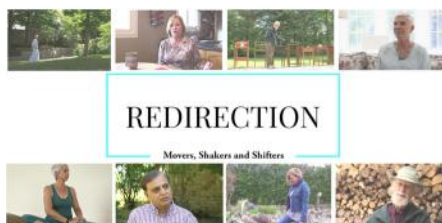
volunteering, she had the opportunity to share her findings with various audiences from Halifax to Victoria and points in between.

"Older adults" she says, "responded to this research. Some of them shared with me that while they liked to use certain skill sets in their volunteer work, they really wanted to find paid employment. They had knowledge, skills and experiences that they felt they could be paid for, if they could find new work opportunities because their skills and strengths could benefit employers. These conversations were the catalyst for the Redirection Project."

Cook says her Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling-funded film has received an incredible response. "People are watching it on YouTube and sharing it with friends, colleagues and even family members. This is very exciting! The film helps to shift the discourse surrounding later life and work and shows that this is a growing trend. This is a huge social shift as people remain in the work force and there's a need for social policy to address these issues."

To help move the conversation forward, Cook is already at work on another documentary about later life and aging. She's also finishing up a book designed to help people rethink retirement. Cook says, "The film was meant to act as a focal point for discussion and dialogue about issues related to later life work. I am pleased to see people planning screening events that incorporate opportunities to discuss the film and share experiences. This is very exciting because I think this will help to shift the current narrative. In addition, it also leads to people making connections, sharing, encouraging each other and networking."

To that end, please join us at the Market Hall Performing Arts Centre on 27 March for a screening of *Redirection: Movers, Shakers and Shifters* with Dr. Cook, followed by a panel discussion moderated by Mark Skinner. For more information and free tickets, go to: [eventbrite.ca](http://eventbrite.ca)



## Community Gardens and end of Life Care

At the end of **October**, a large group of students, faculty, and community members, some representing hospice care and community gardening, turned out for a poignant talk by registered nurse and lecturer with the Centre for Rural Health, University of Tasmania, Australia, Dr. Pauline Marsh.

Pauline was welcomed to the Trent campus to share her research project, "Walking Each Other Home: Weaving end-of-life supports into a community garden," which explores how we might provide better support to individuals at the end of their lives or in bereavement.

Pauline's study evolved organically in response to observing community members coming to the Okines Community Garden, located in



Pauline Marsh and Mark

Tasmania's Southern Beaches area, when they were in crisis.

Some people visited at the end of their lives, some after a difficult health diagnosis, and some after losing loved ones. A research question grew out of this observation: are community gardens suitable places to support people in various states of mourning?

Pauline recalled, “Our project team included a local fibre artist, garden coordinator, grief counsellor and social researcher, all of whom worked collaboratively. Our research was designed to fit with the needs of the community garden. Nothing was artificially structured and imposed by the research team on the space and its users.”

Through various workshops and community events, the team noted that participants wanted to talk about death and dying while in the garden. It was viewed as a low key, safe, and non-confrontational space to do so. It also turned out that a majority of participants were grieving the loss of a partner and they needed to know people cared about their situation and cared about them.

Pauline’s research indicates a number of ways to strengthen and expand informal palliative supports and point to a therapeutic nexus between gardens, grief and dying. This work is forthcoming in the international journal, *Health & Place*.



Kristi Allain and Barb Marshall

## An Alumna Returns Home

**February:** Dr. Kristi Allain’s ’95 interest in curling was first sparked while she was a Ph.D. student studying and teaching at Trent University during the Sochi Olympics. Professor Allain recalls, “During my men and masculinities class, one of my students pointed out that the way the Canadian Olympic team was talked about during the Games was similar to the ways people describe male hockey players.” From this in-class observation, Prof. Allain’s curiosity was peaked and a new line of research was born. “As sociologists,” she says, “we

thought it was important to ask what it means when we try to turn Canadian curlers into hockey players?”

A member of the Trent Centre for Aging & Society (TCAS), Prof. Allain was invited to deliver the first Aging & Society Seminar Series talk of 2017, sponsored by TCAS. The seminar series is aimed at sharing current aging research by bringing together Trent faculty, visiting scholars, students and community members for intimate, informal discussions. Prof. Allain’s talk, *Swept Out of the House: Aging, National Identity and Curling’s Masculine Identity Crisis*, examined the same issue first identified by her student. To that end, Prof. Allain argued that media representations of curling have moved away from a kind of masculine expression linked to older men and sociability to instead draw on the language and values of aggressive Canadian hockey-style masculinity. According to Prof. Allain, this has served to change a genial, multigenerational sport into something that celebrates youth, muscularity and aggression.

“As a Trent graduate and current member of TCAS, it’s a privilege to be invited back to share the work I began while I was a student here. In many ways,” Prof. Allain says. “It’s full circle for me. Barb Marshall has been pivotal to my success as a new scholar. As we’ve worked on our research together, she’s really helped shape my work and has pushed my analysis. Certainly, I couldn’t have asked for better mentorship, and I hope I can offer similar guidance to current students.”

Stephanie Dotto, Ph.D. candidate in Canadian Studies has worked with Professors Allain and Marshall as a research assistant and shares Prof. Allain’s sentiments. “I have had a very similar experience at Trent, just in terms of how approachable my professors are and how invested they are in my success. Getting to work with Prof. Allain, who graduated from the same program I’m enrolled in, and see her progress in her chosen field has helped me see what my own work can lead to. I’m excited to find out what opportunities lay ahead of me after



Dawn Berry Merriam and Melissa Hunt (photo: Hayley Reedman)

graduation.”

## Peterborough’s History of Advocacy

After a meeting of the Age-friendly planning group in 2015, it occurred to Dawn Berry Merriam, Community Research & Development, Merriam & Associates in conversation with TCAS director, Dr. Mark Skinner that the principal actors in Peterborough’s rich and varied history of community activism around seniors issues were themselves getting older, and their

stories needed told before it was too late.

Already engaged in similar work, Dr. May Chazan, Assistant Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies and Canada Research Chair in Feminist and Gender Studies, joined Dawn and Mark on their quest to document these important narratives. Out of an informal beginning, and with backing from the Trent Centre for Aging & Society’s Strategic Research Grant, a truly collaborative, interdisciplinary project was launched.

Moving beyond examining community through the lens of traditional organizations, the project team has come to understand, and document, how individuals are the true agents of societal change. Many of whom, in this context, have given of their time and energy, quietly and with great tenacity since at least the 1970s. Conversely, the group has come to see

that a history of community mobilization focused only on seniors' issues is too narrow and is now considering ways to incorporate a broader history of advocacy and activism in Peterborough. Thus far, the group's research has consisted of a series of interviews with activists who planned and promoted community improvements targeted at the aging population. It is also reviewing archival information from various organizations and agencies involved in providing care, support and/or advocacy for seniors. An overview of local media reports on issues related to aging advocacy in the Peterborough region is also being undertaken.

Remarking on the research process, May says, "In our analysis of different people's histories with advocacy and activism in Peterborough, we draw on a critical approach to thinking about the dynamic between aging, activism, and place. We recognize that people's experiences of all three are very much intertwined with broader systems of

power and privilege. So we are trying to remain critical of how systems of power have operated and are operating, and where and how these are invoked by our participants. It was in listening to our first interviews through this lens that the theme of 'working across difference' became so evident."

Dawn, herself a long time community advocate, and others who have been part of the project, participated in May's Activists and Activisms course in the fall, making a series of digital stories about their activism over the course of their lives (in collaboration with students). A similar series of workshops will be held in autumn 2017 and all are part of building a wider archive called "Stories of Resistance, Resilience, and Resurgence in Nogojiwanong/ Peterborough." The stories collected thus far can be heard at [agingactivisms.org](http://agingactivisms.org)

## TCAS Makes Political Inroads

**December:** Just before the Christmas break, Mark Skinner met with MP Celina Caesar-Chavannes at her constituency office in Whitby, ON. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Celina is a strong mental health advocate and showed particular interest in the psychosocial well being of the senior population.

Celina also sits on the Seniors Caucus. Now that she is aware of the work TCAS is engaged in, she has helped connect us to MP Deb Schulte, the Caucus chair, to present to them in the near future.

**February:** The government of Ontario announced the creation of the Ministry of Seniors Affairs, which purports to "support, develop and deliver public services to improve the quality of life for seniors and helps them lead safe, engaged, active and healthy lives." Tasked with seeking out partnerships to promote age-friendly communities and

to improve Ontario seniors' quality of life, Minister Dipika Damerla, joined by her colleague, Minister Jeff Leal, made Trent one her first stops in her new role.

A roundtable discussion was organized and chaired by Mark Skinner, thus giving the minister the opportunity to hear first-hand from members of TCAS and Trent students, about the leading-edge aging research being conducted at the University.

**Amber Colibaba**, MA candidate in Sustainability Studies spoke to the ministers about her work with older volunteers who help keep rural libraries viable. **Laura Anderson**, Ph.D. candidate in Canadian Studies, discussed her thesis project that aims to tackle the issue of senior friendly policy in nursing. **Laura Christie**, an undergraduate Nursing student, reviewed her recent placement that saw her compile community narratives that will be used to help develop Peterborough's official age-friendly plan.



President Leo Groarke, Minister Jeff Leal, Minister Dipika Damerla, Dr. Mark Skinner, and Dr. Neil Emery

Three TCAS members also joined the students and Mark at the roundtable.

**Dr. James Struthers**, professor emeritus in [Canadian Studies](#) discussed his current project, "Reimagining Long-Term Care: International Study of Promising Practices." The \$2.5 million [SSHRC](#) funded project is studying the promising practices in long-term residential care for the elderly in Canada, and five other nations.

**Dr. May Chazan**, Canada research chair in [Gender and Feminist Studies](#), discussed the work she conducts around aging activism, which aims to investigate and support the many different ways that people – particularly women – of varied ages, abilities, and backgrounds work for social and political change across diverse movements, and across their life courses.

**Dr. Elizabeth Russell**, assistant professor, [Psychology](#), spoke about her new collaborative work with Professor Skinner that studies the barriers, and strategies, to maximize age-friendly programming sustainability.

**March:** Minister Maryam Monsef has also expressed interest in learning more about the work being done at TCAS. Consequently, she is scheduled to tour the Centre and meet with Mark at the end of March.

## Futures of Aging

On 8 March the Gilbrea Centre for Studies in Aging at McMaster University hosted a session with TCAS to formally acknowledge and honour the official partnership between both Centres. The day was anchored by a keynote talk by Neil Hanlon, Professor of Geography, University of Northern British Columbia that



Amanda Grenier, Gavin Andrews, Stephen Katz, Meridith Griffin

explored issues related to aging in resource dependent towns in the B.C. hinterland

As well, Gilbrea director, Amanda Grenier was joined by TCAS members Stephen Katz and Gavin Andrews (also of the Gilbrea Centre), and Meridith Griffin for a panel discussion that delved into both the evolution and current status of aging scholarship in disciplines as diverse as sociology, geography, kinesiology and social work.

A student poster session showcased current graduate work on everything from social isolation, precarity, cognitive audiology,

familial experiences with elder care, tip-of-the-tongue states, Inuit perspectives on aging well, Iranian immigrant experiences, rural voluntarism, and more.

## TCAS' New Space: Bata Research and Innovation Cluster

The design of our new space in [Bata Library](#) looks great. Ours will be the first research centre one will see as one exits the elevator on the fourth floor, making our space highly visible and easily accessible to all. Our move-in date remains autumn 2018 – get in touch if you would like to discuss the space or request a copy of the layout.



## New Members

We're happy to announce several new members of the Centre, including:

**Nadine Changfoot**, Associate Professor and Chair of Political Studies, Trent University. Nadine's research addresses subjectivity and identity in feminist, political, and aesthetic theory, and social movements, including community arts and arts activism.

**Laura Anderson**, Ph.D. candidate, Canadian Studies, Trent University (more on her course of study on page 5).

**Heidi Burns**, MA candidate in Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies, Trent University. Heidi's preliminary thesis work is a response to the present/historical omission of Indigenous knowledge in Gerontological and Aging Studies scholarship.

**Natalie Jennings** is a third-year Sociology student engaged in work with Peri Ballantyne on The Mount Community Centre facilitated by the Trent Community Research Centre.

**Laura Christie**, undergraduate Nursing Student (more on her recent project on page 5)



Ann MacLeod and Laura Christie

## In the Media

**October:** the Peterborough Examiner interviewed Mark Skinner about the Seniors' Summit. Jenny Ingram appeared on the CHEX morning show to discuss the same and Mark and Dr. James Dunn were interviewed for the six o'clock evening news.

**January:** Suzanne Cook appeared on *The Current* (CBC Radio One) on the 24<sup>th</sup> and *Alberta@Noon* (CBC Radio One) on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**February:** Suzanne Cook appeared on *Maritime Noon* (CBC Radio One) on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**March:** Suzanne Cook is featured in this month's edition of Zoomer Magazine (pp. 70, 71).

## Looking Ahead

Many exciting projects and visitors are on the horizon for the Centre and its members. Our latest visiting scholars, **Julia Velten** and **Niklas Petersen**, both arrived the first week of March, and both, coincidentally, come to us from Germany.

Julia is a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz and she will be collaborating with Sally Chivers while at Trent. Julia's work investigates extreme forms of aging, focusing on the stretched lifespan and presumably slow aging process of centenarians on the one hand and the accelerated aging of children with progeria on the other. Julia will be with us until May.

Niklas will work with Barb Marshall in preparation for his Ph.D. studies at the University of Jena. His work is intended to focus on the intersection of contemporary neoliberal social policy and nursing practice in care institutions. With his young family in tow, Niklas will also be with us until May.



We also look forward to welcoming back **Linn Sandberg**, Assistant Professor, Gender Studies, Stockholm University who will arrive in late May for two weeks of research work. Linn was TCAS' inaugural postdoctoral visiting scholar.

**March:** The pilot phase of Mark Skinner's initiative with Canada's National Ballet School (CNBS) has begun in earnest. **Sharing Dance with Active Seniors** is now testing a live-

streamed version of the class with eager participants in Ennismore, ON.

Minister Maryam Monsef is scheduled to announce the funding of the CNBS - led project on location on 29 March and Mark's CIHR grant will be officially announced shortly thereafter. Look for project updates on Facebook and Twitter in the coming weeks and months.

**April:** In partnership with the School of Education, TCAS is helping facilitate *Sharing Stories, Bridging Generations: Celebrating 150 Years of Canada*

Teacher candidates have been recruited to deliver talks to seniors in honour of Canada's sesquicentennial at diner clubs organized by Community Care Peterborough. This is a terrific intergenerational initiative that's all about sharing stories of Canada in an informal atmosphere.



Mark Skinner, Alan Brunger, Elwood Jones, John Wadland, Rachael Nicholls, and students

It gives student teachers an exceptional, out of the box practicum experience and engages seniors across the Community Care system in valuable social time.

Professor's emeriti John Wadland, Canadian Studies,

Elwood Jones, History, and Alan Brunger, Geography are all helping prepare the students for their role as interpreters of local history.

On the education side, the entire program has been tirelessly championed and coordinated by

School of Education instructor, Rachael Nicholls.

NOVEMBER	LANSBURY	MILL BROOK
THURSDAY, APRIL 10   11:30 - 1:00 PM Dinner & Entertainment 300 Main Street Peterborough, ON, K9J 2Y3 RSVP: 705-753-3635	THURSDAY, APRIL 10   1:00 - 4:00 PM Lunch & Entertainment 1400 Lakeshore Blvd. East Scarborough, ON, M1S 1S8 RSVP: 753-3635	THURSDAY, APRIL 20   11:30 - 1:00 PM Dinner & Entertainment 1000 Bay Street Toronto, ON, M5S 1A5 RSVP: 753-3635
APRIL	HURON	HAVERICK
MONDAY, APRIL 21   11:30 AM - 1:00 PM Dinner & Entertainment 1000 Bay Street Toronto, ON, M5S 1A5 RSVP: 753-3635	MONDAY, APRIL 21   11:30 AM - 1:00 PM Dinner & Entertainment 1000 Bay Street Toronto, ON, M5S 1A5 RSVP: 753-3635	THURSDAY, APRIL 21   11:30 AM - 1:00 PM Dinner & Entertainment 1000 Bay Street Toronto, ON, M5S 1A5 RSVP: 753-3635
CHENING	For more information about the project visit TrentU.ca/educator/canada150	
THURSDAY, APRIL 21   11:30 AM - 1:00 PM Dinner & Entertainment 1000 Bay Street Toronto, ON, M5S 1A5 RSVP: 753-3635		

# CHALLENGE THE WAY YOU THINK



## TRENT CENTRE FOR AGING & SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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