

# TRENT CENTRE FOR AGING & SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2017 • VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 3



Participants register for the 2017 Walk for Alzheimer's

## Reflections on an Anniversary

This marks the first anniversary of the TCAS Newsletter, and what a year it's been! We've chronicled the success of Centre members, their publications and awards, introduced new members, and delved into personal reflections on the work several members are doing. We hope this information is proving to be useful and we strongly encourage anyone reading to contribute to its production so that it grows more robust and relevant to both the membership and the Centre's outreach efforts.

Part of the mandate of the Centre is to engage the public on the many complex issues surrounding aging, particularly debunking age-related myths and challenging ageist policies. To that end, over the past year, the work of TCAS members has been showcased on CBC's *The National* with Peter Mansbridge, *Ontario Morning* (CBC Radio One), *Accessible Media Inc.*, *CHEX TV*, *Peterborough This Week*, *The Peterborough Examiner*, as well as several other regional media outlets.

In the year coming, we intend to build on this momentum in an effort to position

TCAS in the minds of politicians, their staff, as well as reporters as a key knowledge partner when timely, relevant, high quality information is required to address whatever the pressing age-related question of the day might be. To help with that, the TCAS staff has grown by one. Sylvia Dick is back in the fold after a year teaching abroad. Sylvia is now the Administrative Research Assistant and, together with Justin Sutton, helps keep the Centre running day-to-day.

Our first ever *TCAS Member's Day* is coming up on August 10. Organized at the request of Centre members, we see this as a terrific opportunity to connect in an informal setting to share research successes and challenges as well as get to know one another a little better. We also believe it will go a long way in helping to identify how we can strengthen our outreach strategy. We look forward to seeing as many of you as can come, but if you're not able to join us, know that you are most welcome to come to Mark's house afterward for the annual TCAS barbeque.

– Mark, Justin, and Sylvia

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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

Trent University is an international leader in interdisciplinary aging studies.

### TCAS Director

Dr. Mark Skinner  
markskinner@trentu.ca

### Newsletter

Writer/Editor: Justin Sutton  
justindsutton@trentu.ca

Copy Editor: Sylvia Dick  
sdick@trentu.ca



TRENT CENTRE FOR AGING & SOCIETY

## Baby Myles

It's always fun to begin with happy news and this update is truly delightful. One of our newest student members, **Laura Anderson**, PhD candidate in Canadian Studies, and her husband Kerri welcomed baby Myles Reid Poulin on June 11, 2017 at 1:08 am. The first time parents wasted no time in heading out on their first camping adventure, road tripping up to Thunder Bay for the Canada Day weekend. Sincere congratulations to the family from everyone at the Trent Centre for Aging & Society.



## TCAS Fast Facts (since January)

- 5 TCAS related public talks/events
- 4 TCAS funded projects
- 6 Tri-Council grants awarded to TCAS members
- 4 new TCAS members
- 1 baby born to a TCAS member

**Niklas Petersen**, MA candidate, Sociology came to use from the University of Jena to work with, and receive training from, Dr. Barbara Marshall, Professor of Sociology and TCAS Faculty Fellow in preparation for his coming PhD work. Niklas brought along his two small children and partner and settled in the village of Keene for the duration of his stay.

Both Julia and Niklas became familiar faces at TCAS events and we were very happy to host them. More students are on their way from Northern Europe in the fall, details to come.

## Visiting Scholars

We welcomed two graduate students, both of whom coincidentally came to the Centre from Germany. **Julia Velten**, PhD candidate in American Studies came to use from Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. During her stay, Julia presented her research on *Extreme Forms of Aging and the Cultural Construction of Age in Life Narratives* at an Intersections Feminist Seminar series event at Alumni House.

## Selwyn Volunteer Event

**Amber Colibaba**, MA candidate in sustainability studies joined the Selwyn Public Library's volunteer appreciation dinner where her community-based project was enthusiastically endorsed by soon-to-retire chief librarian, Joan MacDonald.

A collaborative initiative between Mark Skinner's Canada Research Chair program and the library, Amber's thesis research explores the relationship between the

volunteer library program and the sustainability of Selwyn, an aging rural community. Using qualitative methodological approaches, Amber's project is interested in determining how best to support the more than 150 volunteers, how to sustain the volunteer program into the future, as well as quantifying how the program benefits Selwyn.

## Walk for Alzheimer's

TCAS, in partnership with the Trent Athletics Centre, proudly hosted the 2017 Walk for Alzheimer's at the Trent University Athletics field on May 27. We put together a team this year (thank you participants!) and raised \$875 for the Alzheimer Society of Canada, money that

is used to support of the Society's mission to help people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias as well as their caregivers.

## Sharing Dance for Active Seniors

The first iteration, what's been dubbed "the dress rehearsal," of the *Sharing Dance for Active Seniors* program came to a conclusion in late April. The program has been designed to help address some of the most pressing health concerns that affect the well-being of Canada's senior population, including those with



Amber Colibaba



dementia. It is believed dance can help prevent falls, improve cardiovascular fitness, and reduce social isolation. Some twenty seniors participated in the first iteration of the program ranging in age from early 60s to 90.

The class was a huge success in terms of attendance, enthusiasm and potential to elicit meaningful data, which means actual data collection will begin when the pilot resumes in September in expanded form across Peterborough County. The program also attained a great deal of media attention culminating in a feature story by senior reporter Havard Gould for *CBC's The National* with Peter Mansbridge.



Havard Gould and Mark Skinner



Sharing Dance in Ennismore

## Sharing Stories, Bridging Generations

In honour of Canada's sesquicentennial, communities across the country are participating in exciting and unique initiatives to tell our stories, celebrate our successes, connect different groups, and bridge generations. The goal is to help foster vibrant and healthy communities that reflect the plurality of Canada.

With \$10,000 in funding from the *Community Fund for Canada's 150<sup>th</sup>* – a collaboration between the Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough, Community Foundations of Canada, and the Government of Canada – Community Care Peterborough sought to foster a program that would do just

that. This led to a unique partnership between the Trent School of Education, the Trent Centre for Aging & Society (TCAS) and Community Care Peterborough.

Marrying the lively luncheons and teas Community Care organizes for seniors every month in Peterborough and across Peterborough County with TCAS director, Dr. Mark Skinner's interest in rural voluntarism and social inclusion of seniors and the School of Education's alternative settings placement option for teacher candidates, *Sharing Stories, Bridging Generations: Celebrating 150 Years of Canada* was born.

Undertaking local historical research with the guidance of School of Education faculty member Rachael Nicholls, Trent professors' emeriti Elwood Jones, John Wadland and Alan Brunger as well as other community members, six student teachers presented their findings in Norwood, Buckhorn, Bridgenorth, Millbrook, Apsley, and Lakefield. On average, eighty community members participated in each talk and they

included everyone from preschoolers (who sang O Canada in Norwood) to the elderly.

Students like John Moyer deftly separated local lore from evidence-based historical truth all while never losing sight of the joy that's to be found in historical inquiry. Brittany Roelofs focused on feminist history in Apsley, Lucas Deluca on performing arts in Millbrook, Brittany Luccitti dedicated her presentation to celebrating a diversity of community heroes in Lakefield, Brendan Burlock on the evolution of education in Norwood, and Mikayla MacMillan delved into the settlement history, and religious differences of Bridgenorth and its neighbour Ennismore.

Of the partnership, Mark said, "Community Care Peterborough has been a truly important partner going back to my first major research project

at Trent. This was an exciting opportunity to expand our longstanding intergenerational programming but we were missing a piece of the puzzle to make the project work. Happily, that missing piece turned out to be the School of Education."

"This project sets a framework for young people to consider meaningful dialogue with older community members," according to Catherine Pink, director of Support Services, Community Care Peterborough. "A discussion of Canadian history, local highlights, mixed with the personal storytelling of our clients will make for a really good time and, hopefully, provide a lasting connection between these diverse groups. Who knows," Ms. Pink continued, "maybe some of the students will be inspired to volunteer with us long term!"



Brittany Roelofs speaks to a community member



Rachael Nicholls and Jon Moyer

## Finding Yourself in Field Work

New student member, Natalie Jennings, came to us after graduating with a BA in psychology from McGill University. In an effort to gain more research experience to help with graduate school applications, Natalie is currently pursuing an honours BA in psychology at Trent.

One such research project began after Natalie attended a few classes taught by TCAS executive member, Dr. Peri Ballantyne, Associate Professor, Sociology. Peri is deeply involved in The Mount Community Centre, which is a non-profit organization situated on 10 acres in Peterborough's west end. The historic former home of the Sisters of St. Joseph, The Mount now offers market-based, affordable and subsidized housing and is working to build a community of non-profit organizations and programming. For more than 100 years, the Sisters of St. Joseph ran a hospital, educated children, and supported various community initiatives within the property so this new, community



Natalie Jennings and Peri Ballantyne

driven iteration fits seamlessly with its historic foundation.

The Mount supports the concept of intergenerativity, and has expressed a desire to integrate innovative programs within its own organization; programs that align with its mission to create and sustain an inclusive and diverse community space, and to encourage relationships and partnerships among people, groups, and other social service-providing organizations.

Intergenerational programs could be aligned with the different development "hubs" currently found at The Mount: housing, food, health, arts and culture,

and ecological sustainability. Natalie was tasked with helping The Mount to better understand the types of intergenerational (IG) programs and activities that have been implemented within the community of Peterborough, along with the community's interest in future prospects related to IG initiatives.

"I was really grateful for the opportunity, as it was my first real research project," Natalie said.

"It was also nice because I was able to get to know some of the people at The Mount and what their main missions and values are. I am hoping to keep involved with them, as they do have an intergenerational committee through which they wish to establish some programs in the future!"

Natalie's plan for the coming academic year is to incorporate intergenerational programs into her honours thesis under the direction of Drs. Elizabeth Russell, Assistant Professor, Psychology and Peri Ballantyne. "Natalie's project is an example of the kinds of community based research we can help facilitate

here at Trent," says Peri Ballantyne. "It's a great way for students to gain hands-on experience in an academically rigorous way, it's the best of both worlds really." After her final year at Trent, Natalie plans to apply to grad programs. She says, "I am looking at programs in psychology and aging. I can definitely see myself continuing to be involved in aging research. I think it is incredibly important for our communities to see how we can help older individuals, in the best and most efficient way possible."

## Redirection: Movers, Shakers and Shifters

We told you about Dr. Suzanne Cook's film, *Redirection: Movers, Shakers and Shifters* in the last edition of this newsletter. In partnership with TCAS, the Peterborough Council on Aging, and the City of Peterborough, a screening of Suzanne's film was held at Market Hall Performing Arts Centre on March 27. The screening was a tremendous success,



Suzanne Cook, Carey McMaster, Susan Simmons, Jessica Biggar and Mohamad Bashar Al-Asfary

attracting an audience of more than sixty community members. Following the screening, Mark Skinner moderated a panel discussion about later life work transitions. Panelists included: Fleming College's Jessica Biggar, who brought an extensive background in employment counselling; Dr. Mohamad Bashar Al-Asfary, a Syrian medical doctor in the midst of career reinvention; Carey McMaster, the operations coordinator for the Greater Peterborough Innovation Cluster; and Susan Simmons who has had a varied career in communications and social services.

"Key challenges I faced while seeking to change my career included the reality of the job market in the Peterborough area," said Susan Simmons. "I spent an entire year submitting resumes with relatively little response. I would recommend others in a similar position to persevere, and continue to volunteer and network. I also pursued ongoing continuing education via online college courses, in order to remain engaged and increase my knowledge and skill base."

According to panelist Jessica Biggar, "The film screening was a wonderful way to share Dr. Cook's research on later life career transitions with our Peterborough community. The film brought to life the real experiences of older workers during a time of career transition and highlighted some of the challenges and joys of that journey. I would like to see Dr. Cook's research continued, with a focus on identifying the programs, services, policies and best practices that will best support

our community's older workers as they navigate the challenges of career transition, moving forward."

## Aging Graz 2017

Six members of the Trent Centre for Aging & Society (TCAS) travelled to "Aging Graz 2017," the European Network in Aging Studies (ENAS) and North American Network in Aging Studies (NANAS) joint conference in Graz, Austria in April to celebrate and share Trent University research successes and international collaborations with a global audience.

It was the largest gathering yet of its kind, an exhilarating combination of scholarship and conviviality, and the Trent crew was key to both. Melissa Baldwin, MA candidate in Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies and Dr. May Chazan, Canada Research Chair in Gender and Feminist Studies hosted a panel, described by attendees as "life-changing," based on their book-in-

progress on "Aging Activisms." The panel included a presentation on the "Raging Grannies" by friend of TCAS, Dr. Marlene Goldman, Professor, English Literature at the University of Toronto. It also featured recent Trent graduate, Waaseyaa'sin Christine Sy, Anishinaabe writer and scholar, who shared a chilling recording of her poem, "Grandmother," which challenges audience members to consider how aging studies typically conceptualizes aging, grandmotherhood, and Elder through a Eurocentric lens, bringing a refreshingly de-colonial gaze to the conversations that followed.

Dr. Barbara Marshall, Professor, Sociology presented with Dr. Linn Sandberg, Assistant Professor in Gender Studies, Stockholm University, who was a visitor to TCAS last year, on "Queering Aging Futures," evoking an idea of "heterohappiness" that was repeated throughout the conference affirming that TCAS scholars continue to be on the forefront of debunking myths surrounding aging. Prof. Marshall then

presented to an overflowing room on the ways digital self-tracking devices like fitbits bring 24/7 monitoring of the body home, producing data that is bound up with discourses of "active" aging, and the pressure on aging individuals to constantly monitor their health in the interest of mitigating future risk.

Dr. Sally Chivers, Professor, English Literature joined one of the conference hosts, Dr. Ulla Kriebenberg, Associate Professor at the Center for Inter-American Studies, University of Graz, Austria to showcase their forthcoming book *Care Home Stories*, sponsored by TCAS and newly selected for "Knowledge Unlatched," an open access publishing program that will allow readers to access it without cost. Prof. Chivers also presented, to another packed room, on the movie *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, part of a book-in-progress edited by Dr. Stephen Katz, Professor, Sociology on *Ageing and Everyday Life*.

Prof. Katz's ongoing critical age studies work was fundamental to the

conference, very often quoted as the impetus scholars had found to join age studies, to take new directions with their research, or to think differently about later life. In addition to presenting papers on cultural gerontology and music tied to memory, Prof. Katz was part of a plenary panel discussion that challenged the way we have all been thinking about age studies, how it came to be, and where it needs to go next.

## Aging and rural voluntarism in B.C.'s interior

A large group of students, faculty, and visitors from Queen's University turned out for the last Aging & Society Seminar Series talk of the academic year by Dr. Neil Hanlon, Professor of Geography, University of Northern British Columbia.

At the invitation of TCAS, Dr. Hanlon, whose research is focused primarily on formal and informal health service provision in rural and remote locations, was welcomed to the Trent campus to

share his insights on voluntarism, community development and aging in British Columbia's interior. Dr. Mark Skinner, director of TCAS and Prof. Hanlon are long-standing colleagues and collaborators who share a passion for rural voluntarism. "Neil and I have known each other since I was in graduate school. Our work together on aging resource communities has been one of the highlights of my career, so it's great to finally have him here to share

some of his findings with the Trent community." In 2016, Mark and Neil's collaborative research resulted in their monograph, *Aging Resource Communities: New frontiers of rural population change, community development and voluntarism*.

Prof. Hanlon takes a broad view of voluntarism, defining it as any act done willingly without the expectation of monetary gain. Because anyone can



Marlene Goldman (University of Toronto), and Sally Chivers

be a volunteer it is a transformative practice that has the power to shape place. So too, it is shaped *by* place. Overlooked and undervalued by government and business, voluntarism is too often seen as a cure-all to chronic underfunding of important public services.

In the small resource communities Dr. Hanlon studies in British Columbia, places like Tumbler Ridge and Quesnel, it used to be that people would leave at retirement to go somewhere warmer or more connected to amenities. Now, many older residents are instead aging in place either by choice or necessity. In the past generation or so, few young families have moved to these towns as resource production declined or as plants automated. This removed an important part of the towns' economic life-cycle – there is no one to buy an older person's house when the time comes to



Neil Hanlon addresses students and faculty

leave, which has produced an equity trap, forcing some to remain into old age.

Paradoxically, retirees from other parts of the province and country are actually moving to these small places to retire, attracted by the reasonable cost of living. All of which has necessitated the development of new services aimed at the aging population. Volunteer burn out has emerged as the key challenge to maintaining the quality, and ensuring the availability, of these much needed services. If volunteers exhaust themselves, and no new volunteers step up to replace them, services are at risk of disappearing. An influx of new retirees with

different ideas and expectations also has the potential to marginalize and degrade longstanding volunteer networks, which may have a negative effect on social cohesion.

According to Prof. Hanlon, "These are complicated places with their own unique set of challenges. That said, they also mirror what we see in other jurisdictions right across the country. Volunteers are relied upon to provide essential services just about everywhere. When they don't replace themselves in a small, rural town, the result is potentially devastating but we're seeing the same elsewhere. The aim of the work Mark and I do, is to help move the needle on this conversation, and get politicians to take it seriously and devote more resources to taking care of older people. It isn't just good for them, it's good for us all.



## View from the Lectern

*Note: This is a new feature, written by a TCAS member from the perspective of the classroom. Let us know if you have a story to share from your own perspective.*

Teaching students about the mental, physical, and social processes of aging, within the context of sociocultural factors such as sex, gender, culture, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class, are the goals of the Psychology Department's Adult Development and Aging course. Presenting aging not as a negative, downhill process but as one filled with challenges and growth, hardship and laughter, is important, given Canada's rapidly aging population. However, bringing the aging experience to life for students who, for the most part, are only beginning their own aging journey, can be challenging in a classroom setting.



Elizabeth Russell and Mrs. Ruth Greenley

For example, how can we help students understand the factors associated not just with cognitive decline, but also with the strengthened sense of self that often accompanies growing older?

To address this challenge, I invited Mrs. Ruth Greenley to my Adult Development and Aging class at Trent. Mrs. Greenley co-owned W&R Greenley Booksellers in Belleville for 32 years, along with her husband Bill, until 2007. Together, they impacted the lives of many children, teenagers, and adults living in the area.

Now at age 88, Mrs. Greenley has the humour and openness to new experiences of someone a fraction of her age, and the wisdom of someone who has seen, experienced, and reflected upon many things in our changing world. Before the class, we took Mrs. Greenley on a tour of Trent, including lunch at the *Seasoned Spoon*, a drive by the Otonabee River, and a visit to the

Psychology Department. Our class treated Mrs. Greenley like a guest of honour. With perfect attendance, the students were quietly seated before class, and one found her a comfortable chair to sit in.

Weeks before, I asked students what they would most like to ask an older adult given the opportunity. Drawing from their questions, I informally interviewed Mrs. Greenley in front of the class about her life, her business, her marriage, and her experiences as a parent, grandparent, a new widow, and most of all, as a person simply continuing to live her life while growing old.

Students were able to jump in with their own questions at any time – and they did. I was very proud of them – they asked many respectful but challenging questions, listening to her every word with the undivided attention not often paid to our daily lectures. The students were able to see and hear, as they later observed in their written seminar reflections, many of the core course concepts brought to life.

Danielle Willette, a senior graduating psychology student, reflected: “Having Mrs. Greenley come visit our class at Trent University was a very special moment in our university careers. Being able to speak to Mrs. Greenley allowed us to receive true insight on the experience of aging, and provided us all with an example of what successful aging looks like. I'm glad that our class was able to experience this opportunity alongside Mrs. Greenley!”

Many students reflected that this course, and particularly the words of our guest, helped shatter their previously-held negative biases against growing older, and gave them pause to think about living life to the fullest, and to continue learning and growing at all life's stages.

Amber Allen, a senior graduating psychology student noted: “Getting to meet Mrs. Greenley and hearing her stories that provided great advice to us students was a great experience for me. Not only having Mrs. Greenley as a guest speaker in our class provided a lesson to us about the importance of taking a moment to relax in life, but also, talking with her was a

great opportunity to solidify key concepts that we have been learning throughout the course through the stories she told us about her life. Not often as a student do we get to have these special moments, so I have a great appreciation for this opportunity to talk with and listen to Mrs. Greenley.”

Stefano Pella, a senior psychology student, echoed these words: “The guest lecture we had with Mrs. Greenley was so gratifying, asking her questions about aging in person really put into perspective everything that we studied. She always had a smile on her face and was realistic about her aging process but still kept being the same person she described she was growing up and I think that's the most rewarding moment I can take from this course!”

A few months after her visit, Mrs. Greenley reflected upon the experience. “It was great to get an opportunity to speak with young people. We don't see enough young people. I felt that they included me as a part of the family. We had a great conversation. I thought the pupils were exceptionally polite and nice, and fun, and we loved the lunch where the students

eat (the *Seasoned Spoon*). That was a great experience, we all remarked on that, how nice they were to us there too, and we got to share a piece of cake. The school is very modern and nice. The ramps and things, since I was using a walker – I found it very user-friendly. I enjoyed it very much – it was all just part of a good view on life. If you're given an opportunity – take it. Even though you're not sure you're going to succeed. Take that and run with it.”

As an instructor, I have done my best to articulate course concepts, but Mrs. Greenley and her wise words, I'm sure, is who students will really remember from this course as they leave Trent behind and move on to the next phase of their adventure.

- Elizabeth Russell, Assistant Professor, Psychology

## Age Studies Curricula

The first TCAS supported team taught course, NURS-ECON-SOCI 2015H *Critical Perspectives on Aging*, has been a major success for the Centre. Surpassing enrollment projections in its first year, the course grew exponentially last year with 168 registrations and 118 completions.

Equal numbers of nursing and non-nursing students have taken the course demonstrating its appeal to Trent's tradition of interdisciplinarity. Early registration numbers for fall 2017 indicate the course is on track to surpass even last year's numbers. We're looking to track the students who come out of this program and go on to do community-based projects, your help in doing so would be greatly appreciated.

The new *Collaborative Specialization in Aging Studies* will launch in September and the first cohort of CSAS students is currently being accepted.

Stephen Katz will teach the inaugural edition of the CSAS foundation course, 5000H *Foundations in Interdisciplinary Aging Studies*

## Age-friendly Peterborough

In 2014, the PCOA began work to create an Age-friendly Plan for Peterborough City and County as well as for Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations.

The plan is now in its final stages before adoption and to celebrate, June was Age-friendly Peterborough month. Elizabeth Russell presented at one of several community forums organized by plan coordinator, Sarah Cullingham, looking at lessons learned by other jurisdictions.

Centre members are also now part of the Age-friendly working groups and are tasked with helping implement the plan.

# CHALLENGE THE WAY YOU THINK



## TRENT CENTRE FOR AGING & SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Phone: 705-748-1011 ext. 6440

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