

## **The Trent Centre for Community Based Education**

In 1987 the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Commission, published its report, *Our Common Future*.

Professor Wadland of Canadian Studies and his friend and colleague Professor Tom Whillans in the Environmental Studies Program, were both taken by the report's central admonition, in the interests of sustainability, to "Think Globally, Act Locally." This fit perfectly with their shared interest in the emerging theory of bioregionalism.

In 1989, inspired by the Brundtland Commission's report, Professor Wadland and Professor Whillans created a new interdisciplinary honours Bioregionalism course that could serve two distinct ends:

- (1) the intellectual challenge of exploring a new idea from science, social science and humanities perspectives, and
- (2) accomplishing this with dedicated students, undertaking research that would actually meet the needs of a local community.

This course focused on the Haliburton Highlands, the headwaters of the Trent watershed, of which Peterborough itself is a part.

Wadland and Whillans quickly learned that a foundation of trust from the community was most important for the success of their course. They turned their energy to building that foundation through open collaborative research strategies engaging students and community members. By degrees, and over the years, they built an expanding conversation in which the process of collaboration with community-members was cemented in friendships and a sense of shared purpose.

In 1995 Trent University's graduate program, the Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies, collaborated in a pilot project in Peterborough on "Community Enterprise Development". The partners were 14 Peterborough-based public interest institutions, led by the Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN) and the Peterborough Social Planning Council. A course on Community Enterprise Development provided research support for this initiative.

In 1996, Trent extended its partnership with the COIN and the PSPC to establish the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education (TCCBE). The underlying logic was that if

community-based research had worked in Haliburton, it should also be offered as an option in Peterborough. Projects were solicited from host agencies in the Peterborough community and sought out interested senior students. Projects were negotiated with the faculty member who accepted academic advisory responsibility. A contract was entered into by the host agency, the student, the faculty member and the TCCBE Management Committee each agreeing to defined responsibilities.

The University reviewed the proposed program and endorsed it in Senate. After three years of positive student response the University adopted a plan whereby participating departments could dedicate third and fourth year course numbers to a “Community-Based Research Project”. This made it possible for a faculty member of any department to construct a pedagogy around a research need determined in the community. Such a course could serve several students, or merely one.

The Trent Centre for Community Based Education was incorporated in 2005 and gained charitable status in 2010 with the following purpose:

*To advance education by developing, administrating and coordinating educational programs, including, but not limited to, research, service projects, lectures and workshops, among post-secondary students, faculty and community organizations.*

Over the years, TCCBE focused on working with organizations, municipalities and government agencies in Peterborough and Peterborough County, supporting them in identifying research needs and finding ways that these research needs could be fulfilled. This was primarily through matching these organizations with students interested in undertaking research.

The TCCBE also facilitated Community Service-Learning projects which gave students a taste of volunteering and civic engagement by matching them with short-term projects proposed by local organizations.

The TCCBE supported research initiatives between community organizations, research groups and university and college faculty, as well as providing research project logistics support. This work focused on addressing strategic, long-term community research needs related to issues such as poverty reduction, climate change or how to benefit from an aging workforce. Some of these research projects occurred over a number of

years.

TCCBE partnered with the U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research in Haliburton County to provide Community-Based Research and Community Service Learning in collaboration with Trent University throughout the bioregion.

In June of 2018 the TCCBE transferred the operation of the Community-Based Education program (involving community organizations in the Peterborough area and Trent University students) to the new Careers, Co-ops and Experiential Learning Department of Trent University.

The TCCBE (now operating as the Centre for Community-Based Education) has taken on a broader focus facilitating Community-Based Research and Community Campus engagement throughout the region and nation-wide.

In June of 2019 the TCCBE became the host organization for Community Campus Engage Canada (CCEC).