

## Exchanges

In the *Exchanges*, we present conversations with scholars and practitioners of community engagement, responses to previously published material, and other reflections on various aspects of community-engaged scholarship meant to provoke further dialogue and discussion. We invite our readers to offer in this section their own thoughts and ideas on the meanings and understandings of engaged scholarship, as practiced in local or faraway communities, diverse cultural settings, and various disciplinary contexts. We especially welcome community-based scholars' views and opinions on their collaboration with university-based partners in particular and on engaged scholarship in general.

Below, **Natalia Khanenko-Friesen** talks to **Edward “Ted” Jackson** about his work and his views on engaged scholarship in Canada. Dr. Jackson is a senior research fellow of Carleton Centre for Community Innovation and adjunct research professor in Public Policy and Administration, International Affairs and African Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa. Ted Jackson served as the conference convenor for C<sup>2</sup>UExpo, held at the Carleton in May 2015.

### Conversation with Ted Jackson, Carleton University

**Natalia:** Ted, may we first reflect back on the C<sup>2</sup>UExpo that took place in Ottawa in 2015. I understand that you got involved in this ‘community-to-university’ conference because of your experience and long-term involvement in CES in Canada. It is also my understanding that you partook in earlier conferences as well. What was unique about Ottawa 2015 C<sup>2</sup>U conference in comparison to others that were held earlier?

**Ted:** The conference that influenced me most personally was CUEXPO 2008, held at the University of Victoria. It was well-organized, well-attended and really had, thanks to its organizers, a *movement* purpose and feel to it-appropriately. It was place-based and very respectful of, and reliant on, local indigenous lands and knowledge. Plus, the organizers engaged funders, particularly the granting councils, in direct, non-transactional dialogue, and pushed into some new areas, like the edgy citizen-science group they invited from France.

However, all the conferences in the CUEXPO series—including Waterloo in 2011 and



Corner Brook in 2013—have successfully reflected local strengths and cultures, worked closely with community groups, and, at the same time, contributed to the growth of a pan-Canadian movement for community-based research and engaged scholarship. I have no doubt that C<sup>2</sup>UExpo 2017 at Simon Fraser University will do the same, very successfully.

In our case, we talked to past organizers and tried to build on their experience and insights. In addition to a core of excellent staff and advisors at Carleton University, we benefited from the valuable advice of 60 volunteers, both practitioners and scholars, from across Canada through various planning committees. For C<sup>2</sup>UExpo 2015—the 2015 Community, College and University Exposition—we wanted to achieve three specific things beyond mobilizing a lot of diverse players to participate (which itself takes some work!). First, working with Algonquin College, we explicitly integrated the community colleges, which do a lot of outreach, into conference planning and the program. Second, we featured speakers who could make visible the connections between engaged scholarship and federal, provincial and local policy change, in such areas as the call for a national inquiry on missing and murdered Aboriginal women, community development in Newfoundland, social innovation by Millennials, and pension plans for non-profits, among others.

Third, we actively sought presenters from Aboriginal and other diverse communities and projects, succeeding pretty well there, too. And we were delighted that Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) used the C<sup>2</sup>UExpo 2015 platform to announce its new focus on Aboriginal research. A less explicit objective was to diversify the funding base of the CUExpo conference model, and we made some gains there, as well, mobilizing financial support from four private foundations, SSHRC, the host institutions, the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) project and others, including *The Engaged Scholar Journal*. We also intentionally sourced conference “swag” from ethical businesses, which, I believe, was a first.

**Natalia:** How do CUExpo conferences compare with the annual American Engaged Scholarship Consortium meetings?

**Ted:** The Engaged Scholarship Consortium has a broader institutional base (35 major institutions form its membership), its leaders almost all hold formal administrative positions in higher education, it has a tilt toward the US mid-west and land-grant universities, it has created a formal training offering (its Academy) and it seems to have the resources to meet annually. For its part, the CUExpo series is held only every second year, under the auspices of a group coordinated by Community-Based Research Canada, which itself is more of a mix of active academics and non-profit leaders from both urban centres and rural areas, and a somewhat more activist discourse—though it also enjoys modest support from nine Canadian universities.

I actually think the CUExpo conference model is closer to that of the conferences of the non-profit US network, Community-Campus Partnerships for Health. These events tend to have, again, more of a movement feel and strong community and non-profit

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representation. In fact, during CUExpo years, CCPH has integrated its own annual event into the CUExpo program, enriching the experience for all delegates.

My final comment here is that, apart from its substance, the challenge that remains for the proponents of the CUExpo conference series is getting the business model right. And, given Canada's small scale, doing so will probably always be situational. There are only a few sources of revenue from these events: registration fees, host-institution contributions, and external grants and sponsorships. The particular mix of revenues for each conference is always going to be shaped by the specific location, themes and supporters that can be mobilized for fundraising purposes. So, looking ahead, we need practitioners and academics who understand and are committed to engaged scholarship but who also possess the project, business and financial management skills that are fundamental to the event's success and sustainability.

**Natalia:** Following up on this, let me ask you another question. You are a longtime practitioner of community-engaged scholarship in Canada and one can say you already built your own legacy doing this work. Your work is known internationally as it oftentimes focuses on places and peoples outside Canada. Given your expertise and broad focus, how do you see current developments of CES in Canada? What is Canadian community-engaged scholarship known for, nationally internationally? Is there such a thing as uniquely Canadian community-engaged scholarship, in the eyes of the Canadian CES practitioners and in the eyes of the international CES community? What is really working in Canada's field of community-engaged scholarship, what is missing still? Is there a need for a national CES association or consortium (like it is done in the US) that will bring under one umbrella various centres, platforms and initiatives of community-engaged scholarship? Do CES scholars have sufficient funding opportunities in Canada to pursue their work?

**Ted:** These are good questions! One of the most widely known things about Canadian community-engaged scholarship overseas is SSHRC's creative funding of research partnerships, earlier called community-university research alliances. For about one generation—let's call it 25 years—the Council has been at the forefront of funding engaged scholarship, through grants large and small. It has taken some heat from more traditional academics, but for the most part, and thanks to some agile leaders, SSHRC has been able to maintain this agenda over a sustained period. Another important funder, in the private sphere, has been the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation. Though it has been impatient with the slow pace of change at Canadian universities, the foundation has supported a wide range of key CES projects across the country, and now RECODE, which promotes social innovation and social entrepreneurship among university students, and cutting-edge Aboriginal initiatives. The McConnell work is not well-known abroad, though it should be.

While Canadian scholars and their civil-society partners have also generally kept their heads down and focused on local and regional initiatives, and mostly have not gone out of their way to connect globally (a contradiction, in a sense, in today's globalized economy),

some have. The most high-profile example is the UNESCO Chair on Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, held at the University of Victoria and the NGO PRIA in New Delhi, which has stewarded network-building on every continent. But there are others. The fine work on regional economic development and the social economy of the University of Quebec at Montreal is well-known among engaged scholars in francophone and Iberian countries. And international networks on such topics as indigenous knowledge, food security and food sovereignty, natural resource management, and primary and women’s health have been exposed to innovative Canadian partnerships. But, overall, as good as Canadian CES work has been, and it *has* been good, it still is not very well-known to the world. There is work to do there.

Presently, SSHRC’s partnership funding budget seems to be holding, and a second important source of funding, the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, also continues to make ES-oriented grants. In the future, these budgets may well need to be defended and their opponents countered, but for now the situation seems calm. Inside universities, however, and apart from a handful of exceptions, we still have tenure and promotion incentives that still send young faculty members exactly in the opposite direction from engaged scholarship. So, even if there are funds available, these *disincentives* constrain ES growth, big time, and must be confronted and over-turned directly and energetically. Let’s hope that this battle will become a little easier as the traditionalists of my generation retire!

Should we have one big umbrella organization for all the various ES actors across the country? Yes, but there are two conditions that must be satisfied. First, within such an umbrella, there must be a commitment to pluralism and respect for all the legitimate interests and perspectives currently represented by various networks, associations, centres and programs. Second, and this would make the first much more possible, there must be multi-year, core funding for the umbrella organization. This could be provided by a combination of governments and philanthropy. But none of this will happen magically. Basically, a broad-based coalition of actors must lobby the key funding organizations—hard, for a long time—in order to secure the necessary funds. Further, underpinning this lobby must be a clear business case, or theory of change, that demonstrates how the activities of the umbrella organization will strengthen the performance of engaged scholars and, in turn, contribute to more effective poverty reduction, climate mitigation and the deepening of human rights—and a better, cleaner and fairer Canada.

**Natalia:** Many of our readers are newcomers to the field of community-engaged scholarship and many have different paths towards it. You are an established and well-regarded scholar of CES, with substantial record in this as well as other fields. How did you become involved in what we know as ‘community-engaged scholarship’? What were your first steps in this direction? Was there a ‘eurika’ moment in your career that signaled a turn towards CES, and perhaps away from other academic paths you contemplated? Looking back on your career, is there a particularly memorable experience, in your career of CES practitioner, that always stays with you?

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**Ted:** Yes, there was such a moment for me. It was exactly 40 years ago, at a conference on adult education and development in Dar es Salaam, which I attended as a graduate student. Dr. Julius Nyerere, a remarkable anti-colonial politician and pan-Africanist, addressed the delegates; he was visionary and riveting. But the speaker who turned my world upside down was Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator who declared that “people should be the subjects of their own history.” He was a diminutive physical presence and quiet, even shy, but through his revolutionary and poetic stories and lessons, he became the conference’s dominant force. I followed him around all week, saw him in action with small groups and individuals. He was indefatigable, insightful, open, always teaching. He paid genuine attention to everyone, even us students. Later that summer, he came to the University of Toronto and lectured, Freirian-style, in our adult education program. That nailed it for me. I have tried ever since, all the time, to put Freire’s approach into practice.

Incidentally, the person who organized that conference in Tanzania was Budd Hall, who became a mentor, colleague and dear friend—and a permanent inspiration for so many of us. A year or so later, in 1977, Budd, the late dian marina and I started the Participatory Research Project of the International Council for Adult Education, which tested the power and limits of community-based research in Aboriginal communities, immigrant neighbourhoods and industrial workplaces, and fought for space for participatory research in the social sciences against mainstream scholars. I was very lucky to start my career this way!

There have been many other remarkable moments. I remember, in the late 1970s, walking in a blizzard across a frozen field on Big Trout Lake First Nation in northern Ontario, deep in conversation about strategy and tactics with two brilliant local leaders, Gerry McKay and Grace Hudson, and thinking that this is exactly what I should be doing and how lucky I was to work with people of this calibre and commitment. We used community-based research to demonstrate that the water and sanitation systems in the community constituted a kind of “technical apartheid” for Aboriginal citizens, and this helped the Band Council negotiate with the federal government for improved technologies.

Ten years later, on the top floor of an office building on the scorched savannah of northern Ghana, I was co-facilitating a participatory monitoring workshop with a young Ghanaian colleague, we could see clouds of dust being kicked up half a mile away by a mass demonstration of angry citizens, and it was clear they were headed our way. We quickly told the workshop participants—aid personnel and government officials—that we needed to move everyone immediately to another venue, and did so, getting everyone to safety. I sometimes wonder if perhaps we should have let them face the crowd. Now an Ambassador, Sulley Gariba went on to fashion a brilliant career in evaluation, politics and business and also remains a very close friend. His youngest daughter is my God-Daughter.

**Natalia:** At the *Engaged Scholar Journal*, to serve the Canadian CES scholars, we aspire to profile and give voice to many diverse practitioners of CES in Canada and abroad, be they University academics or community-based partners and researchers. We also want

to serve the established scholars as well as newcomers into CES. You are serving on our Editorial Board. What would be your advice to our Journal with respect to our efforts to appeal to all Canadians and not just to those whose lives and work unfolds in the proximity of our geographic address in Canada’s west. What can you wish our Journal?

**Ted:** I’m honoured and delighted to serve on the editorial board of the *Engaged Scholar Journal*. The journal has a pivotal role to play in the years ahead. By engaging in the various networks around engaged scholarship, and the CUExpo conference series, the journal should be able to attract submissions from a wide range of voices, perspectives, geographies and sectors, from food security scholars on the east coast, to Aboriginal researchers in the mid-north, to environmental projects on the west coast—and much more. Including government policy makers as knowledge producers and users, and members of engaged scholarship collaboratives will also be important. One task that may take more effort, however, is building ongoing, mutually beneficial relationships with engaged scholars in Quebec, especially those working in French. The journal may need to consider securing special funding for French-English editing and translation. Finding partner journals and scholars in Quebec that can anchor and enrich these relationships would be especially useful.

I would also encourage the Journal to look outward, to its peers in other countries. This is not to deflect or diminish the core focus of the journal on Canada. Rather, it is to be able to learn from other countries and regions, and to project Canadian experience, innovations and tools across the world.

But most of all, I believe that the journal, and all of us actually, need to understand the cluster of complex *economic* issues that Canadians are facing and that will evolve in new ways over the next 15 to 20 years—and accompany Canadians in a way that mobilizes engaged scholarship to enable sustainable livelihoods for individuals and households everywhere in the country. Chief among these is the question of *decent work*. Some research suggests that already 40 per cent of the work force is involved in short-term, insecure or otherwise precarious work with few benefits, if any. The “disruptive technologies” of Uber and AirBnB are not only innovative; they cause real economic damage to hotel workers and taxi drivers who lose their livelihoods. But, with the imminent arrival of self-driving vehicles, and many other new applications of automation in the offing, more change, and more layoffs, are on the way. While it is true that some sectors and regions are suffering from lack of talent, and better matching of labour supply with demand is necessary, too many Canadians have given up finding good jobs, or any jobs. Engaged scholarship must step up now and confront these challenges. It is urgent, especially when the effects of unemployment and underemployment are torqued further when they intersect with the problems of immigration, racism, climate change or wildfires, among others. I would go so far as to say that if engaged scholarship *cannot* help Canadians deal with the decent work issue in a meaningful way, we should put it aside and move on to other paradigms.

But I was pleased to see one of the articles in the journal’s very first volume reporting



on community-university partnerships that promote a living wage policy in public institutions across Canada. And there is much more room here for engaged scholarship to help us understand the underlying factors and potential solutions to, say, joblessness among urban Aboriginal youth in western cities, or accelerating small business start-ups in Atlantic Canada. Moreover, universities have other tools—such as using their procurement policies to promote local social enterprises, developing real estate projects that build affordable housing for students and for low-income citizens close to campuses, or use portions of their endowments and general budgets to invest, along with other private and public investors, in local businesses in such niches as, say, tourism, healthy food, sustainable agriculture or renewable energy. Engaged scholars and their allies can become deeply involved in studying and advancing these and other strategies. And the *Engaged Scholar Journal* can accompany them every step of the way.

### About the Contributors

**Edward T. Jackson** is senior research fellow at the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation at Carleton University and a specialist in community-based research and community-university engagement in Canada and overseas. A former tenured professor of public policy and associate dean of public affairs at Carleton University, he chaired university committees on community engagement and partnership at Carleton, was founding principal investigator of the CFICE project, and served as convenor of the 2015 Community, College and University Exposition. His current interests include social impact investment, local economic development, program evaluation and international development. Dr. Jackson holds honorary research positions with the Institute of Development Studies in the United Kingdom and the Institute for Policy Alternatives in Ghana, and is co-editor of *Knowledge, Democracy and Action: Community-University Research Partnerships in Global Perspectives* (2013). He has been recognized for his leadership in community partnerships, development management, community development, program evaluation, and graduate teaching.

**Natalia Khanenko-Friesen** is an inaugural editor of the *Engaged Scholar Journal*, a cultural anthropologist and an oral historian. Dr. Khanenko-Friesen is a Professor at St. Thomas More College in the Department of Religion and Culture. Interested in ethnicity and diasporas, post-socialist transition and labour migration, she initiated and worked on a variety of community-based projects in Western Canada, Ukraine, Italy, and Portugal. Email: [engaged.scholar@usask.ca](mailto:engaged.scholar@usask.ca).