GETTING WISDOM

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING

SILVER DONALD CAMERON

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THE J.W. MCCONNELL FAMILY FOUNDATION

LA FONDATION DE LA FAMILLE J.W. MCCONNELL

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

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PREFACE

Over the past half century The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation has invested significantly in Canadian higher education. Mostly this took the form of capital gifts and scholarships. In recent years, reflecting the concerns that universities are not adequately meeting student needs, especially at the undergraduate level, capital investments were replaced by more targeted grants.

In the mid-1990s, the Foundation launched a competitive program to support innovation in Canadian universities. One project, proposed by St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, involved engaging students in community-based activities. It appealed to the Foundation because it appeared to address several needs: it gave community organizations access to the intellectual capital that was often on their doorstep, yet out of reach; it allowed students to apply their newly acquired knowledge to solve real problems; and it had the potential to create stronger ties between universities and the wider community in order to better serve the public good.

In 2004, there was a call for proposals for the Community Service-Learning program, as it came to be called, which received an overwhelming response. A dozen universities were funded by the Foundation, and many universities that did not receive grants also went on to launch programs using their own resources. Silver Donald Cameron, with his characteristic verve and immediacy, here tells the stories of several of these collaborations. The enthusiasm with which students and many faculty members have embraced the experience of taking "classroom knowledge" into the world suggests that this form of applied learning is here to stay. It is a strand in a larger shift toward collaboration, exemplified by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) program of Community-University Research Alliances (CURAs) and its Knowledge Mobilization grants.

Universities have always held a tension between their freedom to pursue enquiry and encourage critical thought, and the need to demonstrate their value to the society which supports them – in other words, not to be stereotypical "ivory towers." (In time we came to regret our use of the term *Service*, as it inadvertently reinforced for some the notion that benefits flowed only from the university to the community whereas experience has shown that frequently it is the university, both faculty and students, that benefits disproportionately.)

 This Foundation believes that in these challenging times, all Canadians must participate to ensure that our society remains dynamic and prosperous. Involving students, professors, and community members in marrying knowledge, experience, and commitment to tackle local issues can have positive benefits for everybody. As Judith Ramaly wrote in Higher Education for the Public Good (Jossey-Bass, 2005), *"The challenge of engagement is to bring life and work together – in the lives of our students and faculty, in the collective work of our institutions, and in our working relationships with the broader community... True engagement offers the opportunity to experience learning in the company of others in a situation where learning has consequences and where individuals are respected and given voice... In an engaged institution, an ideal education lies between the two poles of experience and purpose, thought and action, self-realization and social responsibility."*

The best examples of the community service-learning initiatives taking place across Canada, including those described by Silver Donald Cameron in this book, demonstrate how that engagement can mobilize knowledge, help solve problems, and create responsible citizens.

Tim Brodhead,
President and CEO,
The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

1. WHAT IS COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING?

"What is community service-learning?" Siu-Kae Yeong muses. "To me, it is a very effective way of getting students to answer the question, What kind of role am I going to play in the world? What kinds of things are truly valuable to me – and to the world?"

Siu-Kae Yeong was raised in Malaysia and immigrated to Vancouver at 17. She enrolled in the University of British Columbia (UBC), where she won degrees in both engineering and English literature, spending four months in England doing biomedical technology in Oxford. The Oxford experience inspired her to study medicine, in pursuit of her deep desire "to create positive change in the world." Back at UBC doing a prerequisite year before entering medical school, she had enough time on her hands to work at UBC's Learning Exchange in the Downtown Eastside and to volunteer both at an inner-city hospice, and as a mentor for engineering students.

The Learning Exchange was then exploring something called "community service-learning" (CSL), which helped students to broaden their learning by participating in a deep and reflective collaboration between academic institutions and community organizations. Siu-Kae promoted the idea to the engineering faculty and co-mentored two of its first CSL projects. Then, as a medical student, inspired by the CSL experience, she co-founded the Global Health Initiative, a student-driven global-health education program that, to date, has involved 500 UBC students and operates in Uganda, Kenya, India and Honduras with a budget of $100,000.

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Community service-learning, say its enthusiasts, is liberating, revolutionary, exhilarating. It will transform the university system, shaping a whole new approach to teaching and learning. It is the precursor of an adventuresome, integrative model of higher education that will embody the unity of knowledge and experience.

Community service-learning, say its detractors, is trendy, faddish, amorphous. It erodes academic standards by blurring the distinctions between rigorous academic study and well-meaning, mushy-minded volunteerism. Far from representing a new synthesis of knowledge and experience, CSL is hideously subjective and relies on a warped understanding of the nature of knowledge.

Community service-learning, says the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning, is "an educational approach that integrates service in the community with intentional learning activities. Within effective CSL efforts, members of both educational institutions and community organizations work together toward outcomes that are mutually beneficial."

Community service-learning, says Laura Janara, is... upsetting. And stimulating. And powerful. It forces teachers far out of their comfort zones.

Dr. Janara teaches political theory at UBC. Among her courses is Political Theory and Non-Human Life, which studies human relationships with other life forms, notably animals and commodities. In 2009, aided by Susan Grossman of the UBC-Community Learning Initiative, she plunged into CSL, focussing her teaching on Burns Bog, a unique 40 square kilometre peat bog southeast of Vancouver that is threatened by a proposed superhighway. The bog sustains numerous rare plants and animals, and it plays a disproportionately important role in cleaning carbon dioxide from the city's air.

In addition to the usual readings and class discussions, the course offered students several possible forms of community engagement. They could prepare displays about the bog and show them at the UN Day of Action on Climate Change. They could orga-

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nize an on-campus forum or a fundraiser, or they could provide outreach to other community groups. Meanwhile, their readings covered such topics as forestry, whaling, breeding livestock for slaughter, corporate control of seeds, and animal cognitive abilities. The readings were designed to build up a body of critical concepts that the students could apply to their community service activities, creating a blend of action and critical reflection.

As the weeks went by, Laura Janara became increasingly nervous. Was the strategy working? Or was the class incubating a disaster? She couldn't tell.

"I never knew how well they were drawing those connections – but their community activities turned out to be absolutely wonderful," says Dr. Janara. "The students put so much effort into them, so much time, so much thought and creativity. They became passionately engaged with these issues – and they reported that a new perspective on the world was opening up for them."

The final assignment was a reflective paper relating theoretical concepts to the actual experience of political activity – and here, she says, "every one of those 18 students did an incredible job. They actually had figured it out – and they were so emotional about it! They had very strong feelings about what the experience had taught them, about how hard it is to challenge the dominant forces in the world, and the value of trying to engage in political struggle.

"My number one job as a teacher, as I understand it, is to stimulate and broaden the horizons of citizens – and that's what happened in this class."

CSL, she notes, requires that faculty accept elements of chance, imagination, struggle, and resistance within their classes. The experience reinvigorated her as a teacher, banished her feelings of burnout, and expanded her thinking about pedagogy – but she found the lack of control profoundly uncomfortable.

"Expanding horizons is definitely the goal, but CSL did it in this radical big way that was upsetting me at the same time," she says. "Students are much braver than faculty. The students just went with it." CSL, she reflects, capsizes classroom relationships by treating students as active participants in the construction of their own education rather

than as passive recipients of flash-frozen, microwaveable servings of information. It assumes that experience is an essential companion to analysis. It upends traditional assumptions about how knowledge is formed, and who controls it, and what its purposes may be.

Upsetting. But it gave her students an understanding of political theory that they will never forget.

Community service-learning, says the US National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, "combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content."

Ah.

As this clumsy formulation demonstrates, it is not easy to say what community service-learning actually is. CSL is not one of the academy's traditional modes of interaction with the community – though it may share some of their qualities. It is not co-op placements, job-shadowing, research. It is not a practicum, an internship, a survey. Like some of these other modes, CSL is intended to enhance the student's learning by combining classroom study with significant experience in the field – but CSL spreads its net much more widely, and it takes many forms.

In its most pedestrian versions, admittedly, CSL does not differ greatly from, say, co-op placements. The university places students with community organizations and assumes that the students will learn something while making useful contributions to the organizations' activities. The faculty's involvement with the organization is distant and formal and often mediated through staff. The community organization participates largely because it believes the exercise has value for the students, not because it expects that its staff or its clients will benefit significantly. There is no evaluation or follow-up, and the teacher's involvement with CSL has no impact on his or her classroom habits or methods.

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In *The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning*, Randy Stoeker and Elizabeth Tryon make the point that a "charity model" underlies many CSL programs, "where people with more power – who perceive themselves as having more knowledge and skills – 'help' people with less power, who they erroneously perceive as possessing less knowledge and fewer skills." The odd thing is that this model is based not on knowledge, but on assumptions. It assumes that knowledge belongs to the university, and that it is being transferred primarily from faculty to student to community with a bit of backflow from community to student. It assumes that even a callow undergraduate will bring something of professional value to an established community organization grappling with such complex, sophisticated issues as poverty, homelessness, racism, addiction, and mental illness.

And so, for example, students were dispatched to a women's shelter in a prairie city to put in their required 20 hours of CSL. But the shelter's rules require anyone coming in direct contact with the residents to complete a 16-hour training program, which the shelter has to provide. The placement thus siphons off 16 hours of staff time in exchange for four hours of student labour. Rather than enhancing the shelter's ability to serve its constituency, the student placements actually drain the organization's resources. Not surprisingly, the shelter's management is now wary about further CSL placements.

This situation resembles a familiar style of academic research in which researchers conduct studies in the community and then go away and write papers for peer-reviewed journals – and never even share their findings with their community hosts. As one activist bitterly remarked, that type of research is little more than the strip-mining of community knowledge to serve the career interests of the researcher. Not surprisingly, more than one community has closed its doors to academic researchers altogether.

Furthermore, this type of relationship ignores the possibility that the university and its faculty may actually have something to learn from the community. In one remarkable example, an undergraduate studying urban poverty was sent to a CSL placement in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. His American-trained professor was using American textbooks and had taught the student that the major issues in inner cities included gun violence, gang warfare, and tensions between blacks and whites. But the Downtown Eastside is not like that at all. Local community organizations actually know far more about urban poverty in the specific setting of Vancouver than the "expert" does.

The objective of CSL, ultimately, is the almost impossible task of serving the needs of at least five participants simultaneously: students and faculty and universities, on the one side, and community organizations and their clients on the other.

If, for example, a sociology student does a placement in an addiction services centre, the experience should enhance and expand the student's understanding both of social service organizations and of addiction. The student's work at the centre should also add value to the organization, and the test of that value would surely be that the organization is better able to serve its clients.

When the student then returns to the university and submits a report, commonly in the form of a reflective essay, the professor presumably learns something as well. The cumulative effect of such student feedback eventually alters the professor's own understanding of the subject s/he teaches, and thus affects the way s/he structures future courses and teaches future students. The new understanding – which ultimately derives from the community – may even stimulate a research project.

If the CSL project thus changes the professor's teaching and research, and if the experience has shown that knowledge can flow from the community to the university as well as the other way around, then the university itself has been changed, however slightly.

Addict – addiction centre – student – teacher – university: five participants. And each one benefits from the experience of community service-learning.

CSL varies dramatically from course to course, from campus to campus, from year to year. It has a long history in the United States, where its supporters include Campus Compact, a national coalition of more than 1,100 college and university presidents dedicated to promoting community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education. Their institutions enroll 6 million students.

CSL first appeared in Canada at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. It was brought to StFX (as the university is universally known) in 1996 by psychology professor Ann Bigelow. Dr. Bigelow, now the CSL program coordinator at StFX, had a sister-in-law teaching at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania. Gettysburg offered

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"immersion" CSL – week-long visits during spring break, during which students and faculty would carry out projects in Third World villages.

Dr. Bigelow went to Nicaragua and Jamaica with Gettysburg CSL groups and was hooked. StFX has a remarkable history of community outreach and extension, but nothing in its existing undergraduate program expressed those values. Rounding up some sympathetic colleagues, Dr. Bigelow scraped together enough funding for a part-time coordinator and simply started the program. In 1999, the program received a grant from The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation to expand its efforts in the field.

Meanwhile, in Edmonton, sociology professor Dr. Sara Dorow remembered her CSL work as a graduate student at the University of Minnesota. Why shouldn't CSL be employed at the University of Alberta? In Vancouver, Dr. Margo Fryer was spearheading UBC's outreach program into the Downtown East Side. And there were others across the country – at Guelph, Trent, Memorial, and elsewhere. They began sharing stories and tools informally, and before long they had formed an ad hoc network. In 2002, they came together for a national symposium on CSL at the University of Guelph. In 2003, they met again at UBC, where they established a steering committee for a new organization, the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning, or CACSL.

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation observed these developments with great interest. Part of the Foundation's mandate is to support educational developments that "foster citizen engagement and build resilient communities," and that draw the universities closer to the life of the community. In 1998, its trustees called for proposals for innovations in higher education, and one of the 16 proposals it selected was the CSL program at StFX. In 2004, Dr. Bernard Shapiro, the former Principal of McGill, reviewed the results of the 16 projects and opined that the grants might have had more impact if the Foundation had focussed its attention on one or two of the most successful approaches.

"We picked CSL, influenced by the Foundation's overall thrust, the community asset approach promoted by John McKnight, and of course, the grant already made to StFX," says the Foundation's CEO, Tim Brodhead. The Foundation awarded a five-year grant to support CACSL and also issued a request for CSL proposals from individual universities. About 40% of the universities in Canada responded, and five were selected: StFX, Nipissing, Trent, the University of Alberta, and the Université du Québec à Trois

Rivières. After a second competition in 2005, the Foundation granted funding to another five: Lakehead, Laurier, Ottawa, Sherbrooke, and the University of British Columbia.

Stimulated by these developments, many universities that did not win Foundation support nevertheless instituted CSL programs themselves, so that about 30 Canadian institutions now provide some form of CSL. The McConnell funding applied specifically to "course-based" CSL – programs that were integrated with credit course offerings, as opposed to "immersion" CSL – programs like the ones that had such an impact on Ann Bigelow. Immersion CSL, however, is far from defunct. StFX has recently offered immersion experiences in exotic and impoverished places like Romania, Guatemala, and inner-city Toronto. The University of Alberta has mounted expeditions to the troubled city of Fort McMurray.

Community service-learning in Canada today is a huge canvas upon which innovative faculty, turned-on students, and imaginative community organizations are together painting a vivid array of images. Done right, CSL represents a transformative, inclusive way of spreading and deepening the educational experience. It may even be a new model of education better suited to an increasingly fluid, dynamic and troubled post-industrial society.

Fine words. What do they mean in practice?

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2. VANCOUVER: THE UNIVERSITY AND THE YWCA

While the earth is still bare, Ted Cathcart surveys the garden that he loves – plots for cabbage and spinach and cucumbers, trellises for raspberries, a patch of herbs, a wall where blackberries and strawberries will flourish. If you're going to grow fruit trees here, he explains – and he intends to – you have to "espalier" them, pinning them against walls and fences, growing them in two dimensions because the soil is too shallow to allow the deep roots that would normally support the tree.

That's simply one of the restraints imposed by the fact that all these plants are leafing and blossoming and fruiting five stories above the roaring downtown traffic. This is the roof of the Vancouver YWCA building, surrounded by soaring towers of glass and concrete.

Ted Cathcart is the YWCA's facilities manager, and he has a budget for this garden – but the budget is never used. Everyone who walks out onto this roof is a volunteer. That includes the Y's own staff, some of its clients, and office workers who pop in for an hour's restorative gardening on the way home from work. And Ted Cathcart himself.

The volunteer contingent also includes students from the University of British Columbia who do projects here every year as part of their course work. Civil engineering students, for instance, designed and built the shallow-soil trellises and the mobile worktables that allow the handicapped to do garden work from their wheelchairs. Land and Food

Systems students have researched suitable crops and interviewed recipients to find out their needs and wishes. In 2009, the little rooftop garden produced 560 kilograms of fresh fruit, vegetables, and herbs. The food was given to needy women at the YWCA's off-site program at Crabtree Corner, in the heart of the Downtown Eastside, statistically the poorest neighbourhood in Canada.

"Food is huge here," says Nancy Cameron, the manager of the Crabtree Corner facility, which provides housing, childcare, counselling and many other services for disadvantaged women and their families. "We feed 200 people every day, and we're constantly buying food. And food is huge for our families, too. No matter how good a budgetter you are, on welfare you don't have enough money to eat." The crisp, fresh produce from the rooftop garden is like an injection of cash to Crabtree Corner – and an injection of delight to its clients. "Oh yes," said one woman, beaming. "When I was growing up in the country, this was the way food used to taste."

Crabtree Corner has other groups of UBC students doing an entirely different set of CSL programs.

"I've got three CSL projects happening right now," says Nancy Cameron. "One is a piece of research on child obesity. We've seen that obesity is an issue, but we don't have any capacity to do research." But the students do – and designing the research, seeing it through the ethics committee, carrying it out, and analyzing the results is a rich educational experience.

The second project at Crabtree Corner involves student dieticians working with Aboriginal grandparents who find themselves raising small children. The babies are often affected by various forms of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and many of the grandparents, who are in their 60s and 70s, have food-related health problems like diabetes themselves. The students' task is to help the grandparents to achieve better nutrition for both themselves and the children, using Crabtree's industrial kitchen as their lab.

The students and the grandparents aren't always an easy fit.

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"When I meet with the students beforehand, I talk about the demographics of our clients," says Nancy Cameron. "I remind them that you can't be saying to these people, 'Oh, go and shop at an organic store.' They have no money to be buying good food. So understand that. You can't talk about food that they'll never have, foods you won't find in the food bank. And that's such a learning for the students. They have to get their heads around exactly what it means to be poor."

In a third CSL project, several occupational therapy students are working as volunteers with a group of families on Saturdays – "just hanging out, helping the facilitator with the families. They eat together and then the whole group goes out and does an activity. It's very informal, but it creates very potent interactions with the families."

At Crabtree Corner, engineering students have also done small construction projects, and an earlier nutritional program designed by CSL students is still run by student volunteers. Another group of occupational therapy students even did a workshop for the Crabtree staff on self-care and burnout – a big issue in so demanding an environment. Since Crabtree Corner has no budget for professional development, the session was a unique and important contribution.

"That workshop was so good!" says Nancy. "It was well-researched, well-organized, interactive, and fun – and it was free!"

The students, in turn, learn some remarkable things about the nature and ownership of knowledge.

"There are lots of very bright women around here whose learning has come in other ways," Nancy explains. "Women are used to exposing their most inner deepest darkest secrets here. Yes, I drank and I used. Yes, my kids have been apprehended. Yes, I'm involved in a violent relationship. They're willing to work on these issues – and yet in some other, more affluent neighbourhoods people are so ashamed about that, they're so closed about these things that they cut themselves off from any support.

"The women here, it just humbles and amazes me how they're very frank, they're very honest, and they know that if they talk about all this, they're more able to get help. They utilize community resources to educate themselves – parenting groups, com-

munity kitchens, reading and reflection, talking to each other. It's very experiential, first-hand learning. These women care. They want to be good moms. They want to be healthy, that's important to them. It's important that their children eat well. They know the importance of exercise. They know that they drank and that caused difficulties for their child, and they're quite motivated to learn what they can to make a better life for their children.

"It's quite an eye-opener for some of the students. They'll be surprised at what the person might know about protein or trans-fats or tofu – but the women go to the food bank, and there's a nutritionist at the food bank. There's a lot of education in this community. There's tons of people sharing knowledge in this community. And the sharing of knowledge is empowering."

Crabtree Corner tends to transform students. They think differently about the people who are caught up in poverty, alcoholism, abandonment, homelessness, addiction, the sex trade. They view the society around them through different lenses.

"The Downtown Eastside has such a bad reputation, you know," says Nancy Cameron, "but I would say 95% of the students go away saying, 'Wow, it's really not that bad,' or 'This is a great community.' It really dispels so many of the stereotypes about the community and the members of the community."

Both at Crabtree Corner and at the rooftop garden, the students have been invaluable – but Ted Cathcart recalls that the relationship with the university took some tuning.

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"The first couple of years were near-disasters," he says. "If I had had my own engineers build the compost box, it would have taken a couple of guys three or four hours. Instead, it took a couple of guys to supervise the students for three days, plus myself, plus running around for materials – so it was hugely expensive in terms of our time. But I did support it because I did believe in community learning initiatives."

In part, the problem was timing and management. The students had no team leader, and they visited the site, created and critiqued the design, and built the project – all in 20 hours crammed into January and February. When the program was changed to allow projects to be designed in the fall and built in the winter, the program began to find its feet. Since then, says Ted, "It's just gotten better and better. The students' professionalism has increased year by year by year, and what we've gotten out of it as a host organization is projects that are much more in line with what we would want."

Susan Nesbit is the civil engineering professor whose students have been working with the YWCA – and she's quick to agree that it's not only the students who have been learning; she's been learning too. In 2006, teaching a course on technology and society, she responded to a call for CSL proposals issued by the director of the UBC-Community Learning Initiative, Dr. Margo Fryer. Dr. Nesbit suspected that CSL would have real pedagogical benefits, and she believed that students should "give something back" to the community that was supporting them.

Engineering education, she notes, has hardly changed since World War II and is now experiencing intense debate about its procedures and purposes. The traditional model is rooted in science and analysis and shies away from concerns with ethics and values, but that stance is no longer viable. She quotes educational critic David Orr to the effect that most of humanity's major problems are related to science and technology, and most of them were created by people educated in universities. It follows that engineers need a fuller understanding of the context in which they work, the way decisions are made, the social purposes that they serve, and so on.

So she and Margo Fryer devised courses that allowed Margo's community and regional planning graduate students to lead teams of engineering undergraduates in working on – and reflecting on – real projects designed for real clients. The clients included the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Garden, and Telus World of Science, Vancouver's scien-

tific educational centre, as well as the YWCA. At first, the CSL component was clearly an add-on, time-consuming, rushed, and constricted. But it proved to be a powerful learning experience for everyone involved – and the students loved it.

Today, Nesbit's students see their course as being mainly about CSL, with all the traditional course material as secondary enhancements. They continue to love it. In the fall, students enroll online to volunteer for community placements – and the most attractive placements are claimed within 45 seconds of the website's opening. In the fall term, the student teams meet with the clients, research the clients' needs, and develop proposals.

"It was a real project with real challenges," says Tanner Watteyne, one of Nesbit's students. The project and its components, some of them nerve-wracking, closely echoed professional practice. "We did an oral presentation to the organization and our mentor and teachers. We all got dressed up in our fancy suits – and there was actually something pretty high at stake because if your project wasn't accepted by your client, the alternative was an essay unrelated to the project."

"Yes," says Sam LaRoche, Tanner's colleague. "As engineers, we enjoy a technical report over an essay any day!"

The most impressive feature of the students' analysis of their experience is their reflections on matters – like leadership – that are not normally part of an engineering education. Their group, which worked on a project for Science World, did not appoint a leader. Instead it operated by consensus, with all members finding their own niches. Other groups did appoint leaders and proceeded more quickly and efficiently, but without the same level of learning for participants – and, say Sam and Tanner, without necessarily arriving at results as good as they might have if they'd had "everyone's ideas in the bucket."

They had learned, they said, that real life projects are messy and complicated, and that issues like sustainability and social justice cannot be excluded from their professional practice as engineers. Their marks were a blend of an overall grade given to their whole team by Dr. Nesbit, and an individual grade assigned to them anonymously by the other team members.

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Was it a good way to learn?

"Oh, phenomenal!"

It sounded as though they were enjoying their educations.

"Oh, definitely! Both the material that we're learning and the way we're learning it."

Up on his roof, his hands dirty, Ted Cathcart smiles.

"What is the value of us growing food in a rooftop garden?" he asks rhetorically. "The business model is not simple. The value is not just money." The garden absorbed 1,200 volunteer hours last year and produced 560 kg of fresh produce – and the food budget of Crabtree Corner dropped by $1,000 a year. But that's not the true value.

He ticks it off – the social aspects of a community garden and how people interact. The therapeutic value for the mental health outpatients who work in the garden every Tuesday afternoon. The impact of that type of therapy as the raw material for an academic research project. What people learn about managing and organizing volunteers. What volunteers learn about marketing, about communications, about the impact of fresh food on self-esteem. What people learn about themselves and their relationships to others.

What the garden produces is not just produce.

"We're not growing food," Ted says. "We're growing community."

3. THUNDER BAY: THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FOOD SUPPLY

"What we're doing," says Connie Nelson, "is playing jazz with the local food system."

Dr. Connie Nelson is Professor of Social Work, former Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, and director of the Food Security Research Network at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. But the Network, she quickly explains, is not a bureaucratic structure, and she does not really "direct" it. It is not highly-structured, top-down, rigidly-organized. It includes the university, numerous faculty members and students, and a huge array of community partners, all brought together around the issue of food security for Northwestern Ontario. Like jazz players, they are interpreting the same melody – but they are all doing their own riffs.

The network began in 2005, with the McConnell Foundation's call for proposals from universities wishing to do CSL projects. Connie had never seen a CSL program organized around a multi-faceted community issue, and it occurred to her that the question of food security was timely, urgent, and multi-dimensional. Oil prices had soared to $77 a barrel, trade and commerce were slowing down, and fields were lying fallow because farmers couldn't afford to ship their crops.

Connie convened a meeting of potential partners and interested faculty members. When the Food Security Research Network was created, it already included 14 community partners. Its participants took the view that faculty members with CSL projects should be directly involved with their community partners, rather than working through an

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intermediary staff person. The core of those projects would be the relationships between faculty, students, and community partners. The faculty, says Connie, would be "out doing the messiness of community work."

For its university champions, the core of the project would be what the faculty would discover from this direct experience. The students, after all, come and go. The faculty stay. If they incorporate in next year's teaching the knowledge that they absorbed this year, then the education of the students who enroll next year – and the year after, and the year after – will be enriched by the discoveries of this year's participants. Knowledge accumulates, and the faculty member becomes a custodian of what the students and the community partners have learned together. That institutional memory is the way that the university itself grows and develops not only in its relationship with its community, but in its relationship to knowledge itself.

"The community is bringing a new source of knowledge into the classroom," Connie says. "So the student is not only learning from the textbook and the instructor, which is the typical way that 99.9% of courses are taught. But what we are saying is that the community has a legitimate body of knowledge." The Network gives that body of knowledge an appropriate role in the educational process.

And the overall project would be not just the accumulation and transmission of knowledge, but the creation and development of a secure local food system – from farmers to processors and millers, from wheat fields to flour to bakeries, from gardening to distribution and marketing and preparation. The system would reflect the huge importance of the Aboriginal peoples in Northwestern Ontario – their traditional foods, the incursions of industry into the lands that historically sustained them, the difficulties faced by "fly-in" communities like Big Trout Lake and Fort Severn that are connected to the rest of Canada only by bush planes and winter ice roads.

In fact, the new food system would reflect the whole independent-minded reality of Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario, a chrysalid province with a simmering secession movement, as distinct and different from Toronto and the Golden Horseshoe as Prince Edward Island or the Yukon. The process of developing the new food system would be driven not by organizational charts, but by need and vision, and it would be energized by the university through the medium of CSL.

Once a year there would be a forum bringing together all the participants – the farmers and gardeners, the people from the fly-in communities, the processors, the retailers, the students, the faculty, the researchers. The forum would be planned a year in advance, to ensure that people from remote corners of the vast non-province of Northwestern Ontario could arrange to be there. Together, all the players would share what they had learned – what worked, what didn't, what needed to come next.

Driven by need and vision, nourished by new relationships, the growth of the Food Security Research Network would be as organic as the advance of spruce trees into an abandoned pasture. The network would be, says Connie Nelson, a construct based on complexity theory. No boss. No director. No management. Every point is the centre. Every participant is a leader. Every chapter is Chapter One.

Chapter One: The Foods of the Forest

The essence of food security is sophisticated forest management.

But what is a forest in the first place? And what is "management?"

For industrial society, the boreal forest that stretches across northern Ontario is a source of raw materials that can be transformed into marketable products – lumber, paper, minerals, fuel. For environmentalists, the forest is the habitat of plants and animals, a community of life, one of the world's greatest carbon sinks. For the Government of Ontario, the forest is a political problem, a disputed arena where tree-huggers and tree-cutters duke it out for the control of forest wealth.

For the First Nations, says Joseph LeBlanc, the forest is a community, a habitat, a home.

Joseph LeBlanc is a soft-spoken, brush-cut Odawa from Manitoulin Island who is taking a PhD in forest science, a discipline which at Lakehead covers a lot of intellectual terrain. He is writing a dissertation on *Aboriginal Perspectives, Food Security and Natural Resource Management in Ontario's Northern Boreal Forest*. The major themes in his research include environmental contamination, the impact of industrial activity in the woodlands, mapping the uses the Aboriginal peoples make of the land, and the marketing of forest products other than timber, particularly food.

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All of which sounds like academic abstraction – but it's not. Joseph LeBlanc would not put it this way, but his work is really about the continuing conquest of Indigenous peoples by European capital and technology. Take the issue of contamination, for instance. Woodland that has been sprayed with pesticides represents a source of food that has been taken from the Aboriginal peoples. The "competing species" eliminated from a pulpwood plantation include plants like blueberries – and even if some blueberries survive, the people have no confidence in their healthfulness. On the economic side, industrial forest practices leave trappers' cabins intact, but worthless because clear-cutting destroys the surrounding habitat that once supported fur-bearing animals.

When food choices change, culture changes too. The community's stories, says Joseph, "are written on the land and in the animals." When conservation officers ban the hunting of caribou, both food and knowledge disappear because Indigenous peoples have no need to maintain their once-sophisticated understanding of the haunts and habits of the animals. Seeking to preserve both food sources and culture, Joseph and his collaborators are using GPS and GIS to map the foodsheds in the forest – the places where forest residents find moose, berries, fish, wild rice and other foods.

Armed with such information, Aboriginal leaders will be much better prepared for land-use negotiations. Ontario's maps, says Joseph, are "static," reflecting a reductionist view of the land and the forest as simply a warehouse of raw materials. The First Nations need to counter with new, more sophisticated maps that reveal the fluid, interdependent web of forest life.

These are not abstract or theoretical disagreements. Recently, for instance, the Ontario government announced a progressive-sounding forest policy that would allow industrial development in just half of the far northern forest, while setting aside the other half as pristine parkland.

"So what's left for the First Nations?" Joseph asks quietly. "Half of it is commercial forest that can be sprayed, or mined, or made into roads, and the other half is parks, where we can't go in and harvest food. The promise completely ignores the value of the forest to the people who live there, which is available and accessible food sources."

The provincial policy represents exuberant ignorance. The antidote to ignorance is knowledge. The knowledge is under construction.

Chapter One: An Imaginary Garden – With Real Veggies in It

The essence of food security is a good method of connecting people with their food.

"I'm here anyway," shrugs Jane. "I like doing it. Why not?"

Jane is a lady of the night who patrols a stretch of Simpson Street in the small hours. When she's not otherwise occupied, she likes to weed the apparent community garden under the streetlights – 2:00 a.m., 4:00 a.m., who cares?

The garden, its creators insist, is not a garden, though it looks like one. It is a park. Actually, it's not a park either. It's an idea – an idea about building community, about revitalizing an old, neglected neighbourhood by bringing people together to grow vegetables.

The Simpson-Ogden and East End district is the oldest part of the former city of Fort William. Like many old neighbourhoods, it has been largely abandoned by the prosperous middle class. Its declining and aging population has been plagued by high unemployment, low income, transience and homelessness, drugs, petty crime and other signs of social distress. In such circumstances, residents tend to draw in on themselves, isolated and fearful.

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Enter Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC), a United Way-funded initiative aimed at neighbourhood renewal. It had some funds available. One of its officers contacted Marg Stadey, a former Community Development Youth Worker in the neighbourhood and a member of the Food Security Research Network. Marg assembled half-a-dozen community residents, including Diane Lessie, Kathie LeBlanc, Ron Marsonet of Wesley United Church, and lifelong resident Genevieve Cernjul, who also worked in the neighbourhood at the NorWest Community Health Centre. The group applied to ANC – and in January 2006, won an $18,000 grant. There was only one catch: they had to spend the money by March. They decided to create gardens, starting with a backyard offered by one resident as the project's first communal space. They spent almost all the money on tools, equipment, soil, and seeds. Because people wander through the back lanes and talk over backyard fences, the movement soon spread.

"Connie Nelson and I had been doing CSL for years, but not formally, just by the seat of our pants," says Marg. "We hired two students part-time, and they did an incredible job. That first year we started 28 new gardens."

Gardening was once an important activity among the European immigrant families who dominated the area, an important bond within the community. As the Veggie Garden Project took shape, gardens began sprouting like newly-fertilized seeds. People began talking over their fences, cleaning up the alleys and planting them with flowers and vines – what one writer called "small, random acts of urban renewal."

In 2007, the Project needed plants badly and had no place to start them. The Lakehead University greenhouse started hundreds of tomato, squash, and broccoli plants and contributed them. Meanwhile, Marg Stadey's niece, Sandy, was working at the Thunder Bay Correctional Centre, which has its own greenhouse. An inmate whose home was in Simpson-Ogden saw a story in the paper about the Veggie Garden Project and asked Sandy whether the prison could contribute some plants. Marg came in to work one morning to find the floor of her office covered with tidily potted plants.

Similarly, a story about CSL in the Lakehead University paper caught the attention of an alumnus who owned one of three vacant lots right on Simpson Street. He sought Marg out and ultimately bought the adjoining lot and provided the Project with a ten-year free lease, renewable for another ten years. The third lot belonged to another Simpson Street

business called Northern Windows, which simply gave its lot to the Project.

So the centrepiece of the new initiative would be a park occupying most of a block and fill-led not with flowers, grass, and trees, but with vegetables. The project's new landlord eng-aged landscape architect Warner Schwar to plan the park, and Marg's nephew, Ken Sta-dey, a mature student of civil engineering at Lakehead, laid it out on the ground. Over the next few months, Ken's four sons, all students, pitched in to build the actual garden plots.

"So in a sense," says Marg, "the whole layout that's been done so far is a non-official CSL."

Volunteers rolled up their sleeves, broke up concrete, hauled away junk, planted the garden beds. One side of the park was bounded by the blank sidewall of Gilbert's Furni-ture Store, and to encourage residents to draw inspiration from their community's ear-lier achievements, local artist Brian Nieminen painted a stunning mural of three arches, each framing an historical scene, called "Portals into the Past."
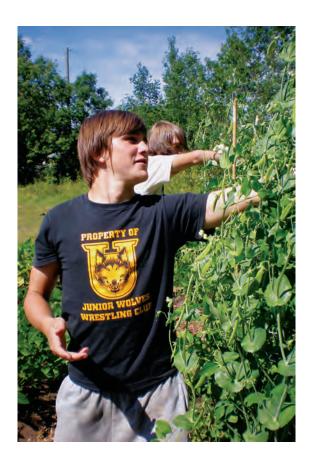
It is hard to specify where CSL fits into all this because it is so pervasive. Students have done research to determine the needs of community members and served as admin-istrative assistants. They have gone into the local elementary schools to engage pupils in planting and caring for tiny tomato plants, which then are re-planted in the garden park. During the winter, two students organized a roaring three day Snow Sculpture Festival that greatly raised the public profile of the park. Another CSL project re-orga-nized the Project's communications, not only by putting up a website and developing stronger media relations, but also by erecting bulletin boards and newsletter distribu-tion boxes – because many of the people in the neighbourhood don't have computers, telephones or (in some cases) homes.

Two students now work with Sandy Stadey in the greenhouse at what's still known as "the DJ" – District Jail – and prisoners come out to work in the park. One of Connie Nelson's social work classes did a sophisticated evaluation of the garden park project and its impact.

And, says Marg Stadey, the garden park has demonstrated the power of a com-pletely different concept of a park. Why shouldn't it be full of fruit and vegetables? Why shouldn't park users be able to reach up to pick and eat an organic apple? Why

shouldn't a park be a place where citizens do more than throw a frisbee or walk the dog? Why shouldn't it be a focus of community, a place where citizens come together to work for the common good?

"The only way to build community is to get together and act together," she says. "We have a rejuvenating neighbourhood now – and we know the City of Thunder Bay is watching because we've done something that they haven't been able to do. In the end, this could be a huge gift that CSL will have given to Thunder Bay."

Chapter One: The Willow Springs Creative Centre

The essence of food security is art and horticulture. And inclusion.

Willow Springs Creative Centre is a small former general store in a village outside Thunder Bay, decorated by a gaudily-painted 1950 Vanguard sedan up on blocks in front of it. It was once a co-op store serving Thunder Bay's large Finnish community. Inside, Judi Vinni and Nicole McWhirter are presenting a slide show and laughing a lot.

Willow Springs actually grew from willow twigs, which Judi and her friend Lisa Campbell had learned to fashion into twig furniture. Others became interested, and the two found themselves giving frequent workshops. A painter and a potter joined their group, which soon needed retail space to sell their work. The old co-op store was available, and in 2001 they bought it. Lisa Campbell worked for the local John Howard Society, and the Willow Springs group soon found themselves presenting workshops in halfway houses, in correctional centres, in the schools, and for at-risk youth.

Art for rehabilitation. Art for high school credit, for socialization, for therapy. The workshops always included food, gardening, and cooking. Gardening is also an art and a therapy. Willow Springs hooked up with Mitchell Hewson, a celebrated horticultural therapist and educator from Guelph, and began offering therapeutic gardening programs.

One day Judi had a revelation.

"This isn't a retail business," she declared. "This is a non-profit organization. We could give it to the community." And they did.

Judi and Nicole are laughing because their slides show their experiences running an innovative gardening program for intellectually-disabled adults living in group homes. The homes are rented, so residents can't dig up the soil. Instead, Mitchell Hewson designed large frames that look like folding sawhorses, with garden beds screwed between the legs at wheelchair height. Knocked down, they are easily transported in a pickup truck. Shop classes at three local high schools built them, and Willow Springs workers delivered them to 11 different residences, setting them up in yards or even on paved driveways. Group-home staffers oversaw such tasks as daily watering, while the Willow Spring workers came by regularly for planting, weeding, fertilizing, and harvesting.

The slide show illustrates the results – not the plants, which were lovely, but the intense concentration and the beaming smiles on the faces of the residents, the neighbours who stopped to talk, the meals the residents prepared at harvest time. One of the residents demanded a high-five every time she planted a seed. Another – who normally spent his days dropping pennies into a can – meticulously sifted and cleaned the soil. Yet another was so happy to be outside that he cried every time he worked in the garden.

And where does CSL fit into all this? As with the Veggie Garden Project, students – not only from the university, but also from the local college and the high schools – are so knitted into Willow Springs that their contributions are inseparable from the Centre's work.

Students, says Judi, are putting the portable gardening program into a manual and a kit that will become a product for Willow Springs to sell. A student from Sault Ste. Marie is exporting the program to her home town. Students serve as administrative assistants and help artists with their classes and presentations. Students research funding sources,

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write applications, represent Willow Springs to funding agencies. Students have created the forms for volunteer and artist recruitment. Indeed, Nicole's job includes overseeing a platoon of 15 students.

Connie Nelson's social work students mounted a theatre project with Willow Springs and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, working on an original play, called *Sight Unseen*, about what it's like to be blind.

Chapter One is learning to see like a blind person.

Chapter One is political science students developing a community food charter. It is business administration students studying the potential for a local organic food market. It is sociology students investigating the wide variation in the cost of milk among northern communities.

Chapter One is a pervasive local food movement growing as organically as the advance of spruce trees into an abandoned pasture.

Chapter One begins tomorrow.

4. TROIS RIVIÈRES: THE UNIVERSITY IN THE STREETS

Jeanne Charbonneau leads the way through the door and out onto the roof. This is the top of a narrow commercial tower built in 1929. It's ten stories high, a narrow stack of old red-brown brick in the heart of downtown Trois Rivières, Québec. The view is splendid: the wide, grey St. Lawrence, the red-and-white Coast Guard ship moored to the riverside quay, the church towers, the leafless trees, and the old buildings of centre-ville, none of them as tall as this one.

Jeanne isn't quite tiptoeing, but she's hushed and wound-up. Enthusiastic, youthful, her long blonde hair rippling in the light breeze off the river, she's as excited as a kid exploring a forbidden space. At this moment, she has no right to be showing visitors the view from the roof of this building, but in a few days, when the deal closes, she'll be the boss here. The building will belong to Vire-Vert, the social enterprise organization that Jeanne heads – and Vire-Vert plans to turn it into something astonishing: the first Écol'Hôtel in Canada.

The first – what?

In French, the name Écol'Hôtel is a triple play on words, a blend of "ecology," and "école" (school) and "hotel." This will be a deeply green, fully-functioning hotel which will also be a school for green management, particularly in the hospitality business. It will be the region's only boutique hotel. The building will be renovated to LEED Gold standards, the first such renovation in the region, and it will instantly become one of the first really green schools in Canada. Its ecological commitment will permeate the organization – green cleaning products, local organic food and fair trade coffee in its restaurants, a green rooftop garden tended by the workers' children.

"We will be a school for all the topics that are directly related to our experience, like hotel and restaurant management," says Jeanne, "and also for the ones that may not be so directly related, like marketing, accounting, graphic design, architecture, engineering, and other topics that usually don't have any contact with the community sector. This is a community project, that's its big strength." Business students, she notes, often do "case studies" of imaginary small and medium-sized companies. Here they can study a real one.

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Vire-Vert is a development company devoted to sustainability and community advancement. Its preferred employees will be school-leavers and people re-entering the work force. Every guest room will be a unique showcase for furnishings created by local artisans and artworks by local artists – and the artwork and the furniture will always be for sale.

You like the bed? You like the sculpture, the quilt? Oui, nous acceptons VISA.

L'Écol'Hôtel is nurtured by Québec's uniquely supportive policy towards *l'économie sociale*, the social economy, neither public nor private – a sector largely ignored elsewhere in the country. This is the fun sector, where people use economic tools to pursue non-economic values. Charities, universities, co-operatives, foundations, hospitals, cultural enterprises, amateur sports – this is a huge, powerful sector of the economy about which most governments have no policies or ideas whatsoever. In Québec, however, the provincial government includes a social economy office and regards a strong social economy as a specific government objective. The province supports non-profits through grants, indirect subsidies and access to credit, and regularly consults with the civil society umbrella organization, the *Chantier de l'économie sociale*, about expanding and enhancing the place of the social economy in the life of the province.

In keeping with the values of the social economy, l'Écol'Hôtel will re-invest its profits in local community development projects, and the funds will help Trois Rivières become self-sufficient and self-financing. A $10 million project, l'Écol'Hôtel is expected to generate $8 – 12 million in direct benefits over its first five years of operation – and the spin-off benefits will be much greater than that.

A major feature of the project is its relationship with local educational institutions, especially the Université du Québec à Trois Rivières (UQTR). L'Écol'Hôtel looks to UQTR for training for its workers – and in return, provides innumerable CSL opportunities for students. In the spring of 2009, the hotel project had 20 students working on it; in the fall, the number had risen to 40, including some from the Trois Rivières CÉGEP, the local community college. The following year, after acquiring the building, it expected to train up to 100, including students from a private institution, Le Collège Laflèche. So many students are involved – and so constantly – that l'Écol'Hôtel has a human resources officer specifically dedicated to managing student participation.

In this model of CSL, it is the community partner that elicits and shapes the students' involvement.

"We start with the needs," explains Rémi Tremblay, the administrator responsible for UQTR's CSL activities. Jeanne Charbonneau and her team determine what tasks need to be accomplished, and then meet with professors to see whether the objectives of the courses and the community project can be aligned. They make the necessary adjustments together, and then the Vire-Vert team goes into the classroom to discuss the opportunity with the students, who may then volunteer. Part-way through the term, the students present their findings to a Vire-Vert team, who provide criticism and guidance. The character of the final presentation is determined by the mentor and the professor.

There's plenty to do. L'Écol'Hôtel's target market is composed of art and culture lovers, eco-tourists, academic tourists, government, unions, not-for-profits, and socially and environmentally aware travellers in general. To attract them, Vire-Vert needed marketing plans. The first of these was not a success, Jeanne says dryly; it was directed towards residents of Trois Rivières, who are unlikely to stay in a hotel in their own city unless their spouses have tossed them out. A later version examined the prospects for vacation packages to be offered in partnership with other local facilities and attractions.

"We want to change the world," says Jeanne Charbonneau. "We ask students, 'What is sustainable development?' We want to empower people, we think everyone can contribute in their own way." L'Écol'Hôtel intends to be carbon-neutral, offsetting its energy use by purchasing carbon credits – and Vire-Vert would love to create a local market in carbon credits. It has already created a Centre for Sustainable Transport and offered

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workshops in the CÉGEP's logistics and transportation program. The workshops, says Jeanne, made sustainable transport "hot and sexy," and now students in the program are required to take a course in it.

In the same way, Jeanne would like to offer a course in sustainable management at UQTR. Sitting across the table, Rémi Tremblay nods his head. It sounds good to him.

"We don't have that course," he says. "So the knowledge in that case comes from the community to the university because the university is not there yet. And it's the same thing for other topics. The knowledge is coming from the community because those fields of interest don't exist in the university." He smiles. "At least, not yet."

From the perspective of CSL studies, l'Écol'Hôtel represents a union of university and community as seamless as the joining of two streams to form a brook. The project is created by both partners, includes characteristics of both partners, is achieved by both partners, yet stands alone as a fusion of its originators. And the students move back and forth between them as fluidly as trout browsing for insects.

L'Écol'Hôtel is known at UQTR as a "Picom" – a Projet d'intervention communautaire, based on what the university describes as "the major project" that "mobilizes the community efforts in our regions" – namely the revitalization of a part of Québec that has suffered greatly from de-industrialization, high unemployment, and the out-migration of youth.

Picoms come in three types. A Picom *institutional* course places a student with an interdisciplinary team in an area outside his main concentration. It's demanding – it requires 270 hours of work by the student – but it earns double credit. A Picom *disciplinary* course may be a graduate or undergraduate intervention or research project, and it must produce a useful result for a community partner, but in essence, it is a riff on a regular course. The third type of Picom is a big, bold innovation known as a community-university "carrefour" or "intersection." A carrefour is a complex, multi-faceted project that requires a deep and sustainable commitment of several years from both partners. Such carrefours, says a university document, "involve major and significant projects that can be described as social innovations" such as l'Écol'Hôtel.

A carrefour is a dramatic commitment by a university which frankly recognizes that its community partners "have always considered the university to be indifferent to their fate." It therefore pledges itself to "re-center our efforts on the University's true mission," and specifically notes "that community circles constitute a rich source of knowledge for social innovation and sustainable development."

L'Écol'Hôtel is one of four carrefours that are already up and running. The others are a healthy communities program, a project to create a 62 square kilometre regional park focussed on eco-tourism (and thus a natural complement to the hotel), and "Université de la Rue," a Street University. CSL initiatives are generally about the university moving into the community – but the Université de la Rue is a spectacularly bold example of the opposite movement, where knowledge generated in the streets enters the classrooms of the university.

An important figure in the social safety network of Québec is the "street worker," a social worker who is consistently present in the streets to support and intervene on behalf of the disadvantaged, particularly young people. In keeping with the systems of *l'économie sociale*, street workers are supported by public funds that are administered by non-profit organizations. They hang out in the streets, in the bars, the parks, the restaurants. They become known, they develop trust, and they make themselves 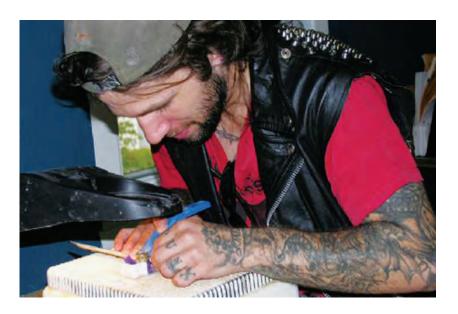available to help when they're asked. The job requires a unique blend of sensitivity, forcefulness, specialized knowledge, tact, and imagination.

"The streets show us what reality we're gonna work with for the day," says Michel Purcell, a short, bald powerhouse of a man who lives and works in Louiseville, not far from Trois Rivières. "We go there, and we make ourselves available, and the streets show us what the streets have to show." What they show is poverty, drugs, joblessness, violence,

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alcoholism, mental health issues, gambling, prostitution – the whole range of human misfortune. Michel has been a street worker for 30 years, 16 of them in Louiseville.

In the past, he says, "the way we learned was always with a mentor. Go in the street with an older street worker, and he showed us the job. Like an apprentice. And that's the way the knowledge has always been transferred. Now we'd like to formalize the whole thing. But that's never been done."

Now, if you want to train people to be street workers, where do you go to find the relevant knowledge base?

To the street. To the street worker.

In Trois Rivières itself, the responsibility for street work rests with an organization called Point de Rue. Its director, Philippe Malchelosse, once studied at UQTR with a professor named Michel Daigneault. One day, Daigneault called him, concerned about the high turnover among university graduates placed as street workers at Point de Rue. Malchelosse agreed – he had often gone to the university to talk about street kids, but somehow the reality of the streets wasn't getting through to the students.

And thus began the idea of a program specifically designed to train street workers. A carrefour that would integrate action research, community intervention, and experiential learning. A carrefour that would unite university faculty and students, street workers, and street youth in a shared attempt to identify and transmit the essence of effective street work. A Street University, a Université de la Rue.

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The carrefour began in 2006 with a local committee, enlarged two years later into a "consultation table," an advisory group with members from many parts of Québec. By 2010, the committee had a proposal for a "micro" version of the program awaiting university approval. Michel Purcell described its three components as formation (which is the street workers' contribution), intervention (headed by Point de Rue) and research (undertaken by the university faculty). If it worked, said Michel, it would lead to a certificate program – and perhaps it would yield a template that could be transferable to workers involved with other marginal or excluded groups: gang members, addicts, sex workers, the homeless.

The proposal, said a Picom document, would "call on community organizations as sources of expertise and knowledge." And among the teachers of the course would be people like Michel himself, people with great experiential knowledge, but without any significant academic background. So the university's rules would have to change to accept non-academic qualifications, recognizing that this was a "pathbreaking" proposal for a program without parallel anywhere in Québec or Canada. Indeed, some of the training would be provided by street youth themselves – a sort of reverse CSL, in which graduates of the school of street experience exert their influence within the unfamiliar milieu of the academy.

The use of street workers as instructors is not entirely without precedent. At the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, similar courses are taught by Gilles Lamoureux, a pioneering street worker whom Michel describes as "an icon in Québec." Lamoureux sits at the consultation table for the UQTR program.

And what does all this have to do with CSL? En passant, the development of the Université de la Rue has involved various Picom projects, and clearly there will be many more. A graduate student of Michel Daigneault, for instance, spent a summer in Louiseville hanging with street kids and making a video, which she submitted as a "field of study report" in lieu of a thesis – but also presented as an outdoor event to the street culture of Louiseville.

But the essence of the Université de la Rue is not about the superficial mechanisms of CSL. It is about the deeper reaches of CSL, where the university and the community jointly embrace their children – both the children of privilege and the children of the street. The development of young people is the fundamental obligation of the street worker and the professor alike – and despite all the difficulties, sometimes that unity shines out like a beacon in the night.

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5. THE FUTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY

How do people learn?

One of the most influential accounts of human learning is the Experiential Learning Model developed by David Kolb of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. Kolb's model consists of a cycle with four basic elements: concrete experience, reflection on the experience, the development of abstract concepts based upon the reflections, and testing the new concepts against renewed experience. The result, says Kolb, is a "spiral of learning" that can begin at any point in the cycle.

About 70% of learners start with a concrete experience. They approach learning with their senses and their feelings, and work from concrete examples to general principles. The educational system, however, is focussed at the opposite pole, the realm of abstract concepts. It's designed by and for people who first seek a logical, systematic, theoretical understanding, then move from those general principles to concrete examples.

Naturally, people who succeed in the system – particularly in universities and colleges – are overwhelmingly oriented towards abstract concepts; indeed, they often define real knowledge as *consisting* of abstract concepts. Sir Ken Robinson, who is both an incisive critic of education and also a distinguished academic, remarks that academics live almost entirely in their heads, with little reference to their senses or feelings and tend to regard their bodies mainly as devices for carrying their heads from one meeting to the next. Hence the cliché of the absent-minded professor whose whole life is essentially an out-of-body experience.

That's what makes CSL a disruptive innovation – "upsetting," as Laura Janara remarked. CSL engages all four elements of learning – experience, reflection, conceptualization and testing. That's also what makes CSL so exciting for so many students: it calls on all their methods of learning, speaks to every dimension of their being, and draws them deeply into the "spiral of learning" that characterizes a fully-consummated learning experience.

The abstract orientation of academic culture creates a powerful set of professional norms that govern a professor's access to promotion, tenure, salary increases, and research grants. That's why the Université de la Rue program, says Michel Daigneault, was proposed to the governing bodies of UQTR not by the academics directly involved, but by two sympathetic administrators, Rémi Tremblay and the dean of undergraduate education, Sylvain Delisle. Within the university, Michel smiles, he and his colleague Lyne Douville are like street kids themselves; in the academic context, they're deviants.

Here, then, is one of the key factors that really works in a CSL program: strong support from senior administrators. At UBC, Margo Fryer knows that CSL is enthusiastically supported by President Stephen Toope and Provost David Farrar. At StFX, Academic Vice-President Mary McGillivray admits she was initially skeptical – she thought that the immersion model was "political tourism" – but now, "I'm totally sold. Within a very few years, CSL will be seen as integral to the institution and integral to what we do." At Lakehead, the driving force behind the CSL program is Connie Nelson, who has held several top administrative positions within the university herself.

Implicit within this administrative support is the freedom to fail. Academic culture is not very tolerant of failure, but CSL programs are, by their nature, innovative – and innovations are, by their nature, untried and uncertain. A string of unsuccessful experiments is often a necessary pre-condition of great success. The role of the administrator in CSL is to create a safe space for faculty innovation and experimentation. The role of the faculty member is to bring students and community partners into that safe space and to forge an alliance that proceeds with courage, passion, and imagination.

When CSL succeeds, all the partners share the benefits. Students are galvanized, faculty are re-vitalized, the capabilities of community partners are increased, the community partners provide better service to their constituents, and all the participants learn together. Good CSL projects actually generate new knowledge and new understandings, which is a central component of the university mandate – even if the new knowledge is not necessarily peer-reviewed. Students involved with CSL report that the experience

strengthens their self-confidence and helps develop their skills in communication, teamwork, negotiation, and managing interpersonal relationships – all of which are difficult or impossible to teach in a regular classroom. In addition, because good CSL programs invariably include a component of reflection and reporting, CSL builds student capabilities in analysis, reflection, writing, and presentation. These gains are permanent. Other skills and knowledge will become obsolete, but these are always pertinent.

And when CSL fails?

CSL rarely fails outright; a CSL venture almost always leaves something of value for some of the players. But the environment in which CSL takes place has some toxic elements that participants must often work to overcome. Chief among these is a long history of academic exploitation of the community – a history which continues to this day in weaker forms of CSL and is not entirely absent even in the most powerful variants. All too often, academic researchers have approached communities in much the spirit of an entomologist examining insects and – having taken up a good deal of community time and energy – have vanished into the peer-reviewed ether without providing any benefits or even feedback to the community. This is really "knowledge piracy," to adapt a term from Vandana Shiva. The researchers extract knowledge about the community that could be of great value to community members – but the community hears no more from the sociologist than the insect hears from the entomologist.

As a result, communities have become wary of academic incursions and skeptical that "partnership" is the right word for their relationships with the university. Michel Purcell's board of directors in Louiseville initially rejected the idea of working on the Université de la Rue because they felt they'd been exploited in the past. Some Aboriginal communities in Northwestern Ontario absolutely refuse any relationship with universities. In *The Unheard Voices*, Stoeker and Tryon mention two PhD theses in the US that had to be abandoned because Aboriginal communities withdrew from participation part way through the research.

Consider, for example, the issues around time and scheduling. In course-based CSL, the student's commitment is generally to 20 hours of community work in one semester – barely enough time for the student to become oriented, let alone to be useful. The relationship is necessarily superficial, and so is the learning.

The academic calendar provides an additional problem. CSL activities are often sched-uled for spring break – a timing which is simply foisted on the community partner by the university. The community group has no power over the schedule at all. A day-care centre, for instance, may have a desperate need for help in the summer, when children are not in school, but the "partnership" does not impose any obligation on the uni-versity to provide help when it's actually needed. The toughest test of university com-mitment to CSL may well be whether the institutions can make significant changes of that kind. If they can, that capacity for institutional change may represent one of CSL's greatest achievements.

Weak CSL programs are often marked by a lofty absence of faculty engagement. In one such project in Ontario, students were assigned to a community centre and were graded on presentations to the faculty reflecting on their experiences. The community centre staff never saw the professor, never saw the student papers, and were never invited to the presentations. In effect, the "partners" operated in air-tight bubbles.

This project can hardly be called a success – but neither is it entirely a failure, since the students found their placements very rewarding, and the community centre ultimately hired two of the CSL students as full-time staff. A notable effect of even a poor CSL rela-tionship is that it often gives students their first exposures to the social economy. Many students don't initially know that organizations like these exist, or that they provide a range of satisfying activities – including career possibilities.

The common theme in these situations is that the university is firmly in the driver's seat – which is not what we usually mean by "partnership." In fact, what underlies such arrangements is the old familiar "charity" model of university-community engage-ment. But community organizations may also fail the relationship in surprising ways. Often the organization is unwilling to criticize the university for fear that it will lose its access to CSL placements. Organizations may not have the resources and may not have done the planning to maximize the benefits of CSL, and they may be reluctant to assert themselves in the company of high-powered intellectuals. Furthermore, they some-times do not really grasp the nature of the CSL process. The director of a small-town addiction centre was extremely proud of the success of his CSL initiative – but when pressed, he admitted that, yes, the students had really designed their own projects with-

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out much guidance from him or their professor, and no, the projects were not terribly well designed or executed, and ummm, the plans that emerged from the projects would indeed be expensive to implement, and, ah, since the organization was in a budget squeeze, there was no possibility the plans could go forward.

So why were the CSL placements a success? Because, said the director, they were good learning experiences for the students. And indeed they may have been – but if the experiences were only good for the students, they hardly met any of the objectives of CSL.

A CSL program that really attempts to address these issues soon departs quite dramatically from the charity template. It starts by looking for ways to address the community's needs rather than the university's. It makes longer time commitments to the community groups – not just 20 hours in one semester, but a year or even more. At Université de Sherbrooke, Simon Bolduc organizes teams of students who collectively provide 100 hours or more of service. In Trois Rivières, UQTR is making commitments for as much as five years.

CSL in Canada is in its infancy, but it has already shown that it can be incorporated in a wide range of disciplines. Not surprisingly, the largest number of CSL faculty are found in social service and the social sciences, but almost any course can be taught this way – not only engineering, forestry, agriculture, business, and other applied disciplines, but also such humanities as music, political theory, literature, and fine art. At the Université de Sherbrooke, says Simon Bolduc, the CSL coordinator, CSL is part of 24 courses spread over five faculties – in administration, social work, history, communications, science and law, for example. Many of the participants are graduate students. At Lakehead, says Connie Nelson, 17 different disciplines are involved. At StFX, 45 courses include a CSL component.

The disciplines can be surprising. At the University of Alberta, for instance, Dr. Elisabeth Herrmann offers a CSL-based course on modern Scandinavian literature. That literature often portrays crime, addiction, domestic violence, and so forth. To learn about these themes first hand, her students volunteer in women's shelters and similar organizations in Edmonton. As highly-developed welfare states, Dr. Herrmann says,

the Scandinavian countries are tempted to deny that such blemishes exist within them. What her students learn is not only that such realities exist even in highly caring societies, but also that works of the imagination may be more truthful than the alleged factual accounts issued by governments and officials.

At St. Francis Xavier, about 25% of students take part in CSL – and in an amazing array of contexts. Since the town's population is smaller than the StFX student body, CSL permeates the community. Fine art lecturer Murray Gibson partners with L'Arche to provide the experience of art creation to intellectually-disabled people living together in a group home. L'Arche also receives CSL students in computer science. Religious studies students provide aid and companionship to retired nuns in the local Bethany Home. Dr. Margo Watt offers a double-credit course in forensic psychology that places students in courtrooms, parole offices, transition houses, and correctional facilities from Penetanguishene, Ontario to Bermuda.

Human kinetics professor Angie Thompson has developed a low-cost, after-school fitness program operating in local schools and run almost entirely by Dr. Thompson's CSL students – and she has led an immersion CSL in Cuba. Accounting professor Mary Oxner regularly sends her students to help community groups with bookkeeping, cash management, and financial planning – and has led an immersion CSL in Romania. Through CSL, she says, her students "discover how the world really operates. It's not like the textbooks. The world is incomplete and messy."

StFX even has a three-credit, undergraduate course specifically in community service-learning. Interdisciplinary Studies 306 – Service Learning: Theory and Practice requires 30 hours of CSL along with active reflection and a final oral presentation. StFX has also developed a "student leader" program that enlists senior students with CSL experience to help administer the CSL program itself.

As a participant in the student leader program, Brittany Hachey – who graduated from StFX in 2010 – had as broad an experience of CSL as any student in the country. Her reflections on CSL are rich and stimulating.

Brittany did an immersion CSL in Grenada as well as CSL placements in three courses – mathematical concepts, developmental psychology, and abnormal psychology. In her first placements, she created math games for elementary school children and taught French to pre-schoolers. (An Acadian from Bathurst, NB, she's fully bilingual.) Her last placement involved providing social and recreational support to schizophrenics living in a group home.

"I knew that was going to be completely out of my comfort zone, which is probably the best way to learn," Brittany says. "But it was the reactions of others that really shocked me – all the stigmas associated with mental illness. And then I was really shocked to discover that I unconsciously had created stigmas about mental health within myself.

"Service-learning has really enriched my academic learning because, I think, it attaches to personal development. It's experiential learning, and while you're critically reflecting on your experience and trying to connect it to the classroom work, you also learn a lot of things about yourself personally. I got to learn about mental illness, but I also got to interact with it, one-on-one, and see how it really does affect people. And then – how did I handle it? How did I react to it? I learned interpersonal skills and leadership skills. I learned about the population groups I like to work with, the strengths I have as a leader, how to give due time to everything so that you're getting the best experience.

"Service-learning has taught me how to learn outside of an academic institution, how to continue my learning and develop as a community member. You don't have to be in a

classroom. Service-learning is almost like an independent learning project. I've learned that making mistakes is okay, that a degree of discomfort is okay."

Finally, as a CSL administrator, Brittany has learned from the experiences of others. Leading orientation sessions for new CSL students, talking about the pedagogy, trying to open them up, motivate them, show them how to reflect critically on their experiences – all of this has given her a deep, multi-faceted understanding of the complex phenomenon that is human learning.

Brittany Hachey has learned intellectually in the classroom, socially and emotionally in her community placements, and transformatively in her reflections and her teaching. And what she has learned is not just balanced precariously and temporarily between her ears, waiting to be spilled onto an examination paper. Instead, it has shaped the lens through which she apprehends the world and forms her vision of life.

CSL also has a regenerating effect on teachers, particularly on younger faculty.

Successful CSL teachers generally develop an innovative and flexible approach to their own teaching. They recognize that, from the student's viewpoint, a course with an additional CSL component requires a significant additional time commitment, which sometimes leads students to avoid CSL courses. Good teachers, however, often come to view CSL not as an add-on, but as the core of the course, with lectures and seminars adding a complementary element of reflection and analysis. At the very least, they reduce their traditional classroom hours to compensate for the extra time students spend on CSL activities. Such teachers also tend to develop innovative grading systems – and to be very attentive to their own learning. Because CSL provides exciting opportunities, strong teachers eagerly embrace it.

"Before, I used to say, 'Okay, there's the textbook – that's what you have to know at the end of the year, and this is how we're going to get you there,'" says psychology professor Dr. Petra Hauf, a Canada Research Chair at StFX. After reflecting on the journals that her CSL students wrote, she began starting her classes with a learning activity – role-playing, a presentation – related to the CSL placements. Thus every student, not just

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the CSL ones, had to engage with the real-life issues that confronted the CSL students. Those activities resulted in "intensive" discussions which now occupy 30 to 45 minutes of class time once a week. And then, she says, in a total reversal of her original procedure, she now says to the students, "Okay, everything else you can read in the textbook. Now you know what it is about, and now you will understand what is written in the book." Today, she says, her students are more motivated in class, take a more active part in discussions, think differently, even read differently – because now they are reading in order to understand their own perceptions, feelings, and experiences.

"Students are demanding things that universities are not prepared to offer because *we are too rigid*," says psychologist Mirella Stroink, Connie Nelson's astute young co-conspirator at Lakehead. "People everywhere are calling for a different way of seeing things – they're reacting to environmental pressures, climate change, energy peaks, and these kinds of things – and students are saying, 'I'm not finding a home here in the university system, I'm not seeing myself here, I'm not seeing the way I understand the world reflected in what my professors are telling me.'"

For Dr. Stroink, the adventure of what she calls "transformative CSL" is in harmony with a tectonic shift in intellectual life away from reductionism and rigid disciplinary boundaries and towards a holistic, integrative vision. This vision more closely resembles pre-industrial and Aboriginal modes of understanding and more truly reflects the complex, interconnected world revealed by ecology. The massive modern universities – and indeed, the whole comprehensive modern educational system – are products of the Industrial Revolution, which required standardized skill sets for standardized tasks, from assembly line work to "scientific" management and industrial research. In a world where knowledge, technology, enterprise, and vocational choice are dividing and blossoming and expanding like fractals on a computer screen, is a standardized industrial model of education still a good fit with social reality?

Mirella Stroink wonders about all this – and she is by no means alone. Simon Bolduc at Sherbrooke says that we are "in between the old paradigm and the new one." A similar sense of restlessness about the old model characterizes many of the best teachers, administrators, and students right across the country. For these people, CSL looks like the forerunner of a whole new post-industrial mode of learning and teaching. Mary

McGillivray, the VP Academic at StFX, says flatly that CSL "points the way towards the university of the future."

The university of the future, on this reading, will be more fluid and less bureaucratic, less concerned with status and process than with depth of understanding. It will be holistic and comprehensive, open to fresh insights from any source, unafraid to confront questions of value. It will provide not just a new way of learning and knowing, but a set of tools for the construction of wisdom.

"Wisdom is the principal thing," says the Book of Proverbs, "therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." If wisdom is the fundamental objective of education – as surely it is – then one can only hope that a pedagogy which so powerfully nudges its participants towards wisdom truly does represent the future of education.

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