

**Canadian Studies at 50**  
**An Address to the Peterborough Historical Society**  
**John Wadland**

In November 2012 I visited the office of our (then Conservative) member of the federal parliament, Dean Del Mastro. He was gracious, receiving me into his office to discuss my concern about the manner in which his government was addressing the systematic dismantling of Library and Archives Canada, a subject of considerable importance to the academic fraternity as I am sure to members of the Peterborough Historical Society. The conversation was cordial and centered on what Dean assured me was a shared interest: the history of Canada. In defending his government's position, Dean said, among other things, "I am fascinated by Canadian history. I just don't like revisionist history." This observation struck me as telling. It has stayed with me and it informs some of the remarks I beg your indulgence to consider this evening.<sup>1</sup>

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I was invited to speak to you about the challenges that faced the creation of the Department of Canadian Studies and, in the year of Trent's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to reflect upon the place of the field on the doorstep of Canada's Sesquicentennial. These anniversaries are important framing devices for this talk because Trent's foray into the field of interdisciplinary Canadian Studies began with President Tom Symons' inaugural address on the opening of the University in 1964 where he expressed

the hope and wish of everyone associated with Trent University that it may become in the fullness of time a useful and significant centre for Canadian

Studies. By this is meant the study of our Canadian civilization – for such there surely is – in its totality: its history and literature, art and institutions, its people and its sciences.<sup>2</sup>

These words, and this hope, anticipated Canada's Centennial in 1967 by three years. By 1966 Trent was already home to the bilingual *Journal of Canadian Studies/ Revue d'études canadiennes* – still the leading international academic publication in the field, available both in print and on a number of platforms online. I arrived at Trent in 1972 at the age of 29, drawn by the magnet of possibilities opened by this vision for the young university. The newly established interdisciplinary undergraduate Canadian Studies Program, in which I became the first full time appointment, was chaired by Alan Wilson and supported by a committee of enthusiastic, mostly very young colleagues from a variety of Humanities, Social Science and Science disciplines. By 1972 Tom Symons was no longer Trent's President. He had recently accepted the commission of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) "to study, report and make recommendations upon the state of teaching and research in various fields of study relating to Canada at Canadian Universities."<sup>3</sup> From his new base of operations in an office at the corner of Rubidge and Charlotte Streets, Tom set about his investigation. I was privileged to serve as Trent's liaison with the Symons Commission and to get to know and to value my friendship with the man behind a project that would have a major impact on post-secondary education at home, and on the study of Canada abroad.

The research and writing for the Symons Commission report took a full three years to complete. Published in 1975 under the title, *To Know Ourselves*, it was a scathing rebuke of the Canadian university system for its failure to address

Canadian issues. But the Report was more than an unmasking of dereliction. It was primarily a set of positive recommendations to remedy the situation it described. Time does not allow me the luxury here of delving deeply into the Report's specific recommendations. Suffice it to say that, in their entirety, they constitute an encyclopedic direction for educators locally, regionally, nationally and globally to place Canada on the intellectual map for students at home and abroad anxious to grasp the multiple complexities of this nation's circumstances. It puzzled Tom, as it puzzled me and my Trent colleagues, that this was considered, even by many academics in the Canadian university system, to be a parochial exercise. Why, we wondered, should we feel it necessary to apologize for promoting among our young people an understanding of, and desire to contribute to, their own society and its place in the world? This question obviously resonated at many other institutions. Even before the publication of *To Know Ourselves*, undergraduate Canadian Studies Programs began to pop up spontaneously across the country, linked together by the newly formed Association for Canadian Studies, established in 1973.

I want also to emphasize that the Symons Report devoted an entire chapter to "Canadian Studies Abroad" where the "conspicuous lack of knowledge about Canada" identified in the report was afforded remedy in 88 formal recommendations. As Tom wrote in the preamble, "The very limited activities of the Department of External Affairs in support of Canadian academic and cultural relations abroad bear little relationship to the needs and resources of this country or to its international responsibilities."<sup>4</sup>

This emphasis placed by the 1975 Symons Report upon Canada's "international responsibilities" is of the utmost importance to this talk. Canada was, and remains, a *nation*, a member of the United *Nations*, and an active participant in inter-*national* relations. As such, the *nation* of Canada had, and continues to have global responsibilities of exponentially increasing complexity that can only be understood by a people, both at home and abroad, educated to grasp its promise and its limitations. That this message from the Symons Report was received by the Trudeau government of the day was revealed almost immediately in the creation of a new program called "Understanding Canada", based in the Department of External Affairs, now DFAIT. In 1981 this program funded the birth and henceforth the annual budget of the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS) which, until 2012, provided grants to international scholars conducting research on Canada (much of it comparative), in Canada, at Canadian universities and in collaboration with Canadian professors. The ICCS also provided funding for international conferences on Canada, for international academic journals publishing research on Canada (again, much of it comparative), for courses on Canada at international universities, and for travel grants for international students attending conferences and special programs in Canada. Tragically, in 2012 the "Understanding Canada" program was axed by the Harper government as one of its austerity measures, cancelling the annual budget of \$5 million and throwing into crisis an organization that had existed for over 30 years contributing to Canadian Studies in 40 ICCS member countries. This was shortsighted foreign policy at its worst, but it fed an emerging logic suggesting that Canadian Studies, both at home and abroad, had

reached the end of the road.<sup>5</sup> Some at Trent seem to accord with this view, progressively marginalizing Canadian Studies in zealous genuflection to the Program Prioritization Process currently underway across the province to satisfy the Ontario government's apparent determination to turn universities into trade schools.<sup>6</sup>

When viewed against the backdrop of the Harper government's evisceration of Library and Archives Canada – where 20 percent of the staff have been laid off, where the accession of private archival collections has been virtually eliminated, where interlibrary loans have been terminated – Dean Del Mastro's observation assumes new meaning. If we remove the tools essential for revising our history, the evil revisionists might give up and go away. Of course, it's not merely LAC itself that has suffered under this government. Also eliminated is the National Archival Development Program that assisted small museums across Canada to preserve local history. Gone is the mandatory long form census. Many federal departmental libraries have been axed, their collections shredded, landfilled or given away. Parks Canada has lost 600 positions, including many staff at National Historic Sites. The budget at Parks has been cut by \$29 million annually. The Canadian Museum of Civilization has been rebranded the Canadian Museum of History with a redefined, politicized mandate that has provoked the Canadian Association of University Teachers to present a "searing indictment" of federal government policy to the expert panel of the Royal Society of Canada charged with reviewing the status and future of Canada's cultural heritage.<sup>7</sup> Canada's recently appointed Minister of Heritage, Shelly Glover, has launched a new page on the Department website. It

announces the creation of the Canada History Fund<sup>8</sup>, which replaces the federal interdisciplinary Canadian Studies Program. The new page notes that the Fund is not accepting any new funding applications because it is currently committed to established “projects that commemorate key milestones and celebrate people who have helped shape our country as we know it today.” Beginning with 2012 and proceeding to 2017 this page lists the government’s chosen “milestones” on the road to the Sesquicentennial. Of the 21 milestones identified, 10 (or 50%) relate directly to war. The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee is identified, as are the birthdates of Macdonald, Cartier, and Laurier. But nowhere do we see even a mention of the repatriation of the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a milestone universally recognized in independent poll after independent poll as **the** one most cherished by Canadians.<sup>9</sup> And by a wide margin. Ramsay Cook, Professor Emeritus at York University, and one of my mentors, was interviewed by Michael Enright last summer on the CBC’s *Sunday Edition*. Speaking about the government’s approach to Canadian history he said, “I think the problem is that governments, when they interest themselves in history, they have answers already of what they believe Canadian history is, whereas trained historians ask questions about the past. We have questions, but they have answers, which means they have an agenda.”<sup>10</sup> Reading through the Canada History Fund site I found the one exception to the lack of additional funding noted earlier and possibly a challenge to Professor Cook’s analysis. Shelley Glover’s Ministry has just launched the Government of Canada History Awards for students in grades 10 and 11 and for their teachers. This is

potentially an excellent initiative but – wouldn't you know it – 3 of the 5 questions from which students can choose an essay topic for submission involve war.

And what about the state of the university, the home of the professional Humanist and Historian? In Jim Flaherty's 2014 budget, the Conservative talking points and some major new initiatives privilege skilled trades and community colleges over universities. This is not surprising. Pollsters Ipsos Reid, Abacus and Ekos Research uniformly report that vote support correlates with educational attainment. College graduates are more likely to support Conservatives, university graduates the Liberals. According to Frank Graves at Ekos Research, "This is a critical fault line. . . . These gaps across university and college [cohorts] didn't exist in the pre-Harper period."<sup>11</sup>

The newly created Canada First Research Excellence Fund announced in the budget will pay out \$1.36 billion over ten years to "***help [institutions] excel globally in research areas that create long-term economic advantages for Canada,***"<sup>12</sup> suggesting that university and college research partnerships with industry and commercialization are the real objectives. Not much hope for history there. The fund gives the appearance of supporting science and apparently rescues the Conservatives from the backlash they encountered when dismantling DFO Fishery Libraries, shutting down the Experimental Lakes Area, savaging environmental regulations, closing Arctic Research Stations and muzzling government scientists in the interest of liberating development, abuse chronicled in detail in an outstanding study by Chris Turner, entitled *The War on Science: Muzzled Scientists and Willful Blindness in Stephen Harper's Canada*.<sup>13</sup> But the appearance of a

renewed relationship with science is illusory. The budget and history combine to suggest that science in support of industry and economic development is fine; science as critique of government policy, not so much.

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My reason for opening with these particular observations is to contrast the intellectual climate that favoured the creation of interdisciplinary Canadian Studies in the 1970s, with the current moment where even the birthplace of its best and most widely recognized flowering, Trent University, is challenging its relevance. My generation embarked on the Canadian Studies project inspired by hope and faith in a future of possibility that encouraged not only a deep understanding of the nation's history, but also an engagement with its politics, its economics, its literature, its science, its art, its foreign relations, its rapidly evolving society and its threatened natural environment. Above all it recognized the centrality of First Nations peoples to the story of this place to which we, the settlers, have arrived. The project was and, at its best, remains interdisciplinary.

Following 9/11 we have witnessed Canada's transformation from a nation of hope into a nation of fear. We have become the victims of what Naomi Klein calls "disaster capitalism", shifting from a master narrative favouring the social, to one that privileges finance and commerce.<sup>14</sup> We are no longer citizens. We are now consumers, investors and taxpayers. We have become the cash we do, or do not have. We are the thickness of our wallets.

Ian MacKay and Jamie Swift have titled their recent book, *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety*.<sup>15</sup> In it they rehearse the perverse logic



favoring a military narrative that results in the decline of democracy and the privileging of secrecy, surveillance and security. The young are confronted by a fear of joblessness, the middle-aged and elderly by a fear of inadequate pensions. There is a growing gap between rich and poor. Canada now receives more temporary foreign workers than immigrants each year. Housing prices have escalated to the point of creating a real estate bubble and an epidemic of homelessness. Degraded infrastructure threatens major floods in the face of global warming. Unchecked corporate power has invaded the university disguised as “partnerships”, threatening academic freedom and advocating a logic of business and defense of the status quo over the role of an education that challenges the state to account for itself. Canada’s mining industry has gained the nation a reputation as an international pariah. The promulgation of omnibus bills, the control of information by the PMO, the muzzling of senior civil servants in government departments, the entitlements of, and their abuse by, unelected Senators – actions such as these threaten the very democratic institutions that Parliament, in theory, should be protecting. Arguably this situation is both the product and the result of a public grown apathetic and increasingly alienated, not merely by the lack of honest, informed and passionate leadership at home, but by an international climate fraught with fears of economic collapse and military conflict.<sup>16</sup>

I don’t mean to suggest that the early days of Canadian Studies were not nested in conflict. This was still the Cold War era. The Vietnam War was raging, but in opposition to it, Canada stood its ground against American imperialism and provided safe haven for war resisters. The Trudeau government launched itself with

two egregious errors – the White Paper of 1969 and the implementation of the War Measures Act in 1970. Trudeau himself may be considered the first of our Prime Ministers to inflate the role of the PMO and to tighten control over Cabinet.

Nevertheless, young people were not prevented from talking back to government. Researchers and journalists had access to government-generated scientific information. Environmental regulations dismantled today were then being created. Crown corporations like the CBC were not threatened by budget cuts for challenging government authority. From 1967 to 1980 the National Film Board's "Challenge for Change" documentary series explored, in graphic detail, the stories of Canadian individuals and communities in crisis. In the days before the internet, no click on a video link could bring the nation, its cities and its regions to the classroom. But the NFB took as its responsibility – and the state did not interfere – the critical visual representation of a Canada that needed fixing. The social injustice unearthed in films like *The Cree Hunters of Mistassini*, *You Are on Indian Land*, *The Things I Cannot Change*, *Paper Wheat*, *The Ballad of Crowfoot*, all of them produced in this period, were purchased by Trent's Canadian Studies Program and illustrated the lectures of colleagues across the university. Between 1974 and 1996 the NFB hosted the first publicly funded women's film studio in the world – Studio D – which brought the struggles of Canadian women to the classroom in a *cinéma vérité* format that brooked no compromises. Films like *Not a Love Story: a Film About Pornography*, *To a Safer Place*, *I'll Find a Way*, *Sisters in Struggle* – most of these were purchased by the Canadian Studies Program to bring feminist issues to its own and to the courses of cognate departments. The power of film became so clear in the

early years of Canadian Studies that the Program undertook to create the first ever all Canadian Film Festival, *Canadian Images*, to showcase Canadian documentary, feature, experimental, animated and children's films. From 1978 to 1984 (when it was shut down after challenging the Ontario Censor Board), the annual *Canadian Images* Film Festival took over every available screen for four days in March, at Trent and in Peterborough, to explore Canada's story in film. In addition it sponsored panel discussions on the state of the art and the state of the industry that brought to Peterborough filmmakers, producers, directors, actors and critics from Canada and around the world to discuss the Canadian art form. Household names like Norman Jewison, Andrew Sarris, Harry Gulkin, David Silcox, Allan King, Michael Snow, Joyce Wieland, Martin Knelman, Martyn Burke, Budge Crawley, Bonnie Klein, Michel Brault, Atom Egoyan, Sophie Bissonnette, Brenda Logfellow – legions – came to Trent and to Peterborough to talk about the challenges facing Canadian productions – supported by the Canadian Film Development Corporation (now Telefilm), created in 1967— that made this form of visual culture a major participant in Canada's conversation with the world. In its final year, *Canadian Images* showed over 400 films to more than 10,000 paying participants. Piers Handling, one of our programmers that year, went on to become the CEO of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

There being no internet, book publishing was also a major issue in the early period. The American book giant McGraw-Hill purchased Ryerson Press in 1970, and in 1971 McClelland and Stewart faced bankruptcy, sparking sufficient concern about the fate of the Canadian industry to warrant the creation of the Ontario Royal

Commission on Book Publishing in 1973. Joining the fray, Alan Wilson and Gordon Roper led Trent's Canadian Studies Program in organizing a major Publishing Conference in 1975. Margaret Laurence, then writer-in-residence at Trent, and an active participant in the Canadian Studies Program, had been a pivotal player in the launch of the Writers Union in 1973, so this was in part a tribute to her. Graeme Gibson chaired the occasion and voices from the young new presses—Anansi, Coach House, James Lorimer, J.J. Douglas, New Press – joined with Paul Audley, Executive Director of the Independent Publishers Association (now the ACP), to create the Canadian Book and Periodical Development Council. This body is now simply the Book and Periodical Council, but it is the base of the Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency, Access Copyright, that guarantees Canadian writers who live by their craft a decent income.

These are merely two examples of the involvement of Trent's Canadian Studies Program in engaging faculty and students in the politically charged intellectual climate of its early incarnation. The years between 1968 and 1982 were characterized by an explosion of voices that both complicated and troubled a national narrative that had appeared squeaky clean, mostly male, white and neat at the Centennial in 1967. Other examples could occupy our attention with equal detail. Professor Bruce Hodgins had taken a canoe trip down the Rupert River in Northern Quebec in the summer of 1972 and discovered that work had already begun on the James Bay Power Project without any reference to the Cree of the region who were just waking up to the fact of what was going on in their territory. Determined to become involved, that autumn we invited Billy Diamond, Grand Chief,

to come to Trent to address the students in the Great Hall of Champlain College, generating at our small university (then only 1800 students), a groundswell of local support for a cause that resulted, in 1975, in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, considered the first of the modern treaties. Colleagues and students in the Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies Programs routinely visited the community and Trent's Anishinaabe colleague, Professor Harvey McCue (then an active member of both Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies, now a member of Trent's Board of Governors) eventually became Director of the Cree School Board in Chisasibi. Canadian Studies colleague Professor John Milloy, a regular visitor at James Bay, has subsequently written the definitive history of residential schools in Canada, also serving as a research specialist for both the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Following the liberalization of immigration regulations in 1967, the announcement of a formal policy of multiculturalism in 1971, and the new Immigration Act of 1976, arrivals to Canada from less developed countries grew dramatically in number, conjoining the voices of ethnicity with the voices of race, but with a decidedly urban edge. I was teaching a second year core course thematically focused on The Land, emphasizing topics like land law, Aboriginal Land Claims, postcolonial theory, regionalism and environmental history. This course privileged an examination of the rural, the dominant landscape seldom visited by urban southerners, among other things sponsoring an annual four day field trip and colloquium in Temagami that routinely brought 125 students (many of them international students) to travel on the land, to meet and speak with members of the

Teme-Augama Anishinaabe, and to listen to papers read by academic visitors from our own and other universities.<sup>17</sup> My colleague, Professor James Struthers, came aboard the Canadian Studies Program in 1977 to address the complex new realities accompanying immigration, urbanism, class and race. Jim's interdisciplinary core courses on Communities and Identities and Social Policy became legendary at Trent, drawing students from across the country and internationally, anxious to grasp analytical and critical strategies for understanding the new Canada that was afoot and that was quickly becoming a model for understanding diversity and aging. Some of his themes have since been taken up and expanded by Canadian Studies Professor Davina Bhandar, whose work centres on migrant perceptions of citizenship and the politics of diaspora.

Paralleling the rise of multiculturalism was the Official Languages Act of 1969, a major spinoff from which, in English Canada, was the rise of French Immersion programs in the elementary and secondary schools. The Canadian Studies Program at Trent partnered closely with the French Section of the Modern Languages Department to offer a course on Québec Civilization. Ironically this course was created and taught by an ardent young Péquiste, Professor Jean-Pierre Lapointe, who very quickly arranged to get our colleagues and students into vans for annual exchanges with Québec universities. When we were finally able to appoint a francophone Canadianist to our own Program – Professor Michèle Lacombe, an Acadian from New Brunswick (working together with Professor Douglas McCalla in History) – the richness of these exchanges grew into a strong, formal relationship with l'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières where students and faculty not only

visited each other at their respective universities on field trips, but also conducted comparative research together – in French and English. Within very short order, we could boast Trent faculty specialists covering and teaching courses or cross-listed courses about every region of Canada.

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Now I want to emphasize a word that I have been using throughout this presentation with, to this point, little explanation. That word is “interdisciplinary”.

Our Program began from the premise that Canada does not present itself to us as a discipline but comes to us pretty much as it is. And however much historians like to think of themselves as centering the universe, their discipline is merely one of many that we can bring to the project of understanding Canada. Canadian Studies at Trent valued all the disciplines, knowing that it could not have come into existence without their faculty representatives agreeing to collaborate, to work together to accomplish an objective that very much resembled an ecosystem. Canadian Studies was built from the premise that everything is related to everything else. Nothing exists in a vacuum. History, of course, provided context. But, just as Joseph Boyden concludes his novel, *The Orenda*<sup>18</sup>: “The past and the future are present.” Canadian Studies is now, and it needs all the disciplines.

Canada lives next door to, and has spent a great deal of its history attempting to remain independent of, the most powerful nation on earth. Canada has supplemented this fact with an active immigration policy that admits people from virtually every country in the world, becoming a multinational nation, effectively institutionalizing the immigrant’s allegiance not only to the place to which they have

arrived but to the one from which they have come. (Does it get more global than that?) In a regionally complex political federation, communicating in two official languages across the second largest (arguably one of the most ecologically diverse) land masses on the globe, conjoining the hopes of an Indigenous population formed from myriad First Nations, we are in desperate need of an intellectual community that recognizes a responsibility not merely to explore the comfortable discourse of disciplines or fields or theories, but to search out the relationships between them – not to achieve a simplistic synthesis, but to recognize the ways in which they speak to one another, to participate, as it were, in a conversation. In other words, this means an acceptance by all scholars that they cannot privilege one discipline over the others. It especially requires that Canadianists within each discipline support the aspirations of those whose work, properly understood, will assist in bringing complex specializations into a wider context more easily grasped by students at large: those students who we would educate to become good citizens.

These observations do not imply the abandonment of rigorous critical and analytical thought about, between and within the disciplines. But the languages within the disciplines are repeatedly under attack for their inaccessibility. At least one objective of interdisciplinarity must be to explain the theories, concepts, methods and, above all, the fundamental ideas emerging from the disciplines, locating them in patterns that connect, to see a Big Picture. In order for there to be *inter*-disciplinarity, there must be disciplines. At Trent, our Program began initially with the premise that all students fulfilling the interdisciplinary requirements of Canadian Studies would, to acquire a degree in the field, have also to complete the



requirements of a cognate discipline – in other words undertake a joint-major. Over time this requirement has regrettably fallen away, largely because the University changed its academic policy in the new millennium. The new policy required students to choose their majors at the end of first year, forcing the Canadian Studies Program to create a first year course option, abandoning its previous policy of requiring students to take 5 discipline-based courses in first year, with its entry level interdisciplinary course offered in second year. Nevertheless, it is my experience that most Canadian Studies students elect the joint-major option on their own.

This collaborative notion of interdisciplinarity required that the Program have both a rich array of Canadian content-courses from across the departments (there are now over 100 listed in the Trent calendar) from which to choose electives, and a demanding set of required interdisciplinary courses taught exclusively by core faculty in the Program. Canadian Studies was the first, the flagship interdisciplinary program at Trent, the template for all subsequently launched interdisciplinary programs that, collectively, have made Trent University unique. Gender and Women's Studies, Environmental Studies, Cultural Studies, International Development Studies – all of these programs are built upon the Canadian Studies model of dedicated interdisciplinary faculty appointed directly to the unit.<sup>19</sup>

The Canadian Studies Program has worked well because it has been well supported, not only by faculty colleagues within Trent, but also by benefactors outside the university looking in. Tom Symons and Alan Wilson both realized that

for this upstart initiative to succeed, it would require resources not available from standard university operating budgets. Accordingly, both of them made a project of beating the bushes (and urging their junior colleagues to do the same) to win external funding from individuals and foundations who recognized the value of what we were doing, in the process creating the largest single endowment of any academic unit at Trent that has paid out hundreds of thousands of dollars to support essay prizes, field trips, scholarships, bursaries, film, library, art and archival acquisitions, faculty- and student-run conferences, travel grants and lecture series. Leslie Frost, the former Premier of Ontario and Trent's first Chancellor, left his entire estate to Trent for the support of Canadian Studies. Canadianists from across the disciplines again joined together to make this extraordinary benefaction the basis of an interdisciplinary graduate program and research centre – The Frost Centre for Canadian Heritage and Development Studies (now called the Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies) which, since its inception in 1983, has graduated 216 MA candidates from across Canada and internationally. One of the earliest initiatives of the Frost Centre, under its then Director, Professor Sandy Lockhart, a Sociologist, was to create and endow the Northern Chair Lecture Series, recently renamed the Roberta Bondar Fellowship to honour our former Chancellor, Roberta Bondar, to bring to Trent outstanding northern scholars, senior government officials and Aboriginal leaders. Building on this momentum, colleagues in the Frost Centre sat down together and took the next obvious step – which was to create, jointly with Carleton University, an interdisciplinary Canadian Studies Ph.D. program, the first and still the only program of its kind in the country. Since its

inception in 2000 it has graduated 14 Ph.D. candidates. Its current Director, seated with us tonight, is Professor Joan Sangster, Professor of Women's Studies, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and the only Trent faculty member who has earned **both** the Symons Award for Excellence in Teaching **and** the Distinguished Research Award. While I am at it, I will acknowledge another Canadian Studies colleague, Professor Bryan Palmer, a leading international labour historian, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Trent's first Tier 1 Canada Research Chair and one of our most prolific authors. Indeed, why not take this moment to point out that excellence in teaching and research have characterized undergraduate and graduate faculty in Canadian Studies historically, with 33% of all the Symons Awards for Excellence in Teaching, and 38% of all the university's Distinguished Research Awards, going to Canadianists. Among this year's honorary graduates to be celebrated at Trent's Spring Convocation, we find Shelagh Grant, internationally recognized scholar of the Canadian Arctic, Adjunct Professor of Canadian Studies, Research Associate of the Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies; and Joseph Boyden, Giller Prize-winning author, recent victor in the 2014 CBC Canada Reads competition, whose first link with Trent came in 2006 from an invitation extended by the undergraduate students in Canadian Studies to be the Margaret Laurence Writer-in-Residence Fellow and Northern Chair Lecturer.

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In the Canadian university system the main victims of the fear of which I spoke earlier are the Humanities. Students registered in Canadian Studies are routinely asked, "What can you do with that?" Questions like this are asked by

people who already know the answer – which is, of course, NOTHING. You can't do anything with a degree in Canadian Studies. Globalization is here, the internet is breaking down borders, the nation state is dead. In their view we have returned to where we began this talk – the study of Canada is merely parochial navel-gazing.

The abstract, ubiquitous rhetoric of globalization goes largely untested and unchallenged, especially by those who profit most from the master narratives of free trade and international market capitalism – in short those and their disciples who hold most power, in the age of fear and anxiety. The nation state, they tell us, is little more than a nuisance. However, a serious scholar like Dani Rodrik, Professor of Economics at Princeton, argues in his recent book, *The Globalization Paradox*<sup>20</sup>, that the democratic nation state is the greatest defense of diversity against the homogenizing forces of the market. There are many ways to look at globalization. In addition to trade and the movement of capital, the IMF emphasizes international migration and the dissemination of knowledge via the internet. But René Dubos' famous 1978 admonition to "Think Globally, Act Locally," so effectively harnessed in the Brundtland Report of 1987, inspired two Canadianists (I, a historian, Professor Tom Whillans, a biologist) jointly to develop an interdisciplinary outreach research program engaging upper year students that ultimately evolved into the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education, premised on the notion that the sustainability of the planet is best served by each community protecting the diversity of its own place.<sup>21</sup> The ongoing and extraordinary success of the Trent Centre and its offshoots reinforces Rodrik's point that a nation's stories, its geography, and social composition – and particularly its unique democratic institutions – resist the logic of

uniformity. In answer to the question, “Who needs the nation state?” Dani Rodrik answers, “We all do.”<sup>22</sup>

Trent’s Canadian Studies Program is a hallmark of our institution, for which we are recognized nationally and internationally. In the age of globalization, Canada has not gone away. The nation, so far, is intact. But it needs both critics and defenders who can see past the ideological, anti-intellectual preoccupations of neoliberalism. Let us allow Canadian Studies to be and to do what it has always been best at being and doing – that is, to produce leaders of principle and integrity and to recognize that for many students getting rich is not the end of moral striving. There really are young people who want to help make Canada a better place for everyone, and who recognize that the best way to get there is to understand how it works and how it is regarded globally as a contributor to the betterment of the human condition (or not). These students see past themselves as individuals. They aren’t thinking about living in 3000 square foot homes or driving Maseratis, or being famous. They aren’t anticipating their pensions, or the jobs they might or might not get. They are too busy learning. They understand that there are risks to everything – just as in business, or downhill skiing. They are not afraid of risk. Yes, they want to think analytically and critically, laterally and contextually – which is why they choose interdisciplinarity. They want to be able to speak back to received wisdom, extemporaneously, with confidence and clarity, and to write persuasively in a minute. They want to know how to conduct serious research. Canada is begging for selfless leadership at every level of government. Indeed everywhere we turn in this country, in virtually every walk of life, on every issue, we can see the need for

education about who we are, where we live and what we are doing to this beautiful country.<sup>23</sup>

There are students who want to know and tell our stories, and they want to be able to revise them.

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I have spoken to you tonight in this vein because I believe that the field of interdisciplinary Canadian Studies at Trent University is under threat.

Its loss would be devastating.

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<sup>1</sup> At Dean's request, I followed up this meeting with the attached letter (Appendix 1), dated 5 December, 2012, which he then forwarded to James Moore, and John Baird, both of whom replied to me with patronizing platitudes defending present policy. James Moore to John Wadland, February 25, 2013; April 9, 2013; John Baird to John Wadland, July 12, 2013. Dean did not respond to my invitation to visit with our Canadian Studies colleagues.

<sup>2</sup> T.H.B. Symons, quoted in John H. Wadland, "Voices in Search of a Conversation: An Unfinished Project," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 35:1 (Spring, 2000), 60. In the present project I have borrowed liberally from my *JCS/REC* essay. Fourteen years after its original publication its essence still stands up to scrutiny.

<sup>3</sup> T.H.B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies*. 2 Vols. (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975), Vol. 1,1.

<sup>4</sup> *To Know Ourselves*, Vol. 2, 1-43.

<sup>5</sup> See Mike Blanchfield, "Foreign Affairs Cuts Canadian Studies Abroad Program Despite Millions Generated for Economy," *Canadian Press*, 18 May, 2012: [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/05/16/foreign-studies-program-cut\\_n\\_1522632.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/05/16/foreign-studies-program-cut_n_1522632.html) also updated in the *Globe and Mail*, 18 June, 2012 at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canada-axes-foreign-studies-program-despite-being-told-of-economic-spinoffs/article4184581/#dashboard/follows/>

For the history of the ICCS, consult: <http://www.iccs-ciec.ca/iccs-history.php>

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<sup>6</sup> To understand the Program Prioritization Process, consult Leo Groarke and Beverley Hamilton, "Doing the PPP: A Skeptical Perspective," *Academic Matters: The Journal of Higher Education*, 13 January, 2014:

<http://www.academicmatters.ca/2014/01/doing-the-ppp-a-skeptical-perspective/>

There is some hope that this "skepticism" may have an impact on Canadian Studies here as Professor Groarke has recently been appointed Trent's new President, effective July 1, 2014. Trent's Draft Strategic Mandate Agreement, dated December 20, 2013, which represents current administration thinking on PPP, may be consulted at:

[https://my.trentu.ca/intranet/admin/vpacademic/20131220\\_Trent\\_Final\\_Draft\\_SM\\_A.pdf](https://my.trentu.ca/intranet/admin/vpacademic/20131220_Trent_Final_Draft_SM_A.pdf)

Also see, Nalinaksha Bhattacharyya, "Academic Prioritization – an Attack on Tenure," *CAUT Bulletin*, 61⊗February, 2014), A2, A5:

[https://www.cautbulletin.ca/en\\_article.asp?ArticleID=3784](https://www.cautbulletin.ca/en_article.asp?ArticleID=3784)

<sup>7</sup> "CAUT Urges Royal Society to Defend Canada's Cultural Heritage," *CAUT Bulletin*, 61:1(January, 2014), A1,A5:

[http://www.cautbulletin.ca/en\\_article.asp?ArticleID=3767](http://www.cautbulletin.ca/en_article.asp?ArticleID=3767)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1358783811378>

<sup>9</sup> Jack Jedwab, "When Tims is More Popular than the Queen: How to Tell Canada's Story?" *Globe and Mail*, 6 January, 2014: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/when-tims-is-more-popular-than-the-queen-how-to-tell-canadas-story/article16204272/#dashboard/follows/>

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in "Scholars, Authors, Wary of Government Review of Canadian History," *CBC News*, June 16, 2013: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/scholars-authors-wary-of-government-review-of-canadian-history-1.1377912>

<sup>11</sup> Paul Wells, "A Federal Budget of Pittances," *Macleans*, February 14, 2014: <http://www.macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/a-federal-budget-of-pittances/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2014/docs/speech-discours/2014-02-11-eng.html>

<sup>13</sup> Chris Turner, *The War on Science: Muzzled Scientists and Willful Blindness in Stephen Harper's Canada*. (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2013).

At a January 2014 town hall meeting in Vancouver Bob McDonald, host of CBC's *Quirks and Quarks*, argued that "beyond the dismantling of scientific institutions and practices, federal scientists, academics, journalists and environmental organizations across Canada have complained of increasingly strict communications policies that prevent researchers from relaying crucial scientific information to the media or the

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public.” “Science Policy Criticized at BC Town Hall,” *CAUT Bulletin*, 61:2 (February, 2014) A3: [https://www.cautbulletin.ca/en\\_article.asp?articleid=3785](https://www.cautbulletin.ca/en_article.asp?articleid=3785)

<sup>14</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Ian MacKay and Jamie Swift, *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety*. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> This section is indebted to a magnificent blog post by the Anglican Bishop of Quebec, forwarded to me by Alan Wilson. See Dennis P. Drainville, “The Rise of Tyranny and the Imminent Fall of Canada by 2014,” October 21, 2012: <http://thebishopsviews.com/2012/10/21/the-rise-of-tyranny-and-the-imminent-fall-of-canada-by-2014/>

<sup>17</sup> The Temagami Colloquium recently celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and continues annually to this day, now under the direction of Professor Stephen Hill, a Canadianist within the Environmental Studies Program and an active member of the Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Boyden, *The Orenda*. (Toronto: Hamish Hamilton, 2013), 487.

<sup>19</sup> In 1981-82 the Ontario Council on University Affairs (OCUA) established "differentiation grants." These were available to universities "which accepted a clearly differentiated role, demonstrated an intention to pursue their strengths efficiently and effectively and required special funding to drop disciplinary graduate programs in favour of multidisciplinary 'umbrella' programs in areas where it had special strengths and the ability to make a distinctive contribution to post-secondary education in Ontario." Trent was one of the few universities to receive a differentiation grant (of \$1million annually) based upon a commitment to adopt an interdisciplinary focus.

<sup>20</sup> Dani Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011). I am indebted to Professor Dimitry Anastakis, Chair of Canadian Studies, for bringing Rodrik’s work (and its applicability to Canada) to my attention. See Andrew Smith and Dimitry Anastakis, eds. *Smart Globalization: The Canadian Business and Economic History Experience*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> See Tom Whillans and John Wadland, “Community-Based Education at Trent,” Unpublished Paper, February, 2014: [http://www.trentcentre.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2014/02/Wadland\\_Whillans\\_CBE\\_history.pdf](http://www.trentcentre.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2014/02/Wadland_Whillans_CBE_history.pdf)



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<sup>22</sup> Dani Rodrik, "Roepke Lecture in Economic Geography – Who Needs the Nation State?" *Economic Geography* 89:1 (January. 2013).

<sup>23</sup> And, in exchange, those who have benefitted from a liberal education must find a way to reward these young people by making that same education affordable to them – not requiring them to search out cheap online courses, but guaranteeing them the opportunity to sit face to face with peers and teachers in humane conversation about their future Canada, unmediated by Google.

## Appendix 1



DEPARTMENT OF CANADIAN STUDIES

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CANADA

**John Wadland**  
Professor Emeritus

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5 December, 2012

Hon. Dean Del Mastro  
1875 Lansdowne Street West  
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Peterborough ON K9J 8M7

Dear Dean,

I deeply appreciated your taking the time to meet with me last month. At your suggestion I am writing to follow up on a few of the points touched by our conversation. Appreciating how busy you are, I will keep these brief. My point is to demonstrate why the cutbacks to Library and Archives Canada and to the Understanding Canada program, pose serious threats to our Canadian Studies Program at Trent. As you personally have demonstrated a deep commitment to the protection of our historical heritage, I appeal to you to speak, in defence of our own university, in favour of reviewing a policy that undermines the scholarship of our faculty and students, jeopardizes a unique and universally respected academic enterprise that has been 50 years in the making, and threatens access, for all Canadians, to the very resources that are essential to the writing of our history.

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1. Canadian Studies has been a primary focus of Trent ever since Tom Symons identified his intention, in his address at the opening of the University in 1964, to make it one of our flagships. The *Journal of Canadian Studies* was launched at Trent in 1966 and remains the senior international academic journal in the field. Our undergraduate Canadian Studies Program began in 1972 and remains the leader in the field, deferred to nationally and internationally. The Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies, named for Conservative Premier and the first Chancellor of Trent, Leslie Frost, was created in 1982. It is both a research centre and home to our M.A. in Canadian Studies, established in 1984, and to our joint (with Carleton) Ph.D. program, established in 2001. The joint Ph.D. program in Canadian Studies is the only such program in Canada. The undergraduate Canadian Studies Program was the first interdisciplinary program at Trent and became the template for all subsequent interdisciplinary programs in the University. Trent has become an acknowledged leader in interdisciplinary research and pedagogy and our colleagues are routinely invited to speak at sister institutions about the success of our unique approach.

2. Following the completion of his presidency at Trent, Tom Symons was chosen by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) to be Chair of its Commission on Canadian Studies. His report, based on several years of research, was published in 1975. Titled *To Know Ourselves*, this path-breaking document remains to this day the pillar of our field, its insights routinely cited for having transformed the direction of the Canadian university. Trent again.

3. The extraordinary strength of our Canadian Studies project is dependent on a number of factors. We have a strong and dedicated faculty, among them Fellows of the Royal Society of Canada and several recipients of major teaching, research and book awards. Our graduates, including Trudeau, SSHRC and Fulbright scholars, populate a broad range of occupations, many in highly responsible, demanding private and public sector positions, representing our success to the rest of the country and globally. Before the termination this year of the Understanding Canada Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage we routinely drew faculty visitors from Canadian Studies programs abroad to the Frost Centre. With our new Ph.D. program we were becoming attractive to fee paying international graduate students. The Trent Centre for Community-Based Education was founded by colleagues in the Canadian Studies Program and is a major contributor to meeting the research needs of the Peterborough community. The Canadian Studies Program and the Frost Centre routinely bring to Peterborough high-profile speakers who address issues of crucial importance to Canadians. Every effort is made to make their lectures free and accessible to all community members. This has required the establishment and constant building of an endowment that is now the largest of any single department at Trent – a testament to the respect of private citizens for the contributions of our Canadianists.

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4. So – how do all these points connect Trent and Peterborough with the policy of your government regarding Library and Archives Canada and the Understanding Canada program?

As I have hinted above, cutting the funding of the Understanding Canada program has dealt a devastating blow to the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS), established in 1981 in response to Tom Symons' AUCS report. Tom Symons is himself a recipient of the highest award bestowed by this organization. The ICCS serves twenty-two member and six associate member associations, and links over 7000 scholars and researchers in 70 countries. As members of the Canadian Studies Network (CSN), Trent's Canadian Studies colleagues automatically belong to the ICCS – and the current Director of the Frost Centre serves on the Executive of the CSN. Pitching what we do at Trent to the ICCS has been an important part of our project. We are not a parochial operation. We want to and should be connected with international scholars interested in the study of Canada. Indeed it is an expectation of our colleagues in other countries that the leading centre for interdisciplinary Canadian Studies should play a central role in the ICCS. The loss of federal support to the ICCS will inevitably undermine the study of Canada abroad. It will also reduce the support available to international students interested in coming to Peterborough to study at Trent, especially at the postgraduate level. Just as we have got our Ph.D. program up and running (an extremely complex process) a primary constituency to which we were targeting our long-range hopes is seriously threatened.

Your government has indicated a strong interest in preserving Canada's history. The recently announced renaming of the Museum of Civilization could be taken as a metaphor for a number of initiatives. However, the actual research into and writing of Canadian history are dependent, finally, upon the availability of the raw material, the evidence, of that history. This comes in a variety of forms, some of which can be exhibited in galleries and museums. But the lion's share is stored in libraries and archives. Your government argues that the contents of our national library and our national archives are slated for digitization, theoretically making them more widely available. This project is noble in intent, but a visit to the facilities housing these collections will demonstrate without much convincing that this project will probably take fifty years at least. And yet, under the 2012 Budget, fifty percent of the digitization staff will be cut. Indeed, twenty percent of the 500 workers at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) are scheduled to be terminated. The Canadian Council of Archives, which traditionally distributed its already meagre \$1.7 million budget to archival repositories across the country, enabling the protection and availability of local archives (for example the Trent Valley Archives, an essential source of historical material for research on our immediate region) has been slashed. I left you with the excellent open letter from Dr. Janet Friskney, a graduate of Trent's Frost Centre and current President of the Bibliographical Society of Canada, detailing the implications of the cuts at LAC. Chief among her concerns, and ours, is the decision to eliminate the Inter-Library Loan service so vital to faculty and

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graduate students – especially to those of us for whom the teaching of Canadian Studies is the mandate. Graduate students, who previously could request a rare or out-of-print book available only at LAC to be sent to the Trent University library, now have to travel to Ottawa, personally absorbing all the unnecessary costs in both money and time that this policy demands. (Imagine what this means for students in British Columbia or Newfoundland!) Even as the quality of on-site services deteriorates, undermining the efforts of researchers who require the assistance of professional archivists, LAC has actually ceased acquiring private archival collections. This is absolutely unconscionable and actually demonstrates a lack of understanding about how our history is preserved and what is required for its accurate representation. You have expressed to me a concern about revisionist history. The best protection against revisionism is accuracy.

I won't go on. The point of my visit, and this letter, was and is to demonstrate that the policies of your government respecting both the Understanding Canada program and Library and Archives Canada threaten, indeed put at risk, the very work my Trent colleagues and their students, in a program demonstrably the best in the country, are attempting to do. It is easy to say that we must all take our licks in the present era of austerity. But where the sources and writing of our collective history is concerned, there are no shortcuts. I need to know that you are fighting for our Canadian Studies project, not allowing it to be consumed by the uninformed logic, so ubiquitous, that the humanities and social sciences are without value.

I would welcome an opportunity, personally, to take you on a tour of the Canadian Studies and Frost Centre programs. They are both located in Kerr House, at Traill College, downtown, and easy of access. I think you will understand better the depth of my concern if you can witness at first hand the home of a project to which many of my colleagues have dedicated their working lives. I would invite Tom Symons to be present for such a meeting, also the Chair of the undergraduate and Director of the graduate programs in Canadian Studies but would otherwise keep it quiet – unless you would like me to invite the participation of some representative students. We would accommodate your timetable.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,

John Wadland Ph.D.  
Professor Emeritus  
Department of Canadian Studies