

Stories of Aging Advocacy, Activist Aging, and Community Change: Documenting the Lives and Perspectives of Older Change-Makers in Nogojwanong/ Peterborough (Ontario)

Preliminary Analysis of Research 2015-16

Aging Activisms Working Paper

Dawn Berry Merriam, May Chazan, Anisah Madden

June 2018



Acknowledgements: In researching, thinking, and writing about change-making in Nogojwanong (Peterborough), we are grateful to the First Peoples of this land, the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg, who have cared and continue to care for this place – its lands, waters, and relationships – for millennia. While these stories are not documented in this research, we respectfully acknowledge ongoing and longstanding Michi Saagiig change-making contributions in this community through creative, persistent, and brilliant resistance and resurgence. We acknowledge Mark Skinner, our collaborator on this research, for his immense contributions; the Trent Centre for Aging and Society and the Canada Research Chairs program (through Aging Activisms) for funding and support; and Julia Strider and Melissa Baldwin for their research assistance. Finally, we would especially like to thank the eight participants who shared their stories with us in this research. Please feel free to share your feedback with us on this preliminary analysis by sending an email to:

agingactivisms@gmail.com.

Table of Contents

Overview	3
Research Methodology and Participants	4
Table 1: Participant Backgrounds	5
Emerging Themes	5-15
Reflections on Aging and Aging Advocacy	5-8
Motivations of Change Makers	8-10
Practices of Change Makers	10-13
Changing Context of Advocacy Work Over Time	13-15
Preliminary Conclusions	15-16
Appendix A: Biographical Sketches of Participants	16-22
John Beamish	16-17
Alan Cavell	17-18
Rosemary Ganley	18
Lois Harte-Maxwell	18-19
Jean Koning	19-20
John Paul Martyn	20
Gillian Sandeman	20-21
Linda Slavin	21-22



Stories of Aging Advocacy, Activist Aging, and Community Change

Documenting the Lives and Perspectives of Older Change-Makers in Nogojiwanong/ Peterborough (Ontario)

Preliminary Analysis of Research 2015-16

By Dawn Berry Merriam, May Chazan, Anisah Madden
June 2018

Overview

This short report provides a preliminary analysis of research undertaken between 2015 and 2016 to document the advocacy work of older advocates and activists in Nogojiwanong¹ (Peterborough, Ontario). This research sought to understand advocates' histories with social change work, including what drew them into advocacy in this community and what sustained them over time. It focused specifically on the motivations, practices, relationships, and aging experiences of eight change-makers – five women and three men in their 60s through 90s, all of whom lived in Peterborough at the time of the research. Through interviews, participants reflected on their social change work throughout their lives, including in their later lives. By focusing on older community members, this research sought to identify key issues faced by Peterborough's aging population and also to challenge narratives of decline and political disengagement commonly associated with aging.

Dawn Berry Merriam, May Chazan, and Mark Skinner carried out the interviews for this research, with funding and support from the Trent Centre for Aging and Society (TCAS). In mid-2017, Chazan, Berry Merriam, and Anisah Madden undertook a preliminary analysis of this research, examining emerging themes, possibilities, and tensions within the interview transcripts. This report outlines our preliminary findings. One of the objectives of this report is to offer this analysis back to participants and to invite their feedback.

Although this project started with an intention to understand community-based work on *aging and aging advocacy*, what emerged was a series of stories about relationships, about how change happens in place, about what motivates change-makers over time, and about how socio-historical context informs advocacy. All eight participants are and have been highly committed to improving lives in the Peterborough/Nogojiwanong community, particularly for groups who are disproportionately socially and economically marginalized. This sense of commitment to improving community through social justice and system change is woven throughout all the interviews.

Interestingly, aging, as a topic of discussion, was less central to our conversations with these change-makers. Among participants who did speak to us about aging advocacy, most connected this to other ongoing issues around which they base their advocacy, including anti-poverty work, accessible housing, mobility advocacy, and so on. Many participants also explained that experiences of aging depend on issues of access and how one is located vis-à-vis broader systems of power – factors such as poverty, access to services, 'race'/ ethnicity, disability, gender, and so on. This suggests that understanding aging (and aging advocacy) in Peterborough might involve the more complex task of thinking about how people are differently affected by broader systems of power in

¹ Nogojiwanong is the original name for this land, one part of which was renamed "Peterborough" through colonization. This is the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg.



society (i.e., how ageism might combine with sexism, racism, or classism to make aging an uneven experience).

Research Methodology and Participants

This research was a preliminary exploration of some of the lives and works of older advocates and activists in the Peterborough community. Berry Merriam initiated the project, approaching TCAS's then-director, Skinner, with the idea to document a local history of aging advocacy through biographical-style interviews. Recognizing the significant overlap with Aging Activisms (Chazan's research program, see www.agingactivisms.org), they invited Chazan to collaborate. In mid-2015, Berry Merriam, with support from Chazan and Skinner, mapped out longstanding community initiatives and advocacy organizations, with emphasis on those that support older people, and identified a preliminary list of potential participants. Participants were selected for a first round of interviews on the basis of having some relationship with Berry Merriam, and as people whom the three researchers knew to be longstanding social change-makers in the community.

Berry Merriam, Chazan, and Skinner then collaboratively interviewed eight advocates from this preliminary list, asking participants to recount their own work for social change in the Peterborough/Nogojwanong community through semi-formal interviews, each lasting approximately 1.5 hours. These were transcribed by Julia Strider, then a research assistant with TCAS. In mid-2017, Madden, then a research assistant with TCAS and Aging Activisms, undertook a thematic analysis of these transcripts under the supervision of Chazan.

It is important to keep in mind that this preliminary study is limited to what a small number of social changers shared with us about their lives. There are so many additional people who we would have liked to interview as well, and whose contributions to this community are profound. Because this project was funded by a small seed grant from TCAS, it was necessarily small and exploratory in scope. In addition, we recognize that the participants we selected represent a fairly homogenous group of people with similar backgrounds: all are white settlers of Christian cultural background who, in their later lives, were living and working for change on the lands of the Mississauga Anishinaabeg. While they were not all born and raised in this community and they do hold different passions and interests, all have worked for, founded, and sustained a variety of different efforts, initiatives, and organizations in Peterborough/Nogojwanong.²

Table 1 on the next page provides an introduction to the eight participants in this project, while a short biography constructed from each interview is also included in Appendix A.

² While we acknowledge that the analysis we offer emerges from this small, preliminary study, we also point readers to Chazan's ongoing project; "Stories of Resistance, Resurgence, and Resilience in Nogojwanong/Peterborough." This project documents the activist stories of 12 social changers from this community each year. Between 2016 and 2019, it will generate 48 detailed interviews with accompanying short videos, thereby offering a more comprehensive oral history of activism in Nogojwanong. In addition, this ongoing work has the explicit aim of bringing together people of diverse backgrounds, ages, and abilities, conscientiously seeking to record the stories of resistance of those people who are typically least recognized for their work, and moving beyond the historical reliance on the stories of white settlers (see www.agingactivisms.org/events).



Table 1: Participant Backgrounds

Name	Birth year/ Age at interview	Birthplace	Education	Career
John Beamish	b.1955 Age 62	Toronto, ON, Canada	M.D.	Family Medicine; Palliative Care/ Hospice
Alan Cavell	b.1948 Age 59	Owen Sound, ON, Canada	MSc Extension Education	Provincial Government; Non-Profit Sector
Rosemary Ganley	b.1937 Age 80	Kirkland Lake, ON, Canada	B.A.; Med; Certificate in Theology; Continuing Education	Education; Newspaper Columnist; Non-Profit Sector
Jean Koning	b.1922 Age 94	Walkerville, ON, Canada	Senior Matriculation, Adult/ Continuing Education; Professional Training; Walking with First Peoples	Non-Profit Sector; Volunteer; Writer/ Journalist
John Martyn	b.1937 Age 80	Peterborough, ON, Canada	Education; Teaching certification	Education and community development
Lois Harte-Maxwell	1937-2016 Age 79	Peterborough, ON, Canada	Business School courses; Community Education	Municipal Politics; Non-Profit Sector
Gillian Sandeman	b.1936 Age 81	Isleworth, England, UK	B.A.; M.A. and PhD in English Literature	Higher Education; Correctional Services; Municipal and Provincial Government; Non-Profit Sector; Self Employed
Linda Slavin	b.1944 Age 72	Vancouver, BC, Canada	B.A. English and Political Science; Teaching Certificates English, Theatre Arts, History, Elementary French	Education; Entrepreneur; Non-Profit Sector

Emerging Themes

A number of themes emerged from these interviews. What follows is our preliminary attempt to make meaning from the detailed and impressive stories shared with us by drawing out four key themes from the eight interview transcripts: (1) reflections on aging and aging advocacy; (2) motivations of change-makers; (3) practices of change-making; (4) changing contexts of advocacy work.

Reflections on Aging and Aging Advocacy

We open with participants' reflections on aging, aging advocacy, and aging in Peterborough. In our interviews, we asked participants to reflect on aging in three parts: to describe their "aging advocacy" (i.e. their advocacy around aging issues), to tell us about their own experiences of "growing old" in Peterborough, and to consider whether (and for whom) they felt Peterborough was "a good place to grow old." As noted previously, although this was initially the focus of this research, our conversations around aging turned out to be less central to the interviews than we anticipated.



Nevertheless, participants' responses – what they said to us but also their silences – offer important insights.

Without being explicitly prompted to talk about aging, participants did not generally identify aging or seniors' needs as central to their advocacy work (with the notable exceptions of Alan Cavell and John Beamish, both of whom have been involved in long-standing work with seniors). This suggests that, for most participants, aging advocacy was not their primary form (or most active area) of social change work. Additionally, in responding to our question about what advocacy work they do around aging and/or what work do they feel is most needed, it became clear that participants did not consider issues facing older people as separate from the work already underway around poverty, gender equality, access to services, disability advocacy, and so on. Most spoke about how the issues that are pressing for older people in Peterborough tend to be embedded in wider social and economic justice issues affecting all ages and life stages. In reflecting on aging in this way, many pointed to the need to address aging-related challenges as part of a comprehensive and integrated strategy to improve overall community well-being (e.g., income security, housing, accessibility), starting with those who are most vulnerable or marginalized.

When asked what they consider – from both their personal experience and their work in community – to be core challenges facing seniors in the community, participants repeatedly cited certain key issues, particularly poverty. Participants also consistently noted the intersections between poverty, health, education, care, and age, which pose multiple barriers to service access - particularly health services - and which collectively underpin many advocacy efforts. Alan Cavell, a long-time advocate of client-centered community care services for seniors through his work for the provincial government and the Victorian Order of Nurses, amongst others, for example, explained:

I think that we need to look at it issues [including aging] more holistically and, you know, when they talk about affordable housing... yes, we need affordable housing but if you gave people a decent income to begin with then they could probably more easily afford adequate housing. If they had adequate incomes then they could have a better diet and you wouldn't see them in the doctor's office getting their needles for diabetes those kind of thing.

Some participants also identified mobility for older people as a key issue that intersected with the greater accessibility needs of other groups in this community (e.g. people with physical disabilities, caregivers with young children), as well as those living in poverty. Lois Harte-Maxwell, a life-long disability rights activist, discussed physical accessibility issues as affecting older people as well as people living with physical disabilities, including for instance the importance of dropped curbs on sidewalks. Jean Koning, who has spent more than five decades “walking with First Peoples” and has indeed played significant roles in organizations and initiatives aimed at decolonization and reconciliation across Ontario and Canada, noted the importance of snow removal on sidewalks for older people's mobility, but also identified this as an issue that most affects those who do not have access to cars, who are mobility challenged for reasons other than age, who live downtown, and who rely on mobility around town to meet their basic needs.

Along with transportation needs, many participants delved into the complexities of affordable housing, care needs, and desires to remain autonomous and live with dignity – all in the context of policy and funding. John Beamish, who has worked as a family doctor since 1982, and has been a dedicated proponent of palliative care through the founding of Hospice Peterborough, as well as the development of health care services for marginalized community members (e.g., those with mental



illness, or who are homeless). He spoke about these complexities as follows: “It’s [housing/care] a big challenge, you need a lot of resource to keep people in their own homes,” which is what he claims many older people want to do, despite pressure faced by family caregivers. After years of experience working for and with seniors, advocates like Beamish and Cavell continue to work for small-scale, person-centered, community-based models of care. As Cavell said:

My view is we should do away with long-term care homes and have nothing bigger than about twenty beds. And more neighbourhood-based as well, so that people can stay in their own neighbourhoods and have more a quality of life that’s worth living as opposed to living in a warehouse. Because I really feel, having worked in two long-term care [facilities] and supervised another twenty or so that it’s, it’s just not the way to treat people really. Yeah. It’s so sad that we are building more of those.

Yet, Beamish noted the mismatch between government policies that dictate standardized models of care provision on a large scale, and the community efforts to provide comprehensive, integrated, person-centered care for seniors in a local context. Connected to this, other participants discussed the challenges associated with trying to provide community-based care, particularly as the responsibility for care is downloaded onto family members and volunteers, who work without financial compensation. For instance, Gillian Sandeman, who in 1975 was elected as the first woman Member of Provincial Parliament for Peterborough (representing the New Democratic Party), pointed to the lack of recognition of this work in government policies, the pressures family members face in caring for their aging relatives, and the need for financial support to enable this work:

Biggest challenge? I think it’s to get policy makers to understand the breadth of the challenge. For instance, for more fragile people there is generally a family, or very often a family caregiver involved. And caregivers are more and more expected to take up the slack. And often, as we old folks live longer, our children may well be retired as well and in their late 60’s, early 70’s looking after mom who is 90 and is exhausted. I think we have to understand that if we want to maintain people in their homes and if their support network is also getting fragile, there has to be a lot more attention paid to caregivers and an understanding that there are some financial needs [...] I think there is some tax relief, but there needs to be more...

In reflecting on their own hopes for the future, and for growing old in this community, many participants communicated their desires for autonomy, connection, belonging, and dignity throughout later life. Some expressed their personal frustrations with a system that continues to institutionalize older community members according to a top-down, standardized model. Some noted the need to provide opportunities for people to “age in place,” be it in rural or urban communities. Many also noted their relative societal privilege – education level, skills with advocacy, class, whiteness, level of social support, and so on – which allowed them, in many cases, to circumvent some of the challenges they faced around the provision of care for themselves and their loved-ones.

Indeed, when explicitly asked for whom they thought Peterborough was a good place to grow old(er) and for whom it was not such a good place, participants raised inequalities associated with socio-economic status (class), ability, ethnicity (“race”), and gender. Linda Slavin, who has been a driving force behind many community organizations, including GreenUP Peterborough, the Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN), and the Kawartha World Issues Centre (KWIC), noted that Peterborough is a good place for those who are familiar with available services



and how to access them if needed, but not so good for others, saying that Peterborough is only a good place to age “if you know the system.” Several others said that Peterborough is a good place to grow old if you have money, if you have support, if you are able-bodied. A few said it was a better place to grow old for people who are white, for people who are settlers/ non-Indigenous, for people with Canadian citizenship. When specifically asked about how racialization impacts community members’ aging experiences, all participants acknowledged ongoing structural and systemic discrimination at play within the community.

Finally, in reflecting on their own hopes for the future, participants widely expressed a desire for deeper and more widespread relationship-building across generations. As advocates, many felt this deeply important not just in the context of relationships across generations in their families, but in relationships across generations that will sustain and renew community initiatives and movements. They take inspiration from activist youth leaders; they also hope to be able to share their experiences and institutional memory of change-making with future generations. They emphasized the need for the next generation to be involved in addressing social justice issues and spoke of their own willingness to provide mentorship to and learn from younger advocates. This finding disrupts and challenges common perceptions of aging as a time of decline or political disengagement: on the contrary, these older community members are informed, active, and bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience working for change in their communities.

Thus, although aging and aging advocacy were not as central to our interviews as we had anticipated, participants’ responses (and silences) to our aging-related questions offered several important insights. Many suggested that aging, as they understood it, was not a stand-alone issue; rather, they understood people’s uneven and differentiated experiences of aging as connected to and embedded in other forms of marginalization and privilege. Each participant thus emphasized the need for systemic *and* person-centred approaches to addressing the challenges associated not only with aging, but also with how aging combines with other ongoing social and economic injustices.

Motivations of Change-Makers

Beyond these findings related specifically to aging, in much greater detail our interviews revealed the motivations and practices of this exceptional group of change-makers: that is, why these advocates and activists became involved in social change work, how they went about their work, how they sustained their enormous contributions over many decades of their lives, and the dynamic personal and socio-historical contexts in which they worked. In the remainder of this report, we will offer only a glimpse of the detailed and impressive stories shared with us. We begin here with participants’ reflections on *why* they became and stayed involved in advocacy work – their underpinning motivations.

When asked to reflect on what drives them in their advocacy work, most participants discussed their feelings and values, as well as their connections to particular places and people. Each participant, in some form, expressed being motivated by feelings of outrage, anger, belonging, caring, empathy, and love, as well as a sense of moral responsibility to listen, help, support, and advocate for and with those in less privileged situations than themselves. Several participants explicitly discussed the relative privilege of their own social positions as a key driver of action for them. In these discussions, some noted the challenges involved in working across difference (differences in power and privilege, often related to gender, class, ability, and so on). These participants were critically aware of the potential for their advocacy to reinforce existing power dynamics. A few also articulated their desire to engage in advocacy work that draws not on a charity model, but instead on a solidarity



model of relationship-building and accountability. In other words, they sought to enter advocacy relationships not based on “helping the needy,” but rather in ways that mobilize their own privileged positions to confront and challenge structural injustices, alongside and in partnership with those who are more impacted by such injustices.

When looking back at their lives, several participants identified early life experiences as strongly influencing the underpinning values they bring to their work. Some described being raised by parents who themselves engaged in community-based advocacy work, and thus that they were exposed to social justice issues at an early age. Others described the values their parents held, or being raised in a community in which they witnessed inequality, as the early motivations for their lifelong advocacy work. Rosemary Ganley, for instance, who is best known in the Peterborough community for her work as an educator, her involvement with Jamaica Self-Help, and her writing for the Peterborough Examiner and the New Catholic Times, reflected on living in a mining town and on her father’s commitment, as a lawyer, to representing miners from poorer families free of charge. She also reflected on her father’s advocacy for women’s education:

My parents were egalitarian. Two sons and two daughters. My father – this was in the 40’s and 50’s – believed in education for everybody and Kirkland Lake was a poor mining town and it was multicultural ... My father was a lawyer who served those folks and didn’t send out bills. So, [in] the earliest stages I learned about inequality. I remember him on the phone one day; he was talking to the head of nursing at the Saint Michael’s Hospital in Toronto, and she had turned down a Kirkland Lake girl because the girl was illegitimate. This was a nun refusing a nursing student. And my father was saying, and he is a Roman Catholic, “now Sister this is not right you cannot do this, you just can’t do this.” So we talked her out of it...but it was just an early example.

In another interview, Koning likewise reflected on her early life, attributing her values to experiencing inequalities within the community in which she grew up. Her words reflect the emotions evoked from her from an early age when she witnessed injustice or classism.

There was a real class distinction in Stratford at that time...I can remember that I used to get really angry. Now they call it bullying, I never thought of it at that time, but there would be kids who were well off who could be very nasty to kids whose parents, maybe with the father gone or there wasn’t much money or anything. And I used to get really mad about that and I would stand up for those kids if I felt they were being hurt in some way.

Another early influence came through “the church” and/or certain social justice teachings associated with Christianity, which a number of participants (but not all) expressed as central to shaping their values and their commitment to advocacy. Some continued to identify as church members or goers in their later life (as part of Anglican, Catholic, United or other sects of Christianity), while others no longer did. Koning, for instance, reflected frequently on her faith and on the role of the Anglican Church in her activism. For Koning, these underpinned her work and sustained her in significant ways:

The only thing that keeps me going a lot of the time is simply hope. Just, I have to hope. I have to believe and my Christian faith in the Anglican tradition allows me to have faith that as human beings we are always capable of being good.... I have always



been associated with the church... Through my church I have been involved in things like poverty, family, violence, concern for peoples generally... especially the poor, marginalized, the people that I can see I suppose don't have a voice...

John Martyn, on the other hand, who has been central to the development of affordable housing and housing for survivors of domestic violence in Peterborough, through the organizations Kairos Non-Profit Housing of Peterborough and Home Grown Homes, explained that the teachings of the Catholic Church were formative to his values and work, although he no longer aligned with the Church's practices as an institution:

By the way that's another part of my education is the whole social justice teachings of the Catholic Church. There are a lot of things about the Catholic Church that I don't like, but the social [justice] teachings of the church are really quite remarkable over many, many years, and they have provided the intellectual foundation for a lot of my work.... The Canadian bishops, for example, produced annually just the most amazing documents on social justice. I have a collection of them and time-to-time I have a look at them and they are just as relevant today as they were 20 years ago. So that's a significant contribution to me and to the whole social justice framework. And as a matter of fact, a lot of the people that I have met in the work that I have done, not just locally, have also been influenced by those teachings even though they wouldn't at all consider themselves Catholics....

In sum, participants described a variety of motivations behind their work for social change, including early family, social, and religious influences, which shaped their awareness and understandings of justice issues. Some emphasized the ways in which their personal and community values brought together their critical thinking skills with a range of feelings that included frustration and anger at injustice, as well as empathy and hope for change. Some also expressed a recognition of their own relatively privileged social locations, which afforded them greater capacity to engage in practical action for change. This awareness galvanized them to work for change within existing social systems, as well as to confront oppressive power structures, through a variety of practices, which we outline in the following section.

Practices of Change-Making

This research offered insights not only into *why* participants engage in advocacy, but also into *how* they go about this work. In discussing change-making in the context of Peterborough, many participants noted certain sites or institutions that were especially generative in terms of seeding social change initiatives, educating advocates, or shifting attitudes. Some examples of these sites included churches, City Council, Trent University, Fleming College, certain key non-profit organizations or community initiatives (e.g., the Kawartha World Issues Centre (KWIC), Council for Persons with Disabilities, Kawartha Participation Projects, Kairos, Jamaica Self-Help, Hospice Peterborough, the Kawartha Truth and Reconciliation Support Group, the Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre, GreenUP, and others), and certain arts events and organizations. In reflecting on how they went about their work, many participants highlighted these sites as spaces where they worked to confront historical legacies of injustice and dominant norms.

When we asked participants explicitly about their practices – to tell us how they go and have gone about their work for change – we heard about diverse, overlapping tactics: from quiet relationship-building to organizing rallies and protests, from working in formal politics to starting up



non-profit organizations, and from educating others to volunteering with community groups. These advocates were skilled at policy work, fundraising, committee and board work, on-the-ground volunteer work, and protest or resistance. Yet, they also spoke extensively about the quieter, “off stage,” or “behind the scenes” ways of acting for change, such as knowledge-sharing in informal settings, relationship-building, parenting, research, and education. Moreover, these practices of change-making were evidently connected to one another. That is, formal change-making work (such as starting up or sustaining an organization) often depended on the quieter relationship-building work, while this quieter off-stage work was seeded or strengthened by formal initiatives.

In reviewing these conversations in detail, it was evident that participants indeed emphasized the centrality of relationships in their reflections on change-making and on how change happens. Slavin, for instance, discussed the critical role of relationships and relationship-building in community development. In her words: “If you want to see change, hold a potluck!” She elaborated, saying:

For several years I would do a potluck when I was at KWIC. We would have every NGO in town come in and just do some analysis of the year and, you know, some inter-organizational planning. And that was really helpful because, you know, it was small enough groups, there would still be 40 people but we could do it right. I think, I always said: “in Toronto you watch and in Peterborough you do.” You know, you don’t watch a lot of theatre here – you do it! You get involved in the Theatre Guild and you do it. You don’t watch for some sort of a concert on human rights, you know the musicians and you get them lined up and you organize the drinks outside. I mean everybody is involved, I just think that’s the difference. Yeah, an amazing arts community that fits into all of this informally...

Slavin often reflected on the important role that inter-sectoral discussions have on creating change – and also the role that community advocates play as match-makers, bringing different sides together to start to talk. Slavin’s words reflect the possibility for change-making across organizations, issues, and movements that comes from organizing within a relatively small urban centre. Indeed, here she drew attention to the often hidden role of relationships in the development of Peterborough’s non-profit sector. In reflecting on how change has happened in Peterborough since the 1980s, Slavin highlighted the power of bringing people together to share ideas and to generate energy to work toward a common vision. In the context of the inception and development of the KWIC, she said:

[It was KWIC] where things first started to come together. And I think it was obvious pretty fast that there are some really old entrenched ways of doing things and volunteers were carefully guarded... I was like – ‘open the doors!’ And we just started sharing, you know; it seemed that there was virtually nothing we couldn’t try. We even bought a house at one point, we owned a little house... Out of that house came the [organization] GreenUP, came tons of projects... Ecology Garden was out of our house. It started out of our house, so we found some money for that. So you just find little bits and you hire somebody. ... Ecology Garden had four or five staff in one room, right, we would have a couple of other people on a project here, the kitchen was the meeting room, and offices and the library downstairs. And again, three or four people in an office – it was quite wild. So it was just a generating ground for lots of good things.

Slavin’s reflection on relationships and collaboration included the following comment on the importance of intergenerational leadership:



I loved the leadership that came up in Peterborough [during the Occupy Movement]. And also with the indigenous parallel [Idle no More] and the way leadership was handled there because... that's kind of been how I wanted to operate... You make sure you have always got young people involved, you have always got, you know, a mix of ages, and stages, and education and not just an exclusive class. You try to mix groups as much as you can and... That's what I would call leadership because those groups can do it together more effectively than any single individual.

Similarly, Beamish emphasized the importance of collaboration in how change-making happens. Beamish, like Slavin and many others in this research, viewed himself as a connector and believed that some of his main contributions involved bringing groups of people together around certain issues. He said:

I think it always has to be collaborative. The challenge is to always find your partners. And I, particularly in this community, [...] having grown up here you know a lot of people so it's sometimes easier to open doors – that's been an advantage. Being a physician makes it a little easier to open doors – people will take my phone calls – but any project you are going to do you have to do it as a group. If you go off on your own you are going to wreck your project on the rocky shores.

Martyn too reflected on his role as a connector in Peterborough's advocacy community. Like Slavin and Beamish, he understood the privilege and position he held and mobilized this to create the relationships required to make change. In his words: "I much prefer to work more quietly [in the background] and that's where I said earlier that any major contribution going forward now [will be from] the links and the contacts. So I can make a few phone calls and pull a group together..."

Related to relationship-building, several participants discussed the importance of listening and being guided by those most impacted by marginalization or injustice. Cavell noted the importance of involving people in identifying their own needs when working in community development: "My idea is you have to involve people in identifying the needs and setting directions." Koning, furthermore, stressed the importance of listening as a social change strategy in her work with First Peoples:

I have learned that it's more important to listen than to talk. ... People need to be heard, they just need somebody to listen. That in itself is an opportunity for healing to take place. Just to be present. This is a term that we have come to use in the church, in our church language 'to be present, just simply to be there not to say anything or do anything but just to be present.' And that's been the greatest learning of my life, always. How do I listen? How do I listen effectively?

... When you listen it's not good enough just to stop talking for a moment and then, if there is silence, to move on. You have to let the silence happen and the silence has to happen sometimes for quite a long uncomfortable time. We are not comfortable with silence. We think we have to chit chat about the weather or something – fill it in. To be able to sit there and just be face to face with somebody and not say anything and allow them not to say anything is still a way of communicating. And so, I have learned that over the years.



Koning further discussed the radical act of listening in connection to her participation in the Kawartha Truth and Reconciliation Support Group (KTRSG):

That's the kind of learning that goes on within that group – native and non-native people together and creating a safe space where they feel they can tell us exactly what they think about us and we can hear that... – where I have been able to maintain my silence and listen and allow the First Peoples to take the lead in speaking. To allow them to say exactly what they feel they have to say and sometimes that can be very, very derogatory towards me as a white person. Sometimes it can be full of hate, anger, pain and I see that within groups where there are Aboriginal people present.

Thus, participants shared with us their diverse “on stage” and “off stage” change-making practices, with an emphasis on the centrality of relationships, accountability, and listening in all of this work. This next section explores participants’ thoughts on this work in the broader historical, social, economic, and political context, and the ways in which social change movements and political shifts had influenced their advocacy over time.

Changing Context of Advocacy Work Over Time

The change-makers interviewed as part of this research were all born during the late 1920s through to the late 1950s, as indicated in Table 1. In discussing the trajectories of their advocacy and activism, most noted the social and political contexts in which they were working, including the socio-historical moments of the latter half of the twentieth century and the ebbs and flows of their access to funding for community initiatives over this time. While participants were asked to reflect on the ways in which their work has changed as they aged and over their lifetimes – the achievements, the setbacks, the learning, and the ongoing struggles – many placed more emphasis on the broader social-historical-economic-political context than on their own particular lifecourse or personal context.

Several participants discussed their work in the context of the struggles and victories of the feminism movement’s “Second Wave,” as it was gaining prominence in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, Sandeman reflected on changes for women over the past four decades. These changes alluded to victories that were hard won through feminist activism, as well as to ongoing struggles:

The role of women has changed quite dramatically. We... have had some victories in the way that women are viewed as a legitimate part of the workforce. Abortion ... is now a legitimate medical procedure, [although] not accepted by everybody... And when we look at the role of women in politics things have been very slow to change. It was 41, nearly 42 years ago that... I was the first women candidate for federal office in Peterborough and it has taken 41 years to get our first women federal member of parliament. Hurray about time. But that is shameful.

Sandeman’s comments acknowledge the importance of the feminist activism and advocacy over the past four decades in changing the possibilities for women’s daily lives. Certainly, her major achievement in being elected as a member of provincial parliament opened new spheres of influence. Yet, her closing observation indicates work still left to be done.

As another key socio-historical marker, many participants noted the immense transformations to social, political, and economic life at all scales during the “neoliberal turn” of the late 1980s through 1990s, including the harsh impacts of funding cuts and ideological shifts on local social justice



oriented projects. Again, Sandeman's words reflects this finding. She continued on to reflect on her work to support Kairos' local housing initiative for women and the devastating impact of policy changes following the election of Mike Harris' Conservative government in Ontario in 1995:

[In 1994] when I came back to Peterborough after working for the Ontario Government for the Premier's office, ... one of the first things I was invited to do was to be project manager for an attempt at expansion by Kairos' non-profit housing, which is housing for women fleeing abusive situations. The NDP government had funded across the province a lot of expansions. And then KAIROS, they had five houses with ten units, five duplexes... We had the funds to buy I think another six houses to extend to another twelve apartments and they hired me to be the project manager. That was so exciting to double the capacity at this small agency. And that was all going very well until the Mike Harris government was elected. And with the stroke of a pen the day after the election they cancelled all of that, all of that across the province. Just heart breaking and very bad business too.

Martyn, one of Kairos Non-Profit Housing of Peterborough's founders, likewise noted the impact of neoliberalism and the Harris government policies. With their projects abruptly cut off (and the recognition of such needs being downplayed and devalued) from government support in this period, he and his community partners had to find other ways to continue their work, drawing on their own personal resources to purchase and renovate homes and support women in the community who were in need. While recognizing and appreciating the incredible commitment and passion of such individuals, many participants echoed the devastating impacts of the sudden withdrawal of government support during that period. They also noted how the persistence of neoliberal policies continues to constrain local efforts toward equity and community well-being.

In discussing the changing context of advocacy work in Peterborough over time, participants did not only reveal the impacts of broader social movements, changing policies, and funding cutbacks. Some also discussed the ways in which changing attitudes and norms influenced their work. This was particularly evident in Harte-Maxwell's interview, in which she noted the shift that took place in understandings of and attitudes toward disability and accessibility from the 1980s onward. Harte-Maxwell spoke about her work to include the needs of persons with physical disabilities within the community, and both the resistance and support she felt from people in positions of power. For her, a major shift took place in 1981, the year the municipality approved an elevator in City Hall, and the International Year of Disabled Persons:

I was on both [organizations] at the same time, Trillium and Handicapped Groups of Ontario. I was on the move – and I don't move fast – but we were wanting the [Ontario] Human Rights Code as they say to include disability and that happened in '81. But we became concerned regarding the need to access to City Hall. After all, it was a facility for all citizens. One city councilor, Gord Holnbeck, took up the challenge to work with us on the issue.... Some other councilors were wondering why we needed an elevator – well why indeed – and one councilor thought we could watch city hall meetings on the TV in the lobby. I said to him: "What makes you think that we only want to *watch* you and the council?" And I also responded that people with disabilities have the same reason to go to city hall, as does any other person – you know, city clerk, or dog license, or whatever the heck it was. So, in 1981 – the International Year of Disabled Persons – the city approved the elevator.



Harte-Maxwell's persistent advocacy work, along with that of many others, resulted in tangible improvements to accessibility in her own community and to changes to the Human Rights Code at the provincial level. Perhaps most evidently, through her work a change in norms – in what is and is not acceptable – took place. Yet even while acknowledging and celebrating her achievements, Harte-Maxwell, like other interviewees, noted many areas where change is still needed to dismantle ableism or the discrimination that continues against people living with varied forms of physical, psychological, intellectual, neurological, and emotional disabilities.

Overall, participants shared stories of unexpected moments of challenge and opportunity, as well as of slower, quieter efforts toward incremental change. They spoke at length about changes and continuities in strategies and circumstances, resistances encountered and frustrations felt, victories won and achievements recognized. All of these stories carried a central thread: contexts inform and are transformed by change-makers and change-making practices.

Preliminary Conclusions

This report offers a preliminary analysis of research undertaken with eight older change-makers in Nogojiwanong/ Peterborough between 2015 and 2017. These eight people, who were in their 60s-80s at the time of the research, have worked for social and economic justice over multiple decades. In many different ways, they have proven themselves as exceptional leaders, activists, advocates, educators, organizers, and listeners. In the context of Peterborough, which is a mid-sized city just outside of the Greater Toronto Area, known in Ontario as an ideal retirement community, these change-makers are clearly contesting images of later-life as a time of either leisure or decline. Instead, they are continuing the work of creating a more just and sustainable community, drawing on their years of experience and institutional knowledge to do so. This report presents their perspectives on aging in this community, their motivations for getting involved in advocacy work, their diversity of social change practices, and some of the ways different contexts have informed their change-making. It reveals diverse understandings and experiences of living and working in this community over time, centring the importance of relationships in advocacy work – relationships across difference and across generations.

Perhaps most significant to the questions about aging and aging advocacy that initially guided this research, participants repeatedly emphasized that understanding aging in this community requires an understanding of wider community needs. They reminded us that there is no singular experience of aging. Participants instead alluded to the ways in which experiences of aging are tied to intersecting issues of poverty, sexism, colonialism, racism, ability, education, and health. In other words, Peterborough is a good place to grow old for some, but not for all: it is especially “age-friendly” for those who have enough money, education, skill, ability, and support to access services and meet their own needs. However, ongoing experiences of structural injustices – dealing with racism, ableism, homophobia, poverty, and so on – do not go away as people age; these often become more intensified. In reflecting on these issues, participants revealed thoughtful and critical awareness of their own societal privilege, class, whiteness, and level of support.

In addition, despite our initial focus on aging advocacy (advocacy work around aging), participants clearly did not frame aging (or age discrimination) as a primary focus of their social change work. Nor did they understand aging advocacy to be separate from their ongoing work around poverty, disability, decolonization, housing, the environment, etc. Instead, they all discussed their advocacy work in much more complex and multifaceted ways, at the intersection of many social and economic issues, with emphasis on why and how they sustained this work over decades.



In recounting how they became involved in social change work, many participants described their political involvement as catalysed by a personal awareness of injustice (often grounded in early family or community experiences) and strengthened with academic and/ or experiential education and on-the-ground work. Their social locations (as white, educated, middle class people) often facilitated access to policy spaces and other decision-making sites, where they tirelessly worked to advance understanding of diverse forms of marginalization and advocate for policy changes to improve equity. At the same time, they engaged in community education, care work, volunteering, writing, and so on. Many faced adversities in this work, as a result of their ideas, funding constraints, or their social locations (as women, people with disabilities, etc).

All participants expressed their sense that the greatest potential for making change begins on smaller scales where relationships are more established and where there may be support from those in positions of relative power. Many also noted a lack of alignment between community-based approaches to social change work and national and provincial policy directives, emphasising that, to be effective, such work has to take place at multiple scales simultaneously. Most participants explicitly emphasized the importance of slowing down, listening, and being guided by the expressed needs of community members in a collaborative approach to enacting change. Some also spoke about their efforts to disrupt charity-based models in favour of building solidarities.

The insights offered through these conversations were clearly profound, both in what participants voices and in their silences. Going forward, there is a need to consider, in meaningful and accountable ways, the experiences and knowledges of those who were not part of this research, but who hold key insights into how both aging and advocacy might be understood and experienced differently and unevenly by groups located differently within different systems of power and discrimination. We are especially aware of the need to better consider the experiences and knowledges of Indigenous peoples, people of colour, newcomers, and LGBTQIA2+ people – of all ages. It is imperative that the learnings, experiences and knowledges of change-makers of diverse ages and backgrounds be part of current and ongoing conversations about aging in Peterborough.

Finally, this preliminary work revealed deeply-held desire for connection across generations, particularly outside of family settings and across generations of change-makers in this community. Many participants expressed the hope that they feel when they witness younger activists at work, and the feeling that they have much to learn from those coming up after them. They yearned for a sharing of experiences and knowledges among many ages. Many also hoped to be able to meaningfully offer the stories of their struggles and victories for generations yet to come, so that they might inspire continued work toward a better, fairer, more sustainable community.

Appendix A: Biographical Sketches of Participants³

John Beamish

John was born in Toronto in 1955 but he was raised for most of his life in Peterborough. After moving away to attend McMaster University, he returned in 1982 to begin practicing family medicine.

³ These biographical sketches offer very brief summaries of participants' backgrounds and advocacy work. These were compiled by Berry Merriam in 2017, in many cases through further consultation with participants.



John has dedicated his life to supporting the health care system of Peterborough. A strong proponent of the palliative care movement, he is a founding member of Hospice Peterborough, and has continued supporting this initiative since its early beginnings when it was 'simply an idea'.

Even with a busy family practice, John found time to participate in community planning activities through the local district health council. His role in research and community development has been instrumental in supporting local health and social services. More recently, he has been involved with the "360 Nurse Practitioner Clinic" supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

John is a member of a community family health team. He cites the following as issues about which he is most passionate:

- Access to health care for all, regardless of socio-economic status,
- Comprehensive palliative care throughout the community which is open to all regardless of socio-economic status, and
- Developing comprehensive primary care for all in the community, recognizing that diversity demands many models of care delivery.

Alan Cavell

Alan was born in 1958 in Owen Sound and spent his early life on his family's farm. He obtained his education through the University of Guelph where he received Master of Science in Extension Education. Alan came to Peterborough in 1976 where he was a Senior Citizens' Consultant with the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

While Alan spent seventeen years working with the provincial government, he has also worked extensively in the non-profit sector in a variety of capacities, such as with a family service agency, a volunteer bureau, a municipally operated long-term care home and most recently a number of branches of the Victorian Order of Nurses. Alan has also been extensively involved in the community as a volunteer, with organizations such as Community Care Peterborough, Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, Ontario March of Dimes, and numerous United Way initiatives.

When asked to identify issues key to his advocacy, he offered the following:

- Community volunteer involvement, including being part of establishing a National Association of Volunteer Bureaux and establishing a Senior Volunteer in Service (SVIS) program in the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. He also developed and promoted multi-agency volunteer-based services, such as Community Care Peterborough, to provide one-stop access to assist seniors to access a range of services and remain as independent as possible.
- Client-centered resource and care coordination, including co-leading a process to develop a seniors' continuing care coordination service, which provided care coordination to those with a wide range of care and support needs.
- Client choice and supportive housing programmes, such as the local St. John's Centre.
- Consumer choice and direct funding to seniors, including supporting his VON team to develop the SMILE program which provides set annual funding directly to individuals based on their needs and abilities.



- Community animation, including supporting his VON team to develop and enhance Neighbours Helping Neighbours – a training program which trains community members to help their neighbour in need.

Rosemary Ganley

Rosemary Ganley was born in Kirkland Lake, Ontario in 1937. Her education indicates her ongoing love of learning. Starting with a BA and then an MEd from the University of Toronto, she continued to expand her education with a certificate in theology from Boston College and courses obtained through the University of the West Indies and the University of Dar es Salaam.

She moved to Peterborough in 1968 after living in Montreal. Rosemary's love for education nourished her work as a teacher for the public and Catholic school boards, Lakefield College School, and Fleming College. She has also used her voice in the media as a columnist for newspapers such as the New Catholic Times and most recently the Peterborough Examiner.

Rosemary has served the Peterborough community through her involvement on the boards of United Way of Peterborough and Amnesty International Canada. Her commitment to social issues, both locally and internationally, has been ambitious. She was the co-founder of Jamaican Self-Help and continues to champion social justice issues. Her passion lies in feminist issues broadly, in community development, and in gender equity.

Rosemary listed the following as the advocacy issues she is most concerned about today:

- The status of women,
- Local and global poverty,
- Gender equality and the status of women in different religions,
- Sexual and reproductive rights, and
- Anti-racism education

Lois Harte-Maxwell (1937-2016)

Lois was born in Peterborough in 1937 and spent her life changing and improving this community, and indeed this province, through her advocacy for people living with physical disabilities.

Lois had polio early in her childhood. Lois never considered herself to be disabled, merely inconvenienced by the physical effects of the disease. She was homeschooled and went on to complete courses at the local school of business. Her education also came through learning from others, especially through her advocacy relationships and work. Never willing to say that 'it can't be done,' Lois instead took the approach of 'why can't it be done?'

She advocated to make Peterborough and Ontario accessible to anyone with physical limitations, long before there were accessibility guidelines in these governments. As part of this work, Lois advocated for accessible transportation which resulted in the city of Peterborough purchasing and developing a van for the disabled in the mid-1970's. She also developed the City of Peterborough's first Access Guide in 1976.

Lois went on to be the Executive Director of the United Handicapped Groups of Ontario in 1979, where she worked with many provincial organizations to have the Ontario Human Rights Code amended to protect the rights of people with disabilities; in 1981, the Code was amended to include disability rights. She also served on City Council as a councillor for her ward from 1985 to 1994.



Lois' passion to improve the lives of the disabled also included her work as founding member and Chair of Kawartha Participation Projects (KPP), an organization providing accommodation and support service for people with physical disabilities. She was the founding and past chair of the Council for Persons with Disabilities, a patron of the Peterborough Community Housing Development Corporation (now known as Homegrown Homes) and past patron of the Fairhaven Foundation.

Her awards included:

- 1976: Peterborough Civic Award of Merit, for successfully advocating that the City of Peterborough provide a municipally operated, accessible transportation system for physically disabled persons,
- 1980: Pilot International Handicapped Professional Woman of the Year. Received Certificate from the U.S. President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped,
- 1991: Gord and Arby Holnbeck Award,
- 1997: Government of Ontario Community Action Award,
- 1997: Peterborough Civic Award, as Honourary Chair of Ontario Games for Disabled
- 1998: Inducted into the Peterborough Pathway of Fame.
- 2003: Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal,
- 2005: Peterborough Civic Award in Community Betterment Category for volunteer activities as member of the Council for Persons with Disabilities, and
- 2005: Peter Robinson Award (considered the "Order of Peterborough")

Jean Koning

Jean was born on December 6, 1922 in Walkerville, ON (now a part of Windsor, ON). After many years residing in other parts of southern Ontario she came to Peterborough in August 2004.

Jean completed her Senior Matriculation (High School), and then went on to enhance her learning by taking seminars in Media Writing (University of Windsor), as well as numerous workshops and in-house training in working with children, homelessness, poverty, and allied social activist issues. She continues to learn and describes her greatest education as her 50 years of walking in solidarity with the First Peoples of the country we call Canada.

Jean was employed with the Muskoka Children's Aid Society and with the Manitoulin CAS, and she also worked and volunteered with the Addiction Research Foundation. She used the written word as a way of communicating community issues and used her journalism skills to educate the public about social change. She has worked persistently to communicate to settlers about the ongoing and devastating impacts of colonialism in this country. She has been integrally involved in a number of related initiatives, organizations, and efforts, alongside and often under the leadership of First Peoples.

Jean listed the following as key organizations she has been involved with:

- Huntsville and District Retarded Children's Association,
- Project North (later known as the Aboriginal Rights Coalition and now under the KAIROS organization),
- Lenni Lenape, Algonkian & Iroquoian Council of the Anglican Church Diocese of Huron, London, Ontario,
- Ad Hawk Committee of Huron Diocese,
- Kawartha Truth & Reconciliation Support Group



Jean's role as an advocate has a long and varied history. She listed the following as key issues about which she has been most passionate:

- Justice for the First Peoples,
- The needs of marginalized people locally and around the world,
- Women's issues of powerlessness, and
- Struggles against multi-national corporate power(s)

John Paul Martyn

John was born on May 25, 1937 in Peterborough. After he left the community for a few years, he returned in 1963 and has continued to work for the betterment of the community in a variety of different projects.

After he graduated from the University of Toronto in 1959, John commenced his teaching career with the Algoma school board where he served for four years. He then joined the Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland and Clarington Catholic School Board, where he served for 36 years with great dedication to education and community work.

Since 1985 John has also worked as a volunteer in developing affordable housing. John helped to establish two non-profit housing initiatives: Kairos Peterborough Non-Profit Housing, a twelve unit project for survivors of domestic violence, and Homegrown Homes, an unsubsidized housing organization developing low rent housing in the central area of Peterborough.

John has supported the work of many local organizations, including:

- The Community and Race Relations Committee of Peterborough,
- Kairos Peterborough Non Profit Housing,
- Home Grown Homes,
- The Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough,
- The Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network,
- The Affordable Housing Action Committee,
- The Mount Community Centre, and
- The Peterborough Theatre Guild

John listed the following as the social-change issues about which he is most passionate:

- Affordable housing supply,
- Living wage,
- Land trusts,
- Government policies, and
- Community engagement & public education in several areas related to poverty reduction

A recipient of numerous community awards, John and his wife Nora were inducted into the Peterborough Pathway of Fame for their work in community theatre.

Gillian Sandeman

Gillian was born in 1936 in Isleworth, England. She attained B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. – all in English literature. After immigrating to Canada she was employed at Memorial University of Newfoundland. In 1965 Gillian and her husband Sandy came to Peterborough with their children.



Her work experience has since included an extensive array of positions, each serving the public in different capacities. These include: serving as M.P.P. of Peterborough; positions at Trent University, Lakefield College School, the Ministry of Correctional Services (Probation and Parole) Ontario, CHEX News, the Elizabeth Fry Society, Peterborough Youth Services, the Premier's Office, and the Ontario Parole Board; and being a very successful self-employed consultant.

Alongside her paid work, Gillian has gifted many organizations with her notable skills in community change and advocacy, including: the Ontario and National New Democratic Party, the National and Local United Way, the Canadian Criminal Justice Association, Jamaican Self-Help, the Grandmothers Advocacy Network, the Peterborough Social Planning Council, and Community Care Peterborough.

Through these contributions, Gillian has been passionate about many advocacy issues, especially the following:

- Social justice as a key determinant of all decision making,
- Replacement of the Prison for Women with better options for women offenders (still a work in progress),
- Coalition against the return of the death penalty in Canada,
- Instituting CAMR legislation (the Canadian Access to Medicines Regime enables drugs still under patent to be produced in generic versions where a public health emergency exists, for example making HIV drugs available in southern Africa. The World Trade Organization allows this, but enabling legislation must be passed by countries wishing to participate, and Canada has yet to do so).

Gillian continues to work for social change in our community and globally.

Linda Slavin

Linda was born in 1944 in Vancouver, BC. Linda's education includes a BA in English and political science, as well as several teaching certificates. As a child, she moved to Peterborough briefly before moving to Havelock. She, her husband Alan, and their children moved back in 1972.

Linda's professional work life was varied and crossed many community sectors. She taught English, theatre arts, and elementary school French. She was also a co-owner of a catering company: Les Hors d'Oeuvres. Linda's love of the arts included her passion as a potter.

Among many other things, Linda's commitment to social justice led her to become: Programme Coordinator with the Kawartha World Issues Centre and later Manager of INSTRUCT, an initiative based at Trent University with CIDA funds (this was a six year multi-partner research and development of ecosystem management in Ecuador), and General Manager of the Community Opportunity and Innovation Network.

Linda named the following as key organizations with which she has been involved:

- The Ontario Council for International Cooperation,
- The Peterborough Social Planning Council,
- The Elizabeth Fry Society,
- Sustainable Peterborough,
- Peterborough Green-Up,
- By the Bushel Food Co-op,



- For Our Grandchildren,
- LEAP Peterborough,
- the Regional Centre for Sustainability Education, and
- A variety of provincial and local committees including Raise the Rates, and Walk, Wheel, Ride for Dignity

Linda listed the following as the key issues of her advocacy work:

- The sustainability of economic/social/cultural and environmental sectors,
- Social issues related to health, education, anti-poverty, women in conflict with the law, and food security,
- Economic issues, including social entrepreneurship, union work, responsible resource use, international trade fairness, etc.,
- Environmental concerns, including her involvement with the first Sustainable Development Committee for Peterborough; Our Common Future (2 large city forums); Peterborough Green-Up/Ecology Gardens, Community Gardens.
- Cultural work, including theatre (acting, directing, producing) and poetry, and
- The role that food plays in various cultural/social/environmental /economic ways.

As expressions of her unrelenting commitment to this community, Linda also ran for political office in municipal, provincial, and federal government elections.

