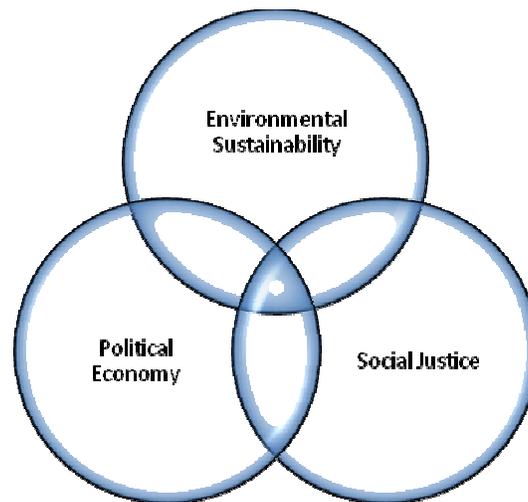


# Lakehead

UNIVERSITY

## Proposal for the Research Centre for Sustainable Communities



Prepared and Submitted by the  
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies Research Committee

September 21, 2012

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# Lakehead

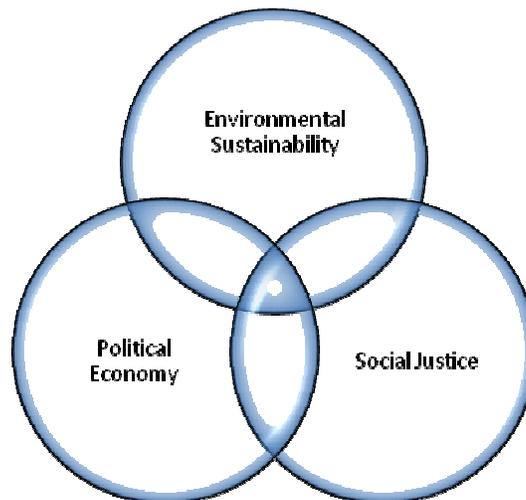
## UNIVERSITY

### Proposal for the Research Centre for Sustainable Communities

Prepared and Submitted by the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies Research Committee

#### 1. Introduction

The Research Committee of the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at Lakehead University-Orillia proposes to establish a Centre for Sustainable Communities focused primarily on conducting research and research-related activities. Drawing on a wide breadth of research expertise at the Orillia campus, the proposed centre will make unique and significant research contributions in a variety of areas related to sustainable communities. The core areas of research housed in the centre will include: 1) Environmental Sustainability, 2) Political Economy, and 3) Social Justice. Particular emphasis will be placed on research that considers the intersection of two or more of these three areas.



Sustainable communities are communities that are politically, environmentally and economically sustainable, as well as being committed to social justice in terms of their goals, processes and governance strategies. At a conceptual level, sustainable communities imply a holistic, integrative and dynamic view of communities, a view that recognizes and supports the principles and processes required for environmental sustainability, economic prosperity and social justice. The political factors and cultural development trends in a community are also key in creating sustainable communities.

**Environmental sustainability** measures seek to sustain global life-support systems by securing sufficient quality of natural resources, ecosystems and species diversity in all aspects of the natural and the human or built environment. In practice, addressing environmental

sustainability implies transforming a community's overall strategies and approaches for living to maximize the likelihood that environmental and social conditions will support long-term human security, well-being and health. In this frame, the flow of both renewable and non-renewable goods and services to and from ecosystems must be sustainable. A community built on principles of environmental sustainability, in line with social and economical sustainability, strives to find a common ground in which human growth and development are not based on the overuse of environmental resources, but on the maintenance of a balance between the source/sink (input/output) environmental capacities.

**Political economy** refers to examining how political and economic forces taken together affect the development of government legislation and policy. There is a widespread view that political factors are crucial in determining economic outcomes. Political forces not only influence economic outcomes, but also often determine community influence based on social relations of power. Political economy explores the relationship between individuals and society and between markets and the state. It is thus concerned with how countries are managed, taking into account both political and economic factors. Political economy is the interplay between economics, law and politics, including examining ways in which the state, culture, education, the media and other institutions develop in different socioeconomic systems. In the final analysis political economy helps to interrogate and understand how public policy is created and implemented.

**Social justice** refers to the belief that communities should be organized to allow for and promote equality, fairness, dignity and solidarity among community members such that all members of the community experience a just and fair society, experiencing equality not just in laws or on paper but also in social outcomes. Proponents of social justice thus work toward establishing and implementing human rights law and policy, and correcting social, political, cultural and economic inequalities in the community, from local to global. Inequality might refer to differences in economic class, wealth, prosperity or status, but it can also refer to differences in access to health care, education, affordable housing, legal services, freedom of thought, political liberties, and basic human rights. Social justice researchers may therefore study barriers to access, considering potential and actual effects of various determinants such as poverty, class, gender, race, (dis)ability, sexuality, indigenous status, geographical location, immigration status, religion, mental health, drug use and other factors. The goal of social justice movements and social justice research is to contribute to the positive transformation of communities.

## **2. Purpose**

The overarching aim of the Centre for Sustainable Communities will be to conduct and promote research and research-related activities that have positive implications for the sustainability of communities. The term "communities" refers to any social grouping, which might include: animal and plant communities, online communities, university communities, localized geographical communities, and/or any other group of people with shared interests, activities or characteristics.

## ***2.1 Objectives***

The central objectives of the Centre for Sustainable Communities include the following:

- (1) To conduct research with positive implications and impacts for the sustainability of communities
- (2) To promote multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research, particularly among the three research pillars named above
- (3) To secure external funding for the centre, and for a range of research projects on community sustainability in science, the arts, humanities and social sciences
- (4) To establish Lakehead University-Orillia as a centre for innovative research
- (5) To sponsor interdisciplinary workshops, conferences, and seminars on the many diverse aspects of sustainable communities
- (6) To provide research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and visiting scholars, at Lakehead University-Orillia
- (7) To facilitate research collaborations across a range of Lakehead University faculties and departments, as well as with various community organizations and private industry
- (8) To facilitate research collaborations between Lakehead University and other universities both nationally and internationally
- (9) To contribute positively to the economic, social, political, environmental and cultural development and sustainability of as wide a range of diverse communities as possible

## ***2.2 Activities***

The Centre for Sustainable Communities will engage in the following activities on an on-going basis:

- (1) Conducting research
- (2) Publishing and disseminating research outcomes in a variety of journals and other media, in a range of forms, and for a diversity of academic and community-based audiences
- (3) Applying for external funding for the centre and its research projects
- (4) Engaging community stakeholders
- (5) Organizing workshops, seminars and conferences
- (6) Preparing an annual newsletter and/or written activity reports
- (7) Training students in order to mentor undergraduate and graduate students, in order to produce Highly Qualified Personnel
- (8) Community knowledge mobilization

## ***2.3 Methods for Evaluation***

The director(s) of the centre will conduct an annual internal evaluation to ensure that the objectives of the centre are being met. This evaluation will rely on the following information:

- (1) Amount of external research funding received

- (2) Number of journal articles, book chapters and book publications produced and disseminated
- (3) Impact factor or other qualitative evaluative markers of excellence of academic publications; reception of community publications
- (4) Number of new members active in the centre, including students, grad students, faculty members, community participants and other collaborators
- (5) Quantity and quality of workshops, seminars, and conferences
- (6) Quantity and quality of community engagement, community knowledge mobilization and other collaborative initiatives
- (7) Positive implications and impacts of research outcomes on developing and contributing to the sustainability of communities

### **3. Relevance**

The establishment of the Research Centre for Sustainable Communities is consistent with the Mission Statement and the Vision of Lakehead University, the Lakehead University Strategic Plan and the Orillia Campus Plan. This Centre will add to the comprehensiveness of the university, because it is committed to innovation and excellence in research and other scholarly activities in relation to sustainable communities, which will complement and extend the scope of research already being undertaken at Lakehead University. Furthermore, the Centre will be committed to the Lakehead University Mission to promote social and environmental responsibility, expanding the diversity of research and scholarly ideas, contributions and achievements. Moreover, in training Highly Qualified Personnel, the Centre will foster the development and mentorship of students who will be recognized for leadership and independent critical thinking and who are aware of and engaged in developing social and environmental responsibilities. Finally, reflecting the Vision of Lakehead University, the Centre will continue to reflect and serve diverse cultures, institutions and organizations as it reaches out regionally, nationally and globally in promoting and developing engaged interdisciplinary research on a range of approaches to sustainable communities.

Consistent with the 2010-2013 Lakehead University Strategic Plan, the establishment of this Centre will contribute to the sustainability, comprehensiveness, research growth, and diversity of the university. The Research Centre for Sustainable Communities will strive to secure external research funding that will support research projects housed in the Centre, furthering the development of research infrastructure and partnerships at Lakehead University. The Centre will add to Lakehead University's growing research reputation, with the objective of positioning Lakehead as a national and international leader in research on sustainable communities, and as a superlative research institution more generally. This Centre and the unique, interdisciplinary research that it will produce, will add to the distinctiveness of Lakehead University, particularly in giving character to the Orillia campus. Excellence in research will also contribute to the development and delivery of high quality academic programs aligned with the University mission and vision. The Centre will contribute to the goal of raising awareness in government and the general population about the local and regional benefits that Lakehead University provides to the local and regional economies of Ontario. Researchers and projects housed in the Centre will help Lakehead University to continue to build on existing international relationships, seeking out structured programming for student and faculty exchanges,

collaborative research and outreach. Moreover the Research Centre on Sustainable Communities, by securing external research funding, will facilitate the development of graduate programs at Lakehead University Orillia where we can attract and retain graduate students with funding for Research Assistantships, which will in turn increase accessibility for graduate students. Moreover, this will enable faculty to undertake complex research projects while continuing to achieve teaching excellence. The Research Centre will work to consolidate and extend the Lakehead University goal to increase research funding by 50% by 2013, beyond the years covered by the Strategic Plan. In addition, this Research Centre will help increase public visibility and recognition of a widely diverse range of interdisciplinary, internationally trained and globally recognized scholars. This visibility and recognition accruing to the Research Centre will contribute to and facilitate Lakehead's goal of becoming one of the Top 25 Research Universities, focusing resources in research areas where we already have and are continuing to develop a unique set of strengths and advantages.

Consistent with the 2009-2013 Orillia Campus Plan, the Research Centre for Sustainable Communities will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the Orillia Campus and Lakehead University in general. It will help to increase the visibility of Lakehead University-Orillia, and to continue to develop community relationships between Lakehead University and various communities in Simcoe County and the wider region. Furthermore, the Centre for Sustainable Communities will be a community participant responding to needs of the area. It will promote research and development initiatives in social, political, cultural and environmental sustainability, and will thereby continue to position the Lakehead University Orillia Campus as exemplary in sustainable development and environmental management.

#### **4. Life Expectancy of the Research Centre**

The proposed Centre will exist indefinitely, and for a minimum of ten years. Issues pertaining to the sustainability of communities are not new, nor will they disappear in future years. As such, the Centre will continue to be relevant long into the future. The Centre will undergo periodic review to ensure that it continues to be feasible, relevant and able to meet the goals laid out in this proposal. As issues related to the sustainability of communities change over time, and as Lakehead University's strategic plan continues to be renewed, the objectives and activities of this Centre will change and grow to reflect these changes, ensuring that it remains not just relevant but also on the cutting edge of research.

Contributing to the review process, the Centre will produce an annual report detailing the activities and performance of the centre, including information pertaining to funding, publications, presentations and the addition of any new participating members. Efforts will be made to highlight the involvement of undergraduate and graduate students in the research conducted within the Centre. These reports will allow assessment of the achievement of the Centre's stated objectives, and cumulatively they will facilitate tracking of the Centre's performance over time.

Following Lakehead policy on the establishment of new research centres, an internal review will be conducted following the third year of the formation of the Centre. This review

will involve an assessment of the performance of the centre by a review panel appointed by the Vice-President-Research with the approval of the Vice-President-Academic. After the internal review is conducted, the members of the Research Centre for Sustainable Communities will meet to develop strategies for the continued development and strengthening of the Centre.

After the sixth year that the Centre is fully operational, it will undergo an external review by a panel of three senior researchers with expertise in the area of sustainable communities. The aim of this review, as well as the annual reports and internal review, will be to further assess the performance of the centre and to make changes that will improve the quality and quantity of research that the centre produces.

## 5. Budget

The current and expected budget for the first five years based on the awarded and proposed research grant applications are summarized in the table below. The funds awarded are mainly through Lakehead University's Research Capacity Development grant (Curtis Fogel), Senate Research Committee's Research Development Fund (Sreekumari Kurissery, Thamara Laredo, Sandra Jeppesen, Rosario Turvey, Florin Pendea, Christopher Murray, Nandakumar Kanavillil, Curtis Fogel), Social Science and Humanities Research Council Standard Research Grants (Sandra Jeppesen), and funds from private industry (Christopher Murray). It is expected that the SRC's Research Development Fund will be awarded for some members in the coming years and this has been projected as future revenue in years two through five (\$15,000/yr). New external funding from sources such as NSERC (Discovery, RTI and SRG), SSHRC (Insight and Insight Development), CIHR, Environment Canada, FeDev and CFI will be sought in coming years and have been projected as a source of revenue from year two onwards (\$100,000/yr). In addition other probable revenue providers such as private industry and other public sector sources will be approached to secure income in the future (Table 1).

The funds mentioned above will be used to hire postdoctoral fellows, graduate students and undergraduate research assistants, whose salary is considered as the main expense of this Centre in the immediate future. Other major expenses will be the cost associated with buying instruments for the environmental science related research programs, and other consumables, which for now are projected as minimal, since the funding is not confirmed. There will be expenses for travel, conducting workshops, attending conferences and supporting visiting scholars and researchers.

Table 1. Projected expenses and income of the ORC members

<b>Expenditures</b>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Post doctoral fellow <sup>#</sup>						
Graduate students <sup>#</sup>						
Research Assistants <sup>#</sup>						

Administrative assistant <sup>#</sup>						
Equipment/consumables <sup>#</sup>						
Travel expenses <sup>#</sup>						
<b>Income</b>						
RDF –NSERC - SRC – LU*	30,000					30,000
RDF – SSHRC- SRC – LU*	15,000					15,000
RCD –LU*	10,000					10,000
Environment Canada*	24,000					24,000
Private Industries*	40,000					40,000
OMAFRA*	10,000	10,000	10,000			30,000
OCE*	20,000					20,000
New funding initiatives (NSERC, SSHRC)		100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
New funding initiatives (Environment Canada)			12,000		12,000	24,000
New funding initiatives (LU RDF -NSERC)		10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	40,000
New funding initiatives (LU-RDF- SSHRC)		10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	40,000
Other revenues						
<b>Total</b>						673,000

\*- awarded # will be updated as and when HQP become available

## 6. Research Plan

### 6.1 Research Objectives

The general aim of the proposed centre is the development of an improved understanding of factors that influence the sustainability of communities. The inherent complexity of this research objective demands an innovative approach that is comprehensive and focused. The research

projects and activities undertaken as part of the proposed Research Centre will not only fall under at least one of the abovementioned core areas (Environmental Sustainability, Political Economy or Social Justice), but will additionally focus on interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary methodologies. As detailed below, collaboration between faculty in the humanities, social and natural sciences has already led to the development of a range of innovative projects with a combination of expertise that would be difficult to realize in less varied departments. Rather than merely providing a “home” for contrasting research projects related to community sustainability, the proposed centre will cultivate research programs which target those areas only accessible to an interdisciplinary methodological approach. Viewed through the compound lenses of the social and natural sciences, the humanities and fine arts, the complex problem of sustainable communities will get proper attention. To illustrate the variety of projects that the centre members will undertake and to provide insight into the interdisciplinary approaches that will be adopted, a subset of research projects proposed or currently undertaken by members of the proposed centre are described below.

## ***6.2 Proposed Projects***

- 6.2.1 Project: Creating Sustainable Communities: Place-Making in Ontario’s Small Urban Communities
- 6.2.2. Project: Historical Nutrient Loading and Wetland Development in North-Eastern Canada
- 6.2.3. Project: Media Coverage of Free Speech Issues at the Toronto G8-G20 Protests, June 25-27 2010.
- 6.2.4. Project: Multidisciplinary Analysis of Brownfields in Orillia
- 6.2.5. Project: Constructing Economic Security as an Approach to Local Development and Sustained Prosperity

## ***Anticipated Facilities***

The Centre is expected to increase its research capacity through grants from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and FeDev. The anticipated facilities include research-specific space where new equipment will be housed, media lab etc.

## ***Faculty Members***

- Dr. Chris Murray:** Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Physics/General Science
- Dr. Curtis A. Fogel:** Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Criminology
- Dr. Florin Pendea:** Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Environmental Sustainability
- Dr. Thamara Laredo:** Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Chemistry
- Dr. Nandakumar Kanavillil:** Associate Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Biology
- Dr. Rosario Turvey:** Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Geography
- Dr. Sandra Jeppesen:** Assistant Professor, nterdisciplinary Studies, Media Studies
- Dr. Sreekumari Kurissery:** Associate Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Biology
- Dr. Syed Serajul Isalm:** Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Political Science