

# TORONTO NEIGHBOURHOODS RESEARCH NETWORK

November 27, 2006

Second Meeting, University of Toronto Faculty Club

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## INTRODUCTION

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### *Name*

- Toronto Neighbourhoods Research Network (TNRN) approved at first meeting
- Note that this is not a University of Toronto undertaking. The Centre for Urban and Communities at the UofT will serve as an initial secretariat for the Network.

### *Co-chairs*

- James Dunn, Inner City Health Research Unit, St. Michael's Hospital, jim.dunn@utoronto.ca
- David Hulchanski, Director, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, UofT, david.hulchanski@utoronto.ca

### *Communications*

- The TNRN will have its own webpage (rather than website) for now; David Hulchanski will reserve the domain [www.tnrn.ca](http://www.tnrn.ca) for the homepage and for the future website
- Distribution listserv for sending meeting information and updates; possible future discussion forum

### *Meetings*

- Four times a year, Mondays at 9:30 a.m.
  - **Next meeting: March 5, 2007, United Way**, Boardroom B, 11th Floor, 26 Wellington St. East;
  - **Agenda: Neighbourhoods and Health**; presenters from Access Alliance, Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network, Toronto Health Profiles Partnership, St. Michael's Hospital Inner City Health Research Unit/Centre for Urban Health Initiatives
  - Remainder of 2007 schedule: **June 11, September 24, and November 26, 2007**
  - Location of June 11 meeting: The Wellesley Institute, 45 Charles St. E, Suite 101. Toronto
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## ATKINSON FOUNDATION: CANADIAN INDEX OF WELL-BEING

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[www.ciw.ca](http://www.ciw.ca)

Presentation by **Lynne Slotek**

The **Canadian Index of Well-being** is a composite set of national indicators, based on 20 years of research, and input from experts in many fields, intended to determine “what it means to have a good life.” It will cover seven areas:

1. Living Standards
2. Healthy Populations
3. Community Vitality
4. Educated Population
5. Civic Engagement
6. Ecosystem Health
7. Time Use

At present, the first two are being pilot tested, and the Foundation is developing sub-indicators for the other areas. The index will include subjective measures that engage citizens.

The Foundation hopes to raise the profile of housing need and poverty at the federal level and “change the national dialogue” in this area; at present, there are only occasional stories in the media (such as recent stories about Aboriginal housing).

Roy Romanow will be a spokesperson for the Foundation and will be a keynote speaker at the World Forum in June 2007 in Istanbul. Key researchers include Alex Michalos of the University of Northern British Columbia and Michael Wolfson from Statistics Canada, as well as researchers at the Institute for Social Research at York University. The Foundation is collaborating with the United Way, Neighbourhood Action for Change, Progress Calgary, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and other groups on this project.

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## MEMBER UPDATES

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### *Centre for Urban Health Initiatives*

[www.cuhi.utoronto.ca](http://www.cuhi.utoronto.ca)

- CUHI focusing on six neighbourhoods in Toronto, both low-income and high-income. The group is testing a “broken windows index” and contact mapping (similar to focus groups) to determine levels of mental well-being in the six neighbourhoods, and will be carrying out a door-to-door survey to determine priority issues in the neighbourhoods.

### *Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network*

[www.torontocentrallhin.on.ca](http://www.torontocentrallhin.on.ca)

- The province has divided Ontario into 14 Local Health Integration Networks for health planning and service integration. All have smaller geographic planning areas within them. The Toronto Central LHIN which operates within the City of Toronto boundaries, uses seven neighbourhood areas (based on census tracts and City of Toronto neighbourhoods) to identify differences in local health needs and engage local communities.

### *Toronto Health Profiles*

[www.torontohealthprofiles.ca](http://www.torontohealthprofiles.ca)

- The Toronto Community Health Profiles Partnership has a website of health data that complements other neighbourhoods websites by making health indicators accessible and by providing workshops and tools to help people to use them in analysis and planning action to reduce health inequalities.

### *Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre*

[www.accessalliance.ca](http://www.accessalliance.ca)

- Access Alliance has prepared neighbourhood profiles and identified priority neighbourhoods based on determinants of newcomer health and is coordinating several community-based research projects in selected areas on topics such as income security and health access.

### *Wellesley Institute*

<http://wellesleyinstitute.com/>

- The Institute is conducting a housing study, led by Michael Shapcott. This will include a detailed study of St. Jamestown.
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### ***St. Michael's, Intensive Research on Neighbourhoods and Health Initiative (IRONhI)***

- Toronto-IRONhI is a piece of research infrastructure that allows for comparative case studies of differences in “health opportunity structures” between low-income and upper-income neighbourhoods in Toronto.
- The study includes an ongoing cohort study in Regent Park to collect baseline data on variables such as labour force attachment.

### ***Toronto District School Board***

**[www.tdsb.on.ca](http://www.tdsb.on.ca)**

- TDSB tracks “secondary student success indicators” (SSSI). The indicators are periodically re-evaluated.
- Researchers recently completed a census of all 140,000 secondary students in the system (Grades 7 to 12), which will take about a year to analyse and link to SSSI.
- SSSI results can also be linked to testing results from EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office) for students in Grades 3, 6 and 9.

### ***United Way***

**[www.unitedwaytoronto.com](http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com)**

- The United Way is focusing on community development and community organization, and in putting new infrastructure in place, particularly in priority neighbourhoods. The strategy involves finding ways to influence public policy.
- A new neighbourhood-level research project is being planned for 2007.

### ***Community University Research Alliance***

**[www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/cura/](http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/cura/)**

- Researchers in the CURA project on Inclusive Neighbourhoods are planning to buy immigration data for the Toronto CMA. One problem with analysis is the lack of an intermediate scale of analysis between Census Tract and Census Subdivisions.

### ***St. Christopher House***

**[www.stchrishouse.org](http://www.stchrishouse.org)**

- SCH is hoping to work with community development workers that have recently been hired by the United Way and the City of Toronto, in order to develop a network for sharing information.
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## INDEXES AND INDICATORS: PRESENTATIONS

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### *United Way: Neighbourhood Vitality Index*

[www.unitedwaytoronto.com](http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com)

#### **Diane Dyson**

The United Way is conducting research to better understand communities in need, identify areas of distress, and measure progress and the impact of interventions. The options are to develop a comprehensive measurement tool, allow the communities themselves to identify priorities, or focus on assessing policy outcomes. The research will not only identify community assets, but also their adequacy, ease of access and other factors that determine effectiveness.

The project is related to Action for Neighbourhood Change, which has conducted a pilot project in Scarborough Village ([www.anccommunity.ca/toronto.html](http://www.anccommunity.ca/toronto.html)). Several more projects are under way.

About 180 indicators are being considered, covering three levels of data: demographics (who lives here), physical assets, and social networks/social cohesion. The sources of information include existing databases, key informant interviews, institutional surveys (such as schools), business surveys, community surveys, and systematic social observation.

The goals are to develop meaningful and manageable tools that can be organized into “bite-sized” pieces by groups such as youth, seniors, or immigrants (but without resorting to labels and stereotypes), to determine the effectiveness of interventions and to encourage partnerships.

In looking at social networks, the researchers are aware of the importance of weak ties – not just the obvious social bonds, but the general acquaintanceships that operate within a neighbourhood. Ethnic groups and gender dynamics will also be explored.

### *City of Toronto Social Policy Analysis and Demographics*

[www.toronto.ca/demographics](http://www.toronto.ca/demographics)

#### **Mat Krepicz**

The City of Toronto tracks data on many trends that affect neighbourhoods, and makes this information available to researchers. Current projects include:

- Toronto Seniors Report Card (mostly dealing with housing and access to services)
  - Neighbourhood Profile on Youth
  - Children’s Report Card
  - Housing and Homelessness Report Card
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- Neighbourhood Profiles, which track change over time
- Economic Indicators, through the Economic Development department
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Quality of Life Indicators ([www.fcm.ca/english/qol/qol.html](http://www.fcm.ca/english/qol/qol.html)) – a report is due in 2008
- Municipal Performance Measurement (required by the province)
- Ontario CAO's benchmarking indicators
- Indicators related to guns and violence in the 13 priority neighbourhoods, a tri-level initiative that will lead to a benchmark matrix.

### ***Toronto District School Board: Learning Opportunities Index***

[www.tdsb.on.ca](http://www.tdsb.on.ca)

#### **Rob Brown**

The Learning Opportunities Index may be one of the oldest neighbourhood indexes, since it goes back to 1960s, although the method of gathering information has changed over time. It gathers information on the students, but is aggregated up to the school level. The information is used for resource allocation and allows for comparisons among schools. Schools may or may not overlap with neighbourhoods; in most elementary schools, the students come from the surrounding neighbourhood, in some secondary schools, many students come from other areas. The information is collected from secondary sources and directly from the students.

There are six variables:

1. household income
2. parents' level of education
3. proportion of lone parents
4. immigration status
5. housing quality
6. housing mobility

For each variable, three years' worth of data is collected, which is weighted 50% for the current year and 25% each for the previous two years. The variables are periodically reviewed, the last time being in the late 1990s. A larger review with a consultant is under way at this time.

The index as a whole is more powerful and predictive than any single variable. Studies by the C.D. Howe Institute have shown that at the school level, the index is strongly correlated to student achievement as measured by the EQAO. Over time, schools at the high and low extremes tend to stay at the extremes, but the position of schools in the middle changes.

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Aggregating the results to the census tract level creates odd results, because the information depends on the students themselves, not the neighbourhood.

***Community University Research Alliance (CURA), University of Toronto and St. Christopher House: Indexes of neighbourhood change***

[www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/cura/](http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/cura/)

**Alan Walks**

The data group created by CURA to study neighbourhoods, and in particular, the neighbourhoods of west-central Toronto, has used census data going back to 1971 (and in some cases 1961) to study neighbourhood change over time in terms of increases or decreases in status, gentrification, and income inequality and polarization. Among the variables studied are personal income, housing tenure, presence of residents who work in the arts, dwelling value, and rent levels.

The research has enabled the group to place neighbourhoods in the following categories:

- complete gentrification;
- incomplete gentrification;
- elite consolidation;
- middle-class recapture;
- downgrading.

The maps also indicate areas of potential gentrification. The researchers have developed a measure of social polarization that can be used at each scale up to the census tract. They are also looking at indexes of diversity and segregation.

The researchers are interested in collaborations and in comparing this data to information on other variables, such as health levels. Correlations with housing type are possible up to a point; the census gathers information on tenure, size, and form, but does not capture things such as rooming houses.

Although the data is available on many variables for the complete Toronto CMA, this information needs to be interpreted with caution, since at the start of the study period (1961 or 1971), the areas surrounding the city were thinly populated.

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**NEW: INCLUSIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS RESEARCH NETWORK**

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David Hulchanski announced that a group of academics with the United Way in several major Canadian cities as partners are creating a national/international-level research network to allow researchers working in other parts of Canada and other countries to share information. It will be called the Inclusive Neighbourhoods Research Network (INRN). At first, it will be a virtual

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**Toronto Neighbourhoods Research Network**

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community linked by email and a website. INRN members will pursue funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and other sources. SSHRC has a new grant program that provides \$300,000 a year for seven years for establishing research networks. The next proposal call will likely be in mid-2007. The Neighbourhood Change CURA project has already established connections in the U.K., the U.S., and Australia/New Zealand and the new INRN would further these connections. TNRN members will be kept informed of progress. The TNRN will be a local node of the national/international INRN.

***Next meeting: March 5, 2007***

***Location: United Way of Greater Toronto, 9:30 to noon***

***Boardroom B, 11th Floor, 26 Wellington St. East, Toronto***

Topic: **Neighbourhoods and Health**

*Presentations by:*

- Access Alliance
- Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network
- Toronto Health Profiles Partnership
- St. Michael's Hospital Inner City Health Research Unit
- Centre for Urban Health Initiatives

Presenters to send a one- or two-page summary to David Hulchanski in advance

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***Remainder of 2007 schedule: June 11, September 24, and November 26, 2007***

**Location of June 11 meeting:** The Wellesley Institute, 45 Charles St. E, Suite 101, Toronto