

# **Final Report**

## **Trudeau Foundation Public Interaction Program Event**

“Citizenship in the City:  
Exploring the Kind of Problem a City is”  
November 18-19, 2009, Ottawa

Organized by Trudeau Scholars: Lisa Freeman & Kate Parizeau

### **1. Executive Summary**

On November 18-19, 2009 a workshop titled, “Citizenship in the City: Exploring the Kind of Problem a City is” organized by Trudeau Scholars Kate Parizeau and Lisa Freeman took place at the University of Ottawa, a precursor to the Trudeau Foundation’s larger policy conference on Cities. This conference was intended to engage its participants in an interactive forum on discussing how cities are governed, who is active in political decision making processes and how alternative forms of active citizenship are fostered. Over the two days, the discussions raised by the approximately 30 participants far exceeded anything proposed by the organizers. Members of the Trudeau community actively interacted with local Ottawa civil servants, policy makers, academics, community organizers and municipal planners. The panelists represented large and small communities from Coast to Coast fostering further questions about civic engagement, active citizenship and implementing urban change at all levels of government. The opening lunch, walking tours, film screening and three panels resulted in a cohesive group of participants that fully engaged in the framework of the conference and consistently pushed its boundaries. This event truly reflected the mandates of the Trudeau Foundation’s Public Interaction Program as it created in opportunity for young scholars to engage with people in established professions working on similar social problems using a wide variety of methods.

## 2. Themes & Key Points

- Urban citizenship, as a mode of democratic involvement and accessibility, is not always available to everyone living in Canada.
- Accessing rights and exercising urban citizenship is highly depended on one's access to the privileges of Canadian citizenship. For many people—especially new immigrants, refugees and First Nation communities—accessing rights to the city is limited based on questions of Canadian status.
- There is a need for all three levels of government to address urban issues. A national policy on cities was one such suggestion.
- Social cohesion is an important concept for governing at the municipal level as it may provide opportunities to fight marginalization and create an urban revitalization beyond the limits of urban planning and structuring the physical components of our cities.
- Sustainability is more than environmental. Urban sustainability relies on social interactions and government intervention.
- Many people in Canada have to negotiate the multiple vulnerabilities of racialized poverty in order to address urban issues and civically engage.
- Urban change, in both environmental and social ways, is dependent on a diverse array of people from various sectors—including but not limited to government, business and community workers—must engage in debates, discussions and already existing networks to move forward.
- Who you are and where you lived influences the way you experience the city and your ability to gain access to its services.
- There are many barriers to accessing rights in Canadian cities, from sexism, homophobia to racism and income marginalization. The struggle of First Nations people is also an urban issue. When thinking through access to urban citizenship we must continually be aware of our historic responsibilities in order to move forward.

### 3. Presentation of Findings

The November 17-18, 2009 workshop “Citizenship in the City: Exploring the Kind of Problem as City is” was organized to create a forum encouraging participants to explore the meaning of urban citizenship by asking questions about rights to the city and how we access those rights. Discussions about citizenship, space and cities lent itself to thoughtful explorations about the role of municipal governments, the impact of community organizing on social cohesion, environmental sustainability in the city, decision-making bodies and questions about belonging. Ottawa was an ideal location for this discussion. As a city known for federal politics, on the border of Ontario and Quebec and located on unceded Algonquin lands, policed by the RCMP, Ontario Provincial Police, Sécurité du Québec and the National Capital Commission, the local politics of Ottawa easily become overshadowed by National affairs. The opportunity to actively engage with Ottawa-based urban planners, architects, civil servants, academics and community organizers enhanced the workshop and grounded it in a local context.

The organization of the conference itself provided participants and panelists from around Canada to share experiences and contemplate differences in municipal politics from St. John, New Brunswick, to Vancouver, British Columbia. During the open lunch on November 17, 2009, participants introduced themselves and a discussion of the preceding walking tours ensued. Questions were raised about the politics of ‘looking’ and concerns raised about the potential for sensationalizing homelessness and poverty. These concerns were collectively addressed and led to a further understanding and discussion of how to challenge privileges implicit in ‘looking’ at a new city. These walks were a time where Ottawa participants could share specific stories and experiences of their city, built environment and social climate from their critical perspective. After this open and provocative discussion with conference organizers and local walk guides, concerns about an imposing gaze appeared less. In fact, it turned out to be a great introduction to the walks. The guided walks included: a history of Lebreton Flats—a plot of land near the current War Museum (Phil Jenkin’s ‘An Acre of Time’), to a detailed walk of Ottawa’s Market district from a youth perspective (“Everyday life in downtown Ottawa”, Scynthia Ross and Kaylin McGregor-Nolan, Mike Bulthuis) to a personal tour of a social housing complex in the suburbs (Chelby Marie Daigle “Communities not Ghettos”). These walks reflected the themes of the conference that questioned the meaning of urban citizenship, how rights to the city are accessible and who shapes social interactions and governance in the city.

The screenings of Trudeau Mentor and documentary filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin’s films “No Address” and “Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of Metis Child” further complicated the conferences themes of “Who has rights” and “How to Access Rights” in the city. Difficult stories reflecting institutional (ir)responsibility, the meaning of home and community in a time of Northern diaspora, realities of urban Aboriginal people in cities and continued racism in Canada were ever present in the films and following discussion. The thoughtful introduction and continued careful facilitation skills of

Trudeau Scholar Dawnis Kennedy provided a basis for a discussion on the serious issues of the historical institutional neglect of Aboriginal children in foster care and the harsh realities of homeless Aboriginal people in Montreal. After the film there were many questions that were insightfully answered by Alanis Obomsawin. Her responses reflecting her passion and personal experiences contextualized the films and (at times) showed how direct institutional change—as was seen in Alberta’s change to policies to foster care for Aboriginal peoples and the establishment of a shelter for homeless Aboriginal women in Montreal—could be made through confrontational and truth telling narratives. These films spurred a re-occurring theme of future discussions; one voicing how rights to the city cannot be accessed with fundamental human rights and serious changes in the Federal governments approach to First Nation communities and situations.

By the end of the first panel on November 19, 2009—“Who has Rights to the City” with Nathan Edelson (42<sup>nd</sup> Street Consulting, Vancouver) and Jane Farrow (Jane’s Walk, Toronto)—the general themes of the conference reflecting access to the city and institutional change had been discussed leaving the participants ready to delve deeper. This panel addressed ways in which people can enter municipal debates, be part of community planning, cultivate social cohesion, initiate communication between various levels of government and take into account the needs of low-income communities through national policy, codification and community involvement. Nathan Edelson shared stories of his experience through his involvement with the planning of the Olympics in Vancouver 2010. He talked about how the municipal government worked with the provincial and federal government in attempts to ensure the needs of poor people in the Lower East Side of Vancouver. He talked about issues of community conflict and struggles with community planning—how to meet needs of poor people in Vancouver’s East End—primarily within the context of 2010 Vancouver Olympics. He did not give us any answers, only more questions about the challenges (and necessity) of creating a national policy on cities in both an optimistic and slightly cautious tone.

Jane Farrow's presentation blended well with Nathan's as she addressed planning and who can access rights to the city from the perspective of the people affected by city policy. She spoke about the importance of walking through the city and different ways that people interact with and navigate their urban surroundings. She gave an example of immigrant women in a suburban (and tower community) of Dorest Park Toronto and how they have been attempting access their rights to urban space. She asked the workshop participants to help solve an ongoing problem in this Toronto community. These women have been trying to get a dangerous walkway that they use everyday to take their children to school fixed by the City Councillor. She told us how these women are stuck. Stuck between a city councilor who makes repeatedly racists comments about them when they publicly assert their rights and a cultural community who is hesitant (and potentially fearful) of their public assertions. This example and the discussions that followed were an example of community planning in action. Jane provided an example of the barriers and possibilities for engaged community planning in the suburbs of Toronto. Trudeau Mentor and facilitator Renée Dupuis tied all of the presented themes together through her discussion of the importance of social cohesion in cities citing experiences of work she did with rooming house tenants in Quebec City in the 1970s.

The second half of the day included two panels focused on “Exercising Your Rights to the City”. These two panels were intended to provide a space for people to share stories of how people interact with the city, make the city their own and question how and explore the concept of urban citizenship. As in the previous discussions, the panelists and participants alike moved the discussion further than expected in the first panel. A wide range of themes emerged from notes on barriers to the exercise of rights, forms of social exclusion, methods of sustainability and diversity and ways people experience ‘the system’ and negotiate institutional structures.

Trudeau Scholar Lucas Crawford opened the discussion with questions about how people access rights to the city when social spaces are designated in certain ways and for certain people (i.e. mobility of bodies in cities). He questioned how people access the city when there is no legal category for their existence. He asked how transgendered people in Canadian cities could claim basic rights when it was a challenge to access financial, health, education and social services based on gender categorization. The panelists linked to the themes expressed above in varied and different ways. Leah Maria Farrah (McGill University) looked at the access of right through accessing our rights to cultivate food. She spoke about ways of exercising rights through food cultivation on university campuses and show how these rights are expressed in Montreal through accessing already established networks (of social service agencies etc). Sean Micallef (*Spacing Magazine*, Toronto, Halifax, Ottawa) discussed how people participate in public space in ways that are not overtly confrontational. From his experience producing the magazine *Spacing*, Sean talk about how it is “not always about fighting city hall” and that every citizen is a public actor from graffiti on walls to guerrilla gardens. Uzma Shakir’s (Atkinson Economic Justice Fellow, University of Toronto) assertion that urban citizenship is highly debatable sparked intense discussion. She questioned the entire theme of the conference “Right to the City” saying that if people do not have Canadian citizenship they cannot access the city. Her talk focused around barriers to active engagement if citizenship is in question. She spoke about how there is an underclass of citizens that are excluded from the city when we talk about the inclusiveness and resiliency of urban citizenship. Her provocative voice led us to really question what urban citizenship is and further connected the panels on the interplay between all levels of government in the city and stressed the importance of new immigrants working with aboriginal people in terms of citizenship. Her presentation led to a heated debate about racism in Canada and questioning if our country, and in turn our cities, are truly ‘multicultural’.

In the second “Exercise your rights to the City” panel, presentations focused on the integral role of active community members in making change at the scale of the city but also discussed the importance of engagement and communication in all urban sectors from social workers, city planners to business associations. The presentations in this panel complimented each other through examples given from presenter’s professional and personal experiences in helping to instigate community development and change in the city.

Trudeau Scholar and facilitator Alex Ayett opened the panel with a brief discussion about climate change and municipalities. He gave an example of women in Durban South Africa who advocated for improved air quality practices in their region. In this example the municipal government initially viewed the women—not unlike Jane Farrow’s earlier example of Dorest Park Toronto—as non-cooperative disruptions, causing more harm than good. However, it turned out that collaboration with government was key. This theme of ‘spirit of collaboration’ was echoed in Wendy McDermont (Vibrant Communities, St. John, NB) who spoke of poverty initiatives in St. John, NB. Her presentation emphasized the importance of integrating all affected parties within municipal systems. She gave the context of tourism in St. John, NB, and stressed the importance of the local economy on collaborations. She spoke of a coalition of ‘unlikely actors’ was essential in the anti-poverty initiatives in her city.

Norma-Jean McClaren (42<sup>nd</sup> Street Consulting, Vancouver) brought the discussion back to First Nations communities and community planning. She drew from Uzma’s discussion and raised questions of multiculturalism and racism in Canadian communities. Through examples of her work teaching at a police college to her experiences in community planning in First Nations communities, Norma-Jean urged the importance of creating spaces for conversations to happen, and told us that these conversations often in the most unlikely spaces. She shared stories of talking circles with youth in Circles in Delta B.C and Burns Lake, giving examples of specific rules that were undertaken to ensure that the youth voices were heard. Norma-Jean’s contribution was about ‘changing the rules of engagement’, starting with communication. Kinwa Bluesky (University of British Columbia) ended the panel, grounded us in the stories from Algonquin Territories (in Ottawa). She spoke of her family’s history in the area and shared a story of the spirit behind parliament hill and history of violence in that area, in subtle ways leading us to think about how these oral histories have potentially shaped on-going Aboriginal interactions with government and settlers in the Ottawa region. Overall, this panel emphasized the need for co-operation amongst various sectors of the city but also stressed the importance of changing the ‘rules of engagement’ through varied ways of communication, listening to different voices and understanding municipalities from their roots (the land).

The closing discussion of the day opened with a few words of reflection by Trudeau Fellow Ann Dale who raised questions about the multiple meanings of the word sustainability. Various participants from Ottawa and the Trudeau community commented on the how sustainability is not just environmental but social. Discussion drew on the themes of the conference presentations to approach questions of urban sustainability as being something that is much more than built form and municipal processes. Participants added to this discussion by concluding that cities are equally about the people who live there and the communities they create. The discussion about communities led to a thoughtful remark by one Trudeau Scholar about manners of speaking and of listening. This quiet critique about public speaking and the need to acknowledge different forms of sharing thoughts, talking and contributing need to be respected and in fact were present for much of the day.

After this conference we do not simply ask “who has rights to the city” but we ask what these rights are, what forms of collaboration exist between policy makers, community activists and businesses are required to make change, and how do we approach questions of citizenship in the city when many urban residents—primarily from First Nations, immigrant and refugee communities cannot access those rights. Overall, this conference was a success. It truly was a sharing of stories, experiences and perspectives on urban issues from coast to coast.

## APPENDIX 1: Event Participants

### *Panelists, Neighbourhood Walks Guides & Facilitators*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Alex Aylett	Trudeau Scholar (Facilitator)
Kinwa Bluesky	University of British Columbia (panelist)
Mike Bulthuis	Carleton Ph.D. Geography (Walk Guide)
Lucas Crawford	Trudeau Scholar (Panel Facilitator)
Chelby Daigle	Ottawa Resident, Activist (Walk Guide)
Ann Dale	Trudeau Fellow (Closing Remarks)
Renée Dupuis	Trudeau Mentor (Facilitator)
Nathan Edelson	42 <sup>nd</sup> Street Consulting, Vancouver (Panelist)
Leila Mari Farah	McGill University (Panelist)
Jane Farrow	Jane's Walk, Toronto (Panelist)
Lisa Freeman	Trudeau Scholar (Organizer)
Phil Jenkins	Ottawa Poet, Author (Walk Guide)
Dawnis Kennedy	Trudeau Scholar (Facilitator)
Norma Jean McLaren	42 <sup>nd</sup> Street Consulting (Panelist)
Wendy McDermont	Vibrant Communities (Panelist)
Kaylin McGregor-Nolan	Youth Services Bureau, Ottawa (Walk Guide).
Shawn Micallef	Spacing Magazine (panelist)
Alanis Obomsawin	Trudeau Mentor (Film Screening).
Kate Parizeau	Trudeau Scholar (organizer)
Scynthia Ross	Youth Services Bureau, Ottawa (Walk Guide).
Uzma Shakir	Atkinson Economic Justice Fellow, University of Toronto (Panelist)

### **Ottawa Community**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Rabbi Arie Chark	Metivata Ottawa, University of Ottawa
Kwende Kefentse	City of Ottawa – city planner
Jacqueline Kennelly	Carleton University – sociology faculty
Ben Liasky	Sierra Club of Canada
Brie Macaloney	University of Ottawa- Ph.D. student
Carrie Mitchell	IDRC
Perez Nyamwange	Carleton University
Emily Paradis	Cities Centre, Toronto
Morgan Peers	Jane's Walk Organizer, Ottawa
Nick Scott	Carleton University- Ph.D. Sociology
Yu Shen	Carleton University–M.A. in Anthropology
Katherine Solc	Carleton University – faculty member
Susan Spronk	Carleton University – sociology faculty



Thomas Yeung	Government of Canada
Xy Yushen	University of Ottawa student

**Trudeau Community**

Martine August	Scholar
Jillian Boyd	Scholar
Andrée Boisselle	Scholar
May Chazan	Scholar
Julia Christensen	Scholar
Tamil Kendall	Scholar
Leah Levac	Scholar
Mark Mattner	Scholar
Jason Morris-Jung	Scholar
Lindsey Richardson	Scholar
Chris Tenove	Scholar
David Theodore	Scholar
Alberto Vergara	Scholar

Total Participants: 49

**“Citizenship in the City: Exploring the Kind of Problem a City is”**

**Ottawa, November 18 and 19**  
Public Interaction Program Workshop

**Wednesday, November 18**

**12:00-1:45pm**      Introductory Lunch and Welcome from the Trudeau Foundation  
*University of Ottawa, Room 3120, Desmarais Building*  
*55 Laurier Avenue East*

- **Bettina Cenerelli** (*Program Director, Trudeau Foundation*)
- **Lisa Freeman** and **Kate Parizeau** (*Trudeau Scholars and Workshop Organizers*)

**2:00-5:00pm**      Critical Walking Tours of Ottawa  
*(departing from University of Ottawa)*

- Walking tour #1 - Social Housing in West End Ottawa: Communities, Not Ghettos (**Chelby Daigle**)
- Walking tour #2 - A Critical History of LeBreton Flats (**Phil Jenkins**)
- Walking tour #3 - Everyday life in downtown Ottawa: Experiences of Street-Involved Youth (**Mike Bulthuis** and members of the Harm Reduction Youth Advisory - **Scynthia Ross** and **Kaylin McGregor-Nolan**)

**5:00-6:30pm**      Wine and Cheese Reception  
*Carisse Studio Cafe & Photo Gallery / Galerie de photos*  
*495 prom. Sussex Dr.*

**7:00-9:00pm**      Film Screening and Q&A with Director Alanis Obomsawin  
*University of Ottawa, Room 3120, Desmarais Building*  
*55 Laurier Avenue East*

- “Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Métis Child” and “No address”
- Facilitator, **Dawnis Kennedy** (*Trudeau Scholar*)
- Q&A with Director, **Alanis Obomsawin** (*Trudeau Mentor*)

*Sponsored by the P.E. Trudeau Foundation*



## **Thursday, November 19**

*All of Thursday's events will take place at University of Ottawa,  
Room 3120, Desmarais Building; 55 Laurier Avenue East*

**8:30-9:00am**

Continental Breakfast

**9:00-10:30am**

Panel Discussion: "Who has rights to the city?" (Inquiries into how different actors understand and interact with the urban/municipal sphere)

- Moderator/discussant: **Renée Dupuis** (*Trudeau Mentor*)
- **Nathan Edelson** (*42nd Street Consulting*): "In Search of a National Urban Policy - Bread, Circuses and The Inclusive Olympics"
- **Jane Farrow** (*Executive Director of the Jane's Walk*): "Pimp my sidewalk: Walking, Talking and Civic engagement"

**10:30-11:00am**

Coffee break

**11:00-12:30pm**

Panel: "Exercise your rights to the city - I" (Issue-based interrogations of access to urban environments – claiming space)

- Moderator/discussant: **Lucas Crawford** (*Trudeau Scholar*)
- **Leila Marie Farah** (*McGill University*): "Regenerating the Urban Grey Core"
- **Uzma Shakir** (*Atkinson Economic Justice Fellow*): "Cities & Ethnic Immigrants: Testing their Citizenship!"
- **Shawn Micallef** (*Spacing Magazine*): "Canada's positive urbanism -- you can't fight city hall so just do it"

**12:30-1:30pm**

Lunch break

**1:30-3:00pm**

Panel: "Exercise your rights to the city - II" (Issue-based interrogations of access to urban environments: claiming citizenship)

- Moderator/discussant: **Alex Aylett** (*Trudeau Scholar*)
- **Wendy MacDermott** (*Vibrant Communities*): "It takes a city to raise a child"
- **Norma Jean McLaren** (*42nd Street Consulting*): "The Circles of Inclusion - Gaining Rights to the City from the Ground Up"
- **Kinwa Bluesky** (*University of British Columbia*): "Indigenous art and the changing city landscape"

**3:00-4:30pm**

Closing discussion (open roundtable)

- Moderators: **Lisa Freeman** and **Kate Parizeau**
- Discussant: **Ann Dale** (*Trudeau Fellow*)