



Social Sciences and Humanities
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Speaking notes for
Dr. Chad Gaffield, PhD, FRSC
President, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
Lakehead Research and Innovation Week
Monday, February 23, 2009
(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Thank you for the kind introduction, Dr. Wang.

Before I begin, I would like to thank your President, Dr. Fred Gilbert for his warm welcome today. I have also noticed that representatives from at least two levels of government are with us, Frank Pullia from the City of Thunder Bay as well as Bruce Hyer, your local Member of Parliament, gentlemen, thank you for participating.

I am very pleased to join all of you at Lakehead's 4th annual research and innovation week. Research and innovation week is the type of event I like to attend because it showcases the great work that is going on in Canadian campuses and between campuses and communities. In particular, we are here to celebrate research at Lakehead and Lakehead's partnerships with the community.

Research is important to the lives of Canadians and to our future success as a nation. Canada's strength as a producer of valuable natural resources is enhanced by the leading edge research that occurs here at Lakehead and across Canada. This research addresses our social questions, helps to educate our children, develops new methods of transport and construction and fights disease. Research is no longer just for academics or university students but for everyone.

At SSHRC, we actively promote the value and benefit of research in the social sciences and humanities along with the important work funded at the Canadian institutes of Health Research and by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. All three federal granting agencies strive to identify and support research excellence.

Our strategic ambitions echo our two core objectives in the changing world of research - investing in the development of talented, creative and innovative

leaders who can contribute across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors; and investing in the research of outstanding scholars who develop unique insights into our past and present and thereby inform our efforts to construct a blueprint for the future.

Let me share some examples of community relevant SSHRC funded research with you; SSHRC has funded the work of Seth Agbo, an assistant professor of education here at Lakehead. Dr. Agbo's research focused on the Keewatinook internet high school (KIHS) and the development of culturally appropriate digital education in Ontario's far north. KIHS allows students to remain in their home communities while taking courses towards their high school diploma. Dr. Agbo's work is a great example of academic research which is directly relevant to the community and to improving the options available to northern students.

SSHRC researchers are also the first people that newsrooms turn to for information on the economic crisis. Economists, management experts, sociologists and philosophers are all contributing to our understanding of the global economy and to how we will react as a society to these challenges. SSHRC funded Robert Petrunia, an assistant professor of economics here at Lakehead for his work on the growth and survival of nascent firms and the role that financial friction plays in their success. SSHRC funded research, whether here at Lakehead or elsewhere, is relevant to communities and issues that affect each of us everyday.

Both Lakehead and SSHRC share an ambitious research agenda. Lakehead is striving to be among the 25 most research intensive universities in Canada in the next five to ten years. At SSHRC, we are focusing our efforts on three core ideas, quality, connection and impact. These three key ambitions guide us as we strive to increase the quality of, and support for, research in Canada; to foster long-lasting connections among researchers and the wider community; and to increase the positive impact of research on the lives of people in Canada

and internationally. These ambitions also reflect the evolving research environment and contribute to the federal government's new science and technology strategy to make Canada a global economic leader through world-class research, a highly skilled workforce and strong partnerships across business, academic and public sectors.

Furthermore, the role of social science and humanities in our economy our work life and society is expanding rapidly. I am convinced that a new consensus is emerging in democratic societies around the world about how to build a successful future in the 21st century.

The fabric of this consensus is being woven with multiple strands. These strands are composed of new views of research and learning, and how these activities can help us address the key questions of our changing times. The strength of the fabric promises to support prosperous and sustainable economies, diverse cultures, robust democratic institutions and safe - just civil societies.

Metaphorically-speaking, the humanities and social sciences are moving to centre stage - shoulder-to-shoulder as I like to say - with the natural and health sciences and engineering.

My sense is that this new recognition reflects deep conceptual changes that have begun defining the 21st century as a new era.

And the people and scholars who will be ideally placed to lead and embrace these changes are those with backgrounds in the social sciences and humanities along with other disciplines. If you're here as an undergraduate arts student, you are already well placed to succeed. Your burgeoning ability to understand complex problems, to adapt and change with new economies, to lead and to persuade will serve you well. At SSHRC, we're making sure that this message

gets out and that Canada's bright scholars in these areas are contributing research to the issues that face us today.

Thank you to everyone for being here today and a special thanks to Dr. Gilbert and Dr. Wang for organizing this event, for promoting research excellence here in Thunder Bay and for reaching out to the community to create important linkages here in Thunder Bay. Just as I think that the future for Lakehead is bright, the future for the social sciences and humanities in Canada and elsewhere is equally so. Together, we are supporting and training the next generation of leaders and that is something we can be collectively proud of.

Thank you for having me here today.