

Media Release

January 9, 2015

St. Thomas University and Atlantic Institute on Aging Establish Partnership to Advance Research and Public Outreach on Aging Issues

St. Thomas University has entered into a partnership with the Atlantic Institute on Aging that will uniquely complement the university's existing resources, research, and public outreach on aging issues.

As New Brunswick's population ages, the need for aging-related research, policy analysis, and program development will be greater than ever and, together, the two institutions hope to make New Brunswick the place that "gets aging right."

"The timing for a partnership with AIA could not be better as our region has the oldest population in Canada and the services and programs for seniors needs to be strengthened before we face an economic and social crisis," says Dawn Russell, President and Vice-Chancellor of St. Thomas University.

"People are living longer, healthier, and more productive lives, and opportunities for all of us to age meaningfully should be an integral part of our health care and educational systems," said Russell.

"The AIA wants to make New Brunswick a better place in which to age healthy and live well, and St. Thomas University is going to be a great partner because we both recognize the importance and value of elders and seniors in the province," says Paul Thériault, Chair of the Atlantic Institute on Aging which was established in 2009. The institute promotes outcome-driven and community-generated policy and research that is holistic, multi-disciplinary, and integrated.

Under the initiative, the university will provide office space in Holy Cross House to AIA which will bring its access to a network of researchers, policy makers, community groups, seniors, and other stakeholders. AIA will be sharing office space with the Third Age Centre.

Since its formation in 2009, the Atlantic Institute on Aging has sought to challenge and shift the dominant, cultural perceptions of aging towards a much more positive and valued process in the lives of New Brunswickers. In everything it does, the AIA challenges people to think differently about how they approach aging, how they approach care, how they approach innovation, how they approach the positive contributions elders can make to New Brunswick's rich cultural landscape.

This new initiative will also complement the existing services and benefits from the University's Department of Gerontology, the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Narrative, and the Third Age Centre, creating a broad spectrum of study and research on aging. Faculty, staff, and students will have greater access to resources and other researchers in the field of aging, leading to more collaborations. The AIA regularly hosts students from the School of Social Work, and this agreement will also create opportunities for student placements from other departments.

"Our faculty conduct research that has already made an impact on the care of seniors but more can be done. The addition of the AIA to our campus will allow for a larger network of cross-disciplinary research and the amplification of ideas and programs that will benefit our aging population," said Russell.

To cite a few examples, Russell noted that faculty members Professor Linda Caissie and Professor Deborah van den Hoonaard are researching the meaning of retirement in the lives of baby boomer women living in New Brunswick. Professor Bill Randall and Professor Clive Baldwin are researching the link between resilience in late life and the stories older adults tell about their lives. Professor Gary Irwin-Kenyon has developed a “Tai Chi as Narrative Care” program that helps people living with dementia find peace through music and movement.

St. Thomas University is one of two Canadian undergraduate universities to offer a Gerontology major and the only university in the country to offer a Bachelor of Applied Arts in Gerontology. Through its Visiting Chair in Gerontology, the department conducts research and delivers programs for seniors, volunteers, caregivers and professionals in aging-related fields. The university also houses the Third Age Centre, an autonomous, community-based, non-profit organization to empower older adults to maintain healthy, independent, active lifestyles.

-30-

Media Contacts – Jacqueline Cormier - St. Thomas University, jcormier@stu.ca, (506) 452-0602 or Adam Thornton - Atlantic Institute on Aging, athornton@aginginstitute.ca, (506) 444-3330.