

# THE UVIC CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN RELIGION & SOCIETY

*My Story of its Birth & Development*



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Founding Director

## **THE UVIC CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN RELIGION & SOCIETY: MY STORY OF ITS BIRTH & DEVELOPMENT**

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THE UVIC CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN RELIGION AND SOCIETY:  
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THE CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN RELIGION AND SOCIETY

**T**he Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS) is an interdisciplinary research centre with a mandate to foster the scholarly study of religion in relation to any and all aspects of society and culture, both contemporary and historical. Since its formation in 1991, the CSRS has established itself as the leading centre in Canada for the investigation of religious themes in relation to society, science, health, technology, culture, environment and the arts. The CSRS hosts national public policy research networks; sponsors fellowships for graduate studies, faculty members and sabbaticants; and produces a dynamic annual program of public lectures and seminars. Housed in a fine one-story cedar and glass building on the beautiful University of Victoria campus, the Centre has a library (where informal scholarly discussions are held over coffee or tea 10:30-11:15 each morning), an administrative area with offices for a director, an administrator, an administrative assistant, a Centre librarian, and research offices for sixteen to eighteen fellows (UVic faculty and graduate students, visiting fellows from around the world, a community sabbaticant and an artist-in-residence). There are also twelve to fifteen associate fellows (a combination of emerging, retired and other scholars living in Victoria) each with a research project on some aspect of religion and society.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE CSRS, 1987-92

**T**he religious communities in Victoria in the late 1980s, led by the then Roman Catholic Bishop Remi De Roo together with the Anglican Bishop Ronald Shepherd and Rev. William Howie (the local United Church Presbytery Officer), proposed to UVic President Howard Petch that an ecumenical research centre be established using endowment support from the community. A Catholic layman, Allen Vandekerkhove, and his family donated \$1 million to the University to establish the centre. At the time the BC

government had a matching grant program for charitable donations which generated another \$1 million for the Centre's endowment. A further donation came when Bishop De Roo sold to the University some diocesan holdings adjacent to the campus for new university housing for \$400,000 and then in the names of the Catholic, Anglican and United churches, donated those funds back to the University (also matched) to become part of the Centre endowment, making a total of \$2.8 million. Bishop De Roo, who had participated as a scholar in Vatican II, had an initial vision for a research centre focused on the study of the relationship between Science and Religion. President Petch presented the proposal to the University by creating a committee with representatives from the faculties of humanities, social sciences, fine arts and engineering chaired by Patrick Grant (English) to consider the proposal from the community. A widening of the concept from "Religion and Science" to "Religion and Society" was accepted along with an expansion of the focus on Christianity to include the other religions of the world. The then vice-president academic, Sam Scully, chaired meetings between De Roo, Shepherd and Howie, and the University committee. Finally, the concept for the Centre was agreed upon, with a focus on the academic "Study of Religion and Society." The goal was the creation of a research centre that would achieve national and international importance. There was significant support for the idea of a research centre on the study of religion among key faculties so long as it was clear that there would be no outside control from the supporting churches or individuals in the community, and that the Centre's activities would be rigorously academic (Howie, 1-5).

At this time, in 1990-91, I was at the University of Calgary where I had been on Faculty since 1973, first as head of the newly created Department of Religious Studies until 1977, then Associate Dean of Humanities (1977-79), and finally director of the Calgary Institute for the Humanities (1980-92). In 1990, Ed Berry, Dean of Humanities at UVic, served as an external reviewer for the Calgary Institute for the Humanities where I was director. After the review was completed, Ed Berry called and told me about the new Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at UVic, and asked me to consider putting my name forward for the position of director. At the time, Rachel and I were quite happy where we were. We had grown up in Southern Alberta and our home was a lovely acreage in the foothills

of the Rocky Mountains, west of Calgary. Rachel loved her job as head nurse in the medical clinic of the small town of Cochrane, west of Calgary, and I had no intention of leaving the University of Calgary where I had worked happily for almost twenty years. But we had frequently holidayed on Vancouver Island, and on visits to Victoria we had sometimes dreamed about how nice it would be to live there. So, after thinking things over we agreed that I should apply for the job and we would seriously look around Victoria when I was interviewed with an eye to possibly moving. So in March of 1992 while I was being interviewed, Rachel scouted the city and found a beautiful oceanside home for sale, and which we could just afford. We were both in our fifties and thought Victoria would be a fine place to retire. Rachel had grown up in southern England until coming to Canada at age nine, and the flora and fauna of Victoria reminded her of the Surrey countryside in which she had spent her early years. For me as a gardener, the prospect of growing roses in Victoria had great appeal, as did the opportunity of creating a research centre focused on religion and society, already funded by a sizable endowment – something I had not been able to achieve at the Calgary Institute for the Humanities. Although Rachel loved her nursing job in Cochrane, she was willing to take up a new nursing challenge, and when the job as founding director was offered to me a few weeks later, we both agreed that, although we did not really want to leave southern Alberta or our beautiful home in the foothills with its splendid view of the Rocky Mountains, the prospect of the move seemed good. We phoned Victoria and found that our dream home on the ocean was still for sale. So I accepted the position and we flew to Victoria and bought our home. In Victoria, Rachel found a new challenge in palliative home care nursing. Thus, in the summer of 1992 we sold our much-loved valley home of eighteen years, where we had raised our children (David, Ken and Susan), packed up and moved to Victoria.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CSRS, 1992-2002

When I arrived at the University of Victoria, the Centre was still just an approved concept, a research centre under the Dean of Humanities, a faculty committee, a supporting group from the leaders of the church community led by Bishop Remi De Roo and Rev. Bill Howie, and an endowment generating an annual budget of about \$144,000 as funding for the Centre with no additional money from the University budget. If the Centre was to be more than a virtual organization operating out of a single faculty office with a borrowed administrative support employee, the two major challenges facing me were: 1) to generate more endowment contributions from the community so as to increase the yearly cash flow; 2) to have adequate space allocated to house a community of scholars. Although both of these challenges seemed difficult, I knew from previous experience at Calgary that the second – finding adequate space – would be the hardest to achieve. Fortunately, when I had negotiated my appointment, I included a requirement that the university would guarantee provision of adequate space for the Centre or I would not take the job. While I accepted a lower salary than I had in Calgary, the space requirement was one on which I would not compromise, for I knew that without the right kind of space, the Centre would not succeed.

Even with full support from the vice-president (Sam Scully was a classicist and fully in favour of the Centre), it still took four years for his promise of adequate space to be realized. In the meantime, I went on my own personal hunt through the campus looking for any unused space I could find that might provide temporary accommodation sufficient to get the Centre started. In the library building, I found three unused offices and some open space for an administrative support person and an unused hallway in which we could have our morning coffee-hour discussions. In the past, the area had been the dean of Law's office location. Through careful negotiating with the vice-president academic and the chief librarian (who planned to expand into that unused area in about three years), I got agreement that in 1993 we could begin using this space as the Centre's initial temporary home. Finally, just before Scully finished his term as vice-president and moved to Dalhousie to take up a new position, I got



him to make good on his promise and he signed over space to us that the university secretary and university research office were vacating, and which could be renovated by moving doors and walls as well as adding a new outside expansion to become the library and collegial group discussion area. We moved into our new accommodation in 1995. Bright and spacious, with office, kitchen and community areas, this has been the key element in making our Centre a successful “community of writers.”

Returning to the financial challenge, I spent much time in my first years working hard to raise additional funds for the Centre’s endowment. I began with the Anglican and United churches, for although their names had been on Bishop De Roo’s \$400,000 gift, all of that money had in fact come from Roman Catholic sources. I suggested to both that the time had come to back their goodwill with hard cash. The Anglicans responded by directing funds – namely, the John Albert Hall endowment for the support of Christian education – to the Centre to provide an annual lecture series and some core administrative expenses. The United Church was in the process of selling one of its main downtown churches and was able to donate a significant amount from the sale to the Centre endowment. Ian Stewart, a Catholic layperson and Victoria businessman, was able to donate a significant sum to the Centre endowment to support graduate student fellowships. These and other donations from individuals, along with gains in the endowment’s invested capital, resulted in an increase of endowment funds to around 4.5 million dollars by the time I retired in 2002. While I was able to hand the Centre over in very strong financial shape at retirement in 2002, in my first years I scrimped for every penny and did not hire an administrative support person or start program costs until year two (1993-94), ploughing operating funds back into endowment capital, so as to set us upon a secure financial path. Thus, as was the case in Calgary in 1973, when I arrived to create the religious studies program, I worked extremely hard during my first year as director of the Centre.

Yet another change I made on arrival was to get the dean of Humanities to agree to let me move the Centre from being in the Faculty of Humanities to being under the vice-president research. In Calgary I had learned that for an interdisciplinary research centre to be successful, it needed to be under the vice-president research rather than located in any one faculty. This would allow the research centre

to engage scholars from all departments and faculties across the campus with support from their deans. Because the Centre was under the vice-president research, an individual dean could agree to work with the Centre without feeling that a competing dean in another faculty was being supported. Thus, the director of the Centre would be able to draw support for the Centre research activities evenly from across all faculties. Ian McPherson, who had just taken over from Ed Berry as dean of Humanities, understood my explanation and request and graciously allowed me to shift the CSRS from the Faculty of Humanities so that the Centre would report directly to the vice-president research. This allowed me to be on a level playing field when working with deans from various faculties to gain their support for the participation of their scholars as Centre Fellows and in team research projects.

#### BUILDING A RELIGIOUS STUDIES LIBRARY

**Y**et another problem which became evident after I arrived in 1992 was that the UVic Library, given its secular orientation and the lack of any direct involvement with religious studies, had large gaps in its collection – a serious problem for the Centre’s goal of fostering high quality research on religion and society. To remedy this weakness, in November 1992 I decided to spend \$10,000 of the Centre’s extremely valuable founding endowment interest for the purchase of library materials needed to fill crucial gaps – especially in the Religious Studies reference collection. To guide this process, we created a library sub-committee chaired by me, with librarian June Thomson and three faculty members to assist with the fleshing out of the general collection in the subject areas of greatest importance to the Centre’s research. Within the next few years we were able to raise library endowments from the Victoria Cultural Association of India and Canada for books on the religions of India; from the Knights of Columbus, for materials on Christianity; from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria for the purchase of books on Roman Catholicism; from the Anglican Synod for books and journals

on Christianity; the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute for books on Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Islam; and from the Sikh Khalsa Diwan Society for the purchase of academic books on the Sikh tradition. In future years I committed some of the CSRS's reserve funds to purchase materials on Judaism and Islam, and then a generous local donor established a fund to be used to purchase books on Islam. The interest from these endowments was used each year by the Centre librarian, June Thomson, to purchase library materials with the interest on roughly \$230,000 of library endowments – a role she continued to fill as a full-time volunteer until 2015. As one external reviewer remarked, the purchases made through CSRS library endowments is about equal to that of a mid-sized Religious Studies Department in a typical Canadian university. We owe special thanks to our Centre Librarian, June Thomson, for her twenty years of dedicated volunteer work, not only in building the collection but also in assisting centre scholars in library searches needed for their research projects.

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

**T**he Centre's governance structure includes "members" (UVic faculty whose research involves religion and society and who request to be centre members), a "program committee" composed of UVic faculty elected to three-year terms by the members, and an "advisory council" made up of members from the community, policy makers and leading religious studies scholars from other universities. While the program committee meets several times during the year and, together with the director, is responsible for overseeing the Centre's major programs, the advisory council meets at the time of the annual general meeting and functions like a board of directors to bring an outside assessment to the overall activities of the Centre and its future plans. As the Centre reports to the vice-president research, he or she is included as a member of the program committee. Because the initiative for creating the Centre came from the Victoria community, I have always thought of this

larger community as our “shareholders,” to whom we are accountable through the advisory council.

## RESEARCH PROGRAM

I clearly remember the first meeting with my Centre Program Committee in August 1992. They were also the interview panel who had hired me and were from various departments in the Faculty of Humanities. None were trained in religious studies but all were interested in research on religion and society. I spent the first hour outlining the various programs I wanted to start during our first year. What I proposed was essentially a repeat of what we had developed at the Calgary Institute for the Humanities, which had proven very successful. The core of the CSRS would be its research fellowships for individual scholars. There would be two categories. First, UVic faculty fellowships providing one-term release-time from two-thirds of their teaching and from all administrative duties for UVic faculty members. Fellows would also move from their department offices to a Centre office to conduct their research. Second, visiting research fellowships would be available to Canadian and international scholars on sabbatical leave from their regular academic appointments. These fellowships would be non-stipendiary but would provide an office, administrative support, and library privileges within a community of scholars all of whom were in the writing stage of their research. Both categories of fellowship were to be awarded on a competitive basis with peer-review procedures modeled on those used at The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), with the Centre’s program committee functioning as the review panel and the director as chair. In the case of UVic Faculty Fellows, funding for teaching release would come from the Centre’s funds and thus had to be negotiated with the dean of the faculty in question. The appointment would not prejudice eligibility for sabbatical leave, but would offer a department’s best scholars a period of concentrated research time between sabbaticals. I also proposed a category of post-doctoral fellowships to provide an office and institutional support for

scholars at UVic or elsewhere holding post-doctoral funding from SSHRC or an equivalent funding body. Another idea I developed in Calgary and brought to the CSRS was the “community sabbatical” fellowship that would facilitate study leave for professionals (for instance, school teachers, ministers, lawyers, social workers, business executives) who could negotiate a few weeks or months of paid leave from their employers to take up residence in the Centre for a period of study and writing. The purpose of the community sabbatical fellowships was to make connections between the valuable knowledge within the larger community and the work of academic researchers. Also, the community sabbaticant would be able to retreat from the rush of daily life for a time of reading and critical reflection that would then be written-up and taken back to the larger community. Of course, the focus of study had to be on religion and society as applied to one’s daily work.

Another research idea I proposed for the CSRS, also developed successfully at the Calgary Institute of Humanities, involved the production of team-authored interdisciplinary book projects. In addition to fellowships to individual scholars, the Centre would put together interdisciplinary research teams to bring knowledge of science, social science, humanities, and the religious traditions to bear on major problems facing society. Each research team would have as its goal the writing of a major academic book to fill a significant gap in knowledge, and, when appropriate, the writing of a policy booklet to communicate the research results to decision-makers. These books would be significantly different from collected works where each scholar writes in isolation from other contributors, and in which an editor, in the introduction, tries to create a sense of thematic unity. By contrast, the team-authored model involved a group of scholars agreeing to meet during a two-to-three year period to create a newly researched and thematically unified book closely approximating a single-authored volume. Two team meetings in a retreat setting are usually required. At the first meeting, lasting two to three days, team members get to know each other, develop a trust and respect for each other’s methodology and technical terminology, and spend time developing a “common-mind” understanding of the problem or thematic focus to be studied. Writing assignments are then agreed upon and the scholars depart, agreeing to write their chapters within one year. The second meeting, also lasting two or three days,

is devoted to a detailed critique by the team members of each other's chapters, which have been circulated in advance. Based on the team critique and editor's requests, authors then have three months to revise their chapters. With the revised chapters in hand, the editor/principal investigator writes an introduction and conclusion and the Centre Administrator works through the entire manuscript to prepare it for submission to a university press for publication. Funding has to be raised for each project from sources such as SSHRC. The project grant would not only cover the travel, meeting and research costs of the team members (including the employment of graduate students as research assistants), but also expenses for project administration provided by the Centre's employees, thus helping to cover Centre infrastructure costs. My aim would be to have three or four such projects running continuously with a new one starting as a previous one finished (see Appendix A for examples).

Another proposal I presented to the program committee was that each year the Centre should offer a Distinguished Speaker Series as a service to both UVic and to the wider Victoria community. Because I had become aware that one source of opposition to the study of religion at UVic came from the Women's Studies Program, I suggested the topic of "Women and Religion" for our first lecture series to be held in the Spring of 1993. I would approach Women's Studies to co-sponsor and we would make a video of the lectures to be shown on Vision TV and the BC Knowledge Network. There would be separate lectures on each world religion by leading women scholars whom I knew personally: Hinduism (Vasudha Narayanan), Christianity (Morny Joy), Buddhism (Eva Neumaier-Dargyay), Islam (Yvonne Haddad), and Judaism (Julia Neuberger). Because I knew that some members of the university's Women's Studies program had an interest in Wicca, we included a lecture on Wiccan spiritual/religious traditions and goddesses (Naomi Goldenberg).

Also as a service to the community we would hold an annual community seminar to which we would invite professionals involved in community work along with academics in relevant fields to discuss case studies based on problems experienced in the community. This was another idea I had tried successfully at the Calgary Humanities Institute. The topic I suggested for our first Community Seminar in May (1993) was "Aging and Dying: Legal, Scientific and Religious Challenges." The proceedings of each Community Seminar would be

published by the Centre for use as a classroom aid volume.

At the end of our first year, the program committee expressed appreciation of what we had achieved, even though one of the foundational programs, the UVic Faculty Fellowships, did not go as expected. As planned, we had announced the Faculty Fellowship competition for teaching-release fellowships in September 1992 with an application deadline of November 1. A number of applications were received and sent out for external review. However, the program committee, as the review panel, agreed with me that the quality of the proposals was not as strong as we had anticipated. I felt that it was important to set the bar high with our first fellowship awards for two reasons: 1) to demonstrate that religious studies in general, and our Centre in particular, was not engaged in “soft scholarship,” but would maintain high academic standards; 2) to encourage the best scholars at UVic to become involved in our Centre’s activities. In early December, the committee announced that no awards would be made. Instead, a workshop was held in February 1993 to which the unsuccessful applicants and others intending to apply were invited. A frank and helpful exchange of information regarding research expectations took place between the adjudication panel and potential applicants. This move was successful, for when our next call for proposals went out in September 1993, we received a much larger and stronger group of applications, allowing us to announce five awards to some top scholars at UVic from the departments of English, History, and Pacific and Asian Studies for research projects involving Christianity, Judaism, and Japanese religion. The announcement of our first group of five Faculty Fellows in 1993, among them some of the university’s best scholars, demonstrated that research in the new Centre for Studies in Religion and Society would be conducted to the same academic standards as those within the arts and science faculties. This has continued to be the approach of the CSRS through the years, and its high academic standards, which are evidenced by success in obtaining SSHRC grants, have been a major reason for the Centre’s success.

The first team interdisciplinary research book project was on the topic “Population, Consumption and the Environment: Religious and Secular Responses.” A general account of the way this project unfolded should give readers a sense of the inner logic of the distinctive model in use at the centre. The project examined the dual environmental

problem of population pressure and excessive consumption of natural resources. Funding was provided by a major grant from SSHRC with additional support from the Canadian Global Change Program of the Royal Society, IDRC, the World Council of Churches, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the United Church of Canada. Meeting in a retreat location, ethics specialists from each of the world's religions, including the Aboriginal traditions, joined economists, philosophers, demographers, climate scientists, and international law specialists in a ten-day intensive seminar on the two-sided global problem. Eight fellowships were awarded by the Centre to graduate students from universities across Canada to enable them to attend. Representatives from business, government, and the churches also participated. Chapters were presented for critical assessment. Part I offered a baseline analysis by scientists Kenneth Hare of the Royal Society, "The Natural Background," and Anne Whyte of IDRC, "The Human Context." Part II examined religious responses by Daisy Sewid-Smith (Aboriginal Spirituality), Sharon Joseph Levy (Judaism), Catherine Keller (Christianity), Nawal Ammar (Islam), Klaus Klostermaier (Hinduism), Rita Gross (Buddhism), and Jordan and Li Chuang Paper (Chinese religions). Part III contained draft chapters on secular responses by Michael McDonald (secular ethics), Mahendra Premi, a demographer from India (population patterns), Rod Dobell, an economist, (the "religion" of the market), Jael Silliman (status of women and the environment), Elizabeth Adjin-Tetty (international law), and Yuichi Inoue from Japan (environmental philosophy). After our retreat meeting the authors had three months to revise their chapters on the basis of the critiques received. The revised chapters were submitted to me as the project P.I. and book editor, and I then wrote the introduction and conclusion. Centre Administrator, Ludgard DeDecker, then prepared the manuscript for submission. The book was published by the State University of New York Press in 1995. A popular summary was prepared by Rick Searle, "Seeking a Common Vision for a Troubled World," and distributed by Wilfrid Laurier University Press. A video, "Environment and Population: Ethical Issues," was created and was shown frequently on both Vision TV and the BC Knowledge Network. Results were used as a primary source by an Interfaith Consultation at Grenval, Belgium in May 1994 which prepared a report "World Religions and the 1994 United Nations (UN) International Conference



on Population and Development” which was translated into seven languages and widely used at the Cairo UN Summit Meeting in 1994.

During my time as director of the CSRS (1992-2002), I frequently found that the original vision I brought to Victoria from the Calgary Humanities Institute was often expanding in surprising new ways. An example is the involvement of graduate students in the Centre. At the Calgary Humanities Institute I had excluded graduate students on the grounds that the role of the Institute was to provide faculty a quiet retreat from their busy round of teaching, meetings with students, and committees. Consequently, no students were allowed in the Institute. When I was being interviewed for the Victoria job, I remember being asked about students, and I gave the above answer which I firmly believed. I now know that on this point I was badly mistaken. When SSHRC grants began to require the involvement of graduate students in the 1990s, I began to involve two or three graduate students in each grant proposal, so that we would have a better chance of success. Being successful in our team book project research grants during 1994, 95, 96 meant that I had to follow through and have graduate students, usually in a Ph.D. program, as full members of the research teams. When I saw how the graduate students brought new energy and academic vitality to the team, and how they often functioned better in the interdisciplinary context than some senior faculty and sometimes ended up as co-authors of book chapters, I recognized my earlier mistake. In interdisciplinary research contexts, it is often the graduate students who are the most willing to learn from other disciplines. And often their enthusiasm stimulates more senior scholars into opening and stretching their thinking. This also happens in our daily Centre coffee-hour discussions, now that we have graduate student fellows in the Centre. That change came about in 1995 when Ian Stewart, a lawyer and leading Victoria businessman who also served as a Roman Catholic community member of the committee that negotiated Remi De Roo’s vision for the Centre with President Petch, was retiring from the Roger’s Cable and Communications Company Board of Directors. I was invited to attend the event that Rogers was putting on to honour and thank Ian Stewart, who at the time was also Chancellor of UVic. As a retirement gift, the Rogers CEO presented Ian with a large cheque which he could donate to a charity of his choice. In his reply, Ian Stewart said he would donate it to UVic to provide student fellowships. At the reception, I approached Ian and suggested that

he direct the funds into the Centre's Endowment to create the *Ian Stewart Graduate Student Fellowship* – an annual competitive award to M.A. or Ph.D. students writing dissertations involving some aspect of religion and society, and providing a Centre office for one year as well as a cash award. Ian liked the idea and followed through. Two such awards are made by the program committee each year. During my tenure, I organized a lunch each year at the University Club for Ian Stewart and the Graduate Student Fellowship Award winners where the students would describe and discuss their thesis projects with Ian. So far there have been over three dozen awards to Ph.D. and M.A. students from the departments of English, history, anthropology, geography, philosophy, pacific and Asian studies, creative writing, classics, social work, education, women's studies, environmental studies, and art history involving the Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Russian Orthodox, Mayan, Hutterite, Greek, and Aboriginal religious traditions.

As another example, in 1995 a bequest was made to the Department of History in conjunction with the CSRS to fund the *Winnifred Lonsdale Fellowship* for a graduate student who is examining the effect and influence, both positive and negative, of organized religion on history, anywhere in the world. The award is tenured in the Centre where the student is given office space. Thirteen M.A. and Ph.D. students received this award between 1996 and 2010.

Also, beginning in 1999, the Allen and Loreen Vandekerkhove Family Foundation has provided annual donations for two graduate student fellowships per year (*Vandekerkhove Family Trust Graduate Student Fellowships*). Students have come from English, history, anthropology, political science, linguistics, philosophy, Pacific and Asian studies, art history, law, and interdisciplinary studies researching thesis topics involving the Islamic, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist and Aboriginal traditions in both medieval and modern time periods.

Including all of the above categories, the Centre has had five to seven *Graduate Student Fellows* per year since the mid-1990s, writing either an M.A. or Ph.D. thesis. Former graduate fellows report that the Centre played an important role in their academic careers. The modest stipends (typically amounting to \$5,000) are much appreciated, as is the chance to have a desk or even an office in the Centre. But

what is most valued is working with each other and with the senior academic mentors who are resident in the Centre or participating in academic events. All of this occurs in an interdisciplinary context, a fact observed by external reviewers who note that the CSRS has served as an intellectual home to interdisciplinary graduate students who do not have a department. Of course, in all cases the research work of graduate fellows at the Centre (as with all faculty or visiting fellows) is focused on some aspect of religion and society.

In the annual *Faculty Fellowship* category, between 1994 and 2014, the Centre has provided release-time fellowships to a wide range of UVic scholars: nine from history; six from English; five from Germanic studies; four from each of law, Pacific and Asian studies, French and art history; three from each of anthropology and political science; two from each of philosophy, creative writing, nursing and computer science; and one from each of sociology, linguistics, psychology, women's studies and music. It is evident that the Centre has drawn widely on scholarly expertise from across the campus. The range of religious subject matter covered by these research projects is also wide, including projects on Christianity, Aboriginal traditions, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism, along with comparative religion, ecology, religion and science, health and religion, religion and literature, and atheism. In virtually all cases, the above research projects resulted in peer-reviewed journal articles and/or book publications.

From 1994-2014, the non-stipendiary *Visiting Research Fellowships* brought ninety scholars to the Centre for periods of research varying from a few weeks to a year. They came from countries such as the U.K., the U.S., Russia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Iran, Israel, Armenia, Algeria, Kenya, South Africa, India, Indonesia, and Australia. Their home universities included Cambridge, Durham, London, Harvard, Notre Dame, Emory, Pennsylvania, Nijmegen, Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and La Trobe to name some from abroad – along with most of the major universities in Canada. For a list of their names and research topics consult the Centre website at <http://csrs.uvic.ca/>. It is safe to conclude from this list that the CSRS is known both nationally and internationally.

Three SSHRC *Post-Doctoral Fellows* have located their research fellowships at the CSRS: Philip Steenkamp (1993-94) from Queen's, Kamala Nayar (1999-2001) from McGill, and Mathieu Courville (2008-09) from Ottawa. In addition, Janet Soskice of the Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge University, was awarded a Canadian Commonwealth Research Fellowship which she took up at the Centre in 1995.

*The India Research Fellowship.* This fellowship, an initiative of the current Director Paul Bramadat, was designed to enhance the presence of scholars from Asia at the CSRS. Using funds from the Harold Coward India Research Fellowship Endowment plus contributions from other sources, the inaugural India Research Fellow in 2010 was Lena Ganesh, a post-doctoral feminist geographer and architect from Mumbai with a research interest in the way Hindu texts and traditions shape a "built environment" which severely restricts Indian women. In 2012, the second India Research Fellow was Rinku Lamba, a faculty member from Jawaharlal Nehru University (J.N.U.) in Delhi. Her research is focused on the influence of *bhakti* or devotional poets on modern Indian political thought. 2015's award brings Bindu Menon, an assistant professor at the University of Delhi's Lady Shri Ram College for Women to the Centre. Menon uses visual culture (film) to explore issues of migration, language, space, gender, myth, and technology affecting members among the Muslim community in Malabar.

*CSRS Artist-in-Residence Fellowship.* Another new fellowship initiated by Paul Bramadat is intended to foster examination of the relationship between religion and the arts. Created in 2008, this Artist-in-Residence fellowship includes, along with an office at the Centre, a stipend of about \$4,000, thanks to a generous endowment created with donations from the Hsieh family of Victoria. Melanie Siebert, (2009-10) the inaugural artist-in-residence, wrote a book of poetry entitled *Deepwater Vee* that was shortlisted for the 2010 Governor General's Poetry Award. At the Centre's morning group discussion sessions, Melanie was an active participant and taught us how to engage in a careful reading of poetry. Doug Jarvis was the 2010-11 artist-in-residence. He is a digital artist, engaged in research on how the internet and computer technology fosters the creation of

“imaginary friends.” The 2011-12 artist-in-residence was a Buddhist storyteller, Margo McLoughlin, who focused her research on “Stories of Early Buddhist Women” which offer snapshots of women from several levels of society describing their encounters with the teachings of the Buddha and the effects of those teachings upon their lives. Margo’s participation in the Centre’s coffee-hour sessions helped us all to see the importance of storytelling in the religious traditions, and how we might use it in our teaching. The 2012-13 Artist-in-Residence was Celeste Pedri who explored the performing of Ojibwa Spirituality through the Art of Traditional Beading. Author Marita Dachsel, spent her 2013-14 artist-in-residence at the CSRS creating poetry and prose which blurred the boundaries between historical fact and modern fabrication. Her work encouraged members of the CSRS community to engage meaningfully with the tensions existing between what is thought to be truthful or authentic and creative fiction in her explorations of the Mormon religion. In 2014-15 Trudi Lynn Smith’s artist-in-residence project investigated the connections between her performance-based photography and film practice and Buddhist spirituality. Her work producing large-scale camera obscura tents, provided those experiencing her work with the opportunity to immerse themselves in a unique space of contemplation and conversation that mimics the impermanent and transcendental inner-workings of a camera.

As was the case earlier on in the Centre (1996-97) when the Canadian poet Lorna Crozier was a UVic Faculty Fellow, the presence of a creative artist in the Centre community adds a valuable new dimension to our discussions of religion. This was also evidenced when I recruited the Canadian philosopher and Governor General’s Award winning poet, Jan Zwicky, to be part of our 2004 Centre book project on the global problem of climate change. Jan’s participation in the initial team meeting and her chapter grounded our study in her Buddhist perspective and her experience of growing up on a homestead farm in Alberta. Zwicky’s razor-sharp perceptions and contributions focused our analysis of climate change in ways that surprised the scientists, social scientists, and policy experts on our team – and significantly changed the book that we wrote, *Hard Choices: Climate Change in Canada* (WLU Press, 2004), which is

used in Canada as a basic text in Climate Science and Environmental Studies courses.

Still in the category of Centre Research Fellowships are the *Community Sabbatical Fellowships*, of which the Centre has sponsored 32 since 2011. Twenty ministers (by far the largest group), have received an award, as well as a consulting geologist, a physician, a computer scientists, three chaplains (hospital, military, and correctional), a Jungian psychologist, an artist, two social workers, and three independent scholars. By bringing community professionals together with academic scholars, both sides gain new knowledge and perspectives that enhance their work and writing.

*Associate Fellows* are the final fellowship group at the Centre. These are locally based scholars without regular appointments (often retired or emerging academics) who are active in research involving religion and society. These are generally two-year appointments. Fellows have a mailbox at the Centre and are expected to make regular presentations of their research and participate in Centre events on a regular basis. Starting with five Associate Fellows in 2000, numbers have increased to twelve active in 2015. My original idea was to engage senior, often retired, scholars so that the graduate students and junior scholars could learn from them, and vice versa. When I became an Associate Fellow, I know that attending Centre morning coffee-hour discussions allows me to meet the graduate students and younger scholars and sometimes be able to mentor them in their research as they continually stretch my thinking with their fresh ideas.

If you were to visit the Centre, you would find fellows from the various categories listed above, all busy writing their individual projects on some aspect of religion and society in their own offices. Indeed, it is a busy community of people of all ages, from graduate students to emeritus professors, from many disciplines and many universities. These research fellows change each year as their terms finish and new fellowship holders arrive. A unique and highly valued part of Centre life is the daily morning discussion sessions (a tradition I brought from the Calgary Humanities Institute) where Centre fellows get to know each other and exchange information about their research projects over coffee or tea. At 10:30 each morning, an old

ship's bell is rung calling the fellows to gather in the library. These coffee-hour gatherings are the core event of the Centre community. As Paul Bramadat put it in 2012,

“anyone who has attended these coffee hour gatherings knows that the topics covered range widely. We might begin by talking about a contemporary political event in Canada in which a particular religious community was singled out for extra scrutiny, and then a few moments later switch to discussions about the relationship of ancient Near Eastern mythologies to the use of state violence to control minorities, soon to be followed by discussion of the relationship between European missionaries and local peasants in 18<sup>th</sup>-century South Asia. Readers might find it difficult to imagine how one could follow a conversation that traveled so widely from topic to topic, but Centre fellows won't be at all surprised by this scenario and will intuit immediately how these different themes and locales intersect. The distance our fellows travel in time and space in our coffee hour discussions reflects the kind of interdisciplinarity we foster” (CSRS Annual Report, 2011/12, p. 2).

It is the kind of atmosphere I always thought a university should strive for but that often gets lost in the silos of our disciplines. Activities at the Centre also include afternoon lectures each Thursday, where fellows formally present their own research to each other and to the wider university, as well as to Centre friends from the community. Usually, attendance at these lectures ranges from twenty-five to fifty people.

For Fellows, such activities in the friendly environment of the Centre also enable them to get on with their own research and writing in a quiet, retreat-like environment where they can shut their office door and become immersed in their own work. As one of the Centre External Reviews commented:

All current and past Fellows with whom we talked maintained that their work was substantially enriched by their association with the Centre and with other scholars – both faculty and students – whom they met there.

In many instances, the varied programmes and wide range of projects supported by the Centre enabled Fellows to enter into areas of research which they did not anticipate and which they might not otherwise have pursued. The Fellows commented also on the importance of finding at the Centre an unusually liberating and gratifying congeniality of a kind that especially fosters intellectual endeavours...Student Fellows were exceptionally appreciative of the opportunity to interact with other researchers at the Centre. They all praised the remarkable atmosphere that prevails there, characterizing it as congenial, supportive and egalitarian. Invariably they attested that their experience has been enriched by their association with the Centre, which, in the opinion of several, is a model for what a university should be (External Review, 2000, 3).

These observations are echoed in each of the four external reviews that have taken place over the Centre's twenty-year plus history. These reviews attest to the leadership consistency of its three directors to date: Harold Coward (1992-2002), Conrad Brunk (2002-2008), and Paul Bramadat (2008-present), and to the welcoming and supportive atmosphere created by the Centre's librarian, administrator, and administrative assistant.

## RESEARCH AND PUBLISHING

**T**he interdisciplinary book-project model described earlier has proven to be successful for introducing religious themes and perspectives into Canadian policy debates. By initiating the book-project, the CSRS can ensure that religion has a place at the table alongside the other areas of study. This process is well-illustrated in a recently completed project on religion in hospice palliative care. Canada is a leader in the palliative care field, and hosts a major international world conference on palliative care in Montreal every second year. But, although religious and spiritual



support was one of the three main principles of the hospice movement from the start, since the 1980s the religious dimensions of providing care to the dying have fallen off the research agenda. By means of our study of the religious or spiritual support needed for a “good death” in hospice palliative care, with myself as P.I., we were able to engage with senior religious studies scholars taking the lead along with other researchers from medicine, nursing, social work, psychology, medical anthropology, and medical history. Our team-authored book, *Religious Understandings of a “Good Death” in Hospice Palliative Care*, supported with major funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), was published by the State University of New York Press in 2012. The book has been described as filling a major gap in the literature and is being widely welcomed by hospice and palliative care clinicians in North America and Europe. In 2012 it received a “Book of the Year” award from the *American Journal of Nursing (AJN)*. It is being used as a textbook in nursing, medical schools and chaplaincy training. In addition to chapters helping hospice palliative care clinicians to understand the requirements for a “good death” in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religion, and Aboriginal Traditions, the volume also includes case studies of hospice care in Uganda, Buddhist monk-healers in Thailand, Punjabi extended family hospice care, and pediatric hospice care. This CSRS project was done jointly with the Centre on Aging at UVic and had a nursing researcher, Kelli Stajduhar, as co-leader and book editor with me. My daughter, Susan Coward, a hospice nurse and artist, provided the book cover drawing of a person in hospice palliative care. As part of the same project, the Centre formed a second team to examine the needs of the dying who describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious” or atheist/agnostic. That volume *Spirituality in Hospice Palliative Care*, edited by Paul Bramadat, Harold Coward and Kelli Stajduhar, was published by SUNY Press in 2013. It is being welcomed by hospice palliative care clinicians around the world who work with increasing numbers of persons in these categories. Our hospice palliative care volumes were presented at a workshop session at the 2012 international world palliative care conference in Montreal, and have been featured in CBC radio interviews.

Other key book projects I have led at the Centre include *Religious Conscience, the State and the Law* (funded by the Law Foundation of

BC and Vancouver Foundation, and published by SUNY Press, 1999); *A Cross-Cultural Approach to Health Care Ethics* (WLU Press, 1999), jointly organized with Mahidol University, a major Buddhist medical research and teaching institution in Bangkok, Thailand, with funding from SSHRC and the Ford Foundation; *Visions of a New Earth: Religious Perspectives on Population, Consumption and Ecology* (SUNY Press, 2000, funded by the Ford Foundation), a project that challenged scholars of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religion and African religions to mine their traditions for new responses to the global issues of population and over-consumption (the book has been a popular text in religious studies and environmental studies courses ever since); *Religion and Peacebuilding* (SUNY Press, 2004), with funding from the Carnegie Corporation examining the spiritual resources (and obstructions) for peacebuilding within the major religious traditions, with case-study chapters from India, Cambodia, Bosnia, South Africa and Northern Ireland; *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada and the United States* (SUNY Press, 2000), a joint project with the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, examining the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian South Asian diaspora; and *Indian Critiques of Gandhi*, a project examining Gandhi's engagement with other major figures of the Indian Independence movement, including Nehru, Ambedkar, Besant, Aurobindo, Tagore, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Christians, the Sikhs, and the Muslims in India (funding from SSHRC, published by SUNY Press in 2003).

Another important team research book project undertaken during my tenure, although not led by me, was *The Spiritual Roots of Restorative Justice*. Led by Michael Hadley of UVic, with funding from SSHRC, the St. Leonard Society, and the Chaplaincy Services of the Correctional Service of Canada, this interdisciplinary study explores what major religious and spiritual traditions say in text tradition and current practice about criminal justice in general and restorative justice in particular. A variety of traditions are explored: Aboriginal spirituality, Buddhism, Chinese religion, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. The book examines the complex relationships between religion and violence, and the ways faith-based principles of reconciliation, restoration, and healing might be implemented in pluralistic, multicultural societies. Results were published by SUNY Press, 2001 as *The Spiritual Roots of*

*Restorative Justice*, edited by Michael Hadley, and have influenced policy considerations in the prison systems of Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand.

Although the Centre does not itself engage in teaching, its directors have all provided courses in existing academic programs (history, philosophy, and religious studies). Moreover, the Centre has produced texts and academic resources that are used in universities around the world. In addition, it has engaged many of the world's leading scholars of religion in its team book projects. When considered alongside the many international scholars who have visited the centre as fellows, one is struck by the impressive group of scholars who have been involved in the Centre's work. Indeed, in any one year the number of scholars engaged in one way or another with the Centre has often totaled over one hundred. The CSRS is indeed a dynamic and energetic place, constantly taking on cutting-edge research challenges and engaging new people.

In 2002, Conrad Brunk, a philosopher of religion from Waterloo University was appointed to follow me as the Centre's second director. During Conrad Brunk's tenure as director (2002-2008), the focus of Centre book projects shifted to initiatives related to religion and culture, technology and ethics. As a member of the Canada-wide National Science Research Council-sponsored Advanced Foods and Materials Network (AFMNet), and leader of its Genetics, Ethics, Economics, Environment, Law and Society (GE<sup>3</sup>LS) Initiative, Conrad was able to locate the AFM Network of Centre of Excellence GE<sup>3</sup>LS initiative in the CSRS and thus not only brought the Centre significant funding but also ensured that religious perspectives would be engaged in this crucial area of research. Conrad oversaw the Centre's involvement into two team-authored book projects. *Acceptable Genes? Religion, Culture and Genetically Modified Foods* (SUNY Press 2008) seeks to understand how genetically modified foods impact the cultural practices and spiritual teachings of Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, as well as people of Chinese and Aboriginal traditions, and those who are secular ethical vegetarians. Published by SUNY Press in 2010, the book includes chapters by leading scholars. A second team-authored book project led by Conrad Brunk and Sarah Hartley and called *Designer Animals: Mapping the Issues in Animal Biotechnology* examines expert and stakeholder perspectives on contemporary animal biotechnology

from the economic, ethical, religious, and public policy viewpoints. Also funded by the Advanced Foods and Materials Network, the book was published by the University of Toronto Press in 2012 and is being used in agriculture, philosophy, and political policy classes.

Also during Conrad Brunk's time as director there were two initiatives led by David Seljak and Paul Bramadat and funded by the Metropolis Project and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The first, *Religion and Ethnicity in Canada*, examines issues of ethnicity within the diaspora experiences of six minority religious traditions, namely, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Islam, and Chinese religions, and was published by Pearson Canada in 2005. The second, *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2008), looks at how the Christian church in Canada is being shaped through participation of ethnic and immigrant groups in nine of Canada's largest Christian denominations: Anglicans; Conservative Evangelicals; Lutherans; Francophone and Anglophone Roman Catholics; Anabaptists – Mennonite and Hutterite; Presbyterians; Christian Orthodox; and United Church. Both volumes contributed important knowledge to our understanding of religion in Canada and are widely used as university textbooks.

Four other team-authored book projects were completed during Conrad's time as director. Led by Paul Wood (UVic) and funded by the Templeton Foundation, *Science and Dissent in England 1688-1945*, published by Ashgate, 2004, examines the relations between Puritanism, dissent, nonconformity and science in England to better understand the role played by dissenting Protestants in the pursuit of science and technology from 1688 to the end of World War II. Paul Wood edited the volume. Another project conceived during a Centre coffee discussion and led by Claire Carlin, a UVic scholar of French literature, explores the involvement of religion in the understanding of contagion in early modern Europe, and implications for today. With funding from SSHRC and the Associated Medical Services charitable organization, participants from Canada, U.K., France, and Sweden examined how, spreading like a virus, the discourse of bodily contagion invades religion, politics, literature, and the visual arts. The resulting volume, *Imagining Contagion in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Claire Carlin, was published by Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Yet another book project conceived during a coffee-hour discussion when John Lutz was a Centre Fellow, examines the engagement of

different religions and spiritual worldviews in the stories of first contact between indigenous and European peoples. With SSHRC funding, John Lutz (UVic) brought together scholars of history, literature and anthropology from Canada, U.S., and New Zealand to study the stories (both oral and written) that indigenous peoples and Europeans tell about their first encounters with one another. These stories not only shape our collective sense of history but also guide our understanding of current events such as treaty negotiations. The resulting book, *Myth and Memory: Stories of Indigenous-European Contact*, edited by John Lutz was published by UBC Press, 2007. An excellent follow-up to the above analysis of “first contact stories” is the very important book project initiated by Conrad Brunk together with James Young on the ethics of cultural appropriation – as, for example, in the unjust imposition of the values of European cultures over those of the indigenous cultures in the colonization process that followed first contact. Such ethical problems are especially important, as Brunk points out, for those with an interest in the appropriation of traditional knowledge and its resources (Brunk, 2009, 168). With funding from SSHRC, an interdisciplinary team of specialists from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.S., and U.K. was recruited with special attention to representation from Indigenous people so as to ensure that the voices of Indigenous people were heard, as very frequently it is their land, art, traditional knowledge (as in pharmacology) and spiritual practices that are being appropriated. This Indigenous focus was reflected in the resulting volume’s cover art by Coast Salish artist lessLIE which portrays the ‘fusion’ in ‘confusion’ of cultural appropriation (p. xvi). The resulting book’s chapters engage ethical issues in the appropriation of, for example, human remains, religion, genetics, traditional knowledge in ethnobiology, music, and art. The resulting volume, *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation*, edited by James O. Young and Conrad Brunk was published by Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, and makes a major contribution to the study of ethical, cultural, legal and religious issues of cultural appropriation.

When Conrad Brunk retired after six years as director, I urged Paul Bramadat, a specialist on religion in Canada at the University of Winnipeg, to apply and he was selected as the Centre’s third director.

When Paul Bramadat became director of the Centre in 2008, his involvement with national and international Metropolis projects, a

SSHRC MCRI project (Religions and Diversity), and his work with the federal government and national and international networks interested in diversity public policy and religion, signaled a significant shift from Conrad Brunk's emphasis on religion, culture, technology, and ethics. In 2012, Bramadat became the BC node leader of Pathways to Prosperity, a national SSHRC network on immigrant integration in small and medium-sized cities in Canada. Other new projects initiated by Bramadat include *Religious Radicalization and Securitization in Canada and Beyond* (Bramadat and Dawson) (eds.) (UTP Press 2014), a book on religiously motivated violence. He also co-edited the book on spirituality and hospice palliative care (mentioned earlier) and spearheaded a major national project on the *Religious and Cultural Roots of Vaccine Hesitancy: Explanations and Implications for Canadian Health Care*<sup>1</sup> (Bramadat, P., Guay, M., Bettinger, J., and Roy, R.) (eds.) (2014). Toronto: UTP press; and numerous scholarly articles and chapters.

Paul Bramadat has brought new social and intellectual concerns to the fore, focused on how religion is framed in public and political discourse. Of particular interest to him are the rapidly changing relationships between religious groups and what one might characterize as the hegemonic "secularist" ideology evident in many sectors of Western society. This leads to a focus on research questions such as what is the appropriate form of separation between religion and the state in Canada? What are the appropriate ways in which Canada might respond to security threats from "radicalized" religious groups? And what are the ways Canada and BC might respond to religiously and culturally-based challenges to immunization practices or debates on the question of polygamy. Under Bramadat's leadership, the CSRS is situating itself as a national and international leader in research on religion and public policy in Canada. He also plans to continue to promote discussions about the relationship between religion and the arts and on the governance of religious diversity in Eastern and Western contexts. For example, in November 2012 he hosted a SSHRC funded advanced research symposium on the

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<sup>1</sup> *Religious and Cultural Roots of Vaccine Hesitancy...* is the manuscript's original working title. Other titles currently under consideration include variants of *Vaccine Nation: Perspectives on Religious and Cultural Vaccine Hesitancy in Canada*.

management of religious diversity in Canada, India, and China (the results of which are to be published in a Special Edition of *Studies in Religion*).

The most recent External Five Year Review Panel led by Lori Beaman (Ottawa) and Michel Desjardins (Wilfrid Laurier) in 2011 commented that the CSRS has a strong national and a growing international reputation. The latter will be enhanced by the India Research Fellowship and new plans to build research links with China. The panel also noted that the research output of the Centre is substantial – during the 2006-11 period ninety-six books, chapters or articles had been published, with most fellows contributing at least an article or a book as a result of their time at the Centre (External Review, 2011, 1). With regard to graduate student fellows, thirty-one were supported in their thesis research – an average of six per year. These include students from a range of academic units within the University of Victoria and students completing their degrees at other universities. The reviewers noted that the students reported being well mentored at the Centre. They were given congenial working space, intellectual stimulation, the opportunity to focus and to learn from the senior scholars around them who were also immersed in research and writing. The Centre director also spends significant time mentoring roughly a dozen graduate student fellows, thus ensuring that they receive high quality training while at the Centre. Graduate student fellows remarked on how their intellectual experience was much richer at the Centre than at any of the departments they came from. As one student fellow put it, “I particularly benefited from the Centre’s daily coffee sessions. Each of these meetings taught me something new, such as fresh methodological insights or previously unknown facts about various religious traditions” (2011/12 CSRS Annual Report).

LECTURES, SEMINARS, AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

As I have mentioned, while I was director of the Centre (1992-2002), the experience of receiving income each year from the Endowment created by the Victoria community led me to think of community supporters as our “shareholders,” who needed to be properly acknowledged. So, from the beginning the CSRS has offered community members multiple opportunities for public engagement through its various programs of public lectures and through the Friends of the Centre organization, which is composed of around 250 people in the community. Friends receive notices of upcoming lectures and projects.

The Centre has several lecture programs open to the university and to the wider Victoria community. The Public Lecture series features weekly presentations by Centre Fellows on their new research, and the Centre’s special lecture series is given by scholars visiting the campus.

*The John Albert Hall Lectures*, co-sponsored with the Anglican Diocese of British Columbia, also brought outstanding scholars to UVic for a series of four lectures on Christian themes. Over the years speakers and topics have included: Morna Hooker (Cambridge) “Keys that Open the Gospels,” John Barton (Oxford) “Ethics and the Old Testament,” Wentzel van Huyssteen (Princeton) “Science and Religion: Duel or Duet?,” Terrence Penelhum (Calgary) “Christian Ethics and Human Nature,” Timothy Gorringer (Exeter) “Ethics and Aesthetics,” Peter Richardson (Toronto) “Religion and Architecture in the Roman East.”

During Conrad Brunk’s term as director, the John Albert Hall Lectures included: Eileen Schuller (McMaster) “What Have we Learned from the Dead Sea Scrolls?,” Brian Blount (Princeton) “There’s Power in the Blood: Wreaking Weakness in Revelation,” Peter Erb (Wilfrid Laurier) “Presentations of Faith in Contemporary Detective Fiction,” Jeffrey Stout (Princeton) “The Spirit of Democracy: Responsibility and Religion in a Secular Polity,” Keith Ward (Oxford) “The Place and Authority of Scripture in World Religions,” and Sarah Coakley (Cambridge) “Flesh and Blood: The Eucharist, Desire and Gender.” During Paul Bramadat’s time as



director, the lectures have included: John Polkinghorne (Cambridge) “Theology in the Context of Science,” Janet Soskice (Cambridge) “Tales from Sinai,” Kwok Pui Lan (Harvard) “Post-colonialism and Christianity,” and Pamela Klassen (Toronto) “Protestant Sublime.” Since 2013, the Anglican Diocese and the CSRS have used funds from the John Albert Hall endowment according to a different model; in some years the funds are used to invite a speaker, and in others they are used to support the technical infrastructure of the CSRS. In all cases, a new committee made up of representatives from the centre and the Anglican community ensures that the original spirit of the arrangement between the church and the university is honoured. This new model appears to work extremely well.

*The Distinguished Lecture in Islam* was created in 2007, during Conrad Brunk’s tenure as director, by means of a gift of \$15,000 from an anonymous donor. Subsequent donations have increased the endowment to over \$40,000. The objective of the series is to invite a scholar of international reputation to the Centre to engage the public and the university community with new research on Islamic culture, history, religion and society. The inaugural lecture was delivered by Tariq Ramadan (Oxford).

*The Faculty Symposium* was an interdisciplinary gathering of UVic faculty members and graduate studies for discussion and presentations on a topic of shared interest. In 1994 I came up with this idea as a way of involving a wider circle of UVic faculty with the Centre by selecting a topic of broad interest and inviting them to a half-day symposium at Dunsmuir Lodge (the UVic retreat centre with ocean views and exceptional food). Registration was limited to about twenty-five to ensure discussion opportunities for everyone. Presentations were kept to four twenty-minute discussion starters, each followed by forty minutes of seminar discussion. The idea worked and each year we were able to widen the Centre base of involvement and support throughout the UVic academic community. A selection of symposium topics include: “The Secular Context of Religion in North America,” “Ecojustice,” “Religion and the Postmodern,” “Religious Ends, Violent Means,” “Minorities and the Protection of Fundamental Freedoms,” “Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and Just War Theory: Is Just War Dead?,” and “Religion and Bioethics.” Sometimes experts

from outside UVic would be invited to make the discussion-starter presentations but often the majority or even all the presenters would be from UVic.

## FINANCES

I began this chapter by explaining why I left a very fine job as director of the Humanities Institute at Calgary to come to UVic, and to take up the challenge of creating a new interdisciplinary research centre from scratch. Of course, having such a Centre focused in religion and society was an attraction, although I quite enjoyed the opportunities to engage with the humanities at large, yet something else also drew me. At the Calgary Institute I had been working hard over several years with the development office and the downtown business community to raise an endowment that would fund the Institute so that it would not be dependent on the ups and downs of the university budget. It was and still is quite clear to me that when crunch-times come and budget reductions are required, research centres or institutes will be among the first to be cut so that teaching departments can be protected. Of course, good research centres can be expected to raise research funds from the granting councils or foundations, as we did at Calgary and do here at the Victoria Centre. But to do that successfully year after year requires secure base-funding (salaries of the director, administrator and administrative assistant, office costs and space provisions). Only then can the research teams and proposals be put together with a view to competing successfully for grants. After all, the success rate is 20-25% (SSHRC) and 15% (CIHR), and at foundations such as Ford or Carnegie you are likely to succeed only if you know the right people. A substantial endowment of several million dollars would generate enough infrastructure funding (say \$200,000 per year, assuming that suitable space requirements are provided free) to enable a research centre to work effectively. At Calgary, I failed. After several years of almost getting the big donation for the Institute, but instead having it go to Geology for petroleum exploration science, I failed to create the

endowment we needed. When I left the Humanities Institute, we had only a few hundred thousand in the endowment – and this was with a university president, Norman Wagner, who was trained in religious studies, working on my side.

Consequently, I was strongly attracted to UVic because it already had a large donation in place. Along with the joint Catholic, Anglican, and United Church gifts and matching funds from the BC government, a 2.8 million dollar endowment was already secured. I had no illusion, however, that this amount would be sufficient. But with the initiative for the Centre coming from the community to the university and not the other way around (as it was in Calgary, and usually is), I felt confident that additional donations to the endowment could be raised – and that has proven to be the case. The Centre's original donor, the Vandekerkhove Family, has continued through the years to make regular donations to graduate student fellowships. Other individuals became supporters early on and still make yearly donations. As well, the Centre receives support from the Anglican Synod and the Telus Corporation. Now and then new donors come forward and, among them, the Centre's 2011/12 Annual Report lists thirty-six individuals, the Anglican Synod, and the Telus Corporation. The principle in the CSRS Endowment totals approximately 5.5 million dollars, a large sum that generates interest we use to cover infrastructure costs, which keep rising with salary increments and inflation. As a result of initiatives by Conrad Brunk, the Centre now receives regular funding from the humanities faculty budget to cover almost two-thirds of the director's salary. In return, the director offers courses in the Religious Studies program and makes service contributions toward the overall operation of University research activities. This has freed more of the endowment income to be used to fund the basic infrastructure of the Centre needed for external resource development (for instance, grants from SSHRC or CIHR). This change has helped to stabilize the Centre's finances in hard times.

## CONCLUSION

**T**he possibility of sustaining an endowment of the sort now in place originally attracted me to become the founding director of the Centre. Twenty-three years later, the Centre's achievements have gone far beyond my original vision – a testament to all those involved: Administrators Ludgard DeDecker, Connie Carter, Leslie Kenny, and Robbyn Gordon Lanning; administrative assistants June Bull, Moira Hill, Susan Karim, Rina Langford Kimmett, and Bonnie Sawyer; and especially the directors who followed me, first Conrad Brunk and now Paul Bramadat.

In the judgement of the 2011 external reviewers, the CSRS at UVic is well-known in Canada and viewed as a national resource for scholars who study religion and society. The Centre attracts high quality scholars from across Canada and internationally, and has a growing international reputation. At the same time the Centre, say the external reviewers, is an excellent university citizen, and has a long history of working collaboratively with the various departments in supporting individual scholars' research, and with other research centres on research projects. Currently, such other centres include the Centre on Aging, the Centre for Asia Pacific Initiatives, and the Centre for Global Studies. Finally, through the capacities and relationships facilitated by the CSRS, the university was able, in 2010, to introduce an undergraduate major program in Religious Studies.

The external reviewers made special mention also that the Centre is a model of civic engagement on behalf of the University. As they put it, the Centre "reaches deeply into multiple local communities: Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Jewish faith communities, and into the many subdivisions of each...Its public talks bring thirty to forty community members to join a like number of faculty and students to campus every week and its special events, like the religion and writing day drew 300...Several people we interviewed told us that the 'Centre changes people' in that it opens intellectual horizons, breaks down disciplinary silos and, through education, erodes prejudice...A former Centre fellow and senior administrator stated that 'in my 35 years of academic life, I can think of no program or unit that so closely approaches the scholarly ideal of a university as does the Centre'." The reviewers conclude that the

*The UVic CSRS: My Story of its Birth & Development*

Centre plays an important role for religious studies nationally, is the only one of its kind in Canada, and one of only a handful in North America: “The Centre is building an international reputation as a centre of excellence in the study of religion and society.” To this I would add that the Centre is leading religious studies in Canada into new areas of research collaboration that are essential for the future development of religious studies as a whole.

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APPENDIX A

CENTRE RESEARCH INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM-AUTHORED BOOK PROJECTS

- Coward, H. (Ed.). (1995). *Population, Consumption and the Environment*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Coward, H. (Ed.). (1997). *Life After Death in World Religions*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Coward, H. (1998). *Traditional and Modern Approaches to the Environment on the Pacific Rim*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Coward, H., & Ratanakul, P. (Eds.). (1999). *A Cross-Cultural Dialogue on Health Care Ethics*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- McLaren, J., & Coward, H. (Eds.). (1999). *Religious Conscience, the State, and the Law*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Coward, H., & Maguire, D. (Eds.). (2000). *Visions of a New Earth*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
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- Coward, H., & Stajduhar, K. (Eds.). (2012). *Religious Understandings of a Good Death in Hospice Palliative Care*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Bramadat, P., Coward, H., & Stajduhar, K. (Eds.). (2013). *Spirituality in Hospice Palliative Care*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Bramadat, P., & Dawson, L. (Eds.). (2014). *Religious Radicalization and Securitization in Canada and Beyond*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bramadat, P., Guay, M., Bettinger, J., & Roy, R. (Eds.). (2015). *Religious and Cultural Roots of Vaccine Hesitancy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.<sup>2</sup>
- Bramadat, P., & Lamba, R. (Eds.). (2015). *The Governance of Religious Diversity in China, India, and Canada. Studies in Religion*. Vol. TBD, Special Issue.

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<sup>2</sup> *Religious and Cultural Roots of Vaccine Hesitancy*... is the manuscript's original working title. Other titles currently under consideration include variants of *Vaccine Nation: Perspectives on Religious and Cultural Vaccine Hesitancy in Canada*.





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