

# Legacy of the Trent Community Research Centre

## From Student Researchers to Community-Engaged Professionals

### Background

**Community-Based Research (CBR)** focuses on connecting students with community organizations to address real-world issues through thought-provoking research. **The Trent Community Research Centre (TCRC)** has worked to facilitate CBR at **Trent University** and the catchment area in Peterborough City & County, City of Kawartha Lakes, Durham Region and Northumberland County for nearly 30 years, encouraging student hands-on learning while serving local communities.

### Purpose

This research examines how participating in CBR through the TCRC has influenced the personal and professional development of former student researchers. By analyzing **alumni experiences**, this study highlights how CBR provides practical skills, career opportunities, and community engagement. The findings will consider the long-term benefits of CBR in shaping student success while informing the future for TCRC initiatives.

### Research Questions

1. In what ways has participation in community-based research through TCRC influenced and benefitted former student researchers?
2. How has participation in community-based research influenced or supported their personal or professional trajectories?



### Key Findings

Using **Clarke & Braun's (2006)** thematic analysis, examination of surveys and interviews explored CBR's impact on former student researchers' trajectories.

#### Interview & Survey

Defined themes were categorized into three groups based on 7 interviews and 13 survey responses.

1. **Skill Building:** Growth in confidence, public speaking, advocacy, research and communication skills.
2. **Bridging Academia & Community:** Increased engagement with real-world issues, importance of community-driven solutions.
3. **CBR as a Career Catalyst:** Impact on career direction, networking abilities, standing out in graduate programs, and resume building

*"An experience that opened new doors."  
- Interview Participant C*

### Methods

A **mixed-methods** approach examining quantitative data (survey) and qualitative data (semi-structured interview) was analyzed using a thematic analysis method (Clarke & Braun, 2006).

1. **Survey via Qualtrics** - A five sectioned, 23 question survey collected data from former student researcher's projects and experience. Distributed by the Trent Alumni & Engagement Services by email and posted on TCRC Instagram and LinkedIn.
2. **Interviews via Microsoft Teams** - A 10 question semi-structured interview gaining real-time, raw response data.

### Discussion & Recommendations

CBR has influenced and supported student researchers, shaping their personal and professional trajectories, skills development and engagement with their communities.

#### Recommendations for the TCRC include:

**For Students:** Expand project availability, provide resources on how to structure surveys, navigate the ethics approval process, and effectively conduct interviews to ensure work that supports growth.

**For the Host Community:** Align projects with genuine community needs that maximize impact and foster meaningful collaborations. Additionally, ensure research expectations are balanced and manageable among student, host, and faculty.