

TALK

Third Age Learning at Kwantlen

Celebrating 25 years (1999 – 2024) of providing lifelong learning for adults over 50

HOW TALK BEGAN

Third Age Learning at Kwantlen (TALK), started with an idea in 1997 when Joanne Cunningham, a member of the Kwantlen faculty, was made aware of a growing number of organizations in North America providing education for seniors. With retirement on the horizon, she thought this would be an ideal activity for her own retirement. She approached her dean Judith McGillivray for a six month leave of absence to research the feasibility of setting up an elder college. The dean also found money to assist in traveling.

Joanne's research included visiting Minerva Institute in Edmonton, attended two Institute for Learning in Retirement conferences in the US, investigating what was being done for retirement education in BC, and reading current research and learning on retirement.



In December 1997, she proposed to the Kwantlen administrative team, led by President Skip Triplett, that an elder college was feasible. Her proposal was greeted positively; although no money existed in the budget, Kwantlen offered to help where possible. With this go ahead, a small steering committee was formed, consisting of Win Hunter, Ann Kitching, Bob Lowe, and Joanne Cunningham.

After an ad in the newspaper and a mailing using the Elderhostel mailing list, a community meeting of over 100 interested people gathered and TALK was launched with this steering committee formed in 1998: Ron Armitage, Joanne Cunningham, Wendy Fidgeon, Win Hunter, Ann Kitching, Jackie Kokotylo, Bill Nicholson, Ruth Parker, Trevor Phillips, Mary Ann Rainer, and Agnes Stewart.

First, they discussed what to call the organization, tossing around names such as Kwantlen Elder College or Kwantlen Institute for Learning in Retirement. Third Age Learning was being used in the UK and this term resonated with committee. A very perceptive member, Jackie Kokotylo, suggested the acronym TALK.

THE EARLY YEARS

The first two years were busy for the newly formed TALK Board. In addition to establishing a mission statement, bylaws, and policies and procedures, decisions had to be made on financial matters and secretarial support. Costs were divided between membership fees to go to TALK for organizational expenses and course registration fees to go to Kwantlen for the cost of registering, mailing and printing. The first membership fees of \$30 per year were changed to \$20 and in 2009 to \$10, where they have stayed.

The early years of TALK were under the supervision of Jim Gillis and Ron Coreau from the Kwantlen Continuing Education department. Later, TALK was supervised by Linda Coyle, Vice President of Ventures and Finance, and then by Gordon Lee, Vice President of Finance and Administration. In January 2012, TALK came under the wing of the Faculty of Academic and Career Advancement (ACA). TALK now is led by Dean Aimee Begalka of the Faculty of Academic and Career Placement (ACP, renamed from ACA). TALK has been supported over the years by many KPU staff members who do their best to help members get registered for all the excellent courses TALK has to choose from, book classroom space, work with KPU Marketing department to get brochures and other publicity published, and provide other administrative support.

In 2003, the University Women's Club of Richmond (now CFUW Richmond) made TALK one of their interest groups and, under the leadership of Jean Garnett and Priscilla Bollo, took on the task of programming courses and Philosophers' Corners held in Richmond.

In the early years a paid part-time TALK secretary, Barbara Giesbrecht, made life easy for TALK Board members. When she retired in 2004, it was decided money could be saved by sharing the workload among Board members, which left the organization with more money than thought advisable for a nonprofit organization but not enough to start paying speakers, so the Board decided to establish a TALK bursary.



TALK Board circa 2006

TALK BURSARY

A \$20,000 TALK endowment was established with the Kwantlen Foundation in 2008; TALK's contribution of \$10,000 was matched by a Kwantlen contribution of \$10,000. This provided an annual \$1,000 bursary to a mature KPU student. In 2021, TALK contributed an additional \$10,000, bringing the total endowed amount to \$30,000. The interest proceeds now allow an annual \$1,500 bursary.

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION

TALK is a volunteer organization whose success depends on people stepping up to help. Volunteers have been the heroes from the first community meeting in 1998 to the current 2024 offerings. Some of these people gave many years to the establishment of TALK. We are fortunate that other dedicated volunteers have followed in their footsteps. TALK now has a facilitators' guide and one for committee chairpersons, and a Board Orientation package. These documents are a great help to new volunteers.



TALK Board 2015

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Each semester, a group of volunteers work diligently to think of topics which will appeal to TALK members and then find the presenters and facilitate the programs. They strive for a balance between courses of interest to men and women, older and younger seniors, science and humanities, academic and general interest, serious and fun, and offered at KPU campuses in Langley, Cloverdale, Surrey and Richmond, plus field trips in the community. Thanks are due to the many enthusiastic and creative committee members over the years.

PRESENTERS ARE ALL VOLUNTEERS, TOO!

In addition to administrative support, Kwantlen faculty members have made a stupendous contribution by offering their academic knowledge and time on top of their regular workload – without remuneration. TALK could not provide its excellent programs without the support of the generous and talented volunteers from Kwantlen faculty, current and retired. Numerous community members have also contributed their time and expertise to provide TALK programs. TALK Program Committee members find a topic and then research it to find an expert to present a course. Many have generously accepted the challenge and TALK participants have reaped the benefits. To members' delight, some speakers have returned several times.



YVR Art Tour

ONLINE COURSES

Due to COVID, beginning in fall 2020 TALK began to offer courses online as Zoom webinars so TALK members could continue to enjoy programs even though campuses were closed. To this day, in addition to the courses offered in person on the campuses (and sometimes at other locations), online courses allow those at a distance and those with mobility issues to continue to participate. Online courses also allow TALK to attract presenters from distant locations.

MARKETING COMMITTEE

In addition to the Program Committee, TALK also has a Marketing Committee, currently being chaired by Sonya Furst, following Terri-Lou Trainor, Donna Brown, Robin Heath, Gerald Horne, Adrienne Corbett and others. The committee works to publicize TALK by distributing brochures and posters and managing a database of outside organizations which receive links to our website, articles for their newsletters, and flyers to distribute to their members. Over the past several years we have sometimes enjoyed the support of a KPU 4th year practicum student for 2 months in the fall.

NEWSLETTER

A TALK newsletter was established in 1999. Initially, newsletters were written by the secretary, but on her retirement in 2004, the job was taken over by the Board. Until 2012, Elizabeth Bordeaux and Joanne Cunningham (and others) produced it. Janis Foster took over in 2012. From fall 2012 to fall 2016 it was professionally produced with the assistance of the KPU Marketing Department. The newsletter was discontinued in fall 2016, due to frustration with delays in the production time. However, it has recently been revived and is being sent to members by email using a template provided by KPU Marketing to which the TALK Marketing Committee adds content.



TALK's 10th Anniversary celebration: Oktoberfest!

WEB SITE

KPU set up a TALK website (www.kpu.ca/talk) in 2006 to provide information on courses, Philosophers' Corners, policies and history, and last-minute announcements. Webmasters have included Carolyn Oliver 2006 - ? (who worked at KPU for most of that time and then volunteered on the TALK Board after she retired) and David Ingre; currently this is handled by KPU ACP staff and volunteer Alice Macpherson.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2016, a Facebook page was set up by Sonya Furst. It is a good source of TALK's history and upcoming events. There is the public page (www.facebook.com/kpu.ca.TALK) plus a Group page (www.facebook.com/groups/697127260390288). In fall 2021, an Instagram account was created (www.instagram.com/talkwantlen). In fall 2022, we added a LinkedIn account (www.linkedin.com/company/talk-third-age-learning-at-kwantlen).

PHILOSOPHERS' CORNERS



The concept of Philosophers' Cafés is a group of interested, loquacious people gathering to probe the meaning or significance of the announced topic, feeding both body and mind. Philosophers' Cafés were established in North America and Europe many decades ago. SFU's Dr. Josef Wosk introduced them to the Lower Mainland and helped Win Hunter initiate them for TALK. Originally Philosophers' Cafes had a separate committee. Some of the chairs of that committee have been Trevor Phillips, Allan Good, Gillian Roberts, Selma Swaab, Liz King and Jane Diston. In 2015, the name was changed from Philosophers' Cafes to

Philosophers' Corners, due to SFU having trademarked "Philosophers' Cafes" in Canada. TALK's Philosophers' Corners are currently held in Richmond, Surrey, and Langley.

COMPELLING CONVERSATIONS



In September 2017, former TALK member Winifred Searle honoured TALK by leaving an endowment of \$23,000 to the KPU Foundation, the proceeds of which were to be used for TALK programming. TALK uses these proceeds to host a speaker event each year which is free and open to the public and intended to publicize TALK. The first was April 2019 featuring Douglas Todd, Vancouver Sun columnist, on the topic: Can we experience unity in a metropolis of enclaves? In March 2021 (after an interruption by COVID), Rudy Buttignol, President and CEO of BC's Knowledge Network, spoke on Television: the future isn't what it used to be. In November 2022, KPU Chancellor Kim Baird spoke on the topic of Reconciliation 101. And in November 2023, the speakers were SFU's Alexandra Lysova and KPU's Balbir Gurm on the topic of Relationship Violence.



Generous TALK member Winifred Searle

KPU Chancellor Kim Baird

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

Each October, TALK holds an annual general meeting and invites a special speaker. Speakers have included Linda Fawcus of GLUU Technology Society on technological issues, BC Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie, KPU President Alan Davis, KPU Chancellor Arvinder Bubber, KPU Dean of Design Carolyn Robertson, Hilarapy and many others. On Nov 8, 2024, the AGM will feature a presentation by the Better Business Bureau on Tops Scams Seniors Should Watch Out For.



TALK Board 2024 at a Strategic Planning session

TALK's CONTINUED GROWTH

In spring 1999, TALK had four courses. In the fall, eight! In spring 2009, TALK offered 16 courses and a special event. In fall 2024, TALK is offering 28 courses (11 on Zoom, 4 at Richmond campus, 7 at Surrey, 3 at Langley, 1 at Cloverdale, plus 2 field trips), our AGM, and a special event – our 25th anniversary party!

Kwantlen Polytechnic University in 2023, through a process initiated by the KPU Retirees Association, was accepted into the worldwide Age Friendly University network. TALK is one of the exciting offerings that qualify KPU to boast that it is age friendly. Did you know that KPU employees and students are able to sit in on TALK classes free when space permits? This intergenerational interaction is a goal of the age friendly movement.



TALK's success can be attributed to many factors: hard-working volunteer organizers, excellent volunteer speakers, unwavering support from KPU, and faithful TALK members. TALK will build on its present success, while evolving and changing to meet the needs of future participants. We are looking forward to another 25 years of providing low-cost, accessible lifelong learning to adults over 50 in the Lower Mainland!

KPU campuses are located on the unceded and traditional territories of the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Semihamoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt, and Kwikwetlen peoples. We are committed to building relationships with these first peoples based on honour and respect.