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Laurier welcomes inaugural activist-in-residence

BRANTFORD – Wilfrid Laurier University has launched an activist-in-residence program that is designed to encourage students, faculty and the broader community to explore and engage with important contemporary issues.

The inaugural activist-in-residence is Alex Tigchelaar, a performance artist who will be the guest of the Faculty of Liberal Arts, the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, and the Faculty of Social Work at the Brantford campus for the 2015-16 academic year. She will act as an organizer, resource, and touch point for social justice-related issues. Her plans for the year include three public presentations that merge scholarly discourse with performance, as well as five activist workshops on creative activism for students, faculty, staff and community members.

"One of the unique attributes of the Brantford campus is a cross-faculty focus on issues of social justice, social change and social equity," said Brian Rosborough, senior executive officer at Laurier's Brantford campus. "The activist-in-residence position was created to support this broad focus. It is the responsibility of the university to engage in dialogue on contemporary social issues, and we hope the activist-in-residence's work will act as a catalyst to some important conversations."

Tigchelaar is the co-artistic director of the multidisciplinary theatre company Operation Snatch. For 15 years her company's plays, street-based actions and short films have been shown at international festivals and venues including The Encuentro, Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and New York's Museum of Modern Art. She has presented papers and talks on sex workers' rights to academic and social institutions for more than a decade. She was a nationally syndicated sex columnist for more than 18 years, writing under the penname of Sasha. She is currently pursuing graduate studies at Brock University and is a research assistant on socially conscious and groundbreaking projects with Laurier professors Kate Rossiter (*Recounting Huronia*) and Stacey Hannem (*STREET Sex Work Needs Assessment*).

"We are incredibly excited to be hosting Laurier's inaugural activist-in-residence," said Heidi Northwood, dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts. "Alex's artistic, academic and activist endeavours have excellent synergies with some of the research currently underway by faculty members on this campus. We expect that her residency will encourage our students and the community at large to reflect upon important topics — especially around the subject of stigmatization — and consider ways to make the world a more just place."

Tigchelaar's first public event as activist-in-residence takes place Friday, Oct. 30 from 7 to 10 p.m. She will perform selections from her play, *Les Demimondes*, in the lobby of the Carnegie Building. In its review of *Les Demimondes*, *NOW Magazine* called the play "part burlesque and part Brechtian political theatre," describing it as a "hilarious, sexy and intellectually potent show." Following the performance, she will introduce plans for her residency, with a reception to follow. Attendees are encouraged to dress in the spirit of the Halloween season.

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On Monday, Nov. 9 at 1 p.m. Tigchelaar will give a public talk titled, *The Body of the Coerced: Humanitarianism as Public Spectacle*. The event takes place in room OD200 in the Odeon Building. The talk is open to the public and seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Tigchelaar also plans workshops on how to build effective and affective presentations, the role of cabaret and alter egos in activism, and the importance of creative activism. Watch the [events calendar](#) on the Laurier website for additional details on these events.

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