Podcast with Rhonda McEwen recorded December 13, 2016 transcribed

[brief music interlude]

Rhonda McEwen (RM): I think the work that I do helps us to stop in moments and examine what all this wonderful – and I truly believe it is wonderful – technological evolution is doing to the human experience via the way we think and construct the world or how people with disabilities have been helped or, sort of, hampered through our ideas about this.

But I think, in general, it's really about the role that technology has played in not just advancing human society, but, on a more micro level, on advancing the human being, and recognizing what we have gained and what we lose in this, sort of, new world of highly integrated technology.

Carla DeMarco (CD): You get a palpable sense of the enthusiasm and exploration today's guest on View to the U podcast has for her field.

Professor Rhonda McEwen, a faculty member in U of T Mississauga's Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology and in U of T's Faculty of Information iSchool, discusses the broad expanse of her research in mobile technology, the huge influence devices play in our everyday lives, and how they affect the information that we process.

There is extra cause to celebrate the outstanding work that Rhonda has produced. In this fifth installment of VIEW to the U podcast, we honour Professor McEwen in her newly appointed designation of Canada Research Chair in Tactile Interfaces, Communication and Cognition. Rhonda will discuss the new project that she is undertaking as part of this exceptional recognition.

And also, in honour of UTM's 50th celebration, she reflects on the excitement happening on campus and in her department as it continues to grow and evolve.

[**Theme music**]

CD: Hello, and welcome to View to the U: An eye on UTM research.
I'm Carla DeMarco at U of T Mississauga.

View to the U is a monthly podcast that will feature UTM faculty members from a range of disciplines who will illuminate some of the inner-workings of the science labs and enlighten the social sciences and humanities hubs at UTM.

[**Music fades out**]

Professor Rhonda McEwen has been a faculty member in UTM's Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology since 2011. She researches

the communicative interactions that arise when users engage with new media technologies focusing on the cognitive effects of using touch-input devices, such as tablets and smartphones, in educational environments, and the social consequences of everyday interaction with new media.

CD: You've been in digital communications for 15 years now, you've been working both in industry and academia, and currently the focus of your research and teaching at U of T and UTM is on information practices involving new media technologies, and so I'm wondering if you can give me a good, sort of, overview of your work. I know some of it is very science-y, but explain it to us so that even people who aren't in the sciences will be able to understand.

RM: I have done a lovely range of activities in my research. I started really focusing on mobile phones. I came out of a Masters' program in Telecommunications from the University of Colorado at Boulder. And from there I went on to do my PhD, and I focused then on, sort of, *how* the mobile phone was affecting decisions that we make, and in particular relationships.

So my PhD work was actually looking at young people, and, you know, by young people I meant people who were transitioning from high schools into universities, and what role mobile phones played. And this was in 2007, so this was in the old days. I mean this was pre-iPhone, right? So people were still on their BlackBerrys or on their flip phones, and still I wanted to investigate what was happening. And even back then you could see the, sort of, *huge* influence that these devices were having on the way that people just lived their everyday lives, but, more importantly, it was sort of a mixed story always. You know, on one hand we gained something, and on another hand we seemed to lose things. And so, I was really fascinated both from a sort of technological aspect, but also from a social aspect. You know, what are the social consequences of embedding these technologies in our lives?

And so that's been the trajectory of my research. I still do work on mobile phones. I do look now, though, at tablets, which I consider another mobile device. I have looked at things like eye tracking as a method for identifying how we interact with these devices. I've gone on to look at disabilities. How these devices affect people or support people who have communication disabilities.

This sort of leads me up to the research that I'm kicking off in a new project that I expect to last about 10 years, which will be focused on how we think about these devices, how they affect the way we process information cognitively. So that's kind of been the sweep of my research.

CD: Have you come across any…well I guess aside from the social consequences, but, like, really surprising developments in this field, it is still relatively a new field, right?

RM: It is. And I think one of the most surprising things is how much we still are learning. I *just* finished a project where we were looking at seniors in, um, east York, which is a neighbourhood in Toronto that used to be a borough. And we looked at how seniors, because there's a fairly large seniors' community in that space, how they have been, sort of, integrating or dealing with having these devices in their lives.

And I think there are all these like, you know, every now and again we see something on a commercial about, some grandpa, a surfboard, and seniors are getting so savvy at all these technologies, and we just finished this research that basically shows that what we call "seniors" is not one group, that they are actually within that category, well that Stats Can might define as a senior. There are some who are completely, and quite a many, that are falling behind.

If we connect that to the idea that Canadians are living longer and need to stay employed for longer than traditionally we've seen that, now if we connect that to this digital divide that is really a generational divide it's a troubling picture because what we're seeing is that they are not able to have the skills that have become necessary and implied for a lot of the positions.

Even simple things like grocery checkout, these are now computing devices that are tactile in nature, and here we see that seniors are feeling quite demoralized, unable to even get a basic job because they just can't work with these technologies. And so one of the things that the research is demonstrating is that it's not just about the social impact but there are economic impacts to this sort of thing; so that was one project.

Another project that I recently completed looked at the effect of touch technologies with children and adults with developmental disabilities, in particular, autism. And what we found in that project is that for children who have autism *plus* another diagnosis, for example, ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder], and they often go together. That the attention deficits, the inability to focus that tablets and other kinds of devices, some gaming devices as well, exacerbate the kind of attentional deficits that children have and can make learning *very* difficult if you use those platforms. So what we're finding is that, yes, it is *very* important and it has been successful for *some* people with a particular cognitive profile. For the first time we're actually getting communication from people who previously were *never* able to share their ideas and their thoughts.

On the other hand if you have other confounding parts of your disability that affect attention, we see that actually it can make learning on these devices problematic. And so we've been raising that focus, and that's what I was saying before that it's never one story: you know, people tend to focus on either just the good news or just the bad news but there are always these tradeoffs that we're seeing and I think the more we *learn* about, you know, how we can work with these technologies it will be, for example, in the last case more successful in schools. How do we integrate these

devices into curriculum if we don't quite understand how it affects cognition? And so I've been really focused on that.

CD: What are some of the problems that have come up with the, like, subjects you've been working with?

RM: I work with tricky subjects. [Both laugh.] So, I tend to work with almost the most difficult subjects to examine in a research format. Seniors are always wanting to talk and tell us so much of their rich life history, but when it comes to speaking about something where they feel quite insecure or worried, or feeling that they're really not able to keep up, it can be very hard to get people to be honest. It requires a kind of reflexivity that can be difficult.

You know, I've worked also on the effect of, say, social media using mobile devices, social media like Facebook, when people in the network pass away, so if you have a loved one or a friend, or even a friend-of-a-friend, on your network and they die, I've examined, sort of, what happens on the network when that happens. And, again, that's a very difficult subject area to research. It certainly can be done and we were able to do it, but it requires a really sensitive look at ethics, how we make sure the participants come through the research well, and that's what we're trying to do is gain insight, but we *must* make sure that at the end of the day we're protecting the people who participate.

I work a lot with children, and I tend to work with children with disabilities, and in the research world, those two things combined – alone, they're an issue – but when you combine children and disabilities, particularly communication disabilities, these are at-risk populations for researchers, and so we have to be very, very conscious of not just the risk that they take in trusting these unknown adults who come in and want to find out what's happening in their brain, but I think also to respect them as participants, as full people with agency who can decide at any moment that this is not something they want to participate in, and we have to design very carefully to make sure that we cover and respect the right of the participant to stay with the research or walk away.

CD: That's so interesting.

Ah, now I want to get into a development in your career. You were just awarded a Canada Research Chair in Tactile Interfaces, Communication and Cognition, and as I understand as part of this particular research program, you are exploring the cognitive effects and information processing associated with the usage of some these touch-input devices that you've mentioned – the tablets and mobile devices – you're also looking a little bit about virtual reality and perception, and as well as the social consequences of everyday engagement, um, with new media.

And so I guess I was wondering a little bit more about this program of research, and maybe if you could talk about your preliminary findings so far. And I think you've

touched on some of these social consequences but I *am* curious about some of them. I'm thinking shorter attention spans and people not paying attention to each other as much, but if you could explain a little bit more about these things and this program of research.

RM: Well, I'm super excited. First of all, it was a *huge* honour, and to have early in my career be recognized for the research that I've done and to be given this massive endorsement by the federal government in the form of the Canada Research Chair has been *just* transformative for me. I'm very, very excited. I have three amazing projects that I'm putting together under this banner of "Tactile Interfaces, Communication and Cognition."

As you said before, I'm kind of extending the work that we just talked about which really focuses on technologies that we interact with with our sense of touch.

In communication – I'm from ICCIT, which is the Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology – we tend to focus a lot on visual communication, because, you know, that is so prevalent in our world. We do quite a bit on sound and auditory, but the one that we don't do as much *anywhere* is touch. And, as one of our five primary senses – we've been talking about other senses lately – but in terms of the five basic senses, our skin is the one organ that covers our entire body, and here is an area where technology is *increasingly* starting to play a role.

When I talk about tactile interfaces now I could be talking about smart clothing; I could be talking about wearables, like Fitbits, all these devices that we're wearing on our bodies. And these devices are, in a way, different to the ones I looked at before in a sense that they are on us when we interact with, say, a phone is in your hand, it's tangible, you know you've picked it up. These are devices that become part of the way you actually carry yourself during the day; it becomes unconscious. In terms of cognition, it's not in the primary part of your thinking. You're not going 'oh, I have this Fitbit on my hand at every moment.' It just kind of becomes a part of what you have on your body. Yet, at the same time, you are processing information that comes from these devices all through the day.

And so I'm interested in really what does this mean for *how* we make sense of the world? People may have read about, um, this 'quantified self' notion where we are tracking data about ourselves – how far did you walk? How much sleep did you get? And so on. And so these are the devices that are taking data inputs off of our bodies and giving us output through our bodies, and we have to figure out how to slot this information into our everyday life.

And this is *new*. Sometimes in new media where we work at ICCIT we always question 'is this new? What is *new* about this media? What about these specific devices the medium itself? What is transforming how we normally lived our lives?' And when we look at the wearable world these are things we actually have not

encountered before, so this is really new. And starting to consider unintended consequences, or how are people co-opting or using the information that they get in a way that wasn't intended even by the manufacturers or the coders or whoever came up with these applications because what we see in new media is that these technologies can almost take on a life of their own driven by, um, necessity, and driven by creativity of the user. They become something that they may not ever have thought to do in the first place, and so I'm fascinated by devices such as these.

Right now I'm working with a team right here at UTM. I have two students on a Research Opportunity Program, which we call the ROPs. And they are working with me on 360 video. A lot of the phones right now can take a 360-video image. Back in the dark old days of photography, the panoramic picture was the big exciting thing. But here we have a way of capturing image and sound that actually affects our *proprioceptive systems*, which in lay words is basically the stuff that is inside of us that helps us orient ourselves in the world. So, if you're standing up your brain knows that your two feet are on the ground and that to move forward you need to articulate your legs in a particular way, and your feet in a particular way to make forward motion or backward motion.

These are not things that we sit and think about if everything is functioning well in our cognition, but when we look at these kinds of images – 360 video, virtual reality – our body is getting one set of information, but our brain through our eyes and sometimes through our sound, through the ears, is getting contrasting information. So while you're sitting in a chair with your virtual-reality headset on, you are instead flying through the air or swimming under some water. And so here we have a little bit of dissonance in the cognition where it's trying to match up what I'm seeing and experiencing, and sometimes you get a tactile feedback as well, so you might get shaking happening from the device with what's happening with your body.

And what we've noticed is that there is nausea, which is an interesting effect to see happen, but people often get nauseous. Some people have trouble with 3D cinema, wearing the 3D glasses. I have heard people say 'I start getting headaches' or 'I don't feel well.' And some of what we are trying to understand in this research project is what is it about that that is causing this person to feel unwell? What is it about combining sensory information in a particular format that brings about these feelings that people are experiencing? And one of the things we want to do is try and see how we could improve how that is done. So we have a lot of interest obviously from the entertainment world, and so on, who are really seeing this as a market that's lucrative and new, and people are excited about, but at the same time we have to address what is happening in the body, and understand whether there are longer term consequences for engaging with these technologies. So that's one of these three projects.

The second one I've been already working on with another set of students here at UTM. I do a lot of work with my undergraduates, and I'm really proud of that. So I

have three students who've been working with me on examining how children with a particular disorder that is called Rett syndrome.

Rett syndrome was declassified as a form of autism in the last DSM [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual] Psychological Register, and it is now considered its own disorder because it has a clear genetic component to it, and it affects *mainly* girls; so over 95% are female. So these are young women who will never speak. We're studying them in a school setting where we happen to have quite a few. It's a rare disorder, but it's one that's interesting to me because this is a disorder where there's no verbal communication, it's difficult for girls with Rett syndrome to use their hands. So in previous work that I've done, you could use your hand and touch the technology – I have a lot of articles on touch technology. But here we have a disorder where the hands are difficult to use because of motor-skill issues. So they can't really tap screens but they can use their eyes.

And so one of the big manufacturers of applications combined with another and now we're examining the way that you can use eye tracking on screens that will recognize where your eyes are hitting, and use that as a form of seeing whether it is an effective form of communication. And also, at the same time, we're kind of tackling some questions that speech and language pathologists and occupational therapists have been struggling with in terms of what is the best learning mechanism for people with these disorders? And this is controversial. There is no agreement in the field of what's the right way to do it. So we are experimenting. It's a series of experiments that we did I would say last term, in sort of the middle of 2016.

We ran this project over a few months in three classrooms, with three teachers, and we are currently analyzing that data. But what see already is how much a device itself plays a role in the communication. It can actually *really* harm the communicative interaction. We're looking at the communicative partner and how they speak when they speak, how to best engage with people who are using their eyes. We're also looking at the physiological effects of having to use your eyes to communicate because, as many of us know, communication can involve the whole body, and if you have to use your eyes *very specifically* it can be cognitively taxing. So we've been looking at cognitive load and how much that affects the ability to communicate.

So my team of researchers here are phenomenal, and they're undergraduate students, they're in their third or fourth year. One of them has already started her entry into Masters', so she's bridging. Just phenomenal experiences, and they are so excited. Before this grant came along, they volunteered their time, you know, and I paid them when I could from other grants. And now that I actually have the ability to pay them I'm so excited to really compensate them for the hard work that they've put in. But I think this is the first study *ever* that is looking at this kind of communication, looking at these devices, looking at the efficacy. And we involved Speech and Language paths and Speech Therapists, and Educators, and the whole

gamut to try and come at this from different angles. And I think there is so much more we have to do with this project, with the additional funding.

CD: And did you say there were three projects?

RM: Yes, the last one...

CD: Because those are just two!

RM: I know. Those are two exciting ones.

And the last one I'm continuing my work on mobile and tablet devices, looking a lot more on the user interfaces. So, looking to see, and, you know, as you can tell these three projects are inter-related. But in this one I'm going to focus more on what is it about the tactile interfaces that truly seem to be affecting cognition. I'll be doing more theoretical work with this part of the project where I'll be trying to unpack what, specifically, what angles on tactile, in terms of sensory-information processing, I'm trying to bring the touch element much more to the fore, to kind of match up against visual and auditory, and look at multimedia processing and sort of take a more theoretical lens on that, drawing from findings I've had, so far, in my previous projects and these new projects a well.

CD: I don't know if you can comment on this, but while you were talking about all this new media and the tablets, I can't help but think about all the young people that are using these from a very young age, and I'm just thinking, is your research showing that people should be limiting the amount of time that your kids are spending on it? Can you comment on that at all?

RM: I can definitely anecdotally comment, because I have children of my own and I deal with these very battles. I think what the research has shown is that there are effects on the mind and the brain, and there's no denying it is having an effect on the way that we construct reality. And we need to pay attention to that, I think.

In some of my research, as I've said before, we made a clear link from my research to attention deficit and that attention is one of the things that are affected. If there are underlying executive functioning or cognitive issues, and let's face it there are always many, each human being is a different blueprint. But if there are underlying factors, the use of some of the technologies certainly can make those things more difficult for people to continue with. So it's hard to say in general, limit to X minutes per day.

For some people the way that their cognition is made up and the way that they have even physiologically made up, they seem to do just fine. But for others it actually is difficult and we can see how much of your cognition can be either caught up in activities that you're not even aware that this is happening to you, and in other cases it frees up space.

I'll give you an example. I did a study a few years ago with adults with developmental disabilities, and they are part of a program, and really phenomenal program actually at Humber College, where people with developmental disabilities can take courses and be in university and, you know, or college, and eventually get a certificate. And then we had iPads come in and we were looking at visual storytelling in this particular project. And we were looking at creativity and using devices.

So we compared when they used a piece of paper and a pencil or a piece of paper and a crayon marker, with doing art on an iPad. So we were contrasting those two scenarios. And so what we found, it was really interesting. A couple of things: One, people who were dominantly right-handed, quite a number, a significant number in the study, would use their left hand when using the digital device, and their right hand when using the traditional paper and marker. So part of this research I'm doing now with the Canada Research Chair funding will be examining why that happens.

We saw it over and over, the way they would oriente the medium, whether it was appear or the iPad, was very different. The hand to stabilize versus the hand to create with, and we have historically all these ideas about the left brain and right brain and creativity. And we're actually seeing some really interesting swapping that was happening sort of unconsciously. We also saw a lot of the students put their heads down and rest when working on the devices, when working on the electronic devices, but they also produced more. They produced more art: quickly, they produced much more on the digital than on the paper. And then we saw a sense of ownership and pride. We felt that, talking to them after, and which one they wanted to have displayed and so on, they really felt that they put a higher amount of commitment onto their paper, and the paper and marker work than their iPad work. So, in terms of prolific or how much they did, they did more on the digital. But in terms of the work that they felt that they were most proud of, a lot of that was on paper. And so, here, if you see what we're getting with this, it is actually how we are conceiving and conceptualizing what we do.

But also I'm interested in this effect on fatigue. This is something that people haven't really begun to look at yet. But we're putting these devices in cars. We're putting them more and more into places where people can feel more fatigue over periods of time. So then what is the effect of cognitive load, which can make you more tired even though you haven't physically done anything? Your actual mental processes can make you quite tired. And so we saw a lot of that coming up, and that was quite unexpected. So, I'm really wanting to drum more into that as we go forward in the current research.

CD: So when you're talking about fatigue, though, you're talking about just needing to take a break?

RM: Yeah, if the research continues to prove that, I'll be interested to see how we generalize that across other kinds of environments; so, digital workers, people who sit in front of screens for many hours a day. It is the same kind of work actually as doing work where you spend only a percentage of your time in front of these kinds of media, or is it a different kind of working day required really to kind of combat what happens with our cognitive processes? So I'm interested to see if this research holds and if it continues onwards and that it can be generalized outside of certain types of specific populations, like those with disabilities, what sort of consequence that has for bigger things, the working day?

CD: When you mentioned fatigue, though, I was thinking that was kind of a follow-up question about a sort of new-media fatigue, because we are so bombarded with, I even find when I'm sitting here, it's like my computer dings when I have an email, then my phone someone texts me and it's like there's all these things. So it's, like, will there ever be a sort of, I don't know, are we going to reach a tipping point where people are just, like, done with that?

RM: Well, I've following quite a bit with *much* fascination. We've just kind of come out of that post US-election period. And media has been such a *huge* part of that particular set of campaigning, and through into the election itself and post election. And Twitter of course has been kind, before the US election, Twitter was on a huge decline. I don't know how many people recognize this. But I was interviewed months before the election about what's going to happen to Twitter? And here we go, now it's been a *boon* for Twitter!

But I think the number of people in my own network that I've seen say, "I'm going to take a social media break, it's time to walk away from this," because the kind of thrill, the kind of passion, the kind of conflict and tension that gets raised in these kinds of fora, is taxing on people as well, cognitively taxing. And so I've seen, and this requires research right now, and I know some people who are starting to work on this. And this may be part of the third project I'm working on where I look at the rise in this. When people need to take these breaks, I see them as sensory breaks.

Now, a sensory break is not a new concept. It's actually something that's been around for a long time. A great example is if you're driving for a long time and you start to get a little sleepy, people say, "Put your window down," right? What are you doing? You're introducing two things: oxygen and you're introducing a temperature change. Or, "Raise the volume of your music," or "Start singing along." So, you're trying to engage other parts of the brain to try and keep awake and keep attention. And so again you see it all comes back to attention, right? I think we're seeing too much attention, being placed in these media. It draws heavily on our well being via our cognitive processes. And I think part of what I'm going to be investigating is when do we need to take that break? But I see people already starting to step away. I see many more restaurants offering "no mobile phone zones" or people feeling happy to get into those airplanes or trains that don't have Wi-Fi.

CD: That's true!

RM: ... although more of them are getting it, so we're never going to get away. But this idea that we *do need* a break, and there comes a point where it's been too much. I'm interested in examining that. For whom is that most important? Why, for some people is it not a big deal? I have a post-doctoral researcher working with me right now, and he's a computer scientist in his graduate training, but he's been looking at depression acuity. Can we predict who are the people who are depressed, by examining their social media posts, toward intervention and things like that. You can almost see that as part and parcel of this fatigue. Who is getting to the point where it's becoming too much and what can we do to help them recognize that? Because it's hard to recognize it until it's almost too late, you've kind of hit almost a depression. And I've seen so many people right now in, sort of, a "social-media depression" that's been kind of fostered, not that the depression wasn't always there, but it kind of become exacerbated as we engage with media.

CD: I know there's been studies about this, young people spending so much time on their devices they're not getting enough green time or outside time-

RM: Or *sleep*. My doctoral research I looked at sleeping habits and mobile phones. And young people between 15 and 18 would sleep with their phones either on the bedside table or under their pillow. And their friends were out and texting or messaging, or video chatting with them; they would wake up during the night and respond, and then try to go back to sleep. And sleep research demonstrates that, that means they're not getting good sleep.

CD: You have touched on this a lot, but I wanted to ask you, if you could boil it down, what do you think is the primary impact of your research? What is your main impact?

RM: I think the work that I do helps us to stop in moments and examine what all this wonderful – and I truly believe it is wonderful – technological evolution is doing to the human experience via the way we think and construct the world or how people with disabilities have been helped or sort of hampered through our ideas about this. But I think general it's really about the role that technology has played in not just advancing human society, but on a more micro level, on advancing the human being or actually making things more difficult for human beings, and recognizing what we have gained and what we lose in this new world of highly integrated technology.

CD: That's a great sum up.

[interlude music]

CD: Coming up, UTM @ 50: Rhonda reflects on the evolution of UTM's Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology over her time here sine 2011,

and she champions their programs for their uniqueness within Canada and the breadth and trail-blazing topics they cover across those specific fields.

CD: I'm going to go a little bit on a different tack now. This podcast coincides with UTM's 50th anniversary. I know that you've been at UTM since 2011, I know that you have been at U of T a little bit longer because you were a lecturer here prior to coming to UTM. And so I just wondered what changes have you seen since you've been here, but also maybe what do you see for UTM on the horizon?

RM: I am so excited to be part of the 50-year celebrations for UTM, which is so amazing. A lot of the people I interact with in the media, particularly CBC Radio, there a lot of alumni who were Erindale College alums, right? And so they come back, if I bring them to guest speak. You know we've had Nora Young here. And they are always stunned by this campus. I mean, I've only been here since, as you said, 2011, so for me UTM has been from the get-go this super-exciting space that's growing and evolving. But for them it's like an entirely different world, right, to what they knew then.

I think being part of that, UTM is THE campus within the tri-campus arrangement at University of Toronto that has early put a stake in the ground regarding communication, information technology, and culture. At ICCIT, which is the program I work within, we are the only one of its kind anywhere in Canada.

The kind of work that my colleagues and I are doing, I think, should be seen as a real gem in UTM's hat because we really have been some of the first people to consider political economy of technology and communication. We've looked at the role of journalists and journalism although we are not a journalism program. We tend to look at media and the technology itself. One of my colleagues looks at time and technology as constructs; really, really fascinating work. Some of us look at drones. So we are always at the cutting edge of what is happening, and I think UTM itself, to me, is the right campus for this because UTM just has that vibe of doing new things; biomedical communication, there's always some new thing happening here that kind of has a technological bent to it.

And so a lot of these students here *really* maximize that. I mean, we have iCube where they're thinking about entrepreneurship. A lot of our students at ICCIT connect into *that,* for example, because it makes sense. Right? A lot of them are thinking about new media technologies and so that's a good way to incubate and to get ideas flowing.

So I'm excited for the future for UTM. I think as we continue to grow, we continue to attract really interesting students and scholars. I think more and more we are being recognized as a research powerhouse within University of Toronto, and when we travel abroad and do our conferences, people are aware of what we are doing. And they are looking to UTM as a sort of, "Hey what are they doing next? That might be something we could be interested in too." So we are kind of becoming a positive

exemplar for a lot of universities. It's an exciting time to be here and to be part of this development.

CD: And you've been such a good advocate and ambassador for UTM, because whenever I do hear you on CBC you're always making sure you say U of T Mississauga, which of course everybody here loves to hear.

I'll wrap it up, but I don't want to take up too much more of your time. But I just wanted to thank you so much for being part of this podcast, and for coming here today, and also congratulations on the Canada Research Chair because we're just so proud of you.

But, thank you very much for being here today.

RM: Carla, I could talk about research all day and you know it, you're trying to get me out. But I just want to take a second to thank the team at UTM. I mean, we talk about research a lot as if it's one scholar, but it is always a group effort at some level, particularly on the granting. And the Canada Research Chair, I couldn't have done it without your office, and your research office; you guys know how much you did to help me get that application through. And, you know, for all the SSHRCs that I had before, I was well known to this office for seeking your advice and getting ideas, and I'm always championing that for everybody. So I want to thank everybody here. And really, you know, I couldn't be in a more enriched environment to pursue these kinds of studies at UTM, so I'm really happy to do this.

CD: Ah, you're so sweet. [laughter]
Thanks so much, Rhonda.

RM: You're welcome!

[wrap-up music]

CD: I would like to thank everyone for listening to today's show. I would especially like to thank my guest, Professor Rhonda McEwen, for taking the time to lay out the broad overview of her research agenda for technically being my first recorded interview for this podcast, though we couldn't post the interview until the announcement was official, for being an all around generous and wonderful person, and congratulations again, Rhonda, on the Canada Research Chair appointment. You are truly deserving of the recognition.

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And special thanks to Tim Lane for the music for the show.
Thank you.