

President's Report to Senate March 24, 2025

As we move into 2025, Lakehead University continues to advance its academic mission, research excellence, and community partnerships. This report highlights key developments, including Research and Innovation Week, research achievements, industry collaborations, and leadership appointments. We remain focused on fostering an inclusive learning environment while strengthening institutional sustainability. Thank you to our faculty, staff, and students for their continued dedication as we shape the future of Lakehead University.

Research & Innovation Week 2025: Celebrating 20 Years of Excellence



Lakehead University celebrated its 20th annual **Research & Innovation Week** from February 24–28 in Thunder Bay, bringing together faculty, students, industry partners, and the broader community to showcase research excellence and foster collaboration.

A highlight of the event was keynote speaker **Jill Heinerth**, Explorer-in-Residence at The Royal Canadian Geographical Society. In her talk, *"Explorations in Excellence,"* Heinerth shared insights from her groundbreaking cave diving explorations, emphasizing curiosity, resilience, and the role of innovation in pushing scientific boundaries.



The milestone year began with the **Science Carnival**, a free public event in partnership with Science North at the Intercity Shopping Centre, attracting **3,800 visitors** who engaged in hands-on science demonstrations and exhibits. Throughout the week, over **30 public lectures, interactive exhibits, and research workshops** took place, featuring topics such as health promotion, aging in place, Indigenous research, and AI knowledge mobilization.

A key focus was student research, with **52 undergraduate and 65 graduate students** presenting at research conferences and poster competitions. Standout achievements included **Dylan Di Carlo** (Anthropology) winning the **Three-Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition** and **Alexandra Haak** (Forestry) becoming a finalist in the **GRADflix competition**.

The week concluded with the **Research & Innovation Awards of Excellence**, celebrating exceptional contributions. **Dr. Christopher Mushquash** (Psychology) and **Dr. Sandra Jeppesen** (Interdisciplinary Studies) received the **Distinguished Researcher Award** for their groundbreaking work in Indigenous mental health and alternative media studies, respectively. Additional awards recognized faculty and students for excellence in research, innovation, and community-engaged projects:

2025 Research & Innovation Awards of Excellence Recipients

- **Distinguished Researcher Award**

- Dr. Christopher Mushquash, Department of Psychology
- Dr. Sandra Jeppesen, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies

- **Research Excellence Awards**

- **NSERC Category:** Dr. Waleed Ejaz, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
- **SSHRC Category:** Dr. Idevania Costa, School of Nursing

- **Indigenous Partnership Research Award**

- Dr. Anna Koné Péfoyo (Health Sciences) & Dr. Lana Ray (Athabasca University)
- Partners: Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, Matawa First Nations Chiefs Council, Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig

- **Community Engaged Research Award**

- Dr. Erin Pearson, School of Kinesiology
- Partners: Thunder Bay District Health Unit, Our Kids Count, City of Thunder Bay

- **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Research Award**

- Dr. Pauline Sameshima, Faculty of Education

- **Innovation Award**

- Bryan Wong, LLB Student, Bora Laskin Faculty of Law

- **Three-Minute Thesis (3MT®) Competition**

- **First Place:** Dylan Di Carlo, MSc Candidate, Anthropology
- **Second Place:** Siddharth Kishore, MSc Candidate, Electrical and Computer Engineering

- **GRADflix Award**

- Alexandra Haak, MSc Candidate, Faculty of Natural Resources Management

- **Graduate Studies Research Excellence Awards**

- **Natural Sciences & Engineering:** Vira Grynko, PhD Chemistry & Materials Science
- **Social Sciences & Humanities:** Chelsea Noël, PhD Clinical Psychology
- **Health Research:** Douglas Newhouse, MSc Kinesiology

- **Graduate Student Conference Poster Winners**

- **Engineering Category:** Mona Mohammadkhani, PhD Candidate, Chemical Engineering
- **NSERC Category:** Amy Stieh, MSc Candidate, Physics
- **SSHRC Category:** Maaja Sepa, MHSc Candidate, Health Sciences

- **Post-Doctoral Fellow Excellence Award**

- Viktoriia Batarchuk, Department of Chemistry

Lakehead Researchers Appointed to UArctic Research Chairs (Feb. 25th 2025)

Dr. **Sudip Rakshit** and Dr. **Chris Southcott** have been appointed international research chairs with the **University of the Arctic (UArctic)**, focusing on sustainable development in the Circumpolar North.



- **Dr. Rakshit** will lead efforts in circular bioeconomy and sustainable biorefining processes, using marine and terrestrial resources to address environmental challenges in the Arctic.



- **Dr. Southcott** will focus on the impact of resource development on Arctic communities, working to empower them to have greater control and benefit from regional resource projects.

These prestigious appointments underscore Lakehead University's leadership in Arctic research and its commitment to sustainable development in northern regions.

BMO's \$1 Million Investment in Indigenous Education

Lakehead University is grateful for **BMO's generous \$1 million donation**, which will support the construction of a new indoor-outdoor space for Indigenous education and cultural engagement as part of the Gichi Kendaasiwin project. This space will serve as a gathering place for Indigenous students, elders, and knowledge keepers while supporting programs like the Indigenous Transition Year Program and the Indigenous Cultural Traditions Club. This investment aligns with the university's commitment to reconciliation and expanding opportunities for Indigenous learners.



Mike den Haan, VP of University Advancement, Dan Adamss, VP Indigenous Banking, BMO, Denise Baxter, Vice Provost, Indigenous Initiatives

Research and Innovation Week 2025: Showcasing Excellence at Lakehead Orillia

Lakehead University's Orillia campus hosted Research and Innovation Week, showcasing the diverse and impactful research being conducted by faculty, students, and community partners. The week featured a range of engaging events, including faculty and student poster presentations, interactive workshops, and thought-provoking discussions on topics such as equity, diversity, and inclusion, artificial intelligence, and climate change.



A keynote address by Simon Jackson, "The Accidental Leader: The Power of One to Make a Difference," underscored the importance of individual action in driving meaningful change.

The event also celebrated Indigenous knowledge and culture through an Indigenous Craft Market and an innovative session on Virtual Reality (VR) technology for Anishinaabemowin language learning. Research and Innovation Week in Orillia reinforced Lakehead's commitment to

fostering a dynamic research culture and connecting knowledge with real-world impact.

PDAC 2024 Breakfast – Strengthening Industry Partnerships



On March 4, 2024, Lakehead University hosted the annual Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) Breakfast, reinforcing its commitment to industry collaboration and innovation in mineral exploration.

A key highlight of the event was the announcement of a **new five-year research partnership with Kinross Gold Corporation**, focused on enhancing **mineral exploration in the Red Lake Greenstone Belt** in Northwestern Ontario. This research commitment goes beyond innovation—it is about building a trusted network of industry partnerships that push boundaries and create meaningful change.

Dr. Pete Hollings, Emcee, PDAC Breakfast event



From left to right: Dominic Channer, Vice-President of Community Relations and ESG at Kinross Gold Corp; Dinah Asare, Senior Director of Social Performance at Kinross Gold Corp; Mac Potter, External Relations Manager at Kinross Gold Corp; Cathy Tuckwell, Board Chair of Lakehead University; Tom Kehoe, Member of the Board of Governors; Sunil Kumar, Member of the Board of Governors; Dr. Andrew Dean, Vice-President of Research and Innovation at Lakehead University; Mike den Haan, Vice-President of University Advancement at Lakehead University; Paul Popo-Ola, President of the Alumni Association; Ashley Moncrief, Environmental Manager; and The Honourable Patty Hajdu.

Appointment of Dr. Gillian Balfour as Provost, Vice-President Academic



Dr. Gillian Balfour will join Lakehead University as Provost and Vice-President, Academic on July 1, 2025. She brings extensive leadership experience from Thompson Rivers University, Western, and Trent, where she has successfully led strategic academic planning, budget oversight, and initiatives focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion.

With a PhD in sociology from the University of Manitoba, Dr. Balfour's research focuses on restorative justice and sentencing law reforms addressing the over-incarceration of Indigenous women. Her expertise in academic governance, student success, and innovative program development will be valuable as Lakehead advances major institutional priorities, including the Collaborative Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program, the Barrie STEM Hub, and the expansion of the Orillia campus.

Dr. Balfour has expressed enthusiasm about joining Lakehead, recognizing its strong reputation for student experience and research excellence. Her experience leading institutions through growth and change will be an asset as we navigate an evolving post-secondary landscape and work towards long-term financial sustainability.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to Dr. David Richards for his leadership as Interim Provost and Vice-President, Academic, ensuring continuity and progress during this transition

March Break Open Houses

Lakehead University recently hosted successful March Break Open Houses on both our Thunder Bay and Orillia campuses, welcoming a total of 551 guests (331 in Orillia and 220 in Thunder Bay). These events provided prospective students and their supporters with an opportunity to experience our campuses firsthand, engage with faculty and staff, and learn more about our academic programs and student services. Notably, over 55 students accepted their offers on the spot, a testament to the impact of these events on enrolment.

I want to recognize the efforts of our undergraduate recruitment team and the many faculty and staff members who contributed to these events. Their dedication helped showcase Lakehead's welcoming and supportive community, reinforcing our commitment to attracting and retaining future students.

Chancellor Deverell Reappointed for a Second Term



Dr. Rita Shelton Deverell has accepted a second term as Chancellor of Lakehead University. Since her appointment in 2021, she has been a dedicated ambassador, supporting the university's mission, fostering outreach and philanthropy, and presiding over convocation ceremonies.

A pioneering broadcaster, journalist, theatre artist, and educator, Chancellor Deverell has broken barriers throughout her career, including as a co-founder of Vision TV and the first woman to lead a journalism program at a Canadian university. She has mentored and advanced the careers of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour in Canada's arts and cultural industries.

A Member of the Order of Canada, she has received numerous accolades, including two Gemini Awards, the Governor General's Performing Arts Lifetime Achievement Award for Broadcasting, and ACTRA's "Woman of the Year." Her commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and advocacy for inclusivity align with Lakehead's values, and we look forward to her continued leadership.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Gillian Siddall
President & Vice-Chancellor