

President's Report to OIEC

November 25, 2025

shaping the

EVOLUTION



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Launch of Lakehead University's Strategic Plan and My Goals

On September 25, we officially launched Lakehead University's new five-year strategic plan, *Shaping the EvoLUtion*, which sets a bold vision for our future. This plan reflects Lakehead's unique and essential role in Canada's post-secondary landscape, serving northwestern and central Ontario — regions defined by progress, curiosity, and resilience. It positions Lakehead as a place where learning and research break down barriers, drive innovation, and create local solutions with global impact.

Shaping the EvoLUtion was informed by input from more than 1,200 voices — students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners — and it clearly outlines what we aim to achieve by 2030, why it matters, and how we will get there. Grounded in our values of integrity, community, belonging, curiosity, and reconciliation, the plan is built around **five interrelated themes**:



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

As we move forward, these themes will shape Lakehead's next chapter — one characterized by growth, transformation, and meaningful impact. They will guide how we strengthen partnerships, elevate student success, support research excellence, and contribute to the economic and social vitality of the regions we serve.

Sixty years ago, Lakehead was built **by the community, for the community**. Today, we continue this legacy by reimagining and redefining our role in shaping society through exceptional teaching, innovative scholarship, and meaningful service.

Future reports will continue to highlight how our academic activities, achievements, and initiatives align with the themes of **Shaping the EvoLUtion**, demonstrating the ongoing contributions of our faculty, staff, and students to the University's evolution.

Dr. Gillian Siddall

President & Vice-Chancellor

Recognition of Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux

President Siddall is pleased to recognize **Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux**, Lakehead University's **Chair on Truth and Reconciliation** and a valued member of the **President's Executive Team**, on being awarded the **King Charles III Coronation Medal**. Dr. Wesley-Esquimaux was nominated for this national honour by the **National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation** in recognition of her distinguished leadership, scholarship, and unwavering commitment to advancing truth, reconciliation, and Indigenous knowledge across Canada.

Dr. Wesley-Esquimaux plays a critical leadership role at Lakehead, guiding the University's efforts to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities, expand culturally grounded learning opportunities, and uphold our institutional commitments to reconciliation. Her work continues to enrich Lakehead's academic and community impact, and this prestigious recognition reflects the profound influence of her contributions both within the University and nationally.



Employee Halloween Contest Celebrates Creativity and Community Spirit: Oct. 31, 2025

Lakehead University's annual Employee Halloween Contest once again showcased the creativity and camaraderie of our employees across both campuses. This year, the Faculty of Graduate Studies swept top honours in both the **Group Costume** and **Office Decoration** categories with their vibrant **Super Mario-themed entry**.

Organized by the **Lakehead Social Committee**, the contest continues to strengthen employee engagement and foster a positive, connected workplace culture. **President Siddall extends her congratulations to the Faculty of Graduate Studies** for their outstanding achievement and offers her sincere thanks to all departments that participated. From imaginative décor to coordinated team themes, the enthusiasm displayed made this year's celebration especially memorable.

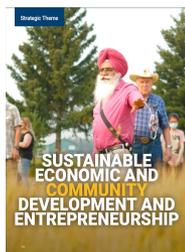


Provincial Investment Expands Nursing Capacity at Lakehead University

The provincial government has committed **\$800,000** to Lakehead University to create up to **80 new nursing seats**. This funding is **one of two regional investments**, totaling over \$3 million, with Confederation College receiving \$2 million to train more construction workers.

The funding will expand nursing program enrolment, including online learning for personal support workers and RPNs, with incentives for those committing to work in underserved or remote areas.

Lakehead President **Dr. Gillian Siddall** noted, “This is wonderful news for our nursing program and the region. Nurses are the backbone of our health-care system, particularly in northern communities.” **MPP Kevin Holland** added that locally trained nurses are more likely to stay in the north, supporting regional workforce sustainability.

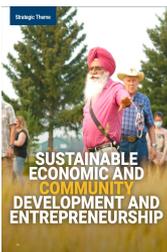


Raag-Rung Music Circle Donation – 42nd Annual Fundraising Event

On September 20, Lakehead University participated in the 42nd Annual Raag-Rung Music Circle fundraising event. We extend our sincere thanks to Raag-Rung for their generous donation of \$6,500, which will support student scholarships at Lakehead University and local colleges, as well as the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra (TBSO). This contribution highlights the University's commitment to fostering student opportunity, supporting the arts, and strengthening community partnerships.



From L-R: Rajesh Talpade, Dr. Gillian Siddall (President and Vice-Chancellor, Lakehead University), Inder Nirdosh, Carl Goodwin, Tammy Holmes and Mr. Michael den Haan (Vice President, University Advancement).

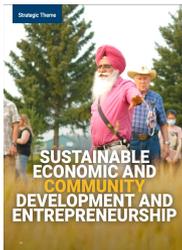


NASA International Space Apps Challenge – Orillia: October 12, 2025

Lakehead University was proud to host the NASA International Space Apps Challenge in partnership with the City of Orillia. The two-day global hackathon brought together **51 participants** of all ages and skill levels — innovators, artists, coders, storytellers, and problem solvers — to tackle real-world challenges using open data from NASA and other space agency partners.

Participants formed teams to design solutions aimed at **educating, inspiring, or improving life on Earth and in space**. As noted by Rebecca Heffernan, Director of Economic Development and Research Support and co-lead for the Orillia location, the Challenge continues to demonstrate that “innovation requires collaboration and diversity of skill and talent.”

Of the 12 participating teams, **two will advance to the next round** of international judging. An additional **five teams** were recognized through an optional local Pitch Challenge on October 5, receiving awards in categories such as Innovation, Impact, Storytelling, and Youth Achievement. Special highlights included a career-focused networking session and a video presentation by Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen. The event showcased Lakehead’s strengths in fostering experiential learning, community collaboration, and innovation. Lakehead University extends its appreciation to the participants, mentors, volunteers, and collaborating partners — including the City of Orillia, City of Barrie, County of Simcoe, Town of Collingwood, Canadian Space Agency, Raytheon ELCAN, and others — whose support contributed to this year’s successful event.



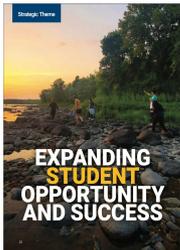
Lakehead University Program Supports Veterans' Education: Nov. 7th 2025



Lakehead University is one of six Ontario institutions receiving provincial funding to help Canadian Armed Forces members translate their military experience into college and university credits. The \$575,000 investment, announced by the **Hon. Nolan Quinn, Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security** will support Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) programs, enabling veterans and military-connected learners to transition more efficiently into civilian post-secondary education.

President Gillian Siddall emphasized the importance of this initiative, stating, “Lakehead University is proud to be part of this important initiative to recognize the knowledge and expertise of those who have served our country. We are grateful to the Ontario government for its leadership in honouring veterans by supporting pathways that value military experience as academic achievement. Together, we’re helping veterans transition successfully into civilian life while strengthening Ontario’s skilled workforce.”

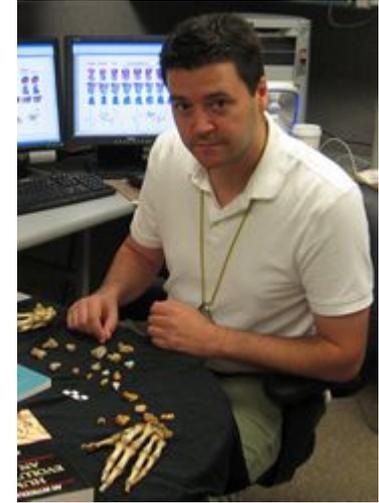
The funding will support a range of measures, including recognizing military skills for credit in programs such as the Bachelor of Engineering, developing AI tools to streamline prior learning assessment, creating a course credit bank, and standardizing recognition of Canadian Armed Forces training across post-secondary institutions. This initiative reflects Lakehead’s commitment to expanding access, supporting student success, and strengthening societal impact through innovative and inclusive programs.



Lakehead Researcher Featured on CBC's Quirks & Quarks: November 7th, 2025

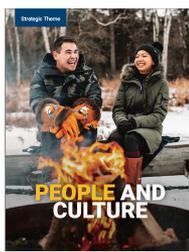
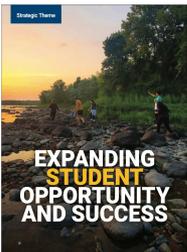
Lakehead researcher Dr. Matthew Tocheri, Canada Research Chair in Human Origins and Assistant Professor in Anthropology, was featured on CBC's national science program *Quirks & Quarks* this past weekend. The interview highlighted Dr. Tocheri's groundbreaking analysis of newly discovered hand and foot fossils of *Paranthropus boisei*, providing insights into the mobility, dexterity, and tool-use capabilities of this distant human ancestor. The research was recently published in *Nature*.

This national media feature reflects both the excellence of Lakehead's researchers and the University's commitment to promoting research innovation and public engagement in the sciences.



Supreme Court Justices Visit Lakehead University: Nov. 18, 2025

As part of their 2025 Thunder Bay visit, **Chief Justice Richard Wagner** and **Justices Malcolm Rowe** and **Michelle O'Bonsawin** met with students and faculty at the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law at Lakehead University. President Gillian Siddall participated in the sessions, engaging with the justices alongside students and faculty. The judges held in-depth discussions on judicial independence, constitutional law, and Indigenous law, providing students with a unique opportunity to explore the role and responsibilities of Canada's highest court. This visit highlighted Lakehead's commitment to experiential learning, civic engagement, and fostering meaningful connections between students, leadership, and the legal community.



Barrie STEM Hub Construction Commences: November 19, 2025

Construction officially began at 24 Maple Ave., marking a key milestone for the Barrie STEM Hub. The project remains on schedule to welcome its first cohort of students in Fall 2026. The start of construction was celebrated at a press conference hosted by the City of Barrie and Mayor Alex Nuttall, highlighting the strong partnership between Lakehead and the City in advancing STEM learning, innovation, and regional opportunity.

The Barrie STEM Hub strengthens community and industry connections, supports student recruitment, and represents a strategic investment in Lakehead's multi-campus growth, revenue generation, and long-term sustainability.



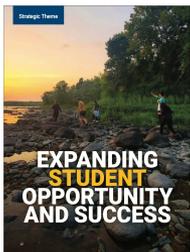
Recent Recruitment Events at Lakehead University

Lakehead University's Orillia campus hosted an **Open House on November 8th** for prospective students and their families. The event provided an interactive, open-house style experience, including a **program-style fair** showcasing academic offerings across all faculties. Attendees had the opportunity to explore classrooms, meet faculty and current students, and gain insight into campus life and student services.

This event offered a valuable opportunity for prospective students to personally connect with Lakehead community members as they entered the campus, helping to foster a welcoming environment and strengthen interest in Lakehead's programs.



Lakehead University's Thunder Bay campus welcomed **out-of-town prospective students** for **VIP Explore the North on November 14**, a specially tailored tour experience highlighting both the campus and the City of Thunder Bay. Participants were guided through key facilities, academic spaces, and student services, while also enjoying a curated tour of the city to provide a sense of community and regional lifestyle.



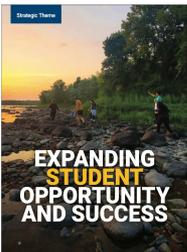
Humanities 101 – 20th Anniversary: November 19, 2025

Lakehead University celebrated the 20th anniversary of **Humanities 101**, a program dedicated to expanding access to university learning. Since its launch, the Thunder Bay program has welcomed more than 500 community members into the academic environment, many of whom were engaging in university life for the first time.

Humanities 101 continues to break down barriers to education by creating inclusive pathways for individuals who may not have previously envisioned themselves participating in higher learning. The program fosters confidence, curiosity, and a strong sense of belonging. Graduates of Humanities 101 go on to pursue further education, contribute to the workforce, support their families, and remain active in their communities.



From Left to Right: Charlotte Le; Anjana Mundachalil Rejeev



Achievement Program Expansion to Kenora November 21, 2025.

Lakehead University and the Kenora Catholic District School Board **signed a Memorandum of Understanding** to launch the Lakehead Achievement Program for Grade 4 students at St. John Paul II School in Kenora, expanding early-access opportunities for students to explore post-secondary pathways.

In Thunder Bay, attendees included **President & Vice-Chancellor Dr. Gillian Siddall**; **Achievement Program Manager Amanda Stefanile**; a **Lakehead University Elder**; **Achievement Program alumnus and Lakehead student Nevaeh Rae**; and **Maria Vasanelli, Chair of the Achievement Program Guidance Committee**, along with additional staff and guests. In Kenora, **Director of Education Jamey Robertson**; **Principal Tammy Bush**; Grade 4 students and their families; an Elder or Knowledge Keeper; and school staff participated in the celebration.

Events were held at the **Faculty Lounge at Lakehead University's Thunder Bay campus** and the **Learning Commons at St. John Paul II School in Kenora**, and included opening prayers, student participation, cultural performances, remarks from school and university leaders, and the official signing of the MOU.





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