

# EDUCATION EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER



## A Message from the Dean

The start of a new academic year brings with it the chance to review the year that was and look forward to the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Looking back, a significant amount of work has been accomplished to move the faculty forward and prepare the groundwork for the coming years. Three important milestones are reported on in this issue of the *Education Exchange*.

First, the Keewatinase Indigenous Teacher Education Program (KITEP), which is the result of several years of relationship building and collaboration with a range of communities and organizations, is now fully accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers. This program will make a significant contribution to supporting Indigenous education in Northwest Ontario in the coming years, and in the Simcoe region when the program is offered in the next year or two.

The second milestone is the development and acceptance of the *Environmental Flourishing and Climate Action Plan*. Designed to guide our responses, as a whole faculty, to the climate and other environmental crises which we face, the document will impact all facets of our operations and interactions with those beyond the Faculty. Developing a document is the easy part; putting it into action and building on it over time will be the challenge that we need to face over the coming year and beyond.

The third milestone is the release of the latest iteration of the *Contract Lecturer Survey*. This Faculty is the only faculty in the university that has a formal committee to advocate for Contract Lecturers, a dedicated group of people who bring so much expertise, professionalism and commitment to our work. While the latest survey shows progress across several issues, we must continue to do better in terms of addressing the casualization of post-secondary education and workload.

In terms of looking forward, the coming year will see us finalizing our revised BEd program, while also dealing with the uncertainties around program length caused by the indecision of the Ministry of Education. We will also be updating the MEd program and working on reviews for the Joint PhD program. In terms of teaching and learning, we will be operationalizing our new Assessment Principles and further developing our Instructional Working Groups. On the administrative side, we will be realigning our management structures to better serve our programs across two campuses and revising our Faculty Council Bylaws to better reflect the more inclusive culture that we have developed over the past few years. And finally, we will be looking to approve our new Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization policy.

So, while much has been done, there is much to do. As a Faculty we have the people and commitment to make the reforms that need to be made if we are to address both the opportunities and challenges that the future presents, and thus can face that future with confidence.

-Wayne Melville

# Faculty News

## Keewatinase Indigenous Teacher Education Program Receives OCT Accreditation

The Keewatinase Indigenous Teacher Education Program (KITEP) – Primary/Junior specialization has received full accreditation from the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), following Lakehead University Senate approval in May. This marks a significant milestone in the offering of a unique Indigenous ancestry teacher education program designed to address the urgent need for Indigenous teacher training across communities and school boards.

The KITEP program offers two areas of specialization: a Language specialization and a Primary/Junior specialization. One of the program's main objectives is to share and model how teacher candidates can ground their practices in Anishinaabe ways of knowing, seeing, doing, and being, to promote learning and teaching that is congruent with Indigenous pedagogy incorporating family, community, and healing. This program is offered to persons of First Nation, Métis or Inuit ancestry, as well as non-Indigenous individuals.

### Aki-Based Learning and Certification Pathways

By privileging Indigenous ways of learning through experiential and Aki (Earth)-based knowledge, KITEP fosters a wholistic approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of individuals, communities, and the land. The program runs for 18 months after which graduates receive a diploma in Indigenous education with full certification from the OCT. A unique feature of KITEP is that teacher candidates can apply for a OCT multi-session transitional certificate, which enables them to begin teaching in classrooms, after completing four courses and a 10-day placement.

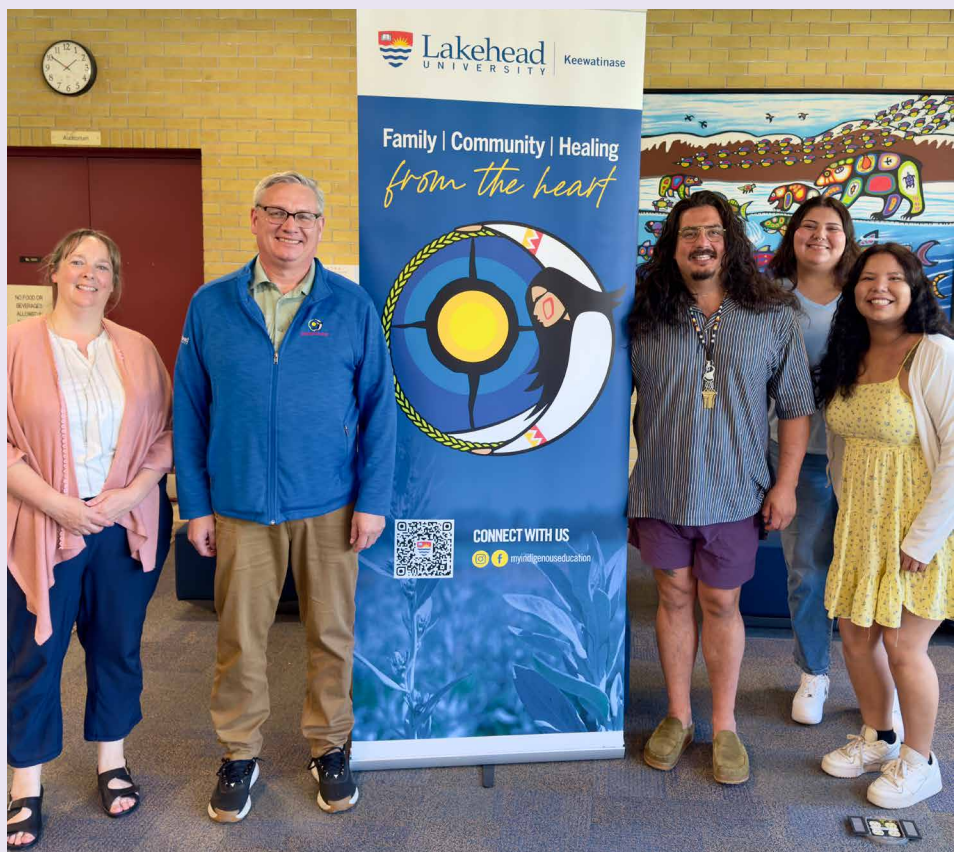
Students in the program are often individuals who are currently working in schools as educational support staff, and are recognized by their communities and schools as having strong potential to become effective teachers.

“The KITEP program provides a safe and wholistic space for teacher candidates to strengthen their identity and to bring their whole selves (emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental) into their teaching practice and communities,” explains Dr. Paul Cormier (Chair, Keewatinase Indigenous Education). “We emphasize the importance of family, community, and healing

within the context of education, empowering students in reclaiming their narratives and contributing to broader societal healing and reconciliation processes.”

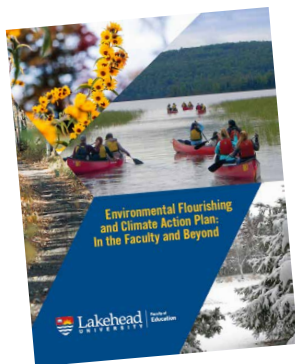
Tyler Armstrong (Anishinaabemowik Languages Program Coordinator; PhD student) adds that “we have built a solid foundation with KITEP, and our intentions are to continue to shape and grow the program to ensure that it is meeting community needs.”

Dr. Wayne Melville (Dean, Faculty of Education) notes that “an initiative like this could not be created without the commitment of many individuals and organizations, including our Indigenous community partners. In particular we would like to thank Biigtigong Nishinaabeg, Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek, Sandy Lake First Nation, Superior Greenstone District School Board, Simcoe County District School Board, the Ontario College of Teachers, our colleagues at Lakehead University, and the students of Keewatinase, past and present, who have provided feedback on the development and teaching of the program.”



Keewatinase Indigenous Education team members, from left to right: Melissa Oskineegish, Paul Cormier, Tyler Armstrong, Nevaeh Rae and Roberta Ogemah.





## Environmental Flourishing and Climate Action Plan Published

The Faculty of Education is proud to announce the publication of its *Environmental Flourishing and Climate Action Plan: In the Faculty and Beyond*. This Plan is a direct response to the growing call for action in the face of climate change and other global crises and represents a significant step in embedding environmental responsibility into every facet of the Faculty's academic and community work.

This Plan builds upon *Flourishing as a Faculty*, a foundational vision document that articulates the Faculty of Education's core values, recognizing our responsibility in a world increasingly shaped by environmental, social, and economic challenges. Together, these documents affirm our commitment to fostering environmental flourishing through teaching, research, policy, and community engagement.

As noted in the document, universities are uniquely positioned to shape society's response to the climate crisis—and Faculties of Education are at the forefront of that work. As educators of future teachers and leaders, we are deeply aware of our role in embedding environmental learning, ecojustice, and climate action into both K–12 and post-secondary education systems.

This responsibility has also been articulated by the Association of Canadian Deans of Education, whose *Statement of Commitment on the Climate Emergency* (2019) and *Accord on Education for a Sustainable Future* (2022) emphasize the transformative power of education and the ethical obligation of educators to advance sustainability. This commitment has been further formalized through updated accreditation guidelines from the Ontario College of Teachers, which require environmental learning, ecojustice, and climate action as core components of teacher education programs.

The *Environmental Flourishing and Climate Action Plan* is closely aligned with Lakehead University's broader Sustainability Plan and reflects a deep commitment to cultivating inclusive, just, and sustainable communities. It was developed through a collaborative effort by the following faculty, staff, and students (listed in alphabetical order): Paul Berger, Joan Chambers, George Drazenovich, Ellen Field, Jillian Fraser, Allison Gardiner, Ann Kajender, Ledah McKellar, Jacob Kearey-Moreland, Jason Kennedy, Maria Lalla, Devon Lee, Claire Morris, Teresa Ruberto, and Christina Summers, with input from the wider Faculty of Education community.

The Faculty is proud to take this meaningful step toward a flourishing future—for our students, our communities, and the planet.

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The support I received through the estate of Florence Shuttleworth-Higgins has allowed me to focus more on my studies, bringing me closer to my career goals and dreams.”

MARINDA TRAN, Bachelor of Arts, Recipient of the Florence Higgins Music Scholarship



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# Dedicated Educators, Evolving Needs: Insights from the Contract Lecturer Survey

In 2024, the Faculty of Education's Contract Lecturer Committee conducted a survey to better understand the experiences and evolving needs of Contract Lecturers. The responses reflect a dedicated, skilled teaching community that plays a vital role in the Faculty's academic success.

Fifty-nine Contract Lecturers from both the Thunder Bay and Orillia campuses participated in the survey. Most respondents indicated they have taught in the Faculty for at least two years, with nearly a quarter (24%) bringing five or more years of contract teaching experience to their work. A strong majority (87%) teach in the Faculty's BEd program, with nearly half of those having served as Faculty Advisors. Others reporting teaching in graduate studies, Keewatinase Indigenous Education programs, or teaching Additional Qualifications courses. While answers varied depending on their teaching load, most respondents reported spending 11 to 30 hours per week on teaching-related tasks, including course preparation, delivery, student communication and grading.

## Passion for Student Success

Respondents consistently described their teaching as highly meaningful and rewarding. They highlighted the importance of mentoring future educators and the satisfaction of witnessing student growth. More than 85% of respondents said they felt supported by the Faculty, and most said they felt highly respected by students and peers. The flexibility and autonomy of the role was also highly valued, especially by those balancing other professional responsibilities. Among the respondents, 73% reported having other income sources beyond contract lecturing.

## Challenges and Priorities

The survey revealed ongoing challenges that affect the day-to-day work and long-term engagement of Contract Lecturers. A key concern was the unpredictability of course assignments from year to year, which makes it difficult to plan professionally and personally.

Workload was another point of concern. Large class sizes and limited Graduate Assistant support were frequently cited

as posing challenges in providing meaningful and timely feedback. Respondents expressed a need for lowered class size caps and additional resources to ease the pressures of grading and advising. Instructors also emphasized the importance of formal recognition and compensation for their contributions. Doing unpaid work—such as course redesign, mentoring new Contract Lecturers, committee involvement and attending meetings—was identified among 25% of respondents.

Contract Lecturers consistently expressed a desire to remain involved and contribute to the Faculty's success. More than half indicated interest in joining a dedicated discussion forum, demonstrating a commitment to community-building, collaboration, and ongoing dialogue.

Overall, the survey findings affirm a deep sense of purpose and professional pride among Contract Lecturers, while underscoring an ongoing need for structural support, recognition, and inclusion.

**Findings: What's Working Well**

1. Strong professional pride and satisfaction
2. High student respect and positive classroom engagement
3. Flexibility and autonomy appreciated by many

"I love my students. I enjoy the flexible schedule of teaching at the university level."

"[I enjoy] sharing my experiences and supporting and mentoring new teachers."

**Top Recommendations**

1. Strengthen predictability in course assignments
2. Cap class sizes and provide Graduate Assistant (GA) support
3. Recognize unpaid labour (e.g., course redesign, mentoring new Contract Lecturers, committee involvement)

"If I could count on teaching two or three FCEs every year, I could plan my life better."

"The time spent marking is enormous. Smaller classroom caps would reduce stress."

Above: Slides from an April 2025 Faculty Council presentation highlight key findings from the Contract Lecturer Survey.



# New Faces in the Faculty

The Faculty of Education is delighted to welcome the following new folks!

## Megha Dhamija

### Administrative and Placement Assistant, Orillia

"I recently joined the placement team for the Intermediate/Senior and Technological Education programs in Orillia.

As the Administrative and Placement Assistant, my role involves securing teaching placements for students in the Intermediate/ Senior and Technology Education programs in Orillia. This includes working with school board coordinators to match students to their teaching placements—and contributing to administrative tasks for each of those programs. This role demands

extensive outreach with local and provincial school boards, to carefully match and place teacher candidates for the practicum components of the Bachelor of Education program.

My educational background includes teaching Economics and I have a Degree in Education as well as a Masters in Economics. I am also a teacher by profession and teach Introductory Statistics at Georgian College in Barrie. Being in a classroom full of young minds keeps me young and grounded.

I have an energetic 6-year-old boy who loves to play soccer and drag me to all his recreational sports. Between managing my full-time role at Lakehead and teaching, I like to make time to read fiction, go for walks and visit libraries. Practicing gratitude every day keeps me going."



## Pete Bowman

### Technological Education Program Coordinator, Orilla Contract Lecturer & Faculty Advisor; Professional Development Seminar Coordinator

"In my new role as Tech Ed Program Coordinator, I promote the program, support applicants, and guide students and staff throughout their journeys. I also work with schools and boards to help them run strong, effective tech ed programs for high school students across the province.

As a retired high school principal, one of my greatest joys was to attend the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) signings for students as they launched into their potential career in the skilled trades. This bold step by the students was almost always inspired by a terrific tech teacher. Taking a step back, at this point in my career I'm really excited about being part of bringing into the

profession the next generation of terrific tech teachers.

Lakehead has always been a special place for me. I spent a wonderful year in the Bora Laskin building for my BEd, graduating in 1991. I fondly recall being taught how to use a ditto machine (mainly enjoying the intoxicating carcinogenic smell). Since then, I've also completed an AQ course with Lakehead that led me to becoming a Principal. Returning now as an instructor is a wonderful twist in my journey. I find myself adopting a similar approach to how I was taught—although technology has come a long way from the ditto machine!—in trying to prepare future teachers for the ever-changing realities that lie ahead. I am truly grateful for the decades of learning that have brought me to this point, where I find myself learning even more.

Outside of this gig, I love family time, backcountry camping, sports and playing in a rock band—all of which keep me young(ish)."





## Amanda Kloepper

### Scheduling & Administrative Assistant, Undergraduate Studies in Education, Thunder Bay

"As the Scheduling & Administrative Assistant in the Department of Undergraduate Studies in Education, I provide professional and knowledgeable administrative support to faculty, Contract Lecturers, students, and the administrative team. I coordinate complex program scheduling and timetabling, support the hiring processes for Contract Lecturers, and assist with maintaining detailed enrolment and program records.

I'm looking forward to getting settled into the rhythm of the academic year and learning the ins and outs of the scheduling process. I enjoy working through detailed tasks and finding ways to keep things organized and running smoothly. I'm also looking forward to meeting more people in the department and being part of the day-to-day work that supports students and faculty.

Over the years, I've worked in a variety of administrative roles across government, postsecondary, and non-profit settings including at Confederation College, the University of Windsor, and Magnus Theatre. Supporting students and faculty has been a common thread throughout my career, and I really enjoy the behind-the-scenes work that keeps things organized and moving. I've also spent several years doing freelance writing and editing, including content management for a large professional network, with published work appearing on platforms like MSN, Yahoo!, and Apple News. Outside of work, I spend most of my time at home with my husband and our four cats."

## Dr. Sonja Grover Publishes Three New Books

Congratulations to Dr. Sonja Grover (Professor, Thunder Bay campus) on the recent publication of three books:

- *Judicial Oppression of Child Rights in Democratic States and by International Human Rights Bodies* (2025, Springer)

examines the contemporary systematic judicial suppression of child human rights empowerment in Western States. It is argued that a new evolved understanding of child rights calls for a rethinking of the court's *patris patriae* doctrine to now include the protection and strengthening of child autonomous fundamental human rights and child empowerment.

- *Litigating the Politics of Human Rights: Contemporary US Culture Wars on Trial* (2025, Springer) examines selected US landmark cases of the Trump era to explore to what degree the U.S. courts have reinforced constitutionally protected human rights or cast the issues as a matter of governmental discretionary decision-making on social policy matters. The book highlights the risk to a democracy of the latter legal characterization.



- *The Responsibility to Protect, Second Edition* (2025): *Perspectives on the Concept's Meaning, Proper Application and Value* (Routledge) examines the international community's responsibility to protect civilians from atrocity international crimes (genocide, crimes against humanity and systematic war crimes). First published in 2017, this second edition includes a new introduction and an afterward addressing contemporary armed conflicts and R2P. This book presents the views of various international human rights scholars (including the editor) on the possibility, legality and strategies for intervention where a State is unable and/or unwilling to protect civilians against atrocity international crimes.

# Alumni Profiles

## Jillian Fraser

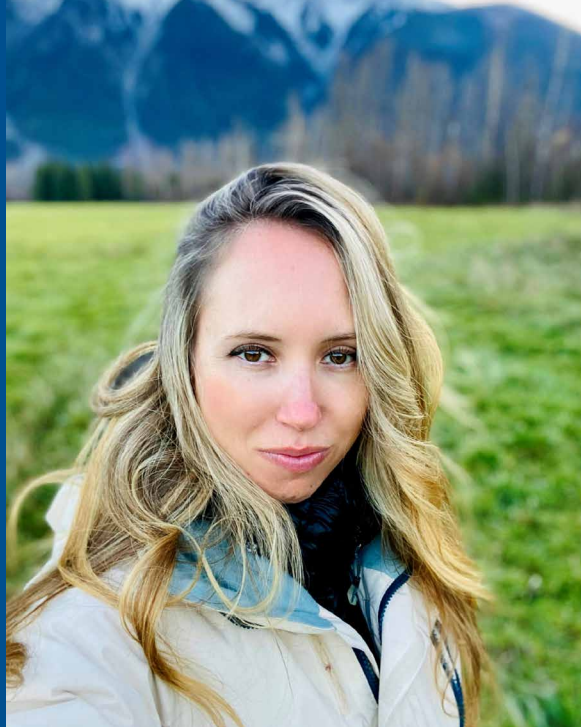
### Vice Principal & Educator, Q'aLaTKu7eM Community School

Graduate of the Bachelor of Education program (2012) and Master of Education program (2022) with a specialization in Indigenous Education

Jillian Fraser is the Vice Principal and multi-grade K–12 teacher at Q'aLaTKu7eM Community School, a remote Indigenous school she helped open in 2018 in the community of Q'aLaTKu7eM, on the unceded territory of the St'at'imc Nation, located 90 minutes from Whistler, BC, and accessed via an active forest service road. The school is uniquely funded by School District 78 and administrated by School District 48. It serves as a vital space where Indigenous youth receive education rooted in both the BC curriculum and their own culture, language, and connection to the land.

Jillian holds a Bachelor of Education (2012) and a Master of Education (2022) with a specialization in Indigenous Education. Her graduate studies were deeply enriched by her work in the community, allowing her to bridge academic research with lived experience and culturally responsive practice.

One of her proudest accomplishments has been supporting the **Youth Designing Climate Resilience Project**, a student-led initiative inspired by her course work in the MED class, *Climate and Wild Pedagogies*. As part of the Youth Designing Climate Resilience Projects, students identified a pressing local environmental concern—abandoned vehicles scattered throughout their community—and took action. Through research, advocacy, and collaboration, the youth successfully led the removal of over 90 junk cars from the



territory, demonstrating the power of land-based learning and youth-driven climate leadership.

Jillian shared some advice for students in Education programs: “During my Master’s program, I found that the most meaningful learning came when I brought my own experience into my coursework. I encourage current students to use their voices—to connect with faculty, explore their curiosities, and show their learning in ways that truly reflect who they are and what they care about. Lean into your passions and let them guide your academic journey.”

Building and leading a school that supports each student’s individual needs, dreams, and identity has been Jillian’s most rewarding professional accomplishment. She is passionate about creating opportunities for youth to thrive in their own communities—through hands-on, land-based learning, language revitalization, and deep relationships.



## Kevin Hastie

### ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) Coordinator, City of Niagara Falls

Graduate of the Master of Education Program with a specialization in Social Justice Education (2024)

“I am currently leading training and change management initiatives for a major Workday ERP implementation project in Niagara Falls. My work sits at the intersection of education, technology, and organizational change. What I find most rewarding is supporting people through transitions, especially when they are facing new tools or processes that can feel overwhelming. I design training experiences that are intuitive and inclusive, and I love seeing people gain confidence when things finally click for them.

Though I have never worked in a traditional classroom setting, education is always at the heart of everything I do. Whether I am helping a city employee learn a new system or designing a navigation tutorial for first-time users, I draw



from my background in adult education, instructional design, and student success. I'm particularly committed to equity in learning, making sure materials are accessible, inclusive, and rooted in real understanding rather than just compliance.

My time in the MEd program at Lakehead was a turning point in how I think about education and systems. The program challenged me to critically examine power dynamics, systemic barriers, and how structures can either empower or exclude. It gave me the tools to approach training and change management through a social justice lens—always asking who a system is built for, and who might be left behind if we are not careful. I appreciated the chance to work alongside peers who operated in different professions; this helped address questions about

the role of education in building more just and equitable communities.

Outside of work, one of the most fulfilling parts of my life is coaching kids in baseball. It's a chance to give back, to help young players build not only their teamwork skills but also their confidence.

To students currently working through their Education programs, I'd say: don't limit your definition of what an educator can be. You may find yourself teaching and leading in places you did not expect—whether that's in a community organization, a municipality, a training room, or a ball field. Social justice education isn't limited to schools; it's needed everywhere decisions are made, systems are built, and learning occurs."

## Dr. Tammy Turega

### Eating Disorder Therapist, Clinical Educator, Contract Lecturer, and Founder of Oak & Rose Counselling

Graduate of the Joint PhD in Educational Studies program (2023)

Tammy Turega is the founder and therapist behind **Oak & Rose Counselling**, a virtual private practice offering compassionate, evidence-based therapy rooted in growth, groundedness, and connection. As a clinical social worker and educator, Tammy supports

individuals navigating anxiety, trauma, emotional dysregulation, grief and loss, and eating disorders or disordered eating.

Her integrative approach draws on modalities such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy-Enhanced (CBT-E), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR).

In addition to her private practice, Tammy works full-time as a regional resource coordinator with the North-western Ontario Eating Disorders Program. In this role, she provides education and consultation to clinicians, healthcare providers, and front-line mental health professionals across rural and remote communities—advancing inclusive, trauma-informed care for individuals across the lifespan.

Tammy also serves as a Contract Lecturer at Lakehead University's School of Social Work. Her

teaching is informed by both theory and lived experience and reflects a deep understanding of the unique challenges and strengths present in rural and northern communities. For Tammy, education and therapy are deeply intertwined—both grounded in curiosity, relational work, and a commitment to social justice.

Tammy's PhD research in Educational Studies focused on educational equity for northern, rural youth in Ontario. Her **dissertation** highlighted how students living in remote communities often face geographic barriers such as long commutes and limited resources, and how their perspectives are too often left out of educational discourse. Using a critical consciousness framework and photovoice methodology, she worked with five youth to amplify their voices and explore how school environments can foster belonging despite systemic barriers. This research continues to shape Tammy's dedication to culturally sensitive, values-driven care.

What Tammy finds most meaningful are the quiet yet powerful moments in therapy—when clients reconnect with their values, lean into discomfort, and begin to move toward a more authentic life. "Therapy isn't about fixing," she says. "It's about expanding. It's about helping people show up more fully to the life they already have."

Tammy speaks with deep appreciation for her time at Lakehead, especially the doctoral Education program, which shaped her critical thinking, deepened her relational approach, and reinforced her lifelong commitment to learning.

Outside of her professional work, she is a parent, a nature-lover, and a passionate advocate for mental health equity. Whether hiking with her family or exploring new clinical frameworks, she continues to embody the very values of rootedness and growth that inspired the name *Oak & Rose*.

She shared the following words of wisdom for current students: "Trust that it's okay not to have it all figured out. The most meaningful work often grows from lived experience, curiosity, and courage. Follow what feels both hard and important."





# Faculty Awards



## Gisella Scalese Honoured with OCUFA Academic Librarianship Award

The Faculty of Education is proud to share that Gisella Scalese, Education Librarian (Thunder Bay campus) has received the Academic Librarianship Award from the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA). This prestigious award recognizes Gisella's outstanding contributions and leadership in librarianship.

Gisella has served as the Education Librarian since 2002. Her award nomination, led by Dr. Gerald Walton (Professor, Education), included letters of support from faculty, staff, and students that praised her dedication, her student-centered approach, and her advocacy for equity, diversity, and inclusion.

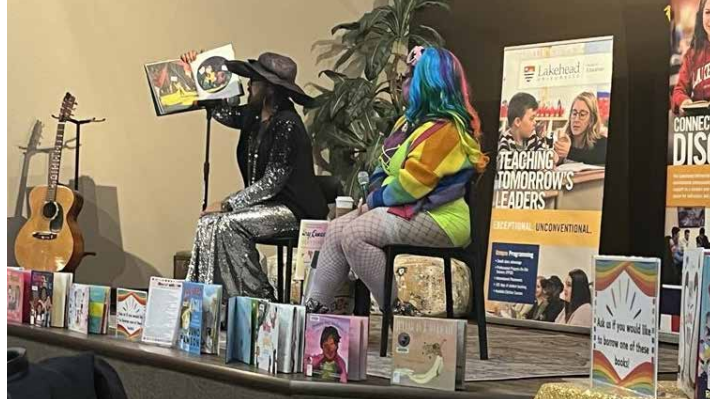
Gisella's work has earned widespread admiration. Lakehead University President Dr. Gillian Siddall commended Gisella's alignment with the university's commitment to social justice, while the Lakehead University Students' Union (LUSU) praised her support for international, Indigenous, and marginalized students. Here are some highlights of Gisella's accomplishments that earned her this award.

### Co-leading the Anishinaabemowik – Indigenous Languages Program Historical Documents Digital Archive

In 2023, Gisella co-led the creation of a digital archive dedicated to preserving teaching resources and documents from the Native Language Instructors Program, dating back to the 1970s. This initiative, developed in collaboration with the Anishinaabemowik Program Coordinator and Lakehead's archivist, includes materials from longtime instructor Tom Beady, whose family gave their blessing for the project. The archive now serves as a vital resource for those teaching Ojibway and Oji-Cree.

### Enhancing Community in the Education Library, Thunder Bay

In 2016, Gisella initiated a reorganization of the education library space at the Thunder Bay campus in consultation with faculty, staff, and students. Her vision reshaped the physical space of the library into a vibrant, collaborative environment that supports academic and emotional well-being. Events like therapy dog sessions, craft nights, movie screenings, and Lunar New Year celebrations have brought students together, fostering a sense of community and belonging.



### Hosting Drag Storytime and Building 2SLGBTQIA+ Resources

Gisella introduced Drag Storytime events at the Thunder Bay campus, and supported a further expansion to Orillia. In partnership with the Pride & Gender Equity Centre, she has curated an expansive collection of Pride resources including picture books, young adult fiction, non-fiction, and teaching materials on gender expression, Two-Spirit identity, and inclusive education. Inclusive signage and Pride flags greet visitors at the library entrance.



### Supporting Research and Teaching Excellence

Gisella has developed over 40 specialized library guides on topics such as Indigenous education, language instruction, and social justice literature. She has taken a leadership role in exploring the implications of AI in education, developing workshops and surveys to help the university community adapt to emerging tools.

Her award nomination was supported by 61 students who shared their experiences through a survey. Their testimonials speak to the impact Gisella has had on their experience at Lakehead:

- *Gisella is genuinely interested in hearing about my research and always asks for updates. She also reaches out when she comes across a potential research paper that I may find helpful.*
- *Every time I am at one of the traditional First Nations ceremonies that are hosted in the Faculty of Education, Gisella is there. I believe this speaks volumes to the person they are and their willingness to learn, support, and advocate for First Nations culture.*
- *Gisella puts on amazing events that bond our school community. She works so hard to provide us with the best resources, teaches us about the various tech we have access to, and is always a friendly and caring presence. If anyone deserves this award, it is her!*

These comments speak to depth of Gisella's influence—not just as a librarian, but as a mentor, advocate, and community builder.

## Innovative First Nations-Led Project on Indigenous Arts and Wellbeing Secures Australian Research Council Grant

Dr. Pauline Sameshima (Professor, Education) is part of an innovative, First Nations-led research initiative that aims to enhance health and wellbeing through arts integrated Indigenous research methods.

The five-year project, titled *Dandhigu Yimbana: Listening on Country for Social and Emotional Wellbeing*, has received a funding grant of \$868,000 AUD through the Australian Research Council's 2025 Discovery Indigenous grant scheme.

The research applies Arts-Informed Indigenist Research (AIIR) methods to explore how Indigenous arts and culturally grounded research practices can address epistemic violence, support healing, and foster culturally safe research environments that promote health equity. The team will work closely with communities engaged in Indigenous health and wellbeing research, aiming to shape how social and emotional wellbeing is understood and studied in Indigenous contexts.

The project is led by Dr. Vicki Saunders, a Gunggari researcher at Central Queensland University's Jawun Research Institute in Australia. Central to the research is the Gunggari concept of *Dandhigu Yimbana* that emphasizes deep listening with respect, on, for and with Country, a practice vital to both community and environmental wellbeing and to research integrity.

This research is expected to contribute significantly to Indigenous scholarship and influence global conversations around arts, health, and decolonizing research practices.



The visual depiction of the research project is represented in the artwork called *Idiwirra: nung Ulamai*, which translates to Secret Business: Let us dance/do ceremony (Alingith language). The artwork was made by Dr. Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyang. The artwork represents five different projects coming together, held by lore, symbolized by two green (new) quarter moon shapes. The work illustrates flow, interconnectedness and unfolding as offerings.



## Mohit Dudeja Honoured with Lakehead Leader Award

The Lakehead Leader Recognition Program celebrates exceptional students who have made valuable contributions within the university and beyond. This year, Mohit Dudeja, a PhD student and Contract Lecturer, was a recipient of a Lakehead Leader Award.

Mohit was nominated by two individuals: his doctoral supervisor Dr. Gerald Walton, and a colleague who wished to remain anonymous.

Gerald noted that since Mohit began his studies in the Joint PhD in Educational Studies program in 2022, he has “excelled academically while also launching community programs at Lakehead and beyond. He is the recipient of ten monetary and four non-monetary awards, including the prestigious CSSE Congress Graduate Merit Award and the Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Fellowship for Excellence in Social Sciences, Humanities, or Arts.

Demonstrating exceptional leadership, Mohit founded and leads campus-wide initiatives such as the Queer Graduate Circle and expanded his India-based non-profit organization (Mendlife Foundation) to Canada, providing vital support to Queer and BIPOC students in Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay Counselling, Family Service Ontario, and Research with International Students have all benefitted from his volunteer service.”

Mohit’s colleague added that “it would be justified to say that Mohit is a go-to person for international students in Thunder Bay. Be it navigating campus organizations, finding a job in Thunder Bay, or seeking peer support for mental health, Mohit is the answer that many students on campus will give. Arriving in Thunder Bay, struggling to adjust, I almost lost hope until someone recommended I reach out to Mohit... his support alleviated academic pressure and provided long-term mental health resources, creating a sense of belonging and safety during a difficult transition.”

Gerald adds that Mohit’s “initiatives and active participation in campus groups have gained media attention ... his commitment to academic excellence, community engagement, diversity, inclusion, and social change sets him apart.”

Congratulations, Mohit!



# Promotion to Full Professor

The Faculty of Education congratulates Dr. Ruth Beatty, Dr. Tanya Kaefer, and Dr. Sonia Mastrangelo on their recent promotion to the rank of Full Professor.



**Dr. Ruth Beatty** joined the Faculty of Education while completing her doctoral degree at OISE. Over the past 16 years, she has played an integral role in shaping the Orillia program, mentoring future educators, and leading nationally recognized research that bridges mathematics education and Indigenous knowledge. She is currently Chair of Orillia Education Programs.

Early in her career, Ruth's research focused on foundational concepts in elementary mathematics—particularly students' understanding of patterns, functions, and relations in early algebra. Working in elementary and secondary schools across Ontario, she designed instructional approaches that built on children's natural abilities to recognize and generalize patterns.

Since 2012, her work has centred on a series of collaborative projects with Anishinaabe and Métis leaders, artists, and educators, as well as non-Indigenous partners.

These initiatives explore the mathematics embedded in cultural practices such as beadwork and finger weaving. Rooted in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to decolonize education, the work prioritizes ethical relationality—placing relationships at the heart of research.

Ruth's dedication has earned her numerous awards, including the 2018 Lakehead University Indigenous Partnership Research Award, the 2020 Community Engaged Research Award, and the 2023 Community-Based Research Canada Excellence in Community-Campus Research Award. In 2021, she was inducted into the Royal Society of Canada College of New Scholars.

She notes, however, that “the award I am most proud of was when I was honoured with the presentation of an Eagle Feather during the *Widookaadying Gikinoomaagewin: Gindaaswin Kendaaswin* Relationships and Reciprocity: Indigenous Mathematics and Education Conference” (2019).

In the classroom, Ruth's philosophy centres on building confidence and competence in mathematics, particularly for Primary/Junior teacher candidates. Her hands-on, inquiry-based courses model the kind of problem-solving communities she hopes her students will create in their own classrooms—spaces where multiple strategies are valued and conceptual understanding is deepened.

Reflecting on her career and recent promotion, Ruth shares, “It's a privilege to see the difference our graduates are making in children's lives. I look forward to continuing as Chair and to continue to grow the faculty in Orillia, because I have seen the profound impact it has had on Simcoe County and the surrounding areas.”

She has also done extensive consultation on knowledge development, reading, eye-tracker and quantitative research with school boards, government bodies, and media companies. In a recent study she worked with partners at Nickelodeon to test the educational content of programming, and whether children were able to learn vocabulary and reading skills from short-form videos. She was also short-listed for the United Kingdom Literacy Association award for Research in Literacy development.

At Lakehead, Tanya teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in educational psychology and research methods, with a focus on quantitative analysis. She applies her research on how people learn directly to teaching, using the same techniques she studies to help BEd and MEd students understand complex concepts in learning. She has also served as the director of the Joint PhD program and recently completed a term as Acting Dean for the Faculty. Each year, she organizes a series of Lunch & Learns for the faculty, encouraging faculty and students to share their research.

Outside of her academic work, Tanya volunteers with Canadian Dachshund Rescue and the Orillia District Literacy Council. She lives in Orillia with her beloved dogs, and has a well-developed appreciation for horror movies.



**Dr. Tanya Kaefer** joined Lakehead as an Assistant Professor in 2012, bringing expertise in educational psychology and a research focus on early knowledge development, learning, and reading comprehension.

In 2020, she and colleagues from NYU and West Texas A&M University received a \$1.47-million grant from the Institute of Education Sciences (U.S.) for their project, *Reducing Knowledge Gaps for Low-Income and Educationally At-Risk Pre-Kindergartners through Taxonomically Organized Books and Screen Media*. The project aimed to make early learning

content more accessible with structured books and videos tailored to diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. A key aspect of the research involved using eye-tracking technology to determine how children approach this media—what elements they attend to—and how that may impact their learning.



**Dr. Sonia Mastrangelo** began her journey at Lakehead University Orillia in August 2009, shortly after completing a PhD in Education at York University. Over the past 16 years she has taken on numerous leadership roles in the Faculty, including Graduate Program Coordinator, Acting Chair of Undergraduate Studies, School Board Liaison, and, currently, Assistant Dean with responsibility for teaching and learning. She also serves as Editor of the [Journal of Applied Self-Regulation](#) and Director of Research at the [Applied Self-Regulation Research Knowledge Network](#).

Sonia's research is centered around three key streams. The first focuses on self-regulation: the ability to stay calm, focused, and alert, especially under times of stress. She is currently completing a three-year project in Mishkeegogamang First Nation, where she has applied the Shanker Self-Regulation framework with educators, parents, and students at Missabay School. With support from a SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant, she is now extending this work to Lakehead University, examining stress among undergraduate and graduate students. In collaboration

with colleagues, she is developing informational modules to promote stress awareness in post-secondary settings.

Her second research stream explores entrepreneurial and employment pathways for young adults with developmental disabilities in Simcoe County. The third stream involves delivering self-regulation training to educators in Guayaquil, Ecuador, supporting teachers and K-8 students through classroom visits and virtual workshops.

Sonia explains: "I've always had a keen interest in mental health, well-being, and neurodivergence—topics that have touched both my personal and professional life. I began my career working with students on the autism spectrum and have always been excited about the possibilities for learning and growth in each individual."

She teaches a range of courses, including Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education (undergraduate), Issues in Special Education and Learning Processes (MEd), and Cognition and Learning (PhD). Her teaching philosophy is rooted in the belief that "everyone has a valuable contribution to make. I try to create a safe environment for students of all abilities to share, challenge, and discuss theories, ideas, and practices. They are encouraged to think outside of what they already know and to apply their newfound knowledge in creative ways."

## Master of Education Students Share Inspiring School Improvement Projects

Master of Education students in the School Improvement Planning course, taught by Dr. Christina van Barneveld in Spring 2025 (Thunder Bay campus), shared a powerful [YouTube video](#) that highlights their learning through two impactful, hands-on school improvement projects. Created in response to a course assignment, the video reflects the students' commitment to community building, inclusivity, and sustainability.

### Growing Community: Part 1 – The Garden Box Project

The first of the two projects saw students designing and building raised garden boxes tailored to Thunder Bay's climate and soil conditions.

"We noticed our school needed more gardens for students, so we built raised garden boxes, adapting them to Thunder Bay's unique climate," one student explains in the video. "But this project was about more than gardening; it was about sustainability, wellness and teamwork. We learned patience, responsibility and how small actions like planting a seed can nurture both environment and our school spirit."



Students in the early stages of building the garden boxes.



From left to right: Arafat Alamgir Shanto, Dr. Christina van Barneveld, and Gideon Odorkor-Teila.

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Students and Dr. Christina van Barneveld in the School Improvement Planning course, Spring 2025.

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Now a permanent feature outside of the Bora Laskin building, the garden boxes embody the group's mission to grow a variety of plants adapted to local conditions, their vision to empower the community through sustainable practices, and their values of respecting nature and collaboration.

### Mapping Belonging: Part 2 – The World Map Project

In the second initiative, students took a global approach to create “Lines of Belonging: The World Map Project.” This project aims to foster a sense of inclusion for the university's international student community, which includes 1900 students from over 80 countries.

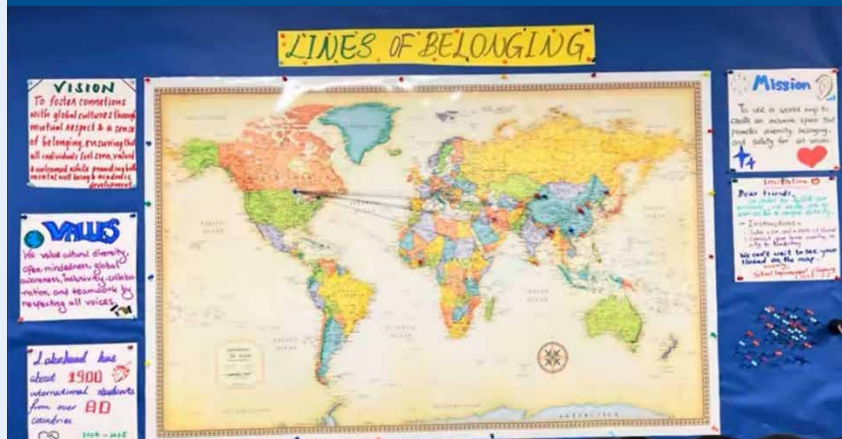
Installed in the hallway of the Bora Laskin building, the project's centerpiece—a large world map—invites international students to take a pin and thread and link their home country or city to Thunder Bay. The resulting web of connections on the map creates a powerful visual representation of the diversity in the international student community.

“This project took us around the world without leaving the classroom,” reflected one student.

The students also thanked Dr. van Barneveld and other faculty mentors for encouraging students to extend their learning beyond the classroom. “When we nurture both roots and relationships, our whole community thrives—one seedling, one story, one connection at a time.”



Students with the frame of one of the garden boxes they built; the boxes are now filled with local plants.



The “Lines of Belonging” World Map Project is featured in the hallway of the Bora Laskin building.



# Anishinaabemowin Phrases and Language Revitalization

**A**nishinaabemowin Boodawe means lighting the fire (boodawe) to keep the Ojibwe language (Anishinaabemowin) alive—and language revitalization is at the heart of the work of the Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee, an educational group in partnership with Red Rock Indian Band, Kinoomaadziwin Education Body, Superior Greenstone District School Board, Superior North Catholic

District School Board, the Ministry of Education, and the faculty's Keewatinase (Department of Indigenous Education).

Below are some of the committee's recent "Anishinaabemowin Phrases of the Week." For information on events and language revitalization initiatives happening in schools, please see their [Facebook page](#).



Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee

*Anishinaabemowin Phrase of the Week*

**Giin igo**

“Your choice”  
“It’s up to you”



Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee

*Anishinaabemowin Phrase of the Week*

**Ginitaa-anishinaabem**

“You speak the language well”



Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee

*Anishinaabemowin Phrase of the Week*

**Bakaan ezhigiizhiwed**

“S/he speaks a different dialect”



Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee

*Anishinaabemowin Phrase of the Week*

**Gaawiin anishaa indikidosii**

“I’m not joking”