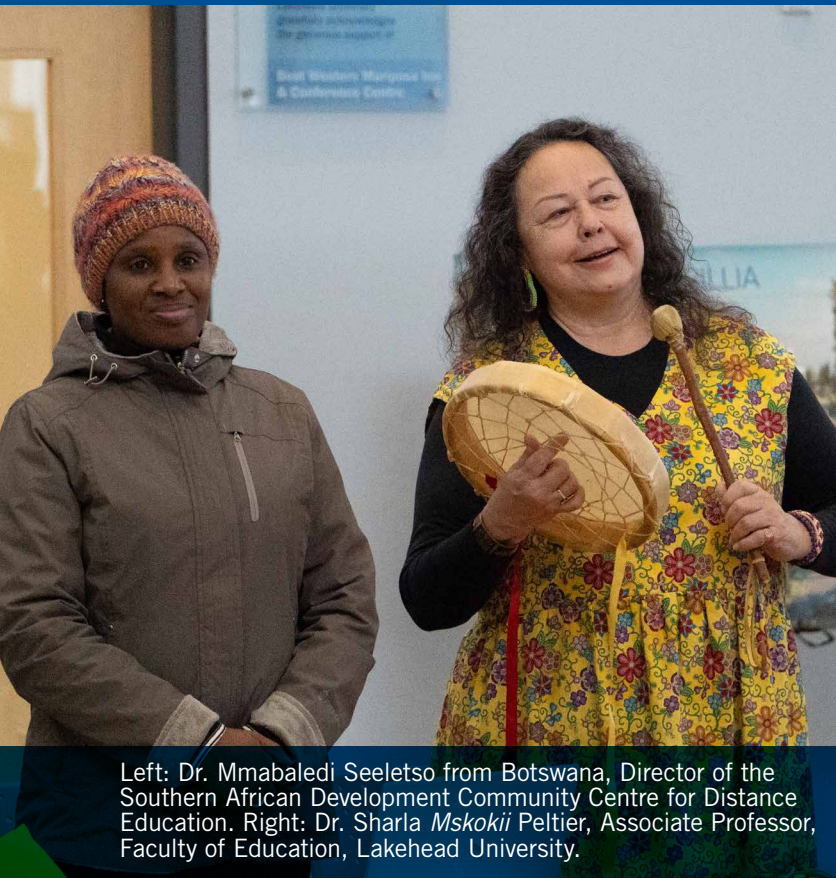


EDUCATION EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER



Left: Dr. Mmabaledi Seeletso from Botswana, Director of the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education. Right: Dr. Sharla Mskokii Peltier, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Lakehead University.



Top photo (L to R): Cynthia Motanka (with the toque) of Botswana and Ernesto Williams from the Bahamas. Bottom photo (L to R): Jacques Cordina of Malta, Sabrina Aouali Gixti, also from Malta, and Joackim Tamale of Uganda.

International Youth Voices Amplified at Global Citizenship Summit in Orillia

Global perspectives, cultural exchange, and youth empowerment took center stage at the “Global Citizenship Summit for Youth Voice, Policy, and Action,” a dynamic, week-long conference held in February at the Orillia campus that aimed to amplify youth voices and enable the exchange of views on international issues.

The event brought together 24 young leaders from 12 countries—including Botswana, Guyana, Turkey, the Bahamas, Malta, Fiji, and Afghanistan—alongside local and provincial youth participants. In partnership with the Ontario Council for International Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Learning, the Summit was coordinated by Dr. Gary Pluim, Assistant Professor in Orillia, with support from several research assistants, Education PhD candidate Jacob Kearey-Moreland and Environmental Sustainability student Dhanvi Gahlawat. By encouraging participants to explore and articulate similarities and differences across global standpoints, the Summit provided a vibrant platform for intercultural dialogue and collaboration.

Summit participants contributed to the event in various ways. First, everyone prepared country presentations and shared insights about their culture, including national traditions, societal norms, and the deeper, invisible aspects of their culture. They described the cultural consequences of colonization, intercultural relations, and how they personally connected to their country’s culture.

Second, each participant prepared a seminar on a global topic of their choice, describing its impact through the lens of their culture. Presentations ranged from climate change to gender equality, from the housing crisis to misinformation. The presentations emphasized why the issues matter to youth and proposed actionable steps for change.

(continued on next page)





Top photo (L to R): Aditi Sharma from Lakehead International, Mishka Watin from the Ontario Council for International Cooperation, and Pragya Tikku from the Ontario Council for International Cooperation. Bottom photos: Left: Action Sixpence of Botswana and Ernesto Williams from the Bahamas. Right: Summit organizer Dr. Gary Pluim.

Third, participants collaborated to produce audio and video podcasts on subjects that they wished to further discuss. These podcasts were unique in that they enabled deep conversations about contemporary global issues among small groups of engaging youth from around the world. The podcasts, which will be shared widely, were identified by many participants as a highlight of the week.

A Week of Learning and Connection

The Summit featured a rich schedule of events, including an opening ceremony with introductions, drumming, and connections to land by Dr. Sharla *Mskokii* Peltier of the Faculty of Education in Orillia (see the photo on the previous page). In conjunction with Lakehead International and Indigenous Initiatives, further learning opportunities included a cultural visit to the Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre in Midland, Anishinaabe teachings by Elder Mark Douglas in Rama Mnjikaning, and a webinar about Black History Month with researcher, educator and Lakehead faculty member Tshweu Moleme. Throughout the week the group enjoyed shared meals, local outings, and recreational activities like swimming, snow tubing, and a winter bonfire.

Culmination of Five-Year Research Grant

The Summit marked the culmination of Dr. Pluim's five-year research grant, "Educational Transfer Between Small States of the Commonwealth," sponsored by the Social Sciences and

Humanities Research Council of Canada. The Summit also served as a milestone in participatory research, with the youth driving the panel discussions, directing the content of the podcasts, and shaping the research questions and methodologies. Along with focus groups about existing youth curriculums on wellness, community engagement, and career readiness, these activities served to inform a deeper understanding of international education transfer. The experience in its entirety underscored the power of intercultural dialogue and youth empowerment and demonstrated that when youth lead, they can drive meaningful change and forge lasting global connections.





The Art Walk at Bora Laskin building drew such a large crowd that not everyone could fit in the hallway!

Celebrating Art and Community at the Bora Laskin Building

Art played a significant role in Lakehead University's Research and Innovation Week this past February, as the Faculty of Education proudly showcased artistic creativity and interdisciplinary expression through an on-campus tour of artwork.

In addition to a Guided Art Walk in the CASES (Centre for Advanced Studies in Engineering and Sciences) Building, an art launch was held at the Bora Laskin Education Building to highlight the work featured in the Lakehead Arts Integrated Research (LAIR) Gallery.

The LAIR Gallery is one of six campus art galleries curated by Dr. Pauline Sameshima (Professor, Education), showcasing work by community Artists in Residence across generations, from high school students to seniors. These artists' diverse artistic practices and lived experiences are reflected in the variety of mediums and stories represented in the LAIR Gallery, which

is found in the hallway on the second floor of the Bora Laskin Building. (For all gallery locations, visit galleries.lakeheadu.ca.)

This year's community partner for the LAIR Gallery in the Bora Laskin was the Northwest Climate Gathering. The **Northwest Climate Gathering** creates positive, inclusive spaces to connect, refresh and empower Climate Action leaders from across the region.

The art launch in the Bora Laskin drew such an enthusiastic crowd that the original plan—a guided walk through the gallery—had to be reimagined! With more attendees than the hallways could hold, artists took turns talking about their artworks in a classroom and then held conversations with featured artists in the hallways.

The event was filled with inspiring conversations, as community members and local artists connected through shared appreciation for the arts.

Serving Up Spirit: Cohort B2 Crowned Champs at the Annual Volleyball Tournament

The annual Orillia Faculty of Education intercohort-faculty volleyball tournament was held in March at the Orillia Recreation Centre. This year Cohort B2 emerged as the overall champions! Congratulations!



Above: Players in the 2025 tournament.



Above: Faculty and staff members Brett Tomlinson, Jake White, Dr. Michael Hoechsmann, and Dr. Gary Pluim.

Congratulations to the Recipients of the RITE (Research in Teacher Education) Award

The annual RITE (Research in Teacher Education) awards support research projects relating to teacher education. This year, six applications were supported through the award, which is open to Faculty of Education graduate and undergraduate students, Contract Lecturers, and faculty alike. The proposals

were judged on their strength, their potential for seeding further research, and their likelihood of illuminating interesting questions in teacher education. Here are some details on this year's six winning research projects.



“The History of Lakehead’s Faculty of Education: Twenty Years of Images”

Researcher: Dr. Frances Helyar (Professor of Education Emerita)

“September 2026 marks the 20th anniversary of the opening of Lakehead University in Orillia. To help to recognize this milestone, I am working with the Orillia Museum of Art and History and

with Orillia university administration to create a public exhibit representing the university’s history in the community. This will include a temporary display at the Museum, a lecture series, and other celebratory events to occur throughout the 2025-26 and 2026-27 academic years.

I am leading a digital project that features photographs and captions submitted by Orillia alumni and instructors, capturing their teacher education experiences from 2006 to the present. Each image will be paired with a paragraph written by the contributor, explaining its significance.

This project draws on two decades of scholarship surrounding the ‘pictorial turn,’ including the role of images as expressive, relational, and archival (Nóvoa, 2000). We will begin by emailing a call for submissions to alumni and instructors, using snowball sampling to broaden our network. Contributors will be asked to share one or two meaningful photos and identifying information.

As submissions are received, I will work alongside a hired Graduate Assistant to curate a montage slide show, set to music, to be displayed across campus and in community venues. The montage will highlight key themes such as teaching and learning, social responsibility, Anishinaabe *Miikana Gichi Kendaasiwin*, student supports and more. We will seek emergent themes in the photos and explore how these personal moments align with the university’s goals in education, research, and community engagement.

Ultimately, this project offers a meaningful reflection on two decades of teacher education at Lakehead Orillia, and will help to rekindle networks during a time of institutional celebration and change.”

Reference

Nóvoa, A. (2000). Ways of Saying, Ways of Seeing: Public Images of Teachers (19th-20th Centuries). *Paedagogica Historica*, 36(1), 20-52.



“Analysis of Contract Cheating Websites to Enhance Academic Integrity and Student Awareness”

Researcher: Suzanne Connell (PhD Student)

“My research addresses the rising threat of contract cheating websites, which may lure students into academically harmful transactions through predatory marketing tactics.

Sites such as Chegg, Quizlet, and Course Hero promote themselves as ‘study help’ tools while engaging in illicit activities such as academic content file sharing, essay writing, and test-taking services. These sites can lead naïve students into potentially academically catastrophic transactions involving blackmail, financial exploitation, and expulsion.

Despite consistent efforts, the problem of contract cheating websites has only expanded. Further, with the proliferation of artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, cheating websites have adapted to bolster and diversify their offerings.

Teacher candidates are in a unique position of being both a target audience for these platforms, as well as being individuals who must enforce academic integrity standards in their placements and future careers. Educating them about these practices is essential, as research shows that this education can significantly improve their ability to detect and address misconduct.

My research involves analyzing five major contract cheating websites to expose how that may entice naïve student users; to classify illegitimate services and place them in the context of extant literature on why students choose to outsource their work; and to evaluate fraudulent and misleading messaging that misinforms students about their academic obligations. I plan to develop an awareness presentation for faculty and administration, to support strategies rooted in evidence-based insights to raise awareness among students of these illegitimate practices and messaging.”



“Identifying Effective Indigenous Resources for Graduate Science Teacher Education”

Researcher: Dr. Liz Beattie (Contract Lecturer, Thunder Bay)

“Decolonizing teacher education by including Indigenous perspectives and content is widely recognized as a key priority in graduate Education programs. In science education, this work is especially challenging due to the contrast

between Western scientific traditions—which are individualistic, objective, and linear—and Indigenous worldviews, which are relational, holistic, spiritual, and complex. While many Canadian teacher education programs provide frameworks and guiding principles for inclusive and culturally responsive science education, they often lack evaluation of specific resources.

The objective of my study is to investigate students’ perspectives on the effectiveness of Indigenous and reconciliation education resources offered in two MEd science education courses I taught in Fall 2024. Using a survey, I will gather students’ opinions on the usefulness and impact of these specific materials.

Understanding how students engage with Indigenous content is vital for responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action (2015), particularly those related to education. This research supports reconciliation in science education by informing how such content is received and how it may be improved. The findings will offer insight for the Faculty of Education and other Canadian institutions on which resources students found most meaningful.

As a White settler science educator, I approach this research with a commitment to support decolonization and reconciliation in science education in a good way, without appropriation or claims to authority I cannot make, and by integrating and normalizing Indigenous content and perspectives in my courses, in ways that support student learning.”



“Developing a Workshop for Teacher Candidates on Guided Play and Early Math Learning”

Dr. Hanna Wickstrom (Adjunct Professor, Orillia)

“Research has long endorsed how young children learn through play. In particular, a growing body of evidence demonstrates that

a specific type of teacher-facilitated play, called guided play, leads to greater math learning gains for young children. This research project builds upon my doctoral work, which identified how exemplary kindergarten educators successfully facilitated play to support early math learning.

My current research project has two objectives:

1. Workshop for Teacher Candidates: I am developing a two-hour, hands-on workshop for teacher candidates that addresses how to support kindergarten children’s early math learning through guided play. This workshop will teach teacher candidates about foundational early math skills, the history of play-based learning in kindergarten education, a contemporary view of play as a continuum, and how specific approaches to guided play can be used to support early math learning.
2. Pilot Survey: The survey will help to not only gather important feedback relating to teacher candidates’ experiences with the workshop, but will also seed future research relating to teacher candidates’ perspectives regarding play and early math learning.

The RITE funding has allowed me to hire a graduate student to help facilitate the workshop, analyze the pilot survey data, and strengthen approaches to professional development for teacher candidates.”



“Language Arts Alignment and Understanding – Case Study”

Researcher: Deborah McCallum (Contract Lecturer, Orillia)

“High-quality language programming in teacher education is imperative, especially in light of recent shifts

in Ontario’s educational landscape. Policy changes, including the revised Ontario Language curriculum, recommendations from the Right to Read report, new Ministry directives, and increased global attention on literacy have brought language instruction to the forefront. These developments highlight the

need to support language arts instruction at Lakehead’s Faculty of Education.

This research will seek to identify the needs and gaps among stakeholders working with Lakehead’s Faculty of Education, including Associate Teachers (ATs), Teacher Candidates (TCs), and Contract Lecturers (CLs). Insights from this research can help inform language arts programming and guide professional development sessions to support language arts instruction and student outcomes.

The study has three main objectives:

1. To explore stakeholder perspectives on language programming needs.
2. To design and deliver two targeted professional development sessions, based on those needs.
3. To use participant feedback to gain new insights and inform future practice.

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

A mixed methods approach will be used, including needs assessment surveys for ATs, TCs, and language instructors, and semi-structured interviews to explore the needs in greater depth. Insights will inform the creation of two targeted professional development opportunities in the 2025/2026 school year, structured to meet the needs of literacy teaching in Grades 1-6 classrooms.

Post-webinar surveys will evaluate instructional changes and inform ongoing professional development needs. Emphasizing evidence-based practices and diverse perspectives, including Indigenous voices, this research aims to enhance the quality and alignment of literacy instruction in teacher education, ultimately supporting stronger literacy outcomes for elementary students across Ontario.”

“Artificial Intelligence-Powered Student Learning Assessment in Teacher Education”

Researcher: Christina van Barneveld (Associate Professor, Thunder Bay)

“My research investigates preservice teachers’ and university instructors’ perceptions of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into teacher education programs, specifically for assessing student learning. It also examines the potential challenges and ethical considerations of AI implementation.

To date, data collection from preservice teachers ($n=292$) has been completed. The preliminary findings include:

- Approximately 75% of students reported occasional use of AI tools for course assignments—primarily for writing support, presentations, and summarizing.
- Students reported limited trust in the accuracy of AI tools, although AI tools help them be more efficient.
- Concerns included potential over-reliance on AI, potential inhibition of their ability to problem-solve, and decreased human interaction in the learning environment.
- Students do not want their instructors using AI to assist with assessment, as they value the lived experience of the instructor, as well as their relationship to inform the student assessment. Some students, however, reported using AI to generate their own formative feedback on assignment drafts

before submitting the final draft to the instructor for assessment.

- The top ethical concerns of students’ use of AI were academic integrity (e.g., plagiarism) and transparency in AI usage (e.g., disclosing how AI tools were used). The top ethical concerns of instructor use of AI in assisting assessment of student work were fairness and equity in assessment (e.g., biases) and transparent use of AI (e.g., instructor transparency).

The next phase of this project involves gathering data from faculty members. The RITE funding will support hiring a graduate student to assist with faculty outreach and data collection. Including faculty perspectives is essential for developing a well-rounded understanding of AI’s role, benefits, and challenges in assessing student learning in teacher education programs.”



Maeghan Chassé Joins Keewatinase Indigenous Education as Administrative Assistant

Keewatinase Indigenous Education (KIE) is excited to welcome Maeghan Chassé back to the department!

Maeghan is no stranger to Lakehead or KIE. She previously served as the Administrative Assistant for the Anishinaabemowik – Indigenous Language Teacher Diploma program and also contributes as a Contract Lecturer, teaching courses including Digital Teaching and Learning, and Technology as a Teaching and Learning Tool.

Maeghan shares: “I am looking forward to supporting KIE students in my new role and getting to work with the Department’s fantastic faculty and staff once again. The Department is currently going through some exciting changes, and I am happy to be a part of its future!”

We’re delighted to have Maeghan back and look forward to the energy and experience she brings to KIE!



Faculty of Education Awards

Marilyn Ailey, Mohit Dudeja and Steven Secord Named “WellU Champions for Mental Health”

Congratulations to Faculty of Education Contract Lecturers Marilyn Ailey, Mohit Dudeja, and Steven Secord for being recognized as “WellU Champions for Mental Health.”

Each year, WellU Champions for Mental Health are nominated by students for showing compassion, encouraging a sense of belonging, inspiring health-promoting behaviours, and promoting student well-being. To see what this year’s champions had to say about their role in student well-being on campus, visit lakeheadu.ca/welluchampion. Excerpts from their quotes are included below:



Marilyn Ailey

“Asking for help can be difficult, so I make it a priority to remove any barriers by being readily available and ensuring students have access to the resources they need to improve their well-being. I’m open and transparent with my students, letting them know that while I may not always have the expertise to address every challenge, I am committed to helping them find someone who can.”

I have also created a resilience challenge as a significant assignment in my physical and health education courses. I encourage students to look at an area of their life that could benefit from some attention—

whether it is for their physical, mental, or social health. They set individual goals, track progress, and research and reflect on how prioritizing an area of life for themselves affects their overall well being.”

Mohit Dudeja

“I actively work to disrupt traditional power dynamics in the classroom. I encourage students to see me not just as a teacher, but as a multidimensional human being, fostering open communication and mutual respect. Recognizing the diversity of challenges students face, particularly international students navigating culture shock, academic transitions, housing instability, and language barriers, I take proactive steps to support their mental health. Through empathy, advocacy, and meaningful relationships, educators and staff can help students thrive not only academically but also emotionally and socially.”



Steven Secord

“Mental health is as important as our physical health and needs to be prioritized whenever possible. It is critical for effective learning and allowing us to reach our full potential. I try to create space in my classrooms that allow students to feel comfortable being themselves and where they know their well-being is a priority. Teaching in the Faculty

of Education, it is important to model this for future educators so they too are able to visualize how they will accomplish this with their students.”



Teacher Candidate Sarah Tassone Wins Award for Demonstrated Excellence as a French Second Language Teacher

Congratulations to Sarah Tassone, a Bachelor of Education (BEd) teacher candidate in the Intermediate/Senior division at the Thunder Bay campus,

for receiving the Ontario Modern Language Teachers’ Association’s Helen G. Mitchell Award.

This award recognizes one graduating student from each Faculty of Education in Ontario who exemplifies the qualities of an outstanding French as a Second Language (FSL) teacher.

Sarah was nominated by James Steele, a Contract Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, with additional support from Mike Filipetti, Placement Experience Coordinator. Her nominations highlighted her excellence in BEd program courses and practicums, as well as her ability to apply effective second-language teaching methodologies that foster student success.

Sarah’s first teachable subject is French, which was also the focus of her undergraduate degree at Lakehead University.

Set to graduate in June, Sarah shared: “I have always been passionate about languages, and have been particularly dedicated to the French language for the past decade. Receiving this award is an incredible honour. As both a student and a future French teacher, I recognize the lack of resources available for French-as-a-Second-Language learners. I can’t wait to change that and make a meaningful impact on the next generation of language learners!”

Dr. Pauline Sameshima and HOPE Team Honoured with Inaugural EDI Award for Community Arts-Integrated Research

Congratulations to Dr. Pauline Sameshima (Professor, Thunder Bay campus) for receiving the inaugural Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Award for her Community Arts-Integrated Research in the HOPE (HIV Obstruction by Programmed Epigenetics) Collaboratory.

This award was presented during Lakehead University's 20th annual Research and Innovation Awards ceremony, which celebrated outstanding contributions to research and knowledge exchange.

HOPE is an innovative global research initiative focused on developing a cure for HIV. Supported by a \$26.5 million grant from the U.S. National Institutes of Health, the project unites researchers from multiple institutions in developing a "block-lock-stop" approach to curing HIV (Block the virus from reactivating; Lock it in a dormant state; and Stop the virus by making it permanently ineffective through gene editing).

Community Arts-Integrated Research

A key component of HOPE's mission—and a central focus of Dr. Sameshima's contributions—is strong Community Engagement, in which the Community Arts-Integrated Research (CAIR) program plays an important role.

This creative approach facilitates dialogue between scientists and communities affected by HIV, ensuring that diverse voices shape the research process. CAIR activities include developing culturally relevant curricula, creating artistic and literary works to educate the public about HIV cure research, and organizing events to share findings.

Dr. Sameshima leads the CAIR Team alongside Dr. Patricia Defechereux (Community Engagement Coordinator, Gladstone Institutes, San Francisco), Sydney Norman (HOPE Collaboratory Program & Community Development Coordinator, Gladstone Institutes, San Francisco), Ebony Gordon (San Francisco AIDS Foundation Representative), the HOPE Community Advisory Board, representatives from Brazil and Uganda, as well as community advocates and student researchers.



Left to right: Dr. Pauline Sameshima accepts the award with three members of the research team: Tashya Orasi (PhD candidate), Colin Kutchyera (PhD student), and Emma Wurdemann-Stam (post-MEd Graduate Assistant).

Advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Research

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Research Award recognizes projects that effectively integrate EDI principles and actively involve historically underrepresented groups in research. HOPE exemplifies this commitment through its global partnerships, including:

- one of the largest transgender participant groups in HIV research history (Brazil team)
- focus groups hosted by the San Francisco AIDS Foundation's Black Health Program and the Elizabeth Taylor 50 Plus Network
- collaborative efforts with researchers from 16 institutions worldwide to ensure a wide range of perspectives and cultural considerations inform the research.

Dr. Sameshima emphasizes that fostering trust, addressing power imbalances, reducing stigma, and integrating diverse perspectives are crucial to the team's success. She also highlights the importance of continuing EDI efforts: "As Canadians, we stand and celebrate EDI. We will continue to build a world where everyone matters!"



Lakehead University Farm Lab Receives PromoScience Grant to Grow Educational Programming

Lakehead University's Farm Lab team, a collaborative initiative made up of educators and students from the Orillia campus's Faculty of Education, has received a major boost through a \$79,800 PromoScience grant from NSERC.

Spread over three years, this funding will support the expansion of the Farm Lab's micro-farm and strengthen its outreach and programming with local schools.

The Farm Lab has become an integral part of environmental and experiential education in Simcoe County. Last year, the team partnered with ten schools across the region,

(continued on next page)



Pictured from left to right: members of the Farm Lab team: Chris Murray (Adjunct Faculty and Principal Investigator); Linda Grant (Contract Lecturer and Garden-Based Educator); Jacob Kearey-Moreland (Contract Lecturer, PhD student, Co-Investigator, and Farm Lab Coordinator); Lindsay Sargent (MEd student and Garden-Based Educator); and Ellen Field (Assistant Professor, Co-Investigator). Not pictured is Mellissa Spencer (BEEd student and Orillia Site Coordinator, Let's Talk Science).

(continued from previous page)

working alongside Lakehead's Bachelor of Education students to weave gardening into the fabric of the school curriculum.

Whether welcoming students to campus for field trips, visiting schools to deliver hands-on workshops, or providing professional development for teachers, the Farm Lab emphasizes the value of learning through nature and gardening.

"Kids love gardening. They love being outside," said team member Jacob Kearey-Moreland. "They love getting out of the classroom, and if they can form positive connections with learning, then they can take that with them in whatever they do."

The program goes far beyond planting seeds. It focuses on building food literacy, integrating curriculum across subjects, and providing meaningful training for educators. By engaging students in outdoor, hands-on experiences, the Farm Lab supports both academic success and overall well-being.

As the program continues to grow, the Farm Lab is expanding its network of skilled garden-based educators ready to support science-integrated programming with schools across Simcoe County. Through in-school visits, teacher workshops, and on-campus experiences, the Farm Lab is helping to grow a more connected, resilient, and food-literate community.

Learn more about their work at the [Farm Lab website](#).

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR ABILITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

May is Leave a Legacy Month

Anyone with assets should have a Will to:

- protect your family and your estate
- minimize taxes
- establish a legacy and safeguard future generations

A gift in your Will to Lakehead University can:

- **CHANGE LIVES**
- remove barriers to a post-secondary education
- sustain important programs and initiatives

A GIFT IN YOUR WILL. SOMETHING YOUR FUTURE SELF WILL BE PROUD OF.

For more information contact Jennifer McKeown
T: (807) 343-8010 Ext. 7792 | E: jennifer.mckeown@lakeheadu.ca

“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



All requests remain confidential with no obligation.
lakeheadu.ca/legacy



Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

Alumni Profiles

Samantha Mathers

Student Progress & Outreach Coordinator, Lakehead University

Graduate of the Bachelor of Education, Primary/Junior (2018); Master of Education, specialization in Social Justice (2020)

“Many of the people I completed the Bachelor of Education program with are certified classroom teachers who have taken their careers in unexpected directions. An education degree can lead far beyond the traditional classroom, and the skills you gain are applicable in a wide range of settings—I’m living proof of that!

In March 2025, I began my current role as Student Progress & Outreach Coordinator at Lakehead University. My primary responsibilities include monitoring student progression and supporting students who need additional guidance, including those admitted through the Academic Support Access Program. I also help students navigate the registration process through initiatives like Fast Pass: Course Registration 101. I’m always excited to connect with students and help them develop the tools they need to thrive at Lakehead.

From 2021 to 2025, I served as the Pride & Gender Equity Centre Coordinator at Lakehead. In this role, I provided support, advocacy, and resources related to gender identity and sexuality, while fostering community through events such as Peer Support, Clothing Swaps, Craftivism, Socials, Pride in the North, and Feminisms at the Lakehead. One of the most satisfying parts of this role was welcoming students into a community that embraces them for who they are, and seeing their confidence grow as they engage with their identity in new and authentic ways.



Throughout my time at Lakehead—both as a student and as an employee—I’ve experienced many meaningful highlights. As a student, one standout experience was completing my final placement at Maple Leaf Foreign Nationals School in Wuhan, China, in 2018. Other memorable moments include co-developing the [Transgender and/or Gender-Nonconforming Teacher Candidates FAQ Guide](#), and collaborating with Education Librarian Gisella Scalse to host Drag Queen Storytime in the Education Library and The Study Coffeehouse. I also played a key role in introducing the Trans Inclusion Coordinator position to the Lakehead University Student Union (LUSU), a role designed to provide trans-specific programming and support for social, legal, and medical transitions.”

Filippo (Fil) Lettieri

Director of Education, Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board

Graduate of the Bachelor of Education (Junior/Intermediate) program (2007); completed Additional Qualification courses in Principals’ Qualifications Program and Supervisory Officers’ Qualifications Program.

“It is privilege to serve the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board (HSCDSB) as its Director of Education. Although I am new to the position, I have learned that the most important part of my work is fostering a culture of collaboration and shared leadership. Education is the business of teaching and learning, and so the focus of my work is centred on creating the conditions for student success and well-being. To do so, I look to the various employees and partners in Catholic education to share their gifts with those they serve in their respective and integral roles. The Board’s mission and vision is only realized if shared, and so I am very grateful for all those who make the HSCDSB a wonderful place to learn and work.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Lakehead University and am a proud alumnus. I credit Lakehead’s Concurrent Education Program for confirming my desire to become a

teacher. When I initially applied to post-secondary schools, it was with the goal of one day applying to medical school. Deep down though, I was interested in education, thanks to the many impactful teachers I was fortunate to have as a student. Upon taking my first class in the Bora Laskin, I knew that education was my vocation.

My family is rooted in education. It began with my mother, who served as a caretaker at the same school for 45 years, until her retirement last spring. She was the first person to teach me that every role in school is important. Two of my brothers, who are Lakehead graduates, as well as my brother and sisters-in-law are also teachers, and my wife is a Vice-Principal. I have four children ranging from the ages of 12 to 4. My children

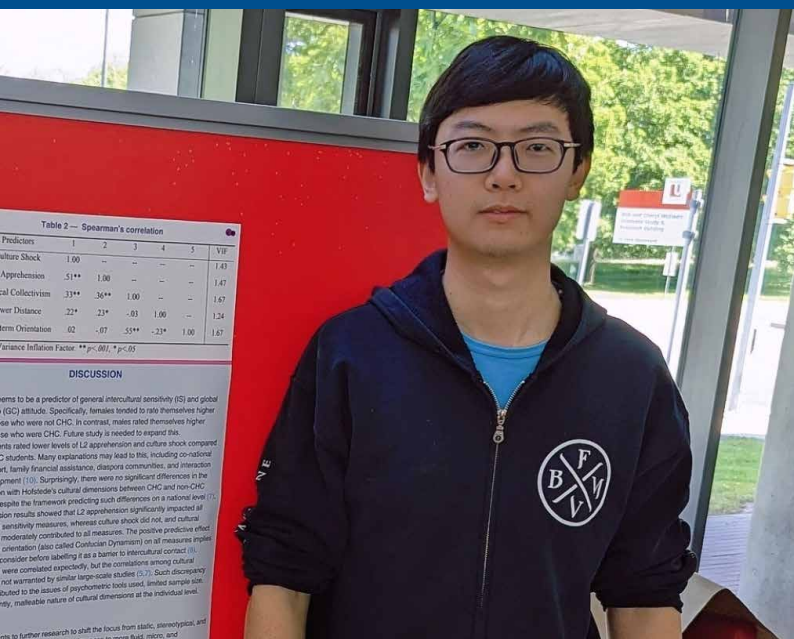


(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

are my source of motivation and monitoring. Whenever there is a snowstorm, they are quick to offer their input on closing schools for the day.

Despite taking on different roles during my 18-year career in education, from classroom teacher, to principal, Superintendent of Education, and now Director, I have always loved teaching and learning. For this reason, I was an instructor for PQP Part 2 and am currently a practicum adjudicator for the SOQP. Working with prospective and current leaders has enhanced my learning and practice.



Xuechen (James) Yuan

PhD student, Joint PhD in Educational Studies Program

Graduated from Lakehead Master of Education program, 2022.

“Completing the Master of Education program truly refined both my life and career path. As an international student, I initially worried about what opportunities would be available to me in Canada after graduating from Lakehead. Without a BEd, becoming a school teacher wasn’t an immediate option. During a period of uncertainty, I chose to lean into my strength in research, which opened new possibilities I hadn’t anticipated.”

Challenging Stereotypes Through Research

Thanks to the guidance of Dr. Tanya Kaefer (thesis supervisor), Dr. Gary Pluim and Dr. Christina van Barneveld (committee members), and Dr. Pauline Sameshima (GA supervisor), I completed my master’s thesis, which later became a peer-reviewed journal article: “**Confucian or confusion? Analyses of international students’ self-rated intercultural sensitivity and its sociocultural predictors at Canadian universities.**”

My research surveyed 120 international students, with a focus on those from East Asian Confucian heritage

My advice to students in the Faculty of Education is to make the most of the learning opportunities. Education is constantly evolving, and so you need to regularly refine your practice to meet the needs of the students and school communities in your care. Build relationships while in school, as those connections can act as a valuable network of ongoing professional learning. Every day in education is different and offers a new opportunity to make a lasting impact. Enjoy the gift of education by sharing your gifts with others.”

cultures—who are often stereotyped as reticent, obedient, and distant. While previous research has linked Confucianism to low intercultural competence, my findings challenged this simplistic narrative. Using quantitative analysis, I found that while some Confucian values (e.g., vertical collectivism, power distance) correlated with lower intercultural sensitivity, language apprehension played a much more significant role. This shows that international students’ reticence or lack of interest in intercultural communication is not solely a result of their cultural upbringing. Also, as expected, I found that East Asian students do not uncritically believe in Confucian cultural values. My study highlighted the diverse and plural identities of international students. It also emphasized the importance of ESL curricula in supporting students’ agency and linguistic development for intercultural learning.

From Intercultural Sensitivity to Indigenous Research

After graduating, I took a research position—not in international student studies, but in Indigenous research, which was one of my MEd specializations. I became a research assistant, then junior researcher, in an Indigenous-led project at NORDIK Institute and Algoma University. I moved to Sault Ste. Marie for a year and later continued working remotely. The first year was particularly eye-opening, as I witnessed the beautiful intersection of multiple cultures. I was deeply moved by the resilience, optimism, and dedication of community members, amid systemic challenges. Through countless research meetings, interviews, and sharing circles, my supervisor and the community helped bring the research to fruition. My year of work after Lakehead graduation can be summed up in one sentence: The most beautiful aspect about research is to document the process, rather than to create a product and move on.

Bridging Cultures in Doctoral Research

Now, as a PhD student at University of Windsor, I am able to weave my Lakehead learning and later work experiences. Given that many international students move to smaller cities for immigration programs, I began to explore how they engage with local Indigenous cultures. This led to a recent publication: “**Exploring the needs for Indigenous allyship among post-secondary international students in Canada.**” I hope to expand on this research topic further and contribute to aligning internationalization with equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts in higher education.”

Anishinaabemowin Phrases and Language Revitalization

Anishinaabemowin 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

Gizaagi'in nimaamaa

● ● ●

"I love you, Mom"



Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee

Anishinaabemowin Phrase of the Week

Ginoonimishin Anishinaabemowin

● ● ●

"Talk to me in Ojibwe"



Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee

Anishinaabemowin Phrase of the Week

**Ni-gii-adaabasisig
mashkikiw-ikwe.**

● ● ●

"The medicine woman smudged me."



Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee

Anishinaabemowin Phrase of the Week

**Gidagigwane awe bineshii,
bizaanigo maang.**



● ● ●

"That bird has spotted feathers, like a loon."

Attention Alumni: Did You Write a Portfolio or Project as part of your Lakehead Master of Education Degree, Prior to 2018?

If the answer is yes, the Lakehead University Education Library would like to include your portfolio/project on Lakehead University's [Knowledge Commons repository](#).

The Knowledge Commons is Lakehead University's open access online repository of graduate level theses, portfolios and dissertations.

The Library will soon reach out to portfolio/project authors individually by email with more information and to request permissions.

If you would like to reach out to the library to initiate the process, please contact Gisella Scalese, Education Librarian at edlib@lakeheadu.ca



Dr. Ellen Field and Dr. Gary Pluim Awarded Tenure

The Faculty of Education congratulates Dr. Ellen Field and Dr. Gary Pluim, Assistant Professors at the Orillia campus, on recently being awarded tenure.



Dr. Ellen Field: Championing Climate Change Education

Dr. Ellen Field is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University (Orillia campus) and a leading advocate for climate change education in Canada. Her research focuses on policies and practices in the K-12 education system, emphasizing the need to integrate climate literacy into schools and formal learning contexts. Committed to preparing young people for the socio-ecological challenges they face, she fosters collaborations across organizations and generations to build hopeful futures. Her work centers on connected learning—an approach that equips students with the skills needed for a rapidly changing world while addressing environmental and social justice issues.

Ellen joined Lakehead's Faculty of Education in 2017. She earned a PhD in Education from James Cook University in Australia, where her research examined how young people worldwide use social media for environmental learning and activism.

"I was drawn to the field of climate change education because while doing PhD research in 2013, I discovered that teenagers around the world were using social media for environmental conversations and learning as well as for organizing community actions to address local climate issues," she says. "They were taking matters into their own hands because they weren't getting enough climate information in their classrooms."

National Contributions and Teacher Support

Since then, Ellen has made significant contributions to climate change education. Her research portfolio includes a SSHRC-funded national review of climate change education curricula. She has led extensive surveys with Canadian teachers, students, parents, and the public to assess perspectives on climate change education. Supporting teachers in integrating climate education into their classrooms is a priority of her work, and she has engaged hundreds of teachers in professional development workshops while collaborating closely with ministries, school boards, and community organizations to strengthen climate education nationwide.

At Lakehead, she teaches *Environmental Education* (BEd) and *Climate Change Education* (MEd), among other courses. She also serves as Associate Editor of the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, Co-Chair of the *Canada Regional Hub for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Climate Change Education (MECCE) Project*, and Community Advisor for *Climate Education Reform British Columbia*.

Global Recognition and Advocacy

Ellen's advocacy extends beyond academia. Selected by UNESCO as one of six global scholars to develop a climate change education curriculum framework, she co-leads the *Accelerating Climate Change Education in Teacher Education (ACCE-TE) Project*, which provides a national course, webinars, and collaborative tools to enhance climate education for teachers.

Beyond her professional work, Ellen is a mom and outdoor enthusiast. Through her research, teaching, and advocacy, she remains dedicated to empowering educators and young people to take meaningful action in addressing climate change and building more just and stabilized futures.



Dr. Gary Pluim: Educator, Researcher, and Advocate for Global Citizenship Education

Dr. Gary Pluim joined Lakehead University's Faculty of Education as a Contract Lecturer in 2012 and was hired on a full-time basis in 2021 as an Assistant Professor (Orillia campus). An accomplished educator, researcher, and advocate specializing in critical global citizenship, youth development, education for democracy, and intercultural education, Gary holds a PhD in Comparative and International Development Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto.

Gary's doctoral research, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), explored youth participation in

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

Haiti following the devastating 2010 earthquake. Since then, his research interests have been rooted in the intersections between critical global citizenship and education that is place-based, reflexive, and intensely local. Currently, Gary is leading a research project that investigates the nuances of education transfer—whether and how curriculum for youth and youth workers should be shared between small countries of the Commonwealth.

“Many of my current projects bring young people together from different parts of the world to examine how global trends affect local realities,” he says. “I am interested in questions such as: *how youth realities are impacted by the culture and politics of their own regions; how intersections between global and local citizenship might differ in various contexts; and how teaching and learning of global issues should respond to location variations.*” Much of Gary’s research focuses on voice, experiences and the perspectives of youth in education. These standpoints are essential to address complex global problems that older generations have been unable to solve.

Gary has extensive international experience in educational leadership, having worked in various countries, including East Africa, the Pacific, the Caribbean, and Canada’s Arctic

region. His global exposure has shaped his understanding of education’s role in fostering critical thinking, social justice, and intercultural awareness.

Through his teaching, research, and activism, Gary is a transformative figure in the field of education, promoting a vision that emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and global citizenship in today’s interconnected world. In 2024, his teaching earned him a Contribution to Teaching Award. In recent years, he has taught courses including Curriculum & Instruction in Social Studies, Social Difference in Education, Democracy and Education, Educational Psychology, and Place-Based Education in Simcoe County.

Gary is also an active participant in civil society, having served as a human rights monitor for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, a board director for Cycle Toronto, and a spokesperson for the Global Campaign for Education. His activism underscores his commitment to social justice and community engagement.

Gary lives in Huronia with his partner and three children. In his free time, he is an avid runner, cyclist, and cross-country skier, balancing his professional achievements with a passion for outdoor activities.

Dr. Lisa Korteweg Named Chair of Robbins-Ollivier Award for Excellence in Equity

Congratulations to Dr. Lisa Korteweg (Associate Professor, Thunder Bay) on being named Chair of the Robbins-Ollivier Award for Excellence in Equity committee, administered by the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program.

This prestigious award, launched by Canada’s three federal research funding agencies—CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC—supports bold initiatives that address systemic barriers and promote equity in academia.

The award honours the contributions of eight academics (Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Louise Forsyth, Glenis Joyce, Audrey Kobayashi, Shree Mulay, Susan Prentice, Michèle Ollivier and Wendy Robbins) whose 2003 Canadian Human Rights complaints led to a 2006 Settlement Agreement and its 2019 addendum, advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the CRC program and Canada’s research ecosystem.

The Robbins-Ollivier Award, named after two of the original complainants—the late Michèle Ollivier and Wendy Robbins—provides \$100,000 to faculty-led projects that boldly challenge institutional barriers and spark long-term change. The funding supports initiatives that enhance understanding of systemic inequities, and drive innovative solutions within academic institutions.

Lisa notes that “it is a great honour to be appointed Chair of the Robbins-Ollivier equity award committee, which plays a



crucial role in challenging systemic barriers and advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion within academia and Canada’s universities. Despite decades of effort, persistent inequities continue to disproportionately affect racialized individuals, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, women, and individuals from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community; thus, this new award is essential for funding bold, transformative initiatives that disrupt the status quo and create lasting institutional change.”

We welcome your feedback, ideas, and content suggestions.
Email us at newsletter.education@lakeheadu.ca



Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

Faculty of
Education