

# EDUCATION EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER



## Ojibwe Spirit Names Gifted to Department of Aboriginal Education

By Tyler Armstrong

In October 2021, the Department of Aboriginal Education passed a significant milestone in the rites of passage for Indigenous organizations. A Chiiskan (Turtle Lodge) naming ceremony took place that resulted in the gifting of three spiritual names: one for the Department, one for the Department's Indigenous language programs, and one for the new cultural space/teaching lodge that is being built in the Faculty of Education's Bora Laskin building (Thunder Bay campus).

"These names not only represent a pivotal juncture in the Indigenization of the department, but will start a new rebranding and marketing of our programs, foundational work on outreach activities into communities," explains Dr. Paul Cormier, Chair of the Department.

The naming ceremony, conducted by Elder Nelly Mesenegeeshik (spirit name Miskwankodook) took place on Fort William First Nations land. It followed ceremonial protocol, including the presentation of Asema (tobacco), a gift, a feast, and the harvesting of poles to build the lodge. Miskwankodook and her ceremonial helpers conducted the Chiiskan, and the information and protocols for honouring the names was documented by Tyler Armstrong (Contract Lecturer; Interim Program Coordinator for Anishinaabemowik/ the Native Language Instructors Program).

### Gifted Name for the Department of Aboriginal Education

**Keewatinase** (pronounced *kee-way-tin-nu-say*): The name Keewatinase refers to an Ancestral Grandmother who sits in the Northern Doorway. This Grandmother stepped forward to oversee the holistic mental health of each person, including the aspects that provide us with a healthy mind, such as learning, sharing, and facilitating knowledge.

1. **Keewatinase (kee-way-tin-nu-say)**  
for the Department of Aboriginal Education
2. **Anishinaabemowik (ah-nish-in-aah-bay-mo-wik)**  
for the Indigenous Language Teacher's program
3. **Kakina Nidinawe Maaganuk (Kuh-ki-nuh Ni-di-nuh-way Maah-guh-nuk)**  
for the new Cultural Space/Teaching Lodge



Tyler Armstrong is a Contract Lecturer and Interim Program Coordinator for Anishinaabemowik

### Gifted Name for the Indigenous Language Programs

**Anishinaabemowik** (pronounced *ah-nish-in-aah-bay-mo-wik*): Anishinaabemowik is a female spirit. During the ceremony, the importance of women and their strength was discussed. Women are a vital part of community and provide life, love, teaching, and knowledge.

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“This scholarship meant more to me than ‘just money.’ It was an investment in my future. As a teacher, I hope to inspire my students with the knowledge that education is a powerful tool.”

STEPHANIE SALINAS, Recipient  
Linda Strey Memorial Education Scholarship

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## Gifted Name for the Cultural Space/Teaching Lodge

**Kakina Nidinawe Maaganuk** (pronounced *Kuh-ki-nuh Ni-di-nuh-way Maah-guh-nuk*): Kakina Nidinawe Maaganuk translates to “all my relations.” During the ceremony the importance of people coming together, working together, and showing love, kindness, and respect for one another was discussed. It was stressed that this new cultural space will be for everyone to use; everyone will be welcomed. The idea of “all my relations” is explained by Leroy Little Bear (2000), who suggests that “if everything is animate, then everything has spirit and knowledge. If everything has spirit and knowledge, then all are like me. If all are like me, then all are my relations.” In other words, all my relations are everyone and everything.



Dr. Paul Cormier,  
Chair of Keewatinase

## Indigenous Protocols for Honouring the Names

Indigenous protocols were outlined to acknowledge and look after Keewatinase, Anishinaabemowik, and Kakina Nidinawe Maaganuk. These included feasts in the spring and the fall, and the creation of cloth flags and tobacco ties in colours representing directions and the human race. A white flag and Asema has already been hung in the front doorway of the Bora Laskin building as per our protocols for Keewatinase.

Paul explains that “with everything that was shared with the Aboriginal Education department (Keewatinase) at the Chiiskan ceremony, it is now our responsibility to follow the protocols that have been given to us. We have made the commitment and moving forward, it is crucial that we honour it. Through the ceremony we now know, and will begin to understand, who will walk alongside us in our work and effort to provide education within our Department.”

Little Bear, Leroy (2000). *Jagged worldviews colliding*.  
[http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/worldviews/documents/jagged\\_worldviews\\_colliding.pdf](http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/worldviews/documents/jagged_worldviews_colliding.pdf)

## Dr. Sharla Mskokii Peltier Joins Faculty of Education

The Faculty of Education is thrilled to welcome Dr. Sharla Mskokii Peltier, Anishinaabe Kwe from the Chippewas of Rama First Nation, who will join us in July 2022 as an Associate Professor at the Orillia campus. Sharla, a member of the Loon Clan, has over 25 years' experience in public schools and First Nations education and health sectors, and experience as a former Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. She holds a PhD in Interdisciplinary Human Studies from Laurentian University, and her dissertation, *Demonstrating Anishinaabe Storywork Circle Pedagogy: Creating Conceptual Space for Ecological Relational Knowledge in the Classroom*, investigated Anishinaabe ecological relationships and traditional teachings in education using an Indigenous research paradigm.

Sharla and her husband Stanley have four children and seven grandchildren, and are looking forward to this new chapter in their lives. Here, Sharla shares some thoughts on the integral role of building two-way relationships between Indigenous communities and the academy, and her focus on relational teaching.

### Indigenizing Education with Two-Way Relationships

Sharla explains that “there is so much work happening right now to Indigenize education and to build bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. At the same time, there’s so much more that can be done to create authentic relationships between universities and Indigenous communities. We know there is a rocky history with schooling as a colonial institution, and as a result, Indigenous people are not always comfortable with universities. And too often, this has been a one-way relationship, with Indigenous people being invited to do an opening prayer at an institution, for example, without any real reciprocity or spirit of getting to know one another deeply. We need to work to change this.

I see part of my work as helping to create relationships between the university and the communities around Orillia, such as the Rama First Nation at Mnjikaning. For me, building these relationships and getting to know the various communities around Orillia, including the urban Indigenous community, will take time. I’m not coming in with a research agenda, but rather want to learn from the communities directly. My goal is to listen, observe, and understand. What are the issues, and what are the queries that the communities have?

As an Anishinaabe Kwe, I do not divide my research from other academic work, like teaching or service. When you’re an Indigenous scholar, it’s all intertwined. So, when I’m in an Indigenous community I’m a teacher, a helper, and I’m there to serve and support the interests of the community.”

### Enacting a Relational Curriculum

“In traditional Western education, when we think about schooling, we think of learning as taking place in a box. A relational curriculum, however, is a pedagogical model based on integration with people, families, communities, and the local. It’s



Sharla Mskokii Peltier stands next to the Sweetgrass Bear sculpture at the University of Alberta. The sculpture reminds us that we are all treaty people, with an inscription reading, “We Are All Related.”

a holistic approach to inquiry, where learners go on a journey of questioning to examine what they know, exploring what they want to know, and a process of deep-knowing through critical thinking and reflective practice.

The relational curriculum is based on the concept of the circle. When we bring people into a physical circle, there is no hierarchy. We’re all in it together, and we are all learning from each other. There are deep connections to storytelling, honouring orality and the Anishinaabe Story Circle process. We are all in relation with each other, and by making connections, students gain a sense of how their work is relevant and how community-building is necessary to create feelings of inclusion. No teacher teaches alone – we are each part of a community, and we need to be able to situate ourselves within that community.

Bringing a relational framework to my educational approach means asking, how do I teach in a way that supports students to be contributing members to community and nation? The answer is that we have to be connected to community and nation in the first place. Some students need a little help with this, especially international students who may be coming to Canada and asking where they fit in this space, on this Land and in these relationships. I have found that they may need a little help to identify as an Indigenous person from another continent, and to bring their identity into their work. Once they are able to do that, though, they are making awesome contributions.

The glue for us all, as human beings, is relationships. I believe that every student brings a wealth of cultural and experiential background to the classroom, and that we all learn from each other. I enjoy learning from my students and am committed to a classroom that offers a respectful, safe place for voicing ideas, critically examining common assumptions, and exploring controversial issues. My role as a leader in education means that I take responsibility to help colleagues, students, and community members understand that ‘we are all Treaty people.’ I’m excited to join Lakehead’s Faculty of Education and continue this work.”

# Reclaiming Identity: Bachelor of Education Student Jessie Moreau Publishes *Being (Métis)*

When teacher candidate Jessie Moreau first shared her personal story of reclaiming her Métis identity, it was in the form of a creative writing assignment for one of her Education courses. She imagined only her instructor, Doe O'Brien-Teengs, would read it, but is thrilled it has evolved into the now-published children's book, *Being (Métis)*.

"The book is a narrative of my own story, starting with my experiences of not knowing what it meant to be Métis. Growing up, I didn't know anything about it, and for a long time I assumed it was about being Canadian. It wasn't until I was 14 that I learned in school that it is about being Indigenous," she explains.

This realization prompted her on a journey to learn about her Métis heritage and, in 2018, to attend the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) Annual General Assembly in Peterborough, where she came to learn that her experience of cultural disassociation is not uncommon.

"For the first time in my life, I was surrounded by hundreds of Métis people, including kids my own age, and we had opportunities to talk about our questions and concerns. Several people said they felt guilty for not knowing everything—or not really knowing anything—about being Métis. That's when I began to realize that my experience is not unique, and that a lot of people grow up with a divide in their identity, where their Métis heritage is not discussed as a result of intergenerational trauma."

Jessie's experiences at the Annual General Assembly formed a significant part of the book's narrative, with the cover image depicting her standing in an auditorium close to two people, one playing the fiddle and the other carrying the Métis flag, which represents two nations joining together. Both individuals are wearing a Métis sash, and hundreds of others are standing in the background at the Assembly. Jessie explains that attending the

event was a pivotal experience for her. Listening to speakers from all over the country, participating in workshops, and experiencing traditional Métis activities such as music, jigging, games, and beading left her with feelings of deep connection to her identity.

"I was standing among strangers, but they also felt like friends and family," she explains. "I hope that any person who reads my story may also experience such a connection, and ultimately be encouraged to seek out that which makes them unique as a person and that which makes them whole."

## A Commitment to Métis Representation and Education

As an Education student, Jessie understands the importance of representation, and how having diverse identities reflected in classrooms and curricular materials can help to ensure all students feel validated and valued.

"We know how detrimental it can be when young people do not see themselves represented in the curriculum, so I've been excited to learn that some teachers have bought my book to use in their classrooms," she says.

In addition to publishing the book, she has found other opportunities to promote education about Métis culture and heritage. For example, she has had opportunities to go into classrooms, and a day camp, to teach about the histories and culture of Métis peoples, and she continues to be involved with the Métis Nation of Ontario. Recently, the MNO awarded her an 'Infinite Reach Facilitator' sash, which is given to Métis post-secondary students who act as facilitators at universities and colleges throughout Ontario, sharing their experiences and supporting other Métis students in their post-secondary academic pursuits.

She also works part-time at the Orillia Museum of Art and History, where she is currently participating in the development of a museum program about Métis culture, which teachers will be able to access.

Finally, she recently participated in the Love of Language and Literacy conference as part of a panel discussion titled 'Stories Matter. Many Stories Matter' (for a write-up on this conference, see page 12). As a presenter, she spoke about the importance of sharing stories, particularly as they relate to identity, and the connections between representation and positive educational outcomes.

"We need to encounter many stories, throughout our lives, to understand the diversity in our world," Jessie says. "Sharing my story was at the heart of writing *Being (Métis)*, but my broader goal is to inspire pride, community, and hope among young Indigenous boys and girls who feel dissociated from their cultural heritage. We all need to see ourselves represented in our stories and curriculum."

*Being (Métis)* can be purchased through **Eaglespeaker Publishing** and **Amazon Canada**.



Jessie Moreau (above) is the author of the children's book *Being (Métis)*, illustrated by Jason Eaglespeaker (Eaglespeaker Publishing).

## Faculty Awards



### Dr. Gerald Walton Receives Distinguished Instructor Award

Dr. Gerald Walton (Professor, Faculty of Education, Thunder Bay campus) is the recipient of Lakehead University's 2021 Distinguished Instructor Award. This is the University's most prestigious teaching award, recognizing an individual who has made a significant

contribution to teaching excellence and educational innovation and leadership over a number of years.

The presentation of the award was made by Lakehead University's Provost and Vice-President, Dr. David Barnett. He read the following citation:

"Since joining the Faculty of Education in 2008, Dr. Gerald Walton has established himself as an outstanding instructor, a committed researcher and communicator and valued colleague.

It is, however, his commitment to equity that really makes Gerald the distinguished instructor that he is.

Equity in education is closely tied to the practices employed by an instructor. It means opening opportunities for all students to fully engage with challenging ideas in an environment that values that engagement. It means opening opportunities for all students to participate fully in the practices, and with the knowledge base, of the discipline. And most importantly, it means opening opportunities for all students to be seen and valued as full participants of the learning community. These are the practices that Gerald pushes himself to develop and model, and it is these practices that inspire Gerald's students.

One criterion for this Award is to demonstrate leadership in teaching and other activities across the wider university landscape. Gerald has served on a number of university committees over the years, and has taken the lead on a number of initiatives that promote equity and support for international and graduate students. Further afield, Gerald has been prominent in fearlessly and honestly communicating the need for societal change across multiple media. These activities have contributed to raising the profile of important issues and leading the public discourse about them.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Gerald Walton, the 2021 recipient of the Distinguished Instructor Award."

### Dr. Ellen Field Receives Insight Development Grant to Study Climate Education

Dr. Ellen Field (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Orillia campus) is receiving an Insight Development grant of more than \$52,000 to study climate change education practice in Ontario and policy in Canada.

"In schools across Canada, teachers decide how they will integrate, discuss, or avoid climate change education on a daily basis," Ellen explains, adding that there can be ramifications with how teachers decide to discuss it in class.

Focusing on comprehensive national data on climate change education, this research will provide further depth and context by monitoring the policies of jurisdictional climate change education, such as within the Ministries of Education and school boards across Canada.

Ellen and her team, Dr. Paul Berger (Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Lakehead and Dr. Andrea Drewes (Rider University, New Jersey), will also examine teachers' personal and professional beliefs on climate change education and how those views inform their decisions about the inclusion/exclusion of climate change content.

This research will provide a more holistic picture of teacher practice that accounts for teachers' beliefs and factors that teachers identify as influencing their integration, or lack of integration, of climate change education. It will also document how climate change education is already occurring in transformative ways in some pockets.



"This will inform policy responses and professional development directions. The research will contribute to scholarship in the emerging field of climate change education internationally and nationally through academic scholarly contributions," she said.

Insight Development Grants are funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to fund important research projects and enable the development of new research questions and ideas.

In November, Ellen's research was also featured in a CBC news article: [Climate Education is Inconsistent Across Canada, but These Students and Educators Want to Fix That.](#)

## Lucas Johnson Receives Teaching Support Award

Lucas Johnson (Educational Technologies Facilitator, Contract Lecturer and Doctoral Student) has been awarded the 2021 Teaching Support Award. This award, given to one University employee a year, recognizes Lucas's exceptional performance in providing support for teaching, and the significant contributions he has made to student learning and engagement.

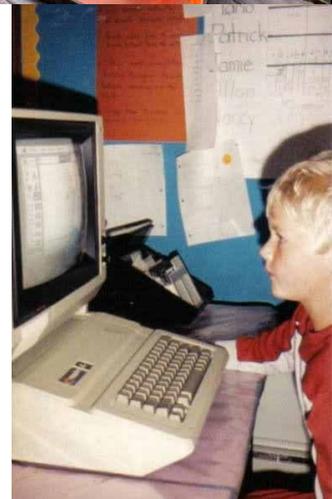
Lucas has been helping faculty and staff find ways to improve their teaching through the use of technology ever since he joined the Faculty in 2003, but his role as Educational Technologies Facilitator ramped up enormously with the pandemic and subsequent shift to online teaching. During the past 20 months he has delivered numerous technical support sessions, live demos, Q&A-style workshops, one-on-one training, Brown Bag presentations, professional development sessions on the logistics of using Zoom and Google Tools, and much more.

The written nomination for the award states that Lucas "has been a critical part of the Faculty of Education's ability to overcome the many significant obstacles this last year and a half has presented. He has worked with instructors to evaluate, select, deploy and support technology across all programs in both the Orillia and Thunder Bay campuses. He has gone far beyond making sure technology is available to all Faculty members who need it ... In a time when we have all relied more than ever on new and sometimes problematic technologies to deliver our courses, his exemplary performance has turned potential crises into new opportunities for faculty, staff and students at Lakehead."

Lucas says the dynamic and evolving nature of his work in supporting the Faculty, both technically and pedagogically, is very rewarding.



"My position has shifted substantially over the years. Through two position title changes and a shift from the analog to the digital world, one of the best parts of my work is knowing that I'm enriching the student experience through my role in supporting instructors. In the past two years, we've undertaken a major shift in how we teach and learn in higher education. The demand for assistance has been unprecedented, and it has truly been my pleasure to support instructors in the delivery of their courses. I'm eager for a return to a more normal campus and course delivery, but very grateful for all that we have learned, and amazed at how dynamic we can be when presented with challenges. I'm honoured to be recognized for my role supporting teaching and learning—it's wonderful (and unexpected) to be recognized for doing what I enjoy doing, and for what is much more than a job to me."



Lucas (pictured above) has been playing with computer technology for many years.



## Randy Wilkie Awarded the Alex Trebek Medal for Significant Contributions to Geographic Literacy in Canada

The Royal Canadian Geographic Society awarded Randy Wilkie (Faculty of Education Contract Lecturer, Thunder Bay campus) with the Alex Trebek Medal, which acknowledges the late Trebek's support for the Royal Canadian Geographic Society, particularly its educational programs for Canadian youth. Presented annually, this prestigious medal recognizes an

educator who has made significant contributions to geographic literacy in Canada.

Having taught geography at the high school level, Randy brings a wide range of teaching skills to teacher candidates. He explains that he now "teaches teachers how to teach geography."

As a regional councilor for the Ontario Association for Geographic and Environmental Education (OAGEE), Northwestern Ontario, Randy has helped develop the Ontario geography curriculum and geographic literacy programs for the Ministry of Education, conduct workshops, and create geographic teaching posters to advance geography in the province.

He became a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographic Society in 2018. In addition, he has received numerous awards for his exemplary classroom efforts at the local, provincial, and international levels.

Recently, Randy has written articles for OAGEE and the Geography Teachers Association of Victoria (Australia). He has presented on classroom teaching strategies throughout Ontario, to the National Council for Geographic Education in Washington, D.C. and online through virtual presentations.

## Graduate Student Award Established in Memory of Robert (Bob) Asselin, Lakehead Alumnus

The Robert Asselin Education Award was established in 2021 by Elaine Asselin in loving memory of her husband, Robert (Bob) Asselin, Lakehead alumnus (BA, 1974). This annual award will be granted to a graduate student in the Faculty of Education who is an experienced educator, with preference given to a Northwestern Ontario student with a minimum 80% average and a strong commitment to curriculum development and implementation, leadership in education, and/or information management technology.

Elaine established the award in recognition of Bob's long-standing and accomplished career as a leader in Education: Bob was a teacher, principal, administrator, consultant, curriculum coordinator, and superintendent of education. He was involved with numerous service clubs, committees, and educational boards throughout Ontario, including the Nipigon Red Rock Board of Education, Fort Frances Rainy River Board of Education, and Lambton Kent District School Board. Underlying all of his work and countless achievements was a focus on community involvement and community building through education.

Bob firmly believed that through education, you could build strong people who will extend their contributions into the community to strengthen it. He believed that this challenges educators to promote learning in individuals on how to manage complexities in our world, how to think and how to process information. By encouraging others to be adaptable to new challenges, he saw education as a process for the learner to gain knowledge, experience and values, so they could go on to make positive contributions in their communities.

Bob also saw learning as a continuous, lifelong process to achieve one's potential, and believed it was important to stay current and relevant to be effective. He exemplified these ideas in his own life: after retiring in 2000, he went on to complete a Masters of Business Administration in Information Technology Management from Athabasca University (2004). This was in addition to having been conferred a Bachelor of Arts degree from Lakehead University (1974), and an Advanced-Level Masters of Education from the University of Minnesota (1979). His commitment to lifelong learning was also evidenced by his focus on the role of information technology in education. During the decades of his career, he embraced the rapid acceleration of computer culture. As a Lakehead student in the 1970s, Bob regularly drove 60+ miles to attend classes at the Thunder Bay campus; three decades later, he completed the majority of the MBA requirements online.



Bob Asselin

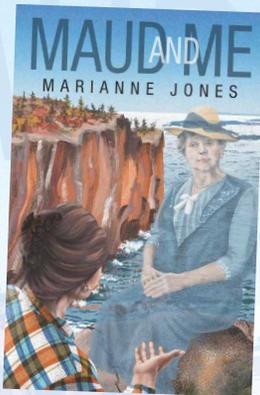
Throughout his profession, community service, and many interests, and having lived in different communities, Bob developed numerous friendships and relationships in his lifetime. He was a caring and generous person, and anything he undertook he did with passion. He always enjoyed getting together with family and friends and had many interests including canoeing, hunting, fishing, prospecting, wine making, cooking, travelling, and reading.

He spent his early years in Atikokan and Thunder Bay, and Elaine notes that "wherever he was working, learning, or living, his heart always rested in Northwestern Ontario." Throughout the years, he enjoyed spending time at the family camp at Nydia Lake, Ontario. He also had a special love and knowledge of Quetico Provincial Park having worked on the Portage crew and also as foreman of the Junior Rangers at French Lake. He continued to return there through the years to enjoy canoeing and backpacking with family and friends, sharing his knowledge, experiences, and adventures with them.

Governed by strong values, practical experience and a passion for learning, Bob's belief in what 'could be' has helped reshape the future of education. The establishment of the Robert Asselin Education Award has preserved his commitment to education and the communities he proudly served. The inaugural recipient will be selected in the 2022/23 academic year based on the three areas of focus for the award that will continue in perpetuity.

The Robert Asselin Education Award is intended to inspire and support future learners and leaders to pursue their career goals in education and continue to honour his legacy to 'make and be a difference.'

# Faculty of Education Alumni Profiles *What Are They Doing Now?*



## Marianne Jones

**Author/Poet, Retired Teacher, Actor, and Choir Director, Northwestern Ontario**

Graduated from the Bachelor of Education program (1989), Thunder Bay campus

“Perhaps the best piece of writing advice I have ever encountered was that ‘success in writing belongs to the undiscourageable.’ This has proven true for me: by age 11 I knew I wanted to be a writer, and my first published short story was in a *Miss Chatelaine* magazine when I was 14, but the publication of my first literary novel, *Maud and Me* (Crossfield Publishing, 2021), was 20 years in the making. My philosophy has been that if I can’t be the hare in the writing marathon, I’ll be the tortoise, plodding along and in it for the long haul! So, a bit of advice I could pass on to new graduates is to not be too impatient with yourself if things aren’t flowing according to your timeline. Be patient and know that unexpected things can happen. Take the time to find yourself, whatever vocation you pursue.”

Marianne Jones is a retired teacher, actor, and choir director from Northwestern Ontario. She is the author of seven books, including poetry chapbooks, children’s stories, and a murder mystery—but *Maud and Me* is her first literary novel. Set in the small mining town of Marathon, Ontario in the 1980s, *Maud and Me* shares a story of an unlikely friendship between an artist, Nicole, and the deceased Lucy Maud Montgomery, author of *Anne of Green Gables*. Crossfield Publishing’s website notes that “Nicole deals with her frustrations through her painting and subversive sense of humour, even as she tries outwardly to please everyone: her well-meaning husband Adam, her angry, distant mother, and the congregation of Marathon Community Fellowship. When she becomes desperate for someone who understands, Maud shows up in her garden. Over cups of tea and long drives along the north shore of Lake Superior, they compare notes and hilarious observations about congregational life. But then news of her father’s death and the discovery of her mother’s betrayal drive Nicole to question everything about her family, her life, and even Maud.”



As a student in the Faculty of Education in the late 1980s, Marianne recalls that she connected with a group of women who, like her, had children and life experiences that they brought to the program. “To be honest, I wasn’t sure I wanted to teach when I entered the program, but when I went out on the student teacher placements, I realized I loved it. I was able to bring my experiences into the classroom and connect with the students,” she explains. This led to her years as a Grade 4 teacher at the Thunder Bay Christian School, where she taught all subjects but had a special affinity for leading the children’s choir and coordinating musicals at the Community Auditorium.

As an avid supporter and participant in the arts community, including writing, theatre, music, and ballroom dancing, Marianne is delighted by the arts scene that has developed in Northwestern Ontario in the past decades.

“Thunder Bay has a vibrant, exciting artistic community that has grown incredibly. Through it, I have had many rewarding experiences and made connections with fellow writers, educators, and artists. I’ve had opportunities to write plays for organizations, including the Salvation Army and International Justice Mission, with the goal of helping others. The energy and support of the arts-based community and my family—including my husband, two amazing daughters and two gorgeous granddaughters—inspires me.”

Marianne’s novel, *Maud and Me*, can be found at local bookstores in Thunder Bay or from [Crossfield Publishing](#) or [Chapters Indigo](#) or [Amazon](#).



Photo credit: Dan Garrity Media

## **Yolanda Wanakamik** **Director of Indigenous Affairs,** **Northern Ontario School of** **Medicine**

Graduated from the Master of Education program (2020) (Thunder Bay campus)

“My passion for working with community can’t be overstated. I have dedicated my life to the advancement of education, working for and with First Nations communities and organizations, and through volunteer involvement with school boards and community-based committees.

Indigenous education is at a critical crossroads. There are so many opportunities for development, growth, and innovation. Understanding relationships, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility<sup>1</sup> are essential to moving forward; we must challenge the idea that Indigenous education is a stand-alone unit in an institution. The Joint Commitment to Action on Indigenous Health states that “we need to stop thinking of Indigenous health as an optional topic, left to the good will of the leadership of each school.”<sup>2</sup> The recommendations in this report are an excellent road map, developed for and by Indigenous peoples.

In my current role, I am Director of Indigenous Affairs for Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM), acting as the primary liaison between NOSM and Indigenous groups, communities and stakeholders. Other key parts of my work include providing leadership on Indigenous issues, facilitating the development of resources, and offering cultural support to learners, faculty and staff.

I’ve held previous positions both at Lakehead University (as Indigenous Outreach and Recruitment Coordinator; Acting Vice-Provost of Aboriginal Initiatives; and Coordinator of Graduate and External Relations) and in the community (Integrated Policy Officer for Dilico Anishinabek Family Care; Family Support Worker and Health Program Coordinator, Whitesand First Nation – my home community). Through these various roles I’ve been honoured to connect with many individuals, advocate for them, and implement supports for their flourishing, whether that is in postsecondary education, health, and/or community.

I am also the mother of two amazing young men, Lucas and Isaac, a wife to Jason, and an auntie to many!

I have many fond memories of my time at Lakehead as a student. In particular, having one-on-one time with professors (some of whom remain close friends and colleagues today) was valuable, and I enjoyed the small class sizes in the MED program.

My advice to incoming students is to step up and get involved! Volunteer, help, and do things outside of the classroom and your professional career that make you happy and support others. Elevate the tough conversations and think differently. What are we not talking about? What can, or should we be doing, that has not traditionally or typically been done? There is so much room for unique innovation, and it can start with some simple questions and actions to make change.”

1. Kirkness, V. J. and R. Barnhardt (2001). First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R’s - Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility. <https://www.uaf.edu/ankn/publications/collective-works-of-ray-b/Four-Rs-2nd-Ed.pdf>
2. AFMC (2019). Joint Commitment to Action on Indigenous Health [http://www.afmc.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/AFMC\\_Position\\_Paper\\_JCAIH\\_EN.pdf](http://www.afmc.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/AFMC_Position_Paper_JCAIH_EN.pdf)



## **Adrienne Roberts** **Special Education Teacher, Hagersville Secondary School; Union** **Vice-President, Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation** **(OSSTF) District 23**

Graduated from the Bachelor of Education program (2009); Master of Education program (2016) (Thunder Bay campus)

“I’m a big-picture person, with a focus on how we can take action to support each other and build community. This is a driving force behind everything I do, whether I’m working with students, their parents, organizations, unions, or the wider public. And the key to successfully building community, I believe, is dialogue: listening, sharing, and understanding where we are each coming from.

As an educator now in my 13<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, I know that our youth are living with a lot of anxiety and trauma. I was recently teaching a Grade 12 class and heard students use the word ‘hopeless’ to describe their feelings about the climate crisis, the housing crisis, the opioid crisis and the pandemic, along with the countless barriers that exist around racial and gender inequalities. It broke my heart to hear this, but it also pushed me to keep focus on helping students find

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their resiliency and build community. Educators have a big role to play in helping students with the many challenges we face today, and taking a student-focused approach to teaching, centered on students' needs and interests, is one way to make meaningful connections with them. Asking students, *'what do you need?'*, offers a way forward.

For me, the most satisfying part of being a teacher is seeing student success. This includes both short-term success and long-term success, like when you hear from students of previous years and learn of the impact your class had in their life. You can't always know in the moment what kind of impact you are having on students, so part of my teaching approach involves keeping the big picture in mind.

I would encourage new teachers to get involved in their schools and communities. In fact, we shouldn't think of education in isolation from community, since youth are our future! I have learned so much from my involvement in politics (as Vice-President

of the Brantford-Brant NDP riding association) and unions over the past decade. I first became involved with OSSTF as a supply teacher, then became a member on various union committees. Currently, I am Vice-President of the OSSTF Teachers' Bargaining Unit, District 23.

Being involved with the union has taught me many valuable things, including how to organize effectively for lasting change. A lot of social movements grow and die quickly, but unions work systematically to negotiate for change. Within the union we often use the word *solidarity*, thinking about how a fight for the rights of one individual can impact us all. In the same way, we know that even though we are each a small cog in a large wheel, the actions of one person can, and do, matter. By thinking holistically about what we are doing in our classrooms and how we are participating in our communities, we can each make a real difference."

## Spotlight on Lac des Mille Lacs' Seventh Fire Secondary School



### School is Leasing Space in Bora Laskin Education Building

**E**xperiential. Innovative. Land-based. Focused on reconciliation through a blending of cultures. These are some of the ways that Vice-Principal Sara Lepere describes the Lac des Mille Lacs Seventh Fire Secondary School, which is currently leasing four classrooms in the Bora Laskin Education building (Thunder Bay campus) for the 2021-2022 academic year.

"Our space on campus, and our partnership with Lakehead University, has made a real difference to our Grade 9-12 students. The new space is awesome! It has given our students a familiarity and comfort level with being on campus. Some of our Grade 12 students will be carrying on their post-secondary education at Lakehead, so it is particularly beneficial for them," she says.

Sara, herself a Lakehead graduate, explains that the private school's previous facility was exceeding capacity. The Lac des Mille Lacs Educational Centre, located on Walsh street in Thunder Bay, was housing the secondary school alongside a Kindergarten-Grade 8 program and wraparound programs, including Indigenous language classes, cultural activities, and other wellness, recreational, spiritual, and cultural programming. Moving the Grade 9-12 students to the University made sense as space was available with most Education students completing their programs online.



From left to right: Seventh Fire Secondary School teachers Mike Davidson, Matt Valley, and Kathleen Baird, with Vice-Principal Sara Lepere at the hockey rink.

### Experiential Educational Model is Highly Engaging

Seventh Fire Secondary School's vision of reconciliation through education is fundamentally embedded in its programs. The school welcomes students from all backgrounds. Featuring small classroom sizes and a team of 10 young teachers (many of whom are Lakehead graduates themselves), the school's unique focus is a major draw for its 140 students. The focus on experiential and land-based education sees students rotating time between classrooms and other locations, including a local hockey rink and fitness centre, and



**Grades 9-12 students start their day on the ice, three mornings a week.**

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organizations such as Roots to Harvest and Fort William Historical Park.

The scheduling means they work intensively on specific subjects and course credits during certain times of the year, Sara explains.

“We start the year in September with a month-long course, like welding or art, or a form of engaging, land-based learning like camping, which brings different subject areas into the mix. Then in October, with a course credit already under their belt, students start the hockey program, which is a strong focus of our school. Then in January we start with three new courses, and the students finish their last credit in June.”

Students are embracing the school’s format and programming. Learning experientially and in the community is well-received, perhaps especially after a year dominated by virtual learning.

“We get so much good feedback from our students, in regard to the overall format of our system and the relationships they have with the teachers, who are relatable and full of energy. Students are able to confide in them and work with them to succeed.”

## **Hockey Program a Huge Draw**

The school’s hockey program, offered to students in Grades 7-12, is modelled after the Hockey Canada Skills Academy. Hockey Canada Skills Academy focuses on individual

student skill development and the enhancement of student confidence, self-esteem, and academic opportunities, while making efficient use of local arena facilities during school-day hours.

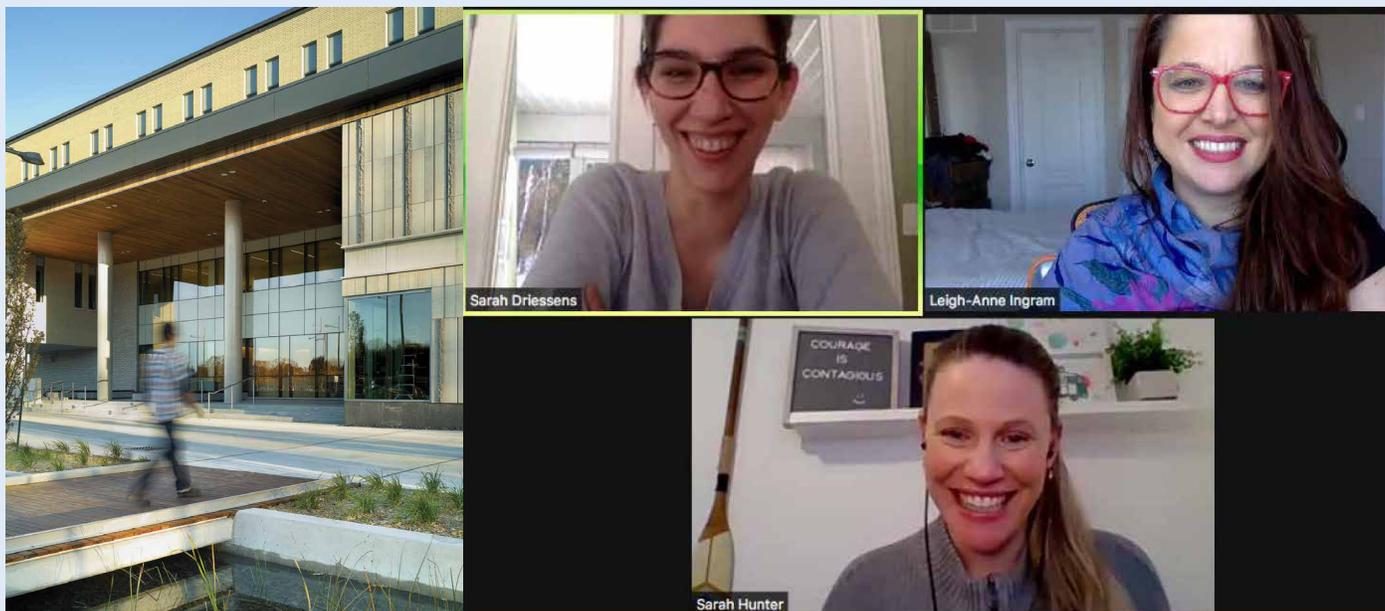
Hockey program leads/teachers Mike Davidson and Matt Valley—both hockey coaches themselves, and graduates of Lakehead’s Bachelor of Education program—note that the hockey program has reinvigorated students’ interest in schooling.

“Some students, who may have been less engaged in their learning, are now coming to school excited to play hockey and to keep their marks up across all the subjects. We even have a few students who joined our school from out to town, just for the opportunities we offer with hockey,” Matt notes.

Sara, who played university-level hockey herself, adds that the hockey program is fulfilling an important need in the city, while giving students a rigorous and fun form of physical exercise.

“Our hockey program is preparing students with the skills to balance both academic and athletic pursuits.”

As Seventh Fire Secondary School continues to grow, plans are underway to purchase property or build a facility. Registration for the school opens up in March 2022 for the next academic year.



## Orillia Language Arts Instructors Organize “Love of Language and Literacy” Conference

The second annual “Love of Language and Literacy” (LOLL) conference took place in October, organized by Year 2 Language Arts instructors Dr. Sarah Driessens, Dr. Leigh-Anne Ingram, and Dr. Sarah Hunter (Orillia campus, pictured above). The theme of the conference was *Stories Matter. Many Stories Matter.*

Sarah Driessens explained that they chose the theme based on stories and storytelling being central to their language arts curriculum, as well as their research and individual identities. Sarah Hunter continued to describe how “the conference fits nicely into our collaborative, caring and critical approach to language and literacy teaching.”

Sarah Driessens added that “we share the belief that stories can act as windows and mirrors, where people can glimpse lived experiences beyond their own to gain perspective, build empathy, and develop broadened understandings of the world. Stories are also mirrors in that they reflect back to us our own lived realities. Moreover, we emphasize to our students the value of diverse stories that demonstrate the complexity and nuance of the human condition.”

Leigh-Anne explained how they drew inspiration from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s

TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, in which it is noted that “Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.”

The instructors worked together, along with Graduate Assistants and the Year 2 Bachelor of Education students, to organize the conference. To explore the theme of storytelling and representation in language and literacy, they coordinated a panel presentation featuring Faculty of Education instructor and PhD Candidate Doe O’Brien-Teings; teacher candidate Jessie Moreau (for a story on Jessie and her published book, *Being (Mé)tis*, see page 4); Dr. Lindsay Herriot, adjunct professor at the University of Victoria and co-editor of the book *Trans Youth Stories*; and Dr. Arif Anwar, creative writing professor at the University of Toronto and author of the novel, *The Storm*.

The panel discussion was attended by Orillia students and numerous faculty members. Congratulations Sarah, Leigh-Anne, and Sarah on your work in organizing a successful conference!



**Doe O’Brien-Teings (Contract Lecturer, Orillia) was a panelist at the conference. She spoke on the potential of stories to build relationships between groups.**