

EDUCATION EXCHANGE

NEWSLETTER



Dr. Doe O'Brien Teengs Leads Research on Community-Driven Anishinaabemowin Revitalization

Across Canada, Indigenous communities are reclaiming and strengthening their ancestral languages after generations of language loss resulting from colonial policies and practices.

In support of these efforts, a research project led by Dr. Doe O'Brien Teengs, Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Keewatinase Indigenous Education), is documenting community-driven initiatives that are helping Anishinaabemowin thrive once again.

"There's been profound language loss because of experiences with Residential Schools," says Doe. "The general stoppage of language has been vast. This research is examining language revitalization efforts in North Superior communities, identifying practices that can strengthen future initiatives while supporting second-language learners."

Grounded in Community Partnerships

Titled *Systematic Analysis of the Indigenous Language Revitalization Programs and Activities of the Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee*, Doe and the research team are analyzing initiatives led by the Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee (ABC), a collaborative network established in 2022 by First Nations communities, educators, school boards, and community leaders.



Doe O'Brien Teengs (left) with Sarah Sandy, Graduate Research Assistant, and Mary O'Donnell, founder and Chair of the Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee.

"We found that the biggest impact—the successes of learning language for the learners—was not language fluency," says Doe. "It was something that we weren't looking for: connection. Language learners experienced connection to ancestors, community, culture, and themselves."

Although the ABC has developed numerous language programs, community events, and educational partnerships, these initiatives have never been systematically evaluated. The study explores which approaches are most effective, what challenges communities continue to face, and how Indigenous communities themselves define success. Programs being examined include an early years program, a mentor program, adult Ojibwe classes, and teacher training.

Indigenous, community-based methodologies guide every stage of the research process, Doe notes.

"Community members and knowledge holders are central to the research process. Participants include community partners, language teachers, school board staff, and second-language learners. Our data is emerging from Sharing Circles and one-on-one interviews, alongside an analysis of ABC program materials and participant observation in language revitalization classes and activities."

A Community Advisory Board (CAB), established in 2024, continues to guide data collection, analysis, and knowledge sharing. The research also follows the principles of OCAP—Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession—ensuring participating communities retain control over their knowledge and research data.

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Above (clockwise from bottom left): Sarah Sandy, Tyler Armstrong, Paul Cormier and Doe O'Brien Teengs having lunch in Orillia after their first group data analysis meeting.

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A Collaborative Research Team

Doe, whose research interests focus on reclaiming Indigenous storytelling and language practices in Northern Ontario, serves as Principal Investigator. She is joined by co-investigator Dr. Paul Cormier, Chair of Keewatinase Indigenous Education and a member of Red Rock Indian Band.

The project also brings together collaborators with extensive experience in Indigenous language revitalization. Founding ABC member Mary O'Donnell serves as a community guide, while Maamaateshiins (Firefly) Andrew A. Manitowabi, Program Manager for the Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee, contributes expertise in language programming and community partnerships.

Tyler Armstrong, coordinator of Keewatinase's Anishinaabemowin Language Programs, provides expertise in Indigenous education and language teacher development, and Graduate Research Assistant Sarah Sandy supports interviews, transcription, and analysis.

Connection: An Unexpected Measure of Success

In April, the research team met to review emerging findings.

"We started to look through each transcript together, to see what caught our attention and get a sense of the emerging themes," Doe says. "It was a very productive way to do the analysis, and it was a rewarding experience—we were energized by the work."

One of the most significant findings has been that the impact of learning Anishinaabemowin extends well beyond developing fluency.

"We found that the biggest impact—the successes of learning language for the learners—was something that we weren't looking for: connection. Connection emerged as our strongest theme."

Participants described feeling more connected to their ancestors, community, culture, and themselves. Some language learners shared that they had begun dreaming about their ancestors and developing a sense of self-worth they had not experienced before. Two young women described language learning as having "saved their lives," and another shared that learning Anishinaabemowin made her proud to be Ojibwe—a feeling she had not experienced before.

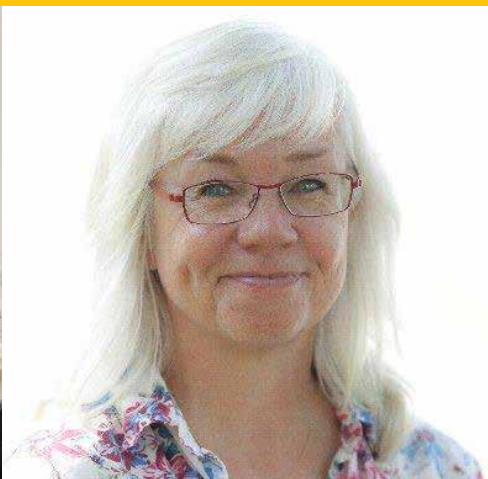
"It's a kind of impact you can't really measure—the importance of language learning," says Doe. "The content of the courses was language learning only, but when we talked to participants, the take-away was all about connection."

For Doe, language revitalization is about much more than restoring fluency. "It's about revitalizing all that comes with being an Anishinaabe person," she says.

Overall, the research demonstrates the value of conducting language revitalization research *with* communities. It is helping identify approaches that strengthen not only language learning but also cultural connection, ceremony, relationships, and the next generation of Anishinaabemowin speakers and leaders. Ultimately, it seeks to create more opportunities for future generations not only to learn and speak Anishinaabemowin, but to live their ancestral language.

Advancing Indigenous Education in Simcoe County through Relationships, Partnership, and Protocols

*“Meaningful
Indigenous
education begins
with relationships
and honouring
protocols.”*



Dr. Leisa Desmoulins (left) and Dr. Ruth Beatty.

The principle that meaningful Indigenous education begins with relationships and honouring protocols lies at the heart of the work of Dr. Leisa Desmoulins (Associate Professor, Education) and Dr. Ruth Beatty (Professor, Education). Their research aims to advance Indigenous education across Simcoe County by bringing together educators, Elders, Knowledge Holders, and community partners in ethical dialogue.

In 2024, Leisa and Ruth received a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connections Grant to support knowledge mobilization and research dissemination. Recently extended to 2027, the grant enabled them to share and advance their research through four workshop circles, guided by Anishinaabe principles of relationship, reciprocity, and community engagement.

“Our focus,” explains Leisa, “is on how we prepare school boards and teachers to welcome First Nations students—and Indigenous knowledge—into classrooms in a good way.”

The project builds on years of collaborative research. Leisa’s work has explored Indigenous pedagogies and the co-creation of locally grounded geography resources and teacher supports, while Ruth has collaborated with Anishinaabe and Métis Knowledge Holders and artists to develop culturally responsive approaches to mathematics education. Together, their research has emphasized that meaningful Indigenous education begins not with curriculum resources, but with relationships.

Four Workshop Circles, One Shared Journey

Held throughout 2025 and 2026, the four workshop circles brought together administrators and educators from the Simcoe County District School Board, the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, and Mnjikaning Kendaaswin Elementary School in Mnjikaning / Rama First Nation. Guided by Elder Jeff Monague (Beausoleil First Nation) and Elder Dr. Elder Deb Danard (Rainy River First Nation), participants explored what meaningful reconciliation looks like in education.

The opening workshop, led by Elder Jeff Monague, examined the deeper meaning of land acknowledgements, emphasizing that acknowledging the land must be accompanied by action. Participants learned about traditional protocols for entering one another’s spaces and sharing knowledge, then moved into small-group discussions to explore where individuals were in their own learning journeys.

Ruth explains that it was “evident that people were excited to incorporate Indigenous knowledge, but some had trepidation about how to do it in a good way.”

Subsequent workshops deepened the conversations. In the second circle, Leisa shared her research focused on incorporating Indigenous perspectives in secondary geography education, while Elder Dr. Deb Danard shared about caring for research data and narrative sovereignty. These two concepts became central to further conversations about who has the authority to share Indigenous knowledge, and the responsibilities that accompany that sharing.

The third workshop circle featured Ruth’s collaborative research in Indigenous mathematics education. Joining her were *Anishinaabe kwe* Colinda Clyne, a member of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg and Principal of Indigenous Education at the Upper Grand District School Board, and artist Christina Reddy from the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, who shared their experiences and emphasized that meaningful curriculum development is inseparable from reciprocal relationships with communities.

The final workshop concluded with ceremony as six project partners received handcrafted beaded medallions recognizing their shared commitment to continuing this work. Created by Indigenous artists Akeesha and Talyn Footman, the medallions incorporated teachings shared by Dr. Elder Deb Danard, symbolizing the relationships and responsibilities developed throughout the project, as

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well as the Medicine Wheel teachings and Seven Sacred Teachings (as denoted by the blue lines on the medallion, pictured left).

Across all four workshop circles, participants came to recognize that Indigenous perspectives cannot simply be inserted into existing lessons. They must emerge first from respectful relationships with local communities, including an understanding of how knowledge should be shared.

Understanding the Ethics of Indigenous Knowledges

One of the project's most significant outcomes was the development of the *Ethical Uses of Indigenous Knowledges* brochure by Dr. Elder Deb Danard. Grounded in the First Nations principles of OCAP—Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession—which affirm Indigenous communities' rights to govern how information about them is collected, used, and shared, as well as the Seven Sacred Teachings and the context of the Williams Treaties clan governance, the guide emphasizes that ethical protocols are local, relational, and inseparable from the communities and lands from which Indigenous knowledges emerge.



Rather than leaving with classroom templates or ready-made lesson plans, participants departed with a deeper understanding that meaningful Indigenous education requires patience, humility, reciprocal relationships, and ongoing community engagement. The workshop circles challenged educators to rethink assumptions about expertise, authority, and ownership of knowledge.

The project is also influencing teaching within Lakehead University's Faculty of Education. Instead of encouraging teacher candidates to search for ready-made Indigenous resources, Leisa and Ruth emphasize the importance of building relationships with local Indigenous communities and recognizing that Indigenous Knowledges are rooted in place.

"We have so much emphasis on integrating Indigenous worldviews into classrooms," Leisa says, "but if we are not guided by Elders and communities, we can unintentionally cause harm."

For both researchers, the closing ceremony represented not an ending, but the beginning of continued learning and partnership.

"The end of the process is really the beginning again," says Ruth.



The shoreline of Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation, the Anishinaabe community to which Leisa Desmoulins's family belongs. Leisa's work is grounded in a foundational relationship with Aki (the land) and family.

Continuing the Journey: Ethical Protocols and Lasting Commitments

Although the workshop circles have concluded, the work continues. Leisa and Ruth are now documenting lessons learned through the development of a *Wise Practices Guide* to support educators in engaging Indigenous Knowledges respectfully.

The project has also laid the groundwork for a new SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant that will expand this work across additional curriculum areas and strengthen partnerships among schools, communities, and researchers.

Ultimately, Leisa and Ruth hope to help create educational systems where Indigenous students feel genuinely welcomed and where Indigenous Knowledges are engaged with respect, care, and relationality. Their work demonstrates that reconciliation in education can only be achieved through an ongoing lived commitment to learning together, honouring protocols and building lasting relationships.



Beaded bracelets: Through Ruth's research on culturally responsive approaches to mathematics, students created beaded bracelets while exploring relationships among wrist measurements, bead size and pattern dimensions.

Faculty Awards

Bridging Research and Practice to Support Every Child's Right to Read

Congratulations to Dr. Meridith Lovell-Johnston (Principal Investigator; Professor and Chair of Graduate Studies and Research), Dr. Tanya Kaefer (Professor), Dr. Sonia Mastrangelo (Professor), and Dr. Hanna Wickstrom (Postdoctoral Fellow and Contract Lecturer) on receiving a five-year, \$324,891 SSHRC Insight Grant for their research project, *Educators' Understanding and Implementation of the Foundational Early Literacy Skills*.

The research responds to significant changes in how reading is taught across Ontario following the Ontario Human Rights Commission's 2022 *Right to Read* report. The report identified concerns about approaches to reading instruction, particularly for students with reading disabilities such as dyslexia, and emphasized that the ability to read is fundamental to full participation in society and success across the curriculum.

"Reading is a fundamental human right," says Meridith, "yet we know that current instruction is not necessarily meeting the needs of all students, especially those with reading disabilities such as dyslexia."

A Shift in Literacy Instruction

Ontario has long debated the best ways to teach children to read. For decades, balanced approaches to literacy have emphasized meaning-making and multiple language cueing systems. In contrast, the more recent Science of Reading approach has brought increased attention to explicit instruction in foundational skills such as phonological awareness, phonics, and alphabet knowledge.

The research team aims to move beyond this debate by examining how educators understand and implement these approaches in practice. The study will ask: *What are Ontario kindergarten and Grade 1 educators' understanding of the foundational literacy skills and cognitive skills related to literacy development in the early years?*

"We need to bridge the gap between new policy and everyday teaching," says Meridith. "While foundational decoding skills are essential, the literature tells us that successful reading also depends on language development, comprehension and meaning-making. We want to look at what teachers really understand about the skills that have been identified as foundational for developing reading fluency."

Following Knowledge into Practice

Over the next four years, the researchers will gather data through province-wide surveys, interviews, and classroom observations in Ontario school settings. This longitudinal approach will examine not only what educators understand about early literacy, but how that knowledge translates into classroom practice as teachers experience changing curriculum expectations.

The study will also examine the alignment among educational policy, research evidence and instructional



Standing: Hanna Wickstrom and Tanya Kaefer.
Seated: Meridith Lovell-Johnston and Sonia Mastrangelo.

practice, while considering regional and demographic differences across Ontario. Professional learning and teaching experience will be considered as factors that may influence educators' approaches over time.

The timing is particularly important. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted learning for many students, with reading rates declining and some children missing essential Kindergarten and Grade 1 instruction related to early literacy.

Supporting Evidence-Informed Literacy Education

The project's findings will contribute to teacher education, professional learning, curriculum development and literacy intervention strategies. The researchers hope the study will identify where educators need additional support and provide practical, evidence-based guidance for strengthening early literacy instruction.

The findings will also help inform future educational policy and curriculum development by providing evidence about how teachers understand and implement new approaches to reading. Ultimately, the project is grounded in the goal of ensuring that every child has the opportunity to become a successful reader.

MEd Student Rayanna Santiago Receives Lakehead Leader Award for Inspiring Wonder in the Natural World

Master of Education student Rayanna Santiago (Thunder Bay) received a Lakehead Leader Award for Sustainability and Innovation this Spring for her efforts to foster environmental sustainability and inspire meaningful connections with the natural world.

"I was really honoured and grateful to be nominated for an award," Rayanna says. "To this day, I don't know who nominated me."

A student in the Education for Change program, Rayanna specializes in Environmental and Sustainability Education and is passionate about social justice, critical environmental education, and helping children build relationships with nature. She is a critical place-based educator who helps children learn through the social, ecological, cultural, and economic contexts of where they live.

"The local context of the place we live in becomes the foundation of learning," she explains. "This could include visiting important cultural sites or getting kids into natural settings to learn from, and with, nature."

Rayanna has volunteered with local forest schools and worked at the Tapiola and Kingfisher Outdoor Education Centres. She serves as a director-at-large with the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario, helping to strengthen connections among outdoor educators, organizations, and universities across northwestern Ontario.

As co-chair of COEO's 'Make Peace with Winter' Conference, Rayanna helped bring educators together to share creative ways of connecting students with the outdoors

last winter. She also secured a travel grant to bring five Lakehead students and staff to the conference.

Community at the Centre

At the heart of her teaching is the idea of community.

"For me, this means people, the place that we live, and the more-than-human beings. The oak tree on my front lawn is as much my community member as my next-door neighbour. My aim is to foster relationships with the more-than-human world so that we can make ethical decisions and do the best we can for other beings, as well as ourselves."

Rayanna encourages students to spend time in nature, where activities such as tracking animal footprints can spark curiosity and kinship. She notes that even 5 to 10 minutes of quiet observation in the forest can inspire wonder.

"It cultivates their sense of awe and stimulates their creativity," she says. "Often, kids will tell me, 'That was so magical!'"

Ultimately, she believes education is a powerful way to change how people relate to the world.



Dr. Mohit Dudeja Part of National Team Awarded SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant

Dr. Mohit Dudeja (Contract Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Thunder Bay) is a collaborator and project lead on a national research team that has been awarded a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Engage Grant. The one-year project will examine the experiences of racialized 2S/LGBTQIA+ international students in Canada and develop strategies to strengthen institutional supports for this student population.

The project brings together researchers and national partners from across Canada, working in partnership with the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) and supported by the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies at York University. The research team includes Principal Investigator Dr. Jean Michel Montsion (York University); Co-investigators Dr. Kumari

Beck (Education, Simon Fraser University), Dr. Ajay Parasram (History and International Development, Dalhousie University), and Dr. Roberta Soares (Education, University of Ottawa); and Collaborators Dr. Mohit Dudeja (Education, Lakehead University); Vedanth Govi (Anthropology, York University); and Rachel Poko (International Development, Independent scholar).

The project will draw on findings from the 2025 CBIE International Student Survey and a series of stakeholder roundtables to identify the challenges faced by racialized 2SLGBTQIA+ international students. The research team has begun hosting a series of online public panels across Canada to discuss the survey findings and to engage higher education professionals, community organizations, student leaders, and other community members in discussions to

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understand the experiences of racialized queer and trans international students, and how institutions can better support this group of students as they navigate postsecondary education and life in Canada.

Although Canada is widely recognized as a welcoming destination for international students, many continue to encounter barriers that affect their sense of belonging, access to services, and overall well-being. Existing support systems often focus on providing either queer/trans-friendly services or ethnocultural community supports, leaving a gap for students whose experiences intersect across multiple identities in

relation to racialization, ethnicity, gender identity and sexuality.

The project will produce practical resources to inform future policy and practice, as the research team will create a training workshop and policy brief for policymakers and higher education administrators interested in learning how to best support this group and foster more equitable and inclusive learning environments.

As the project lead, Mohit is contributing to all stages of the research project, including the design of consultations, the selection of speakers, the analysis of regional roundtable findings and the development of project outputs.



HIV Poetry Collection “Holding HIV: Poems of HOPE” Named 2026 International Book Awards Finalist

The poetry collection *Holding HIV: Poems of HOPE* has been named a Nonfiction: Cross-Genre Finalist in the 2026 International Book Awards. Hosted by the American Book Fest, the International Book Awards are a major literary contest that annually evaluates thousands of entries from mainstream and independent authors worldwide.

Authored by Dr. Pauline Sameshima (Professor, Faculty of Education), Emily Turner (Master of Education graduate), and Dazié Grego-Sykes (California-based poet, performer, and multidisciplinary artist), the collection brings together the voices of 27 community members in San Francisco who are living with or affected by HIV.

Developed through the HOPE Research Collaboratory’s Community Arts Integrated Research program, the collection is rooted in participants’ narratives from an HIV cure research study that intentionally bridged scientific inquiry with creative expression.

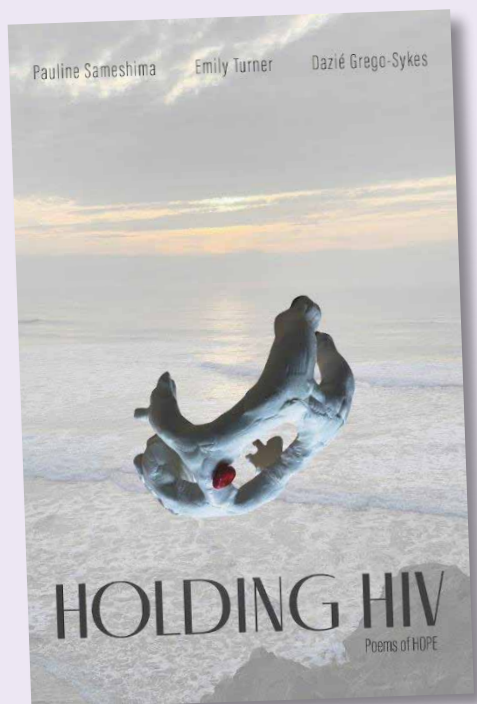
Participants engaged in hands-on artistic processes, including sculpting clay “holders” in response to the “Block-Lock-Stop” epigenetic strategy, and reflecting on what excites them about a potential HIV cure as well as fears it raises. These discussions were then translated into poetry, capturing both deeply personal testimony and broader social realities, including concerns tied to recent reductions in U.S. federal HIV funding.

This marks the book’s additional recognition, following its 2025 finalist placement in the Literary Global Book Awards in four categories: Nonfiction – LGBTQ; Nonfiction – Social Change; Nonfiction – Best Cover Design; and Poetry – Nonfiction.

Bringing Community Voices to the Page

Endorsements of the recently published book highlight its significance. Dr. Patricia Defechereux (Community Engagement Coordinator of the HOPE Martin Delaney Collaboratory) wrote: “This is an amazing book! Dive in! Listen to the collective voice that weaves together humanity, anger, community, a sense of belonging, a deep lasting resilience, and above all, love.”

Paul Edmonds (The City of Hope Patient, cured of HIV through a stem cell transplant) wrote: “I am blown away by this powerful collection of poems—raw, honest, and unapologetic reflections from the San Francisco HIV community. It is a must-read for anyone who wants to better understand the complexities of the HIV journey.”



Technological Education Graduates Bring their Skill Sets to the Classroom

Three recent graduates of the Technological Education program are now bringing their years of industry experience into the high school classroom. Kyle Trodd, Jordan Foster, and Shawn Huls each completed the Tech Ed program at the Thunder Bay campus and have since begun their teaching careers at Hammarskjöld High School. Their experiences offer a glimpse into how the Tech Ed program—which was launched in

July 2023 to help address Ontario's growing need for qualified technology teachers—is helping experienced trades and technology professionals transition from industry to education.

We spoke with Kyle, Jordan, and Shawn about their experiences in the program, their transition from industry to teaching, and what they enjoy about bringing their professional expertise into the secondary classroom.

Kyle Trodd

Ontario Construction Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) and Tiny Home Construction Teacher

Graduate of the Technological Education program, May 2025

“I’m currently teaching construction, woodworking, technological studies, skilled trades, and Tiny Home construction. What I enjoy most about being a technology teacher is building relationships with students in the shop and watching their confidence grow over the course of a semester. There’s something incredibly rewarding about seeing students develop new skills and realize they’re capable of more than they thought.

Before becoming a teacher, I worked as a Red Seal carpenter for eight years, building custom homes and completing renovations and remodeling projects. Throughout my career, I often worked with apprentices and found that I really enjoyed teaching them. Helping someone learn a new skill made me realize there might be another path for me: one that combined my passion for the trades with my interest in teaching.

Looking back, I can trace that interest even further to my own high school experience. Some of my teachers had a way of making learning engaging and meaningful. They genuinely appreciated the work we did, maintained a positive attitude, and created an environment where learning was enjoyable. I hope to bring that same sense of enthusiasm and encouragement to my own students.

From the Trades to the Classroom

“When I learned about Lakehead University’s Technological Education program, it felt like the perfect fit. I was excited that it allowed experienced tradespeople to become certified teachers, and having the program offered in person in Thunder Bay meant I could complete my education close to home.

My time at Lakehead was incredibly rewarding. One of the highlights was getting to know classmates from a wide range of trades and learning alongside them. Working together on projects and sharing our different experiences created a strong sense of community. I still remember how nervous everyone was when we took our class photo during the first few days of the program. Now, just two years later, many of us are teaching technological education in schools across Ontario, and it’s amazing to see how far we’ve all come.

One classroom moment that has stayed with me happened during a Grade 11 construction class. We were learning how to



lay out walls, and each student had to complete four different wall layouts on a 2x4. At first, many of them struggled to understand the concept. But as we worked through each layout together and they gained more practice, I could actually see the moment when everything clicked. Watching those “lightbulb moments” happen was one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve had as a teacher.

Technical education plays an important role in preparing students for the future. Technology influences nearly every career and industry, and the skilled trades continue to offer tremendous opportunities. Beyond learning technical skills, students develop problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, creativity, and confidence through hands-on learning—skills that benefit them in school, the workplace, and everyday life.

Graduating from the Technological Education program was only the beginning of my own learning. Since becoming a teacher, I’ve continued my professional development by completing an Additional Qualification course in Communications Technology, and I’m excited to keep expanding my knowledge throughout my career.”

Jordan Foster

Hairstyling and Aesthetics Teacher

Graduate of the Technological Education program,
May 2025

"I'm currently the Hairstyling and Aesthetics teacher at Hammarskjold High School, where I'm teaching in a Long-Term Occasional position. What I enjoy most about teaching is building meaningful relationships with students while sharing my passion for the beauty industry. It's incredibly rewarding to watch them develop practical skills, gain confidence, and begin to see the many career opportunities available to them.

Before becoming a teacher, I spent 19 years working as a professional hairstylist. During that time, I worked in several salons before opening and operating my own business. As a Red Seal hairstylist, I developed not only technical expertise but also a strong understanding of the business side of the industry.

From the Salon to the Classroom

"My path into education began unexpectedly. One of my salon clients, who worked at Lakehead University, encouraged me to consider the Technological Education program. At first, I saw it simply as a chance to expand my qualifications without knowing where it might lead. That decision completely changed my career. Since graduating, I've taught at Hammarskjold for three semesters, closed my salon, and embraced a new career that I find incredibly fulfilling.

My experience as a Tech Ed student at Lakehead was both challenging and rewarding. Like many of my classmates, I was balancing coursework while working full-time, raising a family, and completing my teaching placement. It wasn't always easy, but the support from the professors made a tremendous difference. They understood that many of us were adult learners with responsibilities outside the classroom, and their encouragement helped me succeed.

One of my favourite memories as a teacher was organizing our December fundraiser, *Vikings Cuts for a Cause*. Our class set a goal of raising \$1,000 for Special Olympics Thunder Bay and Roots to Harvest—two organizations that have a positive impact on many of our students and our community. To encourage donations, several staff members agreed to some entertaining challenges, including one teacher shaving his head, another cutting off his man bun, our guitar teacher donating 14 inches of his braid, and two administrators volunteering to have their legs waxed. We exceeded our fundraising goal and what made the event truly memorable was the excitement it created throughout the school!

Building Confidence through Hands-On Learning

"I believe technical education is essential because it gives students opportunities to learn in ways that may better reflect their strengths. Not every student thrives in a traditional classroom, and hands-on learning allows many to excel by applying their knowledge in practical settings.



For anyone considering Lakehead's Technological Education program, my advice is to be prepared to work hard, especially if you're returning to school after years in the workforce or entering post-secondary education for the first time, as I did. There will be a learning curve as you adjust to academic writing, studying, and balancing multiple responsibilities, but don't let that discourage you. Stay committed, trust the process, and remember that the effort is absolutely worth it. Completing the program can open doors that truly change your career—and your life."



Shawn Huls

Manufacturing Teacher

Graduate of the Technological Education program, May 2025

"If someone had told me a few years ago that I'd become a teacher, I probably wouldn't have believed them. I had no post-secondary education, I was working full-time in the metal industry, I had a young family, and the idea of leaving my job for a teacher education program wasn't realistic.

It was while I was working at Hammarskjold High School in the summer, for Thermal Mechanical Systems during the school's transition from a steam boiler to a high-

efficiency boiler, that my path changed. I had graduated from Hammarskjold myself, and many of my former teachers were still there. They told me there would soon be retirements in manufacturing education and that they had no one lined up to fill those positions.

Then I heard Lakehead University was launching a Technological Education program in Thunder Bay, and that it was designed so that people could continue working while earning their teaching qualifications. So, I applied at the school and was hired on a Letter of Permission. I started teaching one manufacturing class, and a week before school began, I was given a second class. At the same time, I began the Tech Ed program and learning about teaching and education. The program wasn't easy: the online work and academic writing were challenging for me, but with support from instructors like Gino Russo, John Delorey, and the rest of the faculty, I made it through.

Today, I teach manufacturing (primarily welding) between Hammarskjold High School and Superior Collegiate & Vocational Institute. I love creating fun projects and letting students chase their dreams. I teach students in Grades 10 through 12. Grade 10 students begin with design concepts, measurement, hand tools, and safety before building their first projects. By Grade 12, they're doing advanced projects like car trailers and tables while possibly preparing for apprenticeships and careers in the skilled trades.

Now entering my third year of teaching, I feel like I'm finding my path. The first couple of semesters you're just trying to survive. Now I have more material and continue improving my courses each year.

Manufacturing has always been part of my life. I grew up in a family business and was working in sheet metal before I even started high school. Today, I'm proud to help prepare the next generation of skilled tradespeople. Watching students grow and seeing them discover confidence and even sending students to the Ontario Skills Competition are some of the highlights of the job. "

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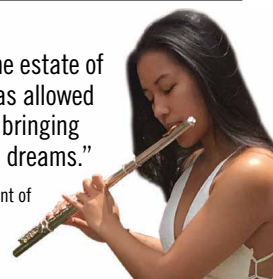
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MARINDA TRAN, Bachelor of Arts, Recipient of the Florence Higgins Music Scholarship



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Pictured above, left to right: Maddy, Mike, Julie, and Abby.

A Family Affair: Four Filipettis Graduate Together from the Faculty of Education

Last June's Convocation was an especially memorable occasion for the Filipetti family, as all four members of the family crossed the stage as graduates of Lakehead University's Faculty of Education!

For Mike and Julie Filipetti, this milestone represented the culmination of decades-long careers in education and their continued commitment to lifelong learning. For their daughters, Maddy and Abby, it marked the beginning of their own journeys as certified teachers.

Mike Filipetti, currently the Intermediate/Senior Division Coordinator in the Faculty of Education (Thunder Bay campus) earned his Master of Education degree. A Lakehead alumnus, Mike previously graduated in 1996 with a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Education (Junior/Intermediate). Throughout his career, he has served students and communities across Northern Ontario and the North, teaching in Coral Harbour, Nunavut, Eabametoong First Nation, the Algoma District School Board, Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School, and Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board. He has worked in Special Education and was a school principal before joining Lakehead University.

Julie Filipetti also earned a Master of Education degree, and she is also an alumna of the Faculty, having graduated in 1994 with a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Education (Junior/Intermediate). Her career has included teaching

positions in Kingfisher Lake First Nation, Eabametoong First Nation, the Algoma District School Board, Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School, Lakehead Public Schools, and Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board. For more than 20 years, she has served as a Special Education teacher and Special Education Lead at St. Ignatius High School. Along the way, she coached basketball and volleyball and contributed to numerous school initiatives. Julie, who is now retiring, looks forward to traveling and pursuing hobbies in the years ahead.

The celebration was made even more special by the achievements of the couple's daughters.

Maddy Filipetti graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in French and a Bachelor of Education (Primary/Junior). Maddy, who also operates an independent photography business, is an Occasional Teacher with the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board.

Abby Filipetti earned an Honours Bachelor of Science in Biology along with a Bachelor of Education (Intermediate/Senior, Biology/Chemistry). She currently works as an Occasional Teacher with both Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board and Lakehead Public Schools.

While earning a degree is a significant accomplishment on its own, celebrating four graduations from the same family at the same convocation is a rare achievement. Congratulations to the Filipetti family!

New Humanities 101 Director Dr. James Czank Shares His Vision for the Program's Next Chapter

For more than 20 years, Humanities 101 has opened the doors of post-secondary education to adults who may never have imagined themselves in a university classroom. As the program enters a new chapter, its new Director, Dr. James Czank (Contract Lecturer, Faculty of Education and Department of Philosophy), brings a personal understanding of the barriers many students face. Once a mature student who believed university was “a place where I did not belong,” James’s journey—from working-class roots to earning a PhD—reflects the transformative power of education. We spoke with James about his path to academia, his educational philosophy, and his vision for the future of Humanities 101.

Q: Tell us a little about your background and what led you to Humanities 101.

“Like many of the students of Humanities 101, I first entered university as a non-traditional mature student. I enrolled when I was around 30 years old. I came from poor working-class roots and grew up thinking of the university as a place where I did not belong—a place only for privileged and super-smart people.

My inspiration to attend university came after reading *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. The book, which is punctuated by a few philosophical discussions, challenged my thinking and pushed me to critically evaluate my life. Shortly afterward, I enrolled in philosophy at Lakehead University, where I encountered thinkers such as Marx, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche. Their ideas continue to shape how I think and teach.

I’ve been involved with Humanities 101 since 2009—as a volunteer, graduate assistant, instructor, program assistant, Acting Director, and now Director. My PhD thesis, *People in Discursive Spaces: Entry-Level Humanities Education for Non-Traditional Adult Learners*, focused on Humanities 101 and radical humanities programs for non-traditional adult learners, so this role has been a long time in the making.”

Q: What drew you to the mission of Humanities 101?

“The Clemente Course, started by Earl Shorris in the United States, inspired Humanities 101 and similar programs across Canada. Shorris argued that poverty is not simply an absence of money—it is an absence of reflection and beauty. He compared it to Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, where people mistake shadows on a wall for reality and assume that is all there is in the world.

That idea has always resonated with me.

The purpose of Humanities 101 is to reorient students out of the cave and into the daylight. It was created for people who lacked the resources to achieve their fair share in society—people whose education had often been limited to training rather than opportunities to study philosophy, history, poetry, and the humanities.

Shorris believed that knowledge of the humanities provides people in marginalized groups with a foundation for thinking,



“I came from poor working-class roots and grew up thinking of the university as a place where I did not belong.”

reflecting, and participating in public life rather than simply reacting to circumstances. I believe he was right, and that philosophy continues to guide Humanities 101 today.”

Q: How would you describe your leadership style and your approach to community-based education?

“Inspired by educators like Paulo Freire and Peter McLaren, I believe education needs to be plural and dialogical. Classrooms should be spaces where students not only read texts and investigate concepts but also understand how those ideas apply to the world around them.

For many years I’ve led Humanities 101 students through Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, challenging them to think about the shadows on their own walls. I want our

classrooms to be places where students critically examine their assumptions, their experiences, and their worldviews.

Education should challenge us, but it should also begin with respect for people's lived experiences."

Q: Why does Humanities 101 matter?

"Humanities 101 matters because education can be a means of emancipation rather than indoctrination. Our students bring extraordinary life experience into the classroom. Many have not completed high school. Some attended post-secondary education, but life happened, or the educational system failed them in some way. Yet they are here because they genuinely want to learn and challenge themselves.

The Humanities 101 classroom is a room full of willing and able learners. In many ways, it reminds me of a classroom filled entirely with mature students—the kind who ask "why?" and expect meaningful answers. For many instructors, teaching Humanities 101 becomes the highlight of their academic year."

Q: What parts of Humanities 101 are you committed to preserving?

"I'm committed to preserving the program's emancipatory elements. Education is a place where power, politics, meaning, and values all come together. In the words of Henry Giroux, it is where the production of meaning, desire, language, and values engage and respond. It is a struggle over the kind of future we hope to create and the kind of society we want to build.

Humanities 101 should continue to be a place where students are encouraged to think critically, reflect on their own experiences, question assumptions, and find their own voices. Those are the elements that empower people not only as learners, but as participants in their communities and in public life.

The truth is that the program's founder, Dr. Christina van Barneveld (Associate Professor, Education), already established much of this during her leadership. My goal is to build on that foundation rather than replace it."

Q: What does the next chapter of Humanities 101 look like?

"One of the catalysts for my doctoral research was recognizing a disconnect between how institutions sometimes understand education and how students understand their own lives. As Paulo Freire argued, education cannot simply be something done *for* people—it must be created *with* them, otherwise it remains an alienating experience. That belief will continue to shape Humanities 101 under my leadership.

We've already brought in new instructors, particularly in philosophy and history, to encourage critical self-reflection. We're strengthening existing community partnerships, creating new ones, and reaching communities that haven't traditionally been connected to Humanities 101. We are also working to strengthen ties between the two programs (Thunder Bay and Orillia) and learn from the unique experiences and realities of both.

I'd also like to see the program eventually offer college or university credit, as similar humanities programs already do elsewhere in Canada and the United States."

Q: What excites you most about this new role?

"Truthfully, I can't imagine a more fulfilling role at Lakehead University.

I've spent years studying Humanities 101, teaching in it, and watching students discover their own voices.

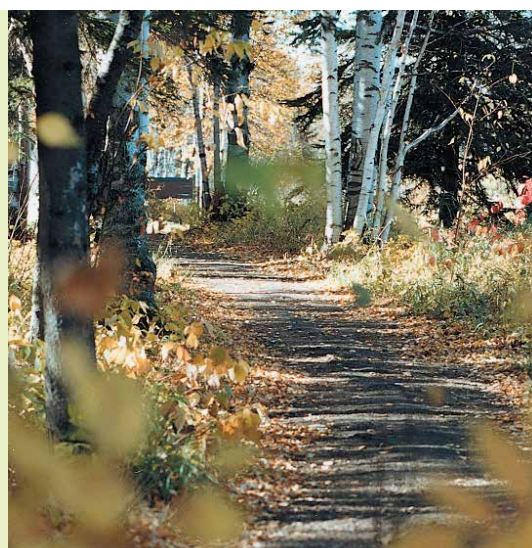
None of this would be possible without the foundation Christina created and the dedication of our staff and mentors. I couldn't hope to lead the program without their incredible work, and would like to recognize Teresa Ruberto, Rain Watson-Bain, and Marlie Gelineau, along with the program's mentors, Jason Thomas and Anjana Mundachalil Rajeev (graduates from last year's Humanities 101 cohort), who make this work possible every day. I'm equally grateful to the volunteer instructors who generously give their time, to our community partners, to Lakehead University's ongoing support, and to Dr. Wayne Melville and the Faculty of Education for their continued encouragement and commitment to the program."

Welcome New Contract Lecturers

The Faculty of Education welcomes the following new Contract Lecturers in Fall 2026.

Amy Beauchamp
Wayne Brown
Samantha Browne
Petere Cameron
Brett Carron
Lori Ann Carson
Brandon Chevrier
Alison Cooke
Mary Day-Mauro
Jane Dewar
Daniel Flitton
Valerie Hargreaves

Justin Heenan
Sara Jamieson
Trina Janveau
Candace Love-Sutton
Brittany MacDonald
Fay Mackenzie
Anneke McCabe
Allison Myers
Heather Rocca
Irfan Toor
Daniel Turk



Then and Now: Full Circle in the Classroom

Some journeys come full circle. Last spring, Faculty of Education teacher candidate Ethan Willmore (Intermediate/Senior division) completed a teaching placement at Bishop E.Q. Jennings Senior Elementary School in Thunder Bay—with none other than his former Grade 8 teacher, Joe Curciarello, serving as his Associate Teacher.

The photos tell the story: one captures Joe as teacher with Ethan as a young student, while the other shows the two of them years later, with Ethan now an aspiring educator. These photos showcase how today's students can become tomorrow's colleagues in education!



Welcome Tatiana Khrystynko, Placement Services Coordinator (Orillia Campus)

The Faculty of Education is pleased to welcome Tatiana Khrystynko to her new role as Placement Services Coordinator. In this role, Tatiana will centralize and streamline placement operations across all departments and programs within the faculty, supporting teacher candidates and strengthening partnerships with school boards.

Tatiana shared the following about her new role and her interests outside of work:

"As Placement Services Coordinator, my role is to build and lead a high-performing Placement Services program where every teacher candidate receives timely, equitable, and high-quality support, and every partnering board benefits from a responsive, professional, and collaborative partnership.

My focus is on creating consistent processes, strengthening relationships, improving communication, and fostering excellence across all aspects of the placement experience, particularly as we prepare for the transition to a 12-month teacher training program in 2027.

Change is not always easy or comfortable, but it offers valuable opportunities for reflection, growth, and continuous learning. Working alongside a talented and dedicated team of Placement Officers and Professional Experience Coordinators, I am confident in our ability to achieve meaningful and lasting success.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time outdoors, either with my family or on my own, as it provides a sense of calm and the space for reflection and personal growth. I also enjoy travelling to places that are different from what we experience in our daily lives, as these experiences broaden our perspectives and deepen our understanding of the world around us. These experiences remind me to appreciate what truly matters and to remain grateful for life's many blessings, both large and small."

