

OUR TRAIL TO WELLNESS

For the Students and Employees of Lakehead University



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Welcome Message

As we begin another academic year, the energy and excitement felt by our students, faculty, and staff are evident everywhere on our two campuses. For many, this time of year signifies a beginning that is filled with hope and determination, and a willingness to learn something new. With the new, however, comes the potential for both excitement and – when we feel overwhelmed or ill at ease – fear.

When I was asked to write about ‘cultural wellness,’ I enthusiastically agreed, as I believe that creating a sense of community and belonging enables people to feel empowered. This sense of community and belonging emerges from a positive culture. But what is ‘culture’, and how do we ensure it’s positive? How do we ensure that people within our organization are on a ‘trail to wellness’ because of Lakehead’s culture, rather than in spite of it?

I remember, as a Lakehead student many years ago, I learned that culture is defined as ‘the way of life of a group of people – the values and behaviours that are accepted as the norm.’ I learned, and continue to learn, that culture emerges through shared value systems, and that behaviours matter, not only because of how they make individuals feel in the moment, but also because of how they set standards for the ways in which people will treat one another going forward.

At Lakehead, we have shared organizational values that have the potential to ground our cultural wellness: a shared **commitment to respect** and **innovation** within a thriving

academic **community**. And our behaviours should follow from these beliefs. When we enact these values, faculty, staff, and students co-create an environment that encourages integrity as we celebrate the diverse interests, cultures, stories, and perspectives that each one of us brings to our campus.

How we embrace cultural wellness on campus and within our communities can significantly impact the overall Lakehead experience for all of us. Coming to university with a commitment to the positive things that enable wellness – and an expectation of this in others – will ultimately create and maintain the Lakehead culture we all want to be a part of.

I wish you all the best during this great season for learning, and I look forward to working with all of you to create our shared Lakehead culture within the communities of Orillia and Thunder Bay!

Dr. Linda Rodenburg, Principal, Lakehead Orillia

9 Dimensions of Wellness

Wellness is an active, lifelong process of becoming aware of your choices and making decisions that will help us to live a more balanced and fulfilling life. Everyone's optimal wellness is different with many factors influencing one's own health and well-being. To this end, [Lakehead University's Wellness Strategy](#) recognizes and considers nine (9) main dimensions of wellness as contributing factors to our overall health and well-being: Cultural, Emotional, Environmental, Financial, Intellectual, Occupational, Physical, Social and Spiritual.

9 Dimensions of Wellness



Wellness Dimension: Cultural Wellness

Our Trail to Wellness is built on the foundation of the 9 Dimensions of Wellness. This particular Issue features **Cultural Wellness**.

Cultural Wellness: Creating and maintaining a positive, inclusive environment that values the diversity of all cultures, as well as understanding and celebrating your own cultural identities.

Cultural Wellness includes, but is not limited to:

- Positive, inclusive, equitable environment
- Supporting others in times of injustice
- Acceptance of all ethnicities, cultures, religions, genders, sexual orientations, etc.
- Study, work, or travel abroad
- Open to new perspectives
- Appreciating differences
- Respect for, and adherence to, laws and regulations
- Engage in cultural and community activities



Fostering Cultural Wellness on our Campus: The Role of Lakehead International

James Aldridge, Vice Provost, International



Cultural wellness is an integral aspect of creating a harmonious and inclusive campus environment that values the diversity of all cultures. It encompasses the appreciation and celebration of diverse cultures, as well as nurturing a sense of belonging and community among students from around the world. Lakehead International, and in particular the International Student Services (ISS) team, plays a pivotal role in supporting cultural wellness on campus by providing resources, guidance, and opportunities for students to engage with their own and other cultures, and contribute to fostering cultural wellness.

In recent years, I have seen Lakehead take some intentional steps toward becoming a more accessible, equitable, diverse, and inclusive university. Efforts have been made to make us more equitable and inclusive for women, visible minorities and racialized persons, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ2S+ community on our campuses. This starts from the top, but is a team effort, in which any offices and individuals play important roles.

For international students, their journey at Lakehead often begins with orientation programs offered across our campuses, and with those offered by the ISS team. These programs provide a platform for students to connect with peers, learn about Canadian culture, and understand the support services available to them. By first addressing their practical concerns and helping with transition, the ISS team help students feel more home in a new country, thereby promoting cultural wellness. From there, we can begin to ensure a sense of belonging.

Adjusting to life in Canada and to a new culture, can be challenging. The ISS team is often the first point of contact for international students facing challenges. We provide a space for students to

discuss their concerns, provide advice and guidance, and rely heavily on the broad range of counselling and support services offered by other departments across our campuses. Providing a safe and culturally appropriate space for international students to get answers to their questions and discuss their concerns is essential for their overall well-being.



Another key role of Lakehead International is to create opportunities for cultural exchange. The LUI team organizes events, workshops and cultural celebrations that allow international students to share their cultures and provide us all the opportunity to understand and appreciate the differences we see in others. Every year we celebrate Black History Month, Christmas, Diwali, Holi, International Education Week, Lunar New Year, and more. These celebrations and interactions foster cultural competence and understanding, allow international and domestic students to interact, share experiences, and appreciate each other's backgrounds, and promote inclusivity and harmony on our campuses.

Through the Global ME (Mobility/Exchange) program, Lakehead International's Global Engagement team also offer exciting opportunities for intercultural learning and exchange. By creating opportunities for international experiences, such as study abroad programs for students, faculty mobility internships, and volunteer opportunities, we aim to help students broaden their horizons, enhance their cultural competency, and prepare them for an increasingly globalized world and workforce of the future.

Lakehead International also supports cultural wellness through its work on advocacy and policy development. Through representation on various Senate committees, Senior Management Team, etc., we advocate for policies and practices that support the well-being and success of international students. We work closely with other departments and university administration to address issues like food insecurity, housing and financial needs, and to ensure that our policies are fair and inclusive, and contribute to cultural wellness on our campuses.

Cultural wellness is an essential component of thriving and inclusive campus communities at Lakehead. Lakehead International plays a central role in nurturing this wellness by providing a range of advice, services, and activities for international students that support their academic and cultural learning journeys. We certainly can't do this alone and are thankful for the collaborative support of many key departments across both campuses. By working together to promote cultural understanding, providing support, and creating opportunities for engagement, we all contribute to the overall well-being and success of international students, while enriching the campus environment for all. Through small steps and active engagement, we help to build a more inclusive and globally aware university.



James Aldridge
Vice Provost, International

5 Ways to Enhance Cultural Wellness

1



Learn about your family history & heritage

Knowing your family history and heritage can help you gain a better understanding of who you are and serve as a guidepost when channelling your most authentic self. Recognizing that everyone has their own history and experiences that shape personal beliefs and traditions allows us to open our minds to new and different perspectives. It also helps to identify how our society has evolved over time and how we choose to progress for our children's future.

2



Share stories

Storytelling and personal sharing are deeply rooted communication techniques found within all cultures as a means to strengthen bonds and leverage educational opportunities. Consider sharing relevant and personal stories as a way of building rapport with others, learning about diverse experiences, and appreciating a variety of cultural perspectives.

3



Enjoy community events

The City of Thunder Bay and Orillia hosts many great events throughout the year. Consider participating in a community-based activity such as festivals, parades, carnivals, concerts, sporting events, farmers markets, art exhibits, workshops, and lectures. Immersing yourself within the community is a great way to meet new people while potentially learning about other cultures and traditions that may not be as familiar to you.

4



Travel

Not only does travelling fuel the soul and positively impact our overall mental well-being, but it also provides firsthand exposure to new cultures, languages, food, economics, and traditions. Being physically immersed in worldly experiences will undoubtedly open our minds to a new way of living, thinking, and being.

5



Learn by asking

One of the greatest ways to expand our Cultural Wellness is through education and exposure. When opportunities arise, ask questions during conversations that demonstrate your desire to learn more about others' cultural experiences, traditions, and heritage. People tend to feel respected and eager to share when others show genuine interest in learning more about who they are, their heritage, and their cultural perspectives.

Cultural Wellness at Lakehead University

Indigenous Student Services

Yolanda Twance, Sheryl O'Reilly, and Mercedes Jacko
Indigenous Student Services Centre & Indigenous Initiatives

Did you know that the Indigenous Student Services Centre offers a culturally supportive learning environment to all Indigenous students who self-identify as First Nation, Inuit, and Métis? Did you also know that we offer a continual welcome to all students, staff, and faculty who wish to learn more about Indigenous culture, traditions, and teachings? For example, you can easily meet with one of

our Elders-in-Residence by checking the [Lakehead Events Calendar](#) or the [Indigenous Initiatives Events Page](#) to see when an Elder is available for drop-in visits on the Thunder Bay and Orillia campuses. Everyone is always welcome to attend one of our seasonal feasts to sample traditional foods such as moose, pickerel, or wild rice and to learn traditional teachings shared by an Elder. Again, check the calendar! We also have an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, and Senator Protocol Guide available. The guide is filled with helpful tips and answers to many questions regarding Indigenous protocols when working with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Métis Senators. Stop by the ISSC and grab your copy or [click here](#) for the online version.



Smudging

Did you know that smudging is similar to meditation? It gives an individual the chance to slow down and to be mindful. Smudging is a traditional Indigenous practice that requires the burning of some of the four sacred medicines. Sage is most often used for smudging, but you can also use sweetgrass and cedar. This practice is done to help us clear our minds and our hearts. Smudging can be purifying, stress relieving, and can help us release negativity. It can also be used to clear the energy in a room. If you're curious and want to learn more, stop by the Indigenous Student Services Centre in UC1007 for Thunder Bay or the Office of Indigenous Initiatives in OR1019 for the Orillia campus and we will connect you with an Elder for more teachings. Check out [Lakehead University's Smudging Policy](#) to learn more!



Lakehead University Sweat Lodge Site - Thunder Bay

The Lakehead University Sweat Lodge Site is a spiritual place where people come together for ceremonies that promote personal and collective healing. All members of the Lakehead University community are welcome to attend one of our sweat lodge ceremonies. “The sweat lodge ceremony has been around Ojibwe people for a long time. The sweat lodge is called madoodiswan, a place of nurturing ceremony. It is very evident that people in this area always conducted these ceremonies for doctoring and exercising their spiritual health and it is all connected to many other Anishnaabe ceremonies. We do not discriminate and everyone is welcome to participate in the ceremony but, at the same time, participants must respect the teachings of the sweat lodge”. (Elder Gene Nowegejick) [Click here](#) for more information on the Lakehead University Sweat Lodge Site.



Gitigaan - Thunder Bay

The Lakehead University garden called Gitigaan in Ojibwe is a gathering space for people to share and learn about the significance of traditional medicines. It was built in the shape of a medicine wheel. The medicine wheel represents the sacred directions and the stages of life. It can also represent the four aspects of our being; spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional and it helps guide us in living a balanced life. Gitigaan is a space for individual reflection and quiet meditation. We recently installed two benches next to the garden for your enjoyment!



Orillia Campus

The Office of Indigenous Initiatives hosts various cultural initiatives on the Orillia campus throughout the year. Many of these initiatives take place in the Office of Indigenous Initiatives' outdoor space: Wiigwasitig Gitigaan 'Birch Tree Garden'. This is a space where folks can connect with others in the Medicine Wheel Teaching Garden, the Three Sisters Garden, and in the tipi for sacred fires. Check out the [Lakehead Indigenous Initiatives Events](#) web page for upcoming programming and learning opportunities or connect with the [Indigenous Initiatives Coordinator](#).

Wiigwasitig Gitigaan - Orillia

“Birch Tree Garden“

Our campus is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg. The Anishinaabemowin ‘Anishinaabeg language’ words ‘Wiigwasitig Gitigaan’ can be translated as ‘Birch Tree Garden’. As the only remaining original tree on campus, the birch tree is vital to the garden area and holds the rich history of the land.

In 2009, this wiigwasitig ‘birch tree’ was central to a storytelling and ceremony that brought together community members, students, staff and faculty. In June 2023, the Lakehead Orillia community came together to honour the end of her life with ceremony, knowledge sharing and harvesting. This tree remains to be central to the garden space where the birch tree stump is now used as a bundle (sacred medicines/items) table for gatherings hosted by the Office of Indigenous Initiatives. Today, three gardens surround the birch tree table: the Medicine Wheel Teaching Garden, the Three Sisters Garden, and the Orillia Community Garden. Wiigwasitig Gitigaan - Lakehead Community Gardens create a natural learning environment in which all community members are encouraged to gather, share and learn.

Allotment Garden - Orillia

Lakehead University has dedicated Allotment gardens, available on a first come first serve basis. There are currently a limited number of small garden spaces for persons interested in tending to their own vegetable garden. The Allotment Garden is located at the Orillia Lakehead University campus at 500 University Avenue.

There are many benefits for participating in a community garden. These benefits include:

- Increased access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food
- Healthy outdoor physical activity
- Building a sense of community and making new friends
- Learning new skills (ex. Composting, natural pest deterrents)
- Beautifying neighbourhoods
- Encouraging the growth of green spaces



Mother Earth: A Self-Care and Grounding Ritual

Have you heard of the practice of Grounding also known as Earthing? Grounding is a simple and easy process that you can use anytime, anywhere to connect with the earth’s natural benefits. Find a quiet place, like Gitigaan, to practice this form of meditation for however long you’d like. Remove your socks and shoes and either stand or sit with your bare feet touching the ground. Grounding/Earthing allows us to connect with the earth’s magnetic field. Research has shown that Grounding/Earthing has many beneficial effects such as better sleep, decreased anxiety, increased brain function, and much more! [Click here](#) to learn more about Earthing benefits.



Yolanda Twance, Sheryl O’Reilly, and Mercedes Jacko
Indigenous Student Services Centre & Indigenous Initiatives

Self-Care Rituals from Around the World

Finland

Ranked as the happiest country in the world, saunas are an integral component of Finland's culture, heritage, and society. Saunas provide many health benefits such as: Mental relaxation, hot/cold therapy, relief from stress and aching muscles, reduce common cold symptoms, increase skin benefits, improve sleep quality, and so much more!



India

"Laughter is the best medicine" - India has been embracing Laughter Yoga for decades as a means to reduce stress, strengthen the immune system, increase energy, and help you better manage personal hardships. The practice involves stretching, meditation, and laughter to help release endorphins which can trigger feelings of joy, appreciation, and elation. It's a mood game changer -- Try it for yourselves!



Japan

In Japan, 'Forest Bathing' or 'shinrin-yoku' is a highly encouraged wellness practice that allows you to immerse your body and mind in nature. Find a garden or cluster of trees that you can slowly walk through while using all of your senses to acknowledge and take in your natural surroundings. Research found that forest bathing can help increase immunity, and decrease depression, fatigue, and anxiety.



Denmark

Hygge (pronounced 'hoo-gah') is about taking time away from the daily rush or life stressors to be with others you care about, or by yourself, and relax while enjoying life's quieter pleasures. It is a self-care practice that encourages you to curl up in a cozy blanket with a hot cup of your favourite beverage or spend quality time with family and friends in a fun and relaxing environment, such as game nights, small get-togethers, laying under the stars, etc. At the end of the day, whatever you choose should provide a sense of healing and inner peace.



Turkey

Turkish women often use rose water to help them feel uplifted, rejuvenated, and relaxed. Rose water is jam-packed with vitamins and helps your body to regain moisture balance while reducing irritated skin and acne. Due to its antioxidant properties, this wellness ritual is sure to boost your mood, strengthen skin cells, and provide a soothing result.



Uniquely Canadian...



Snacks! Ketchup Chips, Nanaimo Bars, Beaver Tails, Coffee Crisps, Butter Tarts, etc.



Milk that comes in a bag

Drawing the Maple Leaf free-hand is your nemesis

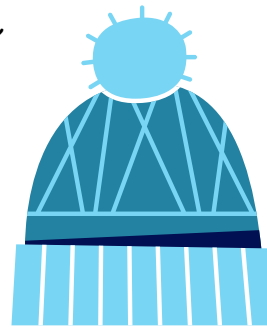


You've gone trick-or-treating in a winter jacket



You've worn snow pants and Long Johns to school at least once ...and you know what Long Johns are

KD- Also known as Kraft Dinner (Canadian Mac and Cheese)



"Toque" = Winter Hat



"Double Double" = Coffee with two creams and two sugars, popularized by Tim Horton's, the Canadian coffee and doughnut chain





Available Resources: To Enhance Our Cultural Wellness

Specific Tools Available for Students

- [Indigenous Initiatives](#)

Explore Indigenous Initiatives for more information about how to get involved, access services, learn more about Indigenous programs and courses, and where to attend events near you.

- [Lakehead University International](#)

At Lakehead University we encourage our students to strive for balance so that they have a well-rounded and rewarding university experience when it comes to living and learning. Through student services and special events, we are committed to helping you as you make the most of student life, get involved in the community, and plan for your future. Explore our available resources below which includes Orientation information, housing and accommodation, immigration, mentorship programs, events, workshops, and so much more!

- [Future International Students](#)
- [Newly Accepted International Students](#)
- [Current International Students](#)

- [Student Clubs and Associations](#)

Explore the many different clubs and associations available to our students on campus such as our Aboriginal Awareness Centre (AAC), Gender Equity Centre (EGC), Multicultural Centre, and so much more!

- [Global \(ME\) Mobility Engagement Program](#)

Lakehead University's Global ME (Mobility Engagement) Program offers several types of global learning opportunities, including:

- [Outbound Study Abroad Programs](#)
- [Inbound Study Abroad Programs](#)
- [International Dual Degree Programs](#)
- [International Partnerships](#)

Additional Cultural Wellness Resources for All

- [The City of Thunder Bay Events](#)

The City of Thunder Bay hosts many great events throughout the year. You can also explore our [Online Community Events Calendar](#) to see what's coming up. We invite you to [subscribe](#) to the events calendar, to be notified when there are events that interest you.

- [The City of Orillia Events](#)

From the renowned Mariposa Folk Festival to heritage classics like The Orillia Scottish Festival, events are one of the ways in which Orillia truly shines. Check out what's coming up next in the Sunshine City by exploring our [Calendar of Events](#).

- [Campus Connection](#)

Subscribe to Campus Connection and be the first to hear about the latest news and events at Lakehead University. Students, faculty, and staff are all welcome to partake in the various events happening on and around campus. It's a great opportunity to meet new peers and colleagues while learning more about our amazing Lakehead community.

- [Lakehead University's Event Calendar](#)

View the Lakehead University master calendar of events to see what's happening on campus monthly. Details can be broken down by campus and by category.

Resources for Lakehead University Employees

- [Indigenous Initiatives - Upcoming Events](#)

Check out the Indigenous Initiatives calendar to see what events are upcoming.

- [Global \(ME\) Mobility Engagement Program - Faculty & Staff](#)

Global ME is not only for students. The Global Engagement team facilitates various opportunities for our faculty and staff members at Lakehead University. Gaining global mobility experience will benefit you in many ways - It provides an opportunity to learn different practices that will enhance social and cultural awareness, global competencies, and broaden your teaching skills for professors.

- [Lakehead University Social Committee](#)

Upcoming activities for faculty and staff will be promoted through The Bulletin and Campus Connections. Stay tuned for the next fun-filled gathering with colleagues, peers, and friends. For future activity suggestions, feedback, volunteer opportunities, or questions, please reach out to Christina Groulx at wellnesscoordinator@lakeheadu.ca.



Future Newsletters

If you are interested in contributing to our future newsletters, we would like to hear from you! Upcoming topics include:

- Emotional Wellness
- Financial Wellness
- Occupational Wellness

For inquiries or submissions, please contact:

Christina Groulx (she/her)
Wellness Strategy Coordinator
Email: wellnesscoordinator@lakeheadu.ca

Subscribing to our Newsletter

To subscribe to the *Our Trail to Wellness* newsletter, please [sign up here](#).



“The beauty of the world lies in the diversity of its people.”

– Unknown