



EXPERIENCE | ACTION | TRANSFORMATION

## NEW BEGINNINGS

The last few years have been incredibly difficult for everyone. While uncertainties remain and various health, geo-political, environmental, and social crises persist, our team felt that "new beginnings" should be the theme of our winter newsletter. Our focus is less on the typical reflection and resolution associated with a new year and more about building upon the strengths we possess as well as growing our capacity as instructors and, by extension, among our students.

New beginnings allow us to explore new ideas and take chances in implementing them, to create space for our students to take their own risks in their learning and so gain confidence, to seek feedback on the things we have tried, and, ultimately, to build our teaching repertoire and reap the rewards of our investment.

While new beginnings can be frightening as we push ourselves out of our comfort zones and challenge our normal ways of doing things and though one can feel alone in such endeavors, know that is not the case.

The Teaching Commons is available to support and assist you – and we are always happy to help!

We hope the holiday break has been rejuvenating, and we share our best wishes for the winter term and 2023!

### Strategic Spotlight

A key pillar of the Academic Plan (2019-2024) is "Enhancing Lakehead's culture of teaching and learning excellence," with an action item to "[p]rovide professional development and support to faculty and staff aimed at equipping all instructors with the necessary technical and pedagogical competencies to foster creative and critical excellence in their approach to teaching and learning and incorporate high impact practices into all programs."

Building on our theme of "new beginnings," our newsletter invites you to build upon the strengths you already possess by exploring some new techniques that expand your teaching tool kit, stimulate your passion for teaching, and help you to further engage your students.

### Faculty Spotlight

#### The Myth of a Fresh Start?

Several societies abide by the myth of a "fresh start." You can think of a fresh start as a mindset. A fresh start is a belief that people can start anew on important aspects of their lives and that these life trajectories can be changed regardless of the current context and circumstances. Many view this mindset as nothing more than a folk tale, a fallacy, or a pipedream. Practical and academic evidence abounds. We notice failed New Year's resolutions every year, in ourselves and others. Consumer research tells us that we frequently and typically fail to habituate new practices into our daily lives. Moreover, the alleged promise of a fresh start is often tainted by the marketing tactics and plays that wield it.

As I am a new Assistant Professor at Lakehead University, the confluence of my own fresh start and our collective desire to leave these past few years behind us has led me to reflect on this myth. Students, teachers, administrators – we have all gone through our own existential and psychological questioning period. The academic system can be a stifling place, even without isolation and virtual bleakness. I know I have questioned, "Why am I doing this? Why am I a teacher?"

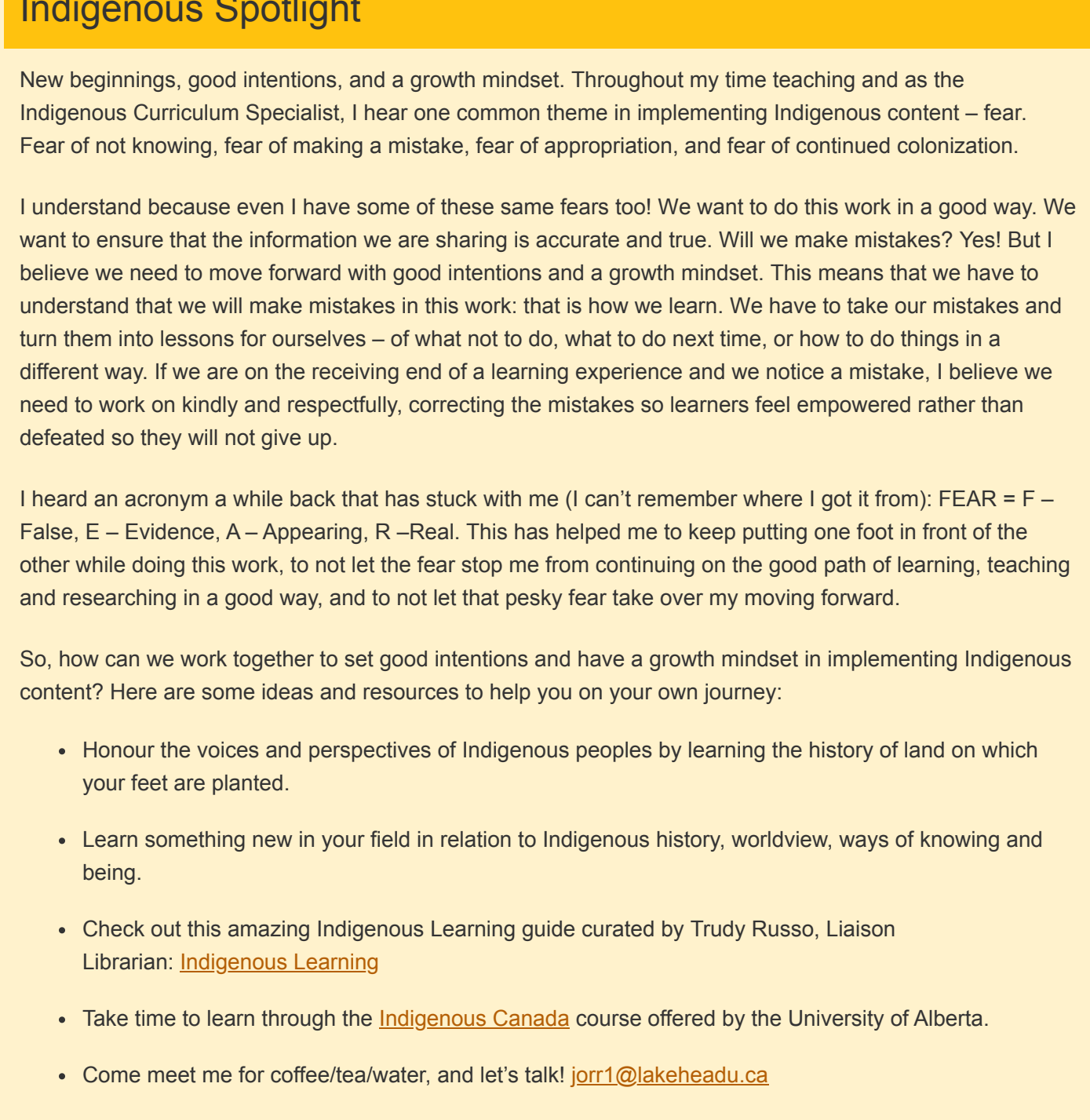
But, in my questioning, I have been reminded of the beauty of myths. The power of myths does not lie in their facticity. That is not the point. Rather, myths become powerful through enactment. As a myth's support becomes ardent, it proliferates throughout our communities, and it becomes what it was otherwise pretending to be. Myths are skeletal structures, waiting in limbo for our collective consciousness to populate them.

In my return to the classroom, I have learned that, by choosing to believe that fresh starts are wonderfully possible, I empower my students to believe the same. We, as faculty members, are always looking for the latest teaching techniques and learning tools. Indeed, knowledge development is an axiom of pedagogy. But it isn't enough. By instilling in students that, every day, they possess the agency to improve their own circumstances and start anew, we help their self-confidence grow. When students acquire new knowledge and the confidence to believe in it, they become an informed, unstoppable force – far more so than those who may possess knowledge or confidence alone. The importance of student self-confidence cannot be understated, and a fresh-start mindset is an extremely powerful mechanism for improving that confidence.

Then, the ripples. I see my students approaching their learning with a new sense of passion, resilience, and determination. Empathy grows in the classroom as students focus on the potential in each other. We forget that, sometimes, the confidence to learn must come before the learning. Otherwise, our students may feel helpless, paralyzed at the seemingly insurmountable mountain of deliverables and tasks.

In this way, I am reminded why I teach – what my purpose and role is. My purpose is to enact the myth that we can transform ourselves, as it were, regardless of the personal, economic, environmental, and societal challenges we face. Because maybe, just maybe, that makes it true.

*Joel Mohr is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Business Administration. His research explores the dynamics of knowledge within consumer and organizational behaviour, including knowledge calibration, folk knowledge, and tradition.*



### Indigenous Spotlight

New beginnings, good intentions, and a growth mindset. Throughout my time teaching and as the Indigenous Curriculum Specialist, I hear one common theme in implementing Indigenous content – fear. Fear of not knowing, fear of making a mistake, fear of appropriation, and fear of continued colonization.

I understand because even I have some of these same fears too! We want to do this work in a good way. We want to ensure that the information we are sharing is accurate and true. Will we make mistakes? Yes! But I believe we need to move forward with good intentions and a growth mindset. This means that we have to understand that we will make mistakes in this work: that is how we learn. We have to take our mistakes and turn them into lessons for ourselves – of what not to do, what to do next time, or how to do things in a different way. If we are on the receiving end of a learning experience and we notice a mistake, I believe we need to work on kindly and respectfully, correcting the mistakes so learners feel empowered rather than defeated so they will not give up.

I heard an acronym a while back that has stuck with me (I can't remember where I got it from): FEAR = F – False, E – Evidence, A – Appearing, R – Real. This has helped me to keep putting one foot in front of the other while doing this work, to not let the fear stop me from continuing on the good path of learning, teaching and researching in a good way, and to not let that pesky fear take over my moving forward.

So, how can we work together to set good intentions and have a growth mindset in implementing Indigenous content? Here are some ideas and resources to help you on your own journey:

- Honour the voices and perspectives of Indigenous peoples by learning the history of land on which your feet are planted.
- Learn something new in your field in relation to Indigenous history, worldview, ways of knowing and being.
- Check out this amazing Indigenous Learning guide curated by Trudy Russo, Liaison Librarian: [Indigenous Learning](#)
- Take time to learn through the [Indigenous Canada](#) course offered by the University of Alberta.
- Come meet me for coffee/tea/water, and let's talk! [joel1@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:joel1@lakeheadu.ca)

Let this be a year of setting good intentions for re-shaping relationships through learning, teaching, and researching based on respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relevance – a kind of new beginning as we work towards decolonization, Indigenousization, and reconciliation.

### Tech-Enabled Focus

#### Automated Engagement with Intelligent Agents

The Intelligent Agent tool in mycourselink/D2L uses artificial intelligence software to send personalized automated email notifications to learners based on specific criteria or conditions determined by an instructor. Criteria can range from a congratulatory message on a well-done task to a friendly reminder about a missed assignment. Not to be confused with system-generated generic notifications, Intelligent Agents use customizable messaging and parameters designed around course activities.

Whether teaching online, hybrid, or in-person, instructors can use agents to facilitate timely and relevant communication at critical junctures to help boost engagement, keep learners on task, and gain insights into learner behaviour. In addition, instructors have access to engagement and performance reports that can help gauge when further action is required (e.g., reaching out directly to a learner) or if adjustments to an assessment or learning material need to be made. Common uses for Intelligent Agents:

- Welcome to the course and login reminders
- Positive reinforcements and completed tasks
- Alerts about missing or late assignments
- Monitoring access to learning material
- Unauthored discussion posts, and much more!

Setting up agents takes a few simple steps and includes options to add attachments and recording audio or video messages. Once set up, agents can be exported and reused in other course sites instructors have access to.

[This short video](#) demonstrates setting up an agent to notify learners who haven't logged in. Visit the [Intelligent Agents webpage](#) on the Teaching Commons website for instructions on setting up agents, support documentation, and other uses for Intelligent Agents.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to the Teaching Commons team at [mycourselink@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:mycourselink@lakeheadu.ca)

**Attend a workshop on Enhancing Student Engagement Using myCourseLink/D2L Intelligent Agents by Kelly Brennan on Monday, January 16, 2023, from 10:00-11:30 am to learn more.**

*Click the button below to register.*

**D2L Intelligent Agents Workshop Registration**

### Faculty Development

#### Teaching Strategies for Teaching Writing

A two-workshop session by Dr. Abhi Rao

**Workshop 1 - Teaching Strategies for Teaching Writing I: Assignment Planning and Making Writing Relevant (Wednesday, January 25; 1:00-2:30):** This workshop focuses on teaching strategies for teaching writing in instructors' respective disciplines. Topics include assignment planning for integrating discipline-specific writing into courses and ways to make teaching writing more efficient and relevant for students. *Click the button below to register.*

**Teaching Writing I Registration**

**Workshop 2 - Teaching Strategies for Teaching Writing II: Assessment of Writing -- Rubrics and Grading Strategies (Wednesday, February 22; 1:00-2:30):** Because assessment of writing can be a time-intensive task, instructors may be reluctant to incorporate writing in their courses. This workshop focuses on efficient assessment of writing. Topics covered include effective rubric models and grading strategies. *Click the button below to register.*

**Teaching Writing II Registration**

### SoTL Spotlight

Young, Sue Fostaty, et al. "Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Across the Disciplines: ICE Stories." *Teaching Strategies and Assessment Across the Disciplines ICE Stories*, ECampus Ontario, 5 Nov. 2021, <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/storiesofteachinglearningandassessment/cross/thedisiplines/>.

This pressbook is "a collection of post-secondary teachers' accounts of the ways the ICE model has influenced their thinking, their teaching, and their students' learning." The ICE model for teaching and learning is an alternate non-linear framework, with leading to "ideas, connections, and extension," which are the three phases of understanding.

### SoTeL Spotlight

Sipes, Shannon M., et al. "Building a Social Network Around SoTL Through Digital Space." *To Improve the Academy*, Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education, 2020, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/rlia/17063888.0039.108?view=text:rgn:main>.

In this SoTL inquiry, the digital connectedness of millennials is capitalized on in a complete redesign of the Centre for Teaching and Learning across five areas: regular SoTL blogs, a website redesign, use of twitter and social media, faculty spotlights on SoTL, and creating a database of institutional SoTL work. The outcomes of this project were effective in building social networks and communications about SoTL in an interdisciplinary manner.

### High-Impact Practice

#### A Growth Mindset for the New Year

With the New Year upon us, it is a good time to consider the ways in which we can grow and develop as educators. One way to help us evolve in our practice is to embrace a growth mindset. Here are some of the ways to adopt a growth mindset into your teaching and learning practice:

- **Seek out learning and professional development opportunities.** A number of workshops and activities can be found on the [Teaching Commons website](#). You can also reach out to a member of the [Teaching Commons staff](#) at any time for professional development and learning support.
- **Utilize constructive feedback from learners** to verify what's working well and to determine where there are opportunities for change and adjustments to a course. Stephen Brookfield's [Classroom Critical Incident Questionnaire](#) is one example of a formative evaluation tool for informing course design.

**Become a reflective practitioner.** Regularly asking questions such as the [30 questions for teacher reflection](#) can provide you with an opportunity to reflect on and maintain focus of your approach to teaching and learning.

### Events Calendar

#### Audio For Education Workshop

Adam O. Thomas

Starts Monday, January 16; runs 10 hrs over 2 weeks

Learning the basics of audio recording and editing can serve as the backbone for a technological shift in instruction. By understanding the fundamentals of "good" quality voice recording to the basics of audio editing, instructors can begin to create a wide variety of content. From instructional podcasts to audio marking responses or even adding voice content to presentations, the **Audio for Education** workshop will help you develop the basic skills to make a sound start. *Click the button below to register.*

**Audio for Education Registration**

#### Enhancing Student Engagement Using myCourseLink/D2L Intelligent Agents

Kelly Brennan

Monday, January 16, 2023, 10:00-11:30 am

The Intelligent Agent tool in myCourseLink/D2L can be used to send personalized automated email notifications to learners based on specific criteria or conditions determined by an instructor. Whether teaching online, hybrid, or in-person, instructors can use agents to facilitate timely and relevant communication at critical junctures to help boost engagement, keep learners on task, and gain insights into learner behaviour.

In this session, participants will be presented with a variety of ways they might use Intelligent Agents for their teaching and learning contexts. Participants will then be instructed on how to set up an intelligent agent in myCourseLink/D2L to their own classes. *Click the button below to register.*

**D2L Intelligent Agents Registration**

#### EdMedia Protégé Program

Dr. Lisa O'Neill

Monday, January 23 - Friday, March 17 (8 weeks)

The EMP program is designed to support faculty members who are interested in being better media creators, enhancing their learners' experiences with effective resources, and distributing media in ways that work for both faculty and learners.

The EdMedia Protégé (EMP) program will improve your capacity to design and deliver media assets such as infographics, videos, graphic organizers, etc. as embedded parts of teaching and learning. In the first three weeks of the program, faculty will work together to better understand how to effectively embed media in activity and assessment. Throughout the remaining time in the program, faculty receive one-on-one support from media/learning developers to design media for learning and to develop assets using common tools and techniques. The program will wrap up with a showcase that celebrates the works of the EMP participants.

*For more information and to register, follow the directions provided on the program homepage through the button below.*

**EdMedia Protégé Program Registration**

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**Teaching Writing II Registration**

#### Online Activity & Assessment Fundamentals

Dr. Lisa O'Neill

February 5 & 6, 2023

Together in this (approximately) five-hour course, we will explore different activities used during online teaching and learning and will consider ways that we can assess learning through technology.

This short course is a combination of online self-directed study through D2L (opens February 5, 2023) and synchronous delivery through Zoom (February 6, 2023). We recommend that you allocate approximately 2.5 hours on each of the two course days to engage in activities.

Registration is limited to twelve participants and is for Lakehead University faculty and teaching staff. This course runs February 5 and 6, 2023. Additional details will be provided to registrants prior to February 1, 2023. *Click the button below to register.*

**Online Activity & Assessment Fundamentals Registration**

#### Engagement Techniques and Tools

Kelly Westelaken and Kelly Brennan

Thursday, February 16, 2023, 10:00-11:30 am

Spice up your lectures with interactive strategies and tech tools. Create a sense of community in your classroom and gather assessment data using the strategies and apps discussed in this workshop. This workshop will be delivered through Zoom and will be recorded. The Zoom join link will be provided to registrants before the event. *Click the button below to register.*

**Engagement Techniques and Tools Registration**

#### D2L Online Course Design Exemplar and How-to

Kelly Brennan and Alex Westelaken

Friday, March 10, 2023, 10:00-11:30 am

This workshop has been designed for instructors who are teaching online or in-person and who are looking to create more attractive course pages that are more visually accessible, align with a clear instructional flow, and embed interactive and engaging multimedia components.

The purpose of this workshop is two-fold: it demonstrates effective instructional strategies for a D2L learning environment, and it also functions as a tutorial on how to place and use multimedia tools to both enhance your virtual classroom experience and create interactive opportunities for your students.

As a bonus, we'll share files and templates to bring these components directly into your own courses. This workshop will be delivered through Zoom and will be recorded. The Zoom join link will be provided to registrants before the event. *Click the button below to register.*

**D2L Exemplar Registration**

#### 5 Quick and Easy Critical-Thinking In-Class Activities

Dr. Rhonda Dubec

Wednesday, April 5, 10:00-11:30 am

This workshop introduces five, fast, no-prep activities that engage higher-order thinking skills and can be used in class or online as discussion guides/extenders, brief thinking/writing exercises, and/or simple assignment/research initiators/guides. *Click the button below to register.*

**Critical-Thinking Activities Registration**