

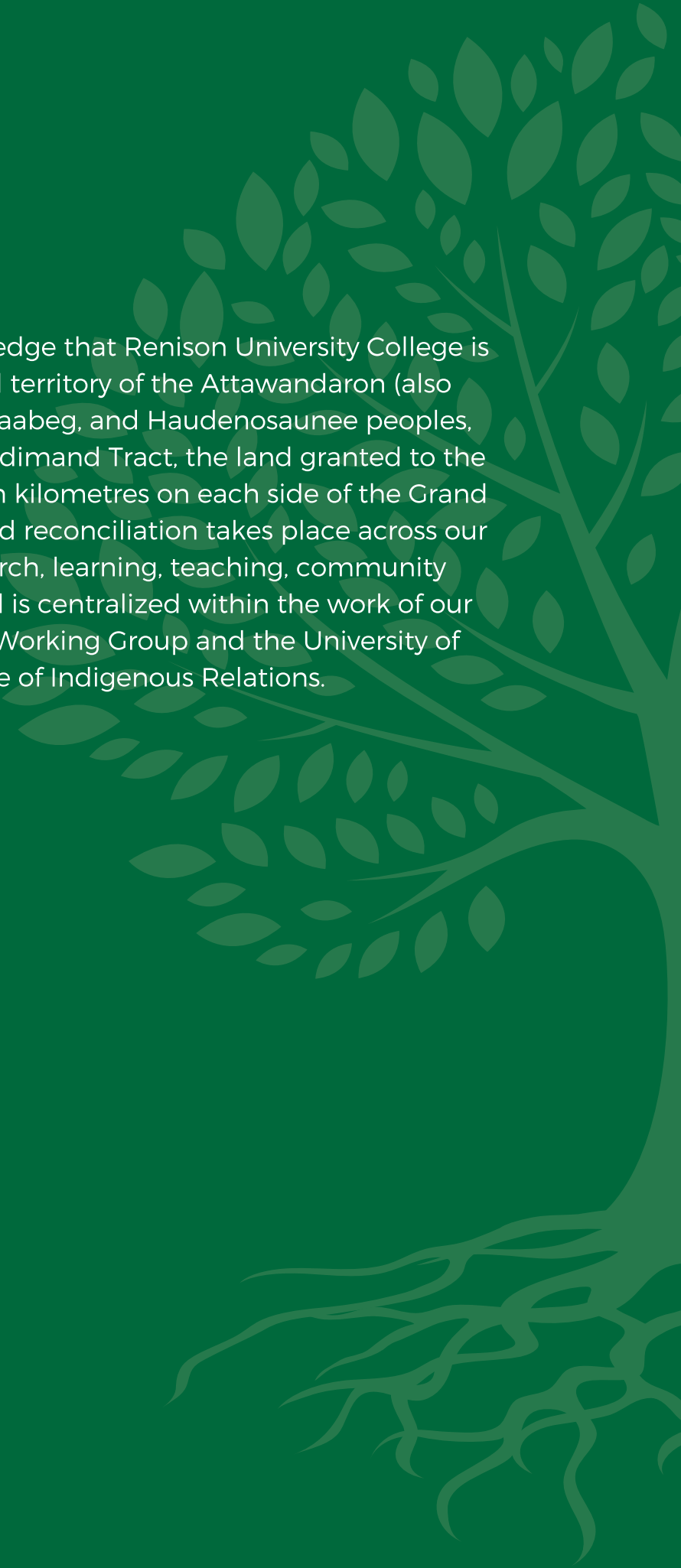
# RENISON REPORTS

SPRING 2022



AFFILIATED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO





With gratitude, we acknowledge that Renison University College is located on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples, which is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, community building and outreach, and is centralized within the work of our Truth and Reconciliation Working Group and the University of Waterloo's Office of Indigenous Relations.

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# TURNING THE PAGE

WENDY L. FLETCHER

As I arrived in the Renison parking lot and headed toward the building for the first time earlier this year, I heard something. It was the trill of a spring songbird. The snow is still piled high around us and the thermostat on my car told me it was -12, but even so- my heart lifted! The songbirds are making their way back. Even though the ravages and markers of a long winter remain with us, the sound of approaching spring shifts the ground of our present reality.

These parallel images (winter and spring) are entirely appropriate for this moment in Renison's story. For the past two years we have lived, along with the rest of our society, through a long and complicated shadow time. But the page is turning: for the first time our whole workforce is engaging in our work in this space again; our classrooms hold students and in the Great Hall the chatter of mixed voices (student and staff song) once again swells. We are recovering.

As we return to old spaces and imagine new ways of being together in learning and in work, we see that our shared focus has sharpened. The thread that runs through all that we are and do at Renison is gathered into one word: students. Students first! Our work of education and mentorship is always and forever in support of the empowerment and well-being of our students and their flourishing. Our staff, our Board, our administrators, and our faculty share this commitment. It unites us across many forms of difference.





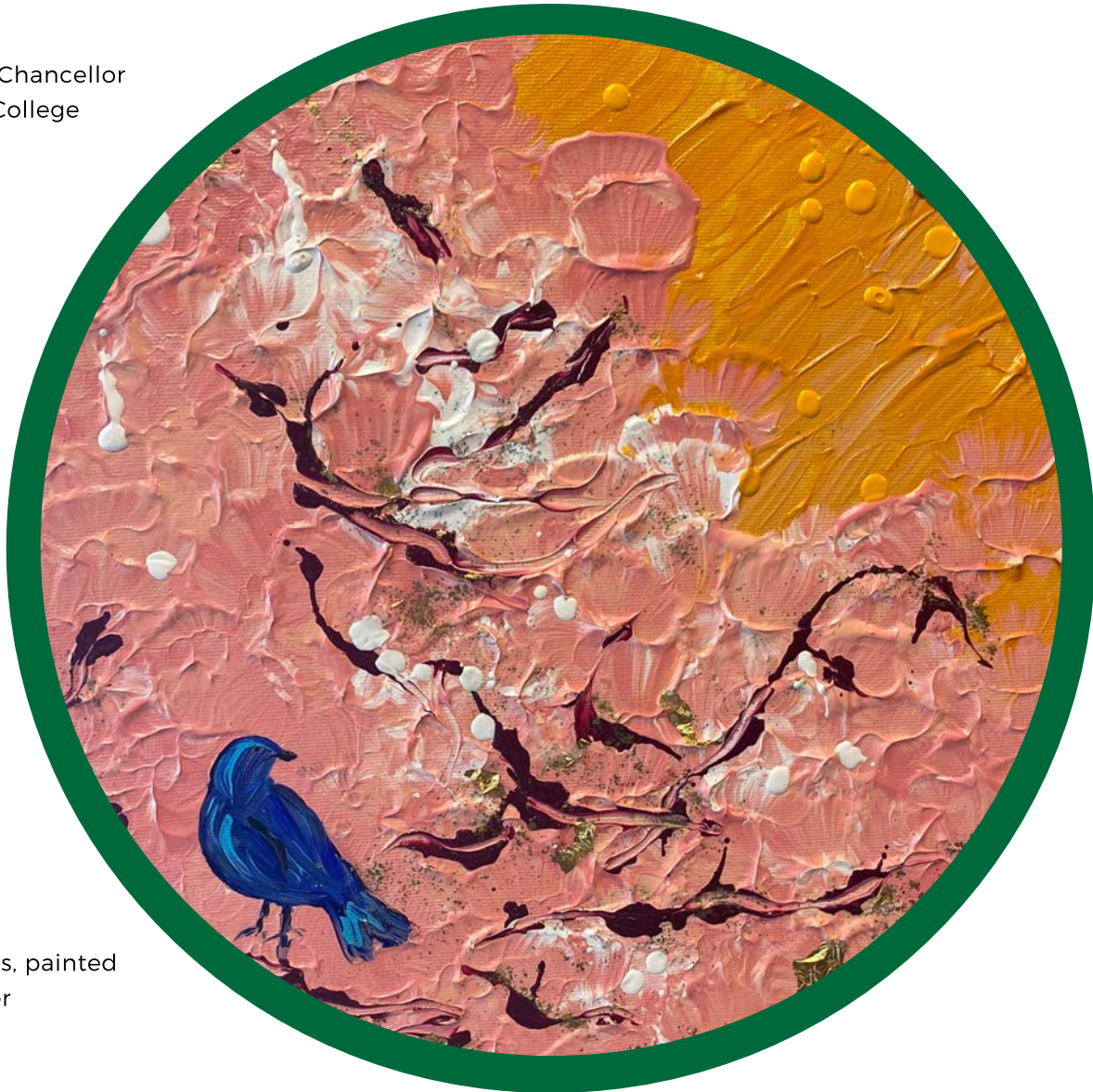
Recently, my imagination has been captured by the words of a song from the soundtrack of the hit musical **Glee**. This enthusiastic song celebrating the potential of the young in a hard-edged world invites the hearer to sing out:

*Sing it out...you've got to see what tomorrow brings...what tomorrow needs...every time they want to count you out...use your voice...sing it from the heart...sing it for the world...sing it out.*

One of the most potent metaphors for human flourishing is song. When we are well-held, well-mentored and well-heard, the unique song that is us can rise- as potently and powerfully as the songbirds of spring: harbingers of a new day coming. Renison wants to count everyone in- education offered toward building a world with a place at the table for all. Thank you for joining with us in support of this vision, as we work together in the service of our students- always first.

*Wendy Fletcher*

Wendy L. Fletcher  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
Renison University College



Right: *Songbird*  
Acrylic Oil on Canvas, painted  
by Wendy L. Fletcher

# NURTURING THE RENISON SPIRIT

KAREN SPENCER

We are in year two of living through a pandemic. Living through a period of adversity, uncertainty, fear, inequity, and significant loss. It's a time when more than ever we need to care for one-another -- to all pull together. Renison has a long history of commitment to a common goal -- creating a better world. As an Alumni, I have experienced Renison as a community of people who genuinely care for each other, where everyone is welcome, and well-being matters. Valuing and caring for others and working together for a better future is in the DNA of Renison - it is the Renison spirit, and it is where I see hope.

I would like to provide a few examples, and I know there are many more. The Student's First campaign, focused on ensuring a commitment to student scholarships and bursaries, while navigating some challenging financial times. The commitment of our President Dr. Wendy Fletcher extending her contract and commitment to the College to ensure a period of stability during a most uncertain time. The recent signing of the Scarborough Charter, committing to address anti-Black racism and underrepresentation of Black faculty and students in higher education.

Amid adversity life goes on. The Board of Governors has had the pleasure of hearing from talented and passionate students at our AGM. We have opportunities to be engaged in faculty research through Board presentations. Through new hires, including our new VPAD Dr. Kristiina Montero, we are inspired by fresh ideas, energy, and creativity.

There is no doubt there will be challenging times ahead, as a Board we have confidence in the Renison Community. It is a pleasure to be part of a caring community of resourceful, creative, and dedicated faculty, staff, and students. Many thanks for all that you do.

Karen Spencer, Chair, Board of Governors  
Renison University College

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
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# RETURNING TO RENISON

CORT EGAN



As I unlocked my office door in February, for the first time in two years, I also unlocked a flood of childhood memories.

My dad was an electrical contractor in Sarnia; he and his crew were responsible for much of the electrical circuitry within Sarnia's Chemical Valley. The city's skyline was a ghostly silhouette of giant towers and storage tanks the size of hockey arenas, all interconnected by intricate pipelines; smokestacks billowed clouds of steam and were topped with dangerous looking flares. The refineries were a jarring contrast to the impossibly blue waters that separated Sarnia from Port Huron, Michigan.

It was perhaps our proximity to the Pinery and Grand Bend that convinced my father to buy a bus for family vacations. Air travel was too expensive, and a cottage was unnecessary with beaches just a bike ride away.

My dad bought a 1951 Twin Coach city bus, destined for Hamilton Street Railway Company. The rollsign over the front windscreen was already loaded with Hamilton city streets: Kenilworth, Barton, King, Sherman, Main; we always kept it on "Special," though "Charter" and "Out of Service" were other options. As kids, we would turn the crank and marvel as all the streets of Hamilton would roll past.

The bus (pictured) was decked out to sleep all of us and had upholstered couches, a fridge, stove, sink and kitchen table that folded into a double bed when not in use. My grandfather lived in Hamilton, so we would often roll into town in our Hamilton city bus. My dad would take great pleasure in opening the accordion-style doors at a bus stop and watch the expression on people's faces as they climbed the stairs, fare in hand, and realized this was not Hamilton transit. A few – either adventurous or foolhardy – would call my dad's bluff and make themselves comfortable on one of the couches. We'd drop them at work or at home, and my mom would wag her finger at my dad in mock dismay.

Coming back to Renison brought to mind the day last summer I rediscovered our old bus that had sold at auction many years ago. That experience is as close as I can come to expressing how our students and residents must have felt returning to Renison in February and renewing our journey of learning and working together. This place is Special, and I'm happy we're back on the road with Students First proudly displayed on our rollsign. Thank you all for being onboard.

Cort Egan, Director, External Relations and Communications  
Renison University College



# MOVING FORWARD: RENISON'S NEW VPAD

In January 2022, Renison welcomed a new face on campus (and online) with Kristiina Montero beginning her tenure as the new Vice-President Academic, and Dean (VPAD) of Renison. As VPAD, Kristiina is responsible for the support and oversight of undergraduate and graduate degree programs at Renison, faculty processes, student academic life, the Office of the Registrar, and Marketing and Recruitment. She is an award-winning university educator, praxis-oriented scholar, and seasoned administrator, having held progressive leadership positions during her career in higher education.

Kristiina has always been a teacher, first completing an undergraduate degree at the University of Waterloo, followed by a Bachelor of Education at Brock. She taught for a few years, but says that as she was early in her teaching career, she continued to have questions. In particular, questions about how we learn, and how sociocultural circumstances influence learning and teaching. Bitten by what she refers to as “the learning bug,” Kristiina set out, initially for one year, to complete a Master’s degree at Northern Illinois University (DeKalb, IL). Her Master’s program was followed by a PhD from The University of Georgia (Athens, GA), and she began her professional academic life at Syracuse University, (Syracuse, NY) before returning to Waterloo Region. One year turned into twelve, and the rest is history.

Part of why Kristiina was drawn to Renison was because of our motto, *One Sky Over All*. An explicit statement of commitment to inclusion and diversity, and a central part of Renison’s identity, she was energized by the acknowledgement of our community as a group of multiple people, with different cultures and identities, all under one sky. Kristiina’s personal and professional background also aligns well with Renison, as she explains the links she sees between the helping professions of Social Work and Social Development Studies with her own teaching and research. There is a link to Culture and Language Studies as well - Kristiina is a multilingual speaker, fluent in English, French, Spanish, and Finnish.

When asked about her VPAD vision and priorities, Kristiina says that she would first like to tackle post-pandemic planning. The pandemic has had an impact on almost every aspect of Canadian life, and post-secondary education is no exception. “The pre-pandemic world is no longer possible, nor desirable,” emphasizes Kristiina. “We have so many things to learn from the pandemic, and then we can start to move forward.”



# STARTING A NEW JOURNEY AS CHAPLAIN

Motorcycles, Jazz Music, and Rockabilly are not typically what one thinks of when describing a priest (at least not those in my experience). But – these all link to Renison’s new Chaplain, the Rev’d Scott McLeod. A person of many interests, Scott is continuing the important work of Renison’s Chaplaincy, as our community transitions back to campus and more in-person experiences.

Scott was drawn to the role of Chaplain at Renison because of the strong community environment that offers opportunities to build relationships and journey with people as they pursue their education or work in the community. Much of Scott’s previous work has been to support people across language and cultural barriers, and he looks forward to working with all members of Renison’s diverse community.

Scott is originally from Victoria, BC, and came to Ontario to pursue an undergraduate degree in Music at the University of Toronto. For his degree, he specialized in Jazz music (he plays the drums) but has also played a variety of genres, including Bluegrass, Folk, Gospel, Motown and even Rockabilly. About halfway through his degree Scott started investigating the seminary and the Church, and ended up taking some courses at the Toronto School of Theology before pursuing a Master’s degree of Divinity in BC. His wife, Su, was offered a job in Ontario and that pushed them to move East again, and Scott took on the role Associate Priest at St. George’s Anglican Church in St. Catharines before becoming Chaplain at Renison.

I asked Scott what his vision is for Renison’s Chaplaincy, and for the first time he mentions “journeying with people” a thread that comes up several times throughout our conversation. Scott explains that he wants to engage with students, faculty, and staff, to help grow their own beliefs and connect with their aspirations and see those lived out. He makes it clear that it’s important for members of the community to see themselves reflected in programming, and that the Chaplaincy welcomes and offers support to everyone.

“Journeying” is both dynamic and pragmatic. It denotes an intention of achieving a goal while placing importance on the process: the journey. This is what Scott means when he talks about his vision for his role at Renison. He wants to get to know students, faculty, and staff, and talk to them about life, ideas and philosophies. By getting to know the community, he’ll be able to serve the folks within, and provide support along the way.

*Image: Scott, his wife, Su, and their family.*



# STUDENTS FIRST

At first blush, it is difficult to see a connection between Renison's Students First appeal, which was launched in November of 2021, and a 1960 white Chevy Impala convertible with red fins and red leather interior, manufactured in the main Assembly Plant in Flint, Michigan in 1959. Please bear with me.

We all know that the past two years have been challenging; to say so is to state the obvious. What is not known to everyone is how the pandemic has disproportionately affected students. Many have been unable to find part-time or summer employment for the past two years; others have discovered that anticipated family support was no longer possible.

In order to ensure that essential funding remains available to our students, the Students First campaign was launched. Our goal is to raise \$200,000 per year for two years - \$400,000 in total - this sum will be available to Renison students in the form of scholarships, awards and bursaries.

\$200,000 per year is a large sum to raise and we knew we would need help. We met with our Chancellor, Manfred Conrad (pictured), and he immediately pledged \$100,000 towards our goal. Thanks to your support, we have now raised \$197,000: we are almost 50% to goal.

The Manfred and Penny Conrad Family Foundation is well known in the Kitchener / Waterloo community for supporting healthcare, the arts, disaster relief and education. Manfred was inducted into the Waterloo Region Entrepreneur Hall of Fame in 2015 in recognition of the generous contributions that he and his family have made to enhance and lift up our community.

You may be wondering what this has to do with a 1960 Chevy Impala convertible, ivory white with red leather interior and punctuated with scarlet red fins. We'll get there.

Manfred was born in the Saarland province of Germany, bordered by France and Luxembourg. There are parts of Saarland that are so magical and picturesque, rich with forests, winding rivers and sweeping valleys, that one almost expects Julie Andrews to twirl into the picture, followed by the Von Trapp children. But Saarland is primarily an industrial state, known for its production of cast iron, sheet metal, tools, wire, coal and its byproducts. Manfred and his family lived a modest existence in a small, industrial town more suited to a Dickens novel than a motion picture musical starring Christopher Plummer.





## ...AND A 1960S CHEVY CONVERTIBLE

At 17, Manfred already had his sights set on Canada. His older brother, Henry, had emigrated to Canada two years earlier and was working in Kitchener as a house painter. A family friend of Manfred's father had also moved to Canada and returned to Germany for vacation with photos from his new life in Canada. One photo in particular stands out in Manfred's memory. It was taken in front of the floral clock at Niagara Falls; the family friend was leaning against a brand-new Chevy Impala with fins as big as surf boards. Two days after his visit, Manfred was at the Immigration Office in Cologne; two weeks after his 18th birthday, Manfred arrived in Quebec, gradually making his way to Kitchener.

Like so many dreams, Manfred's proved elusive. Success did not come overnight. Far from it. His first job was mixing cement for Superior Stone on Victoria Street in Kitchener; long days were spent casting heavy door arches and chimney caps. He eventually went into business with his brother, Henry, and painted houses for a decade and a half. Handy with a hammer and a wrench, Manfred found himself buying homes, fixing them up, and selling them for a profit. Days were long and challenging, but he had a knack for real estate. Gradually, this became a much more reliable source of income, as painters and carpenters and other finishers were always the last to be paid by contractors; too often, they were not paid at all. He sees this determination to succeed, to make a better life, in the goals of our students. "Many Renison students are destined for careers as social workers, youth workers, addiction counsellors and mental health professionals; I am inspired by their selflessness and dreams of a better world."

Manfred downplays the significant role that he plays in supporting Renison and the K/W community. "It's all Penny," Manfred claims, "Penny and the kids. They opened my eyes to the needs in the community." But it's obvious that Manfred's personal story, combined with his many years on Renison's Board, meeting Renison students, has helped to inform his choices.

"Arriving to Canada at 18, I had already completed my formal education. I had more of a chance to fly to the moon than to be accepted into university. I spoke nearly no English – only French and German. It is very difficult to achieve your goals when you don't speak the language. I see the work that the English Language Institute at Renison is doing to assist international students, and I want to help. I hear the stories of sacrifice and hardship that Renison students are facing financially during our Board meetings, and I want to help make a difference in their lives. I want them to achieve their dreams."

Some dreams, like the '60 Chevy, are okay to park; others, like being a champion for access to education and equal opportunities for students, are worth driving for. Thank you, Manfred, for putting students first.



*Back to campus*

# COMING HOME TO RENISON

In early February 2022, Renison's hallways began to see the signs of life and energy that had been absent for nearly 2 years. Though our residence has been open to students for months, only now are courses returning to in-person delivery and those who had worked from home have returned to their offices.

It's a different world, there's no question. But the energy has lightened over the last few weeks. There is nothing quite like hearing laughing and talking from students as they make their way through our halls. Or running into a colleague only seen on screen for nearly 2 years - it's the personal connections that make Renison... well - Renison!

As we move forward, we continue to keep the safety and comfort of our students, staff, and faculty as our first priority. We don't know what the next months will bring, but we are prepared to be flexible and adapt to whatever may be in store. We expect that as restrictions ease, we will be able to continue offering more and more in-person experiences, expand classroom capacity, and return to a roommate-based residence (we have been offering only single rooms since re-opening).

The support of our whole community: donors, alumni, students, staff, faculty, colleagues across campus, other partners, and everyone who supports them - keeps us going. For that, you have our sincere thanks for being part of the Renison community!



*Images:*

*Top: students participate in an in-person event after residence re-opened.*

*Bottom: Renison community BBQ, Summer 2021*



*Tea with the President*

# CREATING COMMUNITY WITH THE COMFORT OF A 'CUPPA

When Cindy Qui (pictured below, right, with President Wendy Fletcher) saw the sign at Renison for 'Tea with the President' she was immediately intrigued. The aspiring clinical social worker, now in year 2 of her SDS degree, stumbled across a monthly event calendar and thought she would check out the new event.

Started in Fall 2021, Tea with the President (shown below) is geared to students on campus who want to connect with peers and talk with Renison President Wendy L. Fletcher. For Cindy, it was a way to connect in-person. Renison is known for its close-knit community atmosphere; because of online classes and social distancing, Cindy felt she was missing the real Renison experience.

Tea-times have been great to help Cindy get to know others on campus, connect with the school community, and make new friends. The social event is also a great way to take a break from studying, and the time commitment is very flexible. "Many people like to drop by for a few minutes," says Cindy. "They say hello and grab a few snacks, it's easy!"

For those considering attending one of these events, Cindy admits that it can be a bit awkward at the beginning, but that everyone is really friendly and it takes no time at all to become comfortable. "Wendy (the President) really puts in effort to make everyone feel welcomed and comfortable," says Cindy, "She is super friendly, approachable and kind, always making an effort to introduce new attendees to other people and make them feel welcome!"

If you see Cindy at the event, she invites you to introduce yourself and strike up a conversation. Plus, according to Cindy, the snacks are great too - cookies, tea, cheese, crackers and fruit are all part of the regular menu rotation!





# ECO ANXIETY

## AT THE INTERSECTION OF ENVIRONMENT AND SDS

Beth Grant, a recent Social Development Studies (SDS) and Environment Resources and Sustainability grad, became interested in Eco Anxiety after learning about how mental health is impacted by climate change. Genuinely interested in both nature and psychology, Beth wanted to learn more about how climate change is affecting the mental health of youth in the Region of Waterloo. Beth was invited to present her resulting thesis project at the 2021 Environmental Studies Association of Canada at Congress, and she hopes it will lead to many more important conversations around climate change and mental health.

Born in Clifford, ON, Beth and her family moved to Kitchener when she started university. Beth found her place at Renison, both as a student and resident – she lived (appropriately) on the Treetop floor in her first year. As part of the Co-op stream, Beth worked with the Regions of Peel and Waterloo in Waste Management; she developed online courses for the Faculty of Environment at University of Waterloo; and she had hands-on experience working with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Sustainable Neighbourhoods Action Authority.

When Beth began to consider her topic for her thesis project, she reflected on her interest and new-found experience; she recognized that a significant gap exists in Environmental work: “So often what is missing from Environmental work is an interdisciplinary approach,” says Beth. “We need to understand what motivates people in order to get them on board for meaningful action.” She is particularly interested in eco-grief, which is a natural and common reaction to learning about or experiencing environmental damage or climate change.

The study included a pool of students in the Faculty of Environment and environment/climate related clubs, with the hypothesis that this group of students would show mental health impacts of



climate change most visibly. They had students complete a pre-activity survey to get a baseline of how they were feeling about the future, and their anxiety level about climate. Then, they asked about their hope for the future, and what gives them courage in the face of climate change. In addition, Beth used photovoice methodology, which had participants take photos and reflect on their thoughts and feelings about the natural world and climate change. Student participants shared photos and reflections in a group environment. Through group discussions and a series of surveys, Beth was able to make some interesting observations.

Not surprising to Beth was the high rate of eco-anxiety expressed by participants in the study. What she was not entirely prepared for, and has given her cause for hope, is that activities of resilience, like taking photos, reflecting and sharing one's experiences can be beneficial to mental health. The problem of climate change is extremely large and difficult to tackle, but there is reason for optimism. "Participants found many sources of resilience and hope for a brighter future," says Beth. "These included spending time in nature, leaning on peers, and taking political or environmental action."

There is demand for more discussion about mental health and the environment, particularly for environmentalists to process discouraging information and data in a healthy way. Beth wants readers to know that if they are experiencing eco-anxiety, they are not alone. She recommends talking to others about it and do the best they can to tap into experiences of resilience. "It's important to be vulnerable," says Beth. "A lot of my data came from my participants opening up and talking about their experiences." Beth also suggests that this could be a place for counsellors to grow their skillset to deal with eco-anxiety directly, and this could be translated into other opportunities to engage and foster resilience within the university community.

Up next for Beth is working at neighbouring St. Paul's University College as Student Activity Coordinator where she will be managing teams of environmental leaders. Her main goal, though, is to help new students have a great experience. She is also planning to submit her research to some research journals and says she would love to do more study in this area now that the roots have been planted.





*Putting Renison Resilience into Practice*

## "THE PATHWAY IS ALWAYS A CONVERSATION"

When we think about Renison Resilience, and the hard work that goes alongside a degree at Renison, we might well place a photo of alum Charmaine Hammond beside that description. Now an accomplished speaker and trainer, Charmaine began her studies at Renison as a distance education student in Social Development Studies, with lectures arriving via cassette tape. "I couldn't take time off of work," she explains. "It was key that I could study remotely. I found Renison and thought it was incredible that I could graduate with a certificate, diploma, and degree – all while continuing my fulltime job."

Charmaine (pictured below) describes getting boxes with cassette tapes and written materials. The work taught her to be self-reliant, focused, and accomplish goals. She got creative, even listening to lectures on repeat via her Walkman while she slept! Saying things out loud also helped her work through the materials. This experience, says Charmaine, taught her to be self-reliant and focused, which are critical to her work now.

Mental Health, Resilience, and Relationships are common threads throughout Charmaine's work. She runs two businesses, Hammond International Inc. and Raise a Dream. Hammond International Inc., which has recently become WBE (Women Business Enterprise) Canada Certified, has Charmaine working as a speaker and trainer going into companies to talk about conflict resolution, building healthy relationships, and resilience. Raise a Dream, on the other hand, helps entrepreneurs, changemakers and non-profit organizations to launch dream projects through collaboration.



Charmaine graduated from Renison before starting her first business, and says that the things she learned were "building blocks" along her path. "What I do now could not have been possible without these tools and skills," says Charmaine. "They were completely transferrable into what I do now."

While at Renison, Charmaine had many projects happening in tandem with her studies. As she was taking a social work course that emphasized collaboration, she was also starting to look at fundraising opportunities for a drop-in centre she was operating for high-risk kids. She asked the kids to help her fill the programming calendar and talk about who to connect with, and one 10 year old's response was "we gotta



# Back Home Again

get to the mayor and his people!” Charmaine realized that she was seeing first hand the impact of bringing people together, presenting an idea, and having others give input. She now teaches people to do that and it’s how one of her most recent projects, a short film, started rolling.

“Back Home Again” is an award-winning animated short film about the fires that occurred in Fort McMurray in 2016 and caused the evacuation of nearly 90,000 residents. Charmaine, a past resident of Fort McMurray, was called by a community organization the day of the evacuation and helped to pull leaders together in Edmonton to support evacuees. She also worked with school boards and parents to teach skills of resilience, an opportunity to be part of the resilience and healing process for the community. That’s when she met Michael Mankowski, a filmmaker.

When Charmaine met Michael, he shared a script for the film, however, no voice cast was attached to it at the time. Over the next 5 years, she says that the project took some twists and turns, sometimes feeling like pushing boulders uphill (which is common with film projects and bringing projects to life). But – the more they involved people, and brought the opportunity forward for them to be involved, the more they were able to get the movie funded and get an incredible lineup of Canadian actors. “Let me ask,” became a mantra, starting from the very first actor. Michael knew Tom Green and also connected with John Schneider, producer, who had worked with Tom Green. When Michael asked John if Tom would be the first voice on the project, really put the dream out there, the response was “I don’t know, let me ask.” Tom Green became the first voice of 19 in a star-studded Canadian cast, all of whom donated their time and voices to the project.

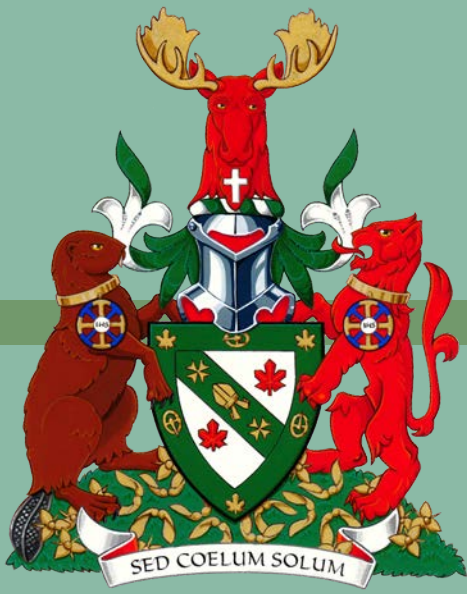
The film has resonated with audiences since its premiere in 2021. In part, says Charmaine, this is a result of the globally shared pandemic experience. The story is based on the fires in Fort McMurray, and is told through the perspectives of the animals who live in the forest. It was created to be a conversation starter about mental health. “It’s not a disaster movie,” comments Charmaine. “It’s about hope, community, resilience, and people.”

The power of relationship and connection is something Charmaine says she learned from Renison and has helped her be courageous throughout her many projects, including “Back Home Again.” She has maintained a close connection with Renison throughout the years since graduation, and received the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2013. Did she have any idea where her path would lead when she applied to Renison all those years ago? “I had no clue! Not one.” Charmaine says with a laugh. “The pathway is always a conversation.”

*Image credit: Michael Mankowski, Alien Kow. From the movie "Back Home Again."*



# GETTING TO THE 'CREST' OF THE MATTER



Never under-estimate the influence of a grade two assignment.

When an 8-year-old David Bowyer (now Reverend Canon David Bowyer, MStJ, BA, MDiv, FRHSC) was given a class assignment by Miss Cochrane on the history of the Township of Scarborough in which he lived, he took on the enterprise with the single-minded focus of an archaeologist. He sketched a map of the township, learned the history of its inhabitants, and carefully drew and coloured its emblem. Largely agrarian in those days, a significant component of Scarborough's seal was a sheaf of wheat. This classroom activity taught David an early lesson in designing a coat of arms: an effective coat of arms should be as simple and direct as possible; it should use clear symbols to convey quick messaging. This not only led to a fascination with heraldry that would shape a great part of David's future life, it also influenced David's approach to writing his popular Sunday morning sermons.

It would be difficult to provide an exhaustive list of all of the individuals and organizations for whom David has created heraldic designs, for there are many. Ontario Land Surveyors, the Town of Westminster, Holy Saviour in Waterloo, Holy Trinity in Chatham, various priests and bishops (Anglican and Roman Catholic), and many more. When the Canadian Heraldic Authority was formed in 1988, David was invited to be one of the heraldic consultants and artists.

Renison University College is one of many institutions that has benefitted from David's keen sense of design and appreciation for historic associations. Renison began with just a shield and that was derived from the arms of Archbishop Robert John Renison, after whom the College was named. The primary difference is the addition of a green border; this shade of green had already been adopted by the College to represent its lush, grassy campus setting. Maple leaves from the coat of arms of the Province of Ontario were added to represent the college's Canadian location and the additional buckles are acquired from the arms of Canon Archibald Howard Skirving, the Chairman of the Board of Governors at the time of the grant, in 1978.

Renison's motto had been in place since the inception of the College: "*Sed coelum solum*". This motto, which literally translates to "*But heaven only*" was also adopted from the Renison coat of arms, but Renison University College's founders elected to interpret the words more broadly in order to align better with the College's vision and values: *One Sky Over All*. This interpretation speaks not only to the diversity of cultures, religions and languages that Renison celebrates, it helps to express Renison's commitment to equity and diversity; our strong belief that we all share an equal place on this planet. Finally, it anticipates our commitment to socially responsible and sustainable investment practices.

Later, Renison would add the helmet and crest to the shield and motto. In this case, the moose's head once again comes from the arms of Archbishop Renison and symbolizes his years of service in



# RENISON'S FULL HERALDIC ACHIEVEMENT

Moosonee, Ontario. This element of the coat of arms has been popular with students at Renison. The Moose Room was a favoured student hang-out in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, the College mascot is named Reni Moose, and Moose Crossing is one of the very popular residence floors at Renison. The head of the moose is also used on the Renison badge which features the silhouette of a moose head over a Maltese cross. The Maltese cross is a recognized symbol of protection; its use in this case is both religious and symbolic of the shelter and security that Renison furnishes for its community.

The final component of the coat of arms which were to be granted are the supporters; these are the figures that stand on either side of the shield: the Renison shield is flanked by a red lion and a beaver. The red lion is taken from the arms of the University of Waterloo, and thus symbolizes Renison's affiliation with the university. It is also found in the arms of Bishop D. Ralph Spence, Chancellor of the College at the time of the grant. The beaver is taken from the arms of the Anglican Diocese of Huron, the Bishop of which is the Visitor to the College. The wagon wheel is taken from the arms of the Church of the Holy Saviour, Waterloo, the founding parish of Renison University College.

Having all of these elements: the shield, the helmet and crest, the badge and the supporters is known as a complete "armorial achievement." An even greater achievement is recognizing how a well designed and carefully considered coat of arms will not only celebrate the history from which it came but will maintain room to anticipate its future. With thanks to David Bowyer (pictured right) and Miss Cochrane.





# STREAMLINING ACCESS TO A BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK

When thinking about a post-graduate degree like the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), many likely think about a student finishing up their bachelor's degree, applying, and moving into the next chapter of their education. But what about the students who are coming to a BSW from a different place? The students who may have begun their education by completing a college program as a Social Service Worker, and want to move into a university program? That's where the new Social Service Worker pathway comes in, streamlining the process for students coming from a college program.

In September 2021, Renison welcomed a special group of Social Development Studies (SDS) students. These students are part of a group who have received conditional acceptance to the BSW program, and instead of having to complete a 2-step application process, they completed a single application and transferred credits from their Social Service Worker diploma to fulfill some of their SDS credits. Though 2021 was the first year it has been offered, the pathway has been embraced by the School of Social Work and has been very popular with incoming students.

This new pathway was part of a larger goal to reduce barriers to members of communities who have been historically marginalized and may be more likely to go to college, rather than university, for postsecondary education. The original 2-step admission process can be a real barrier and deterrent, so the streamlined pathway enhances access to college-level students and indirectly reduces barriers.

Students who are part of this cohort will be connected with the School of Social Work right away, and start building a sense of community as they complete their pre-requisites. Andrea Daley, the Director of the School of Social Work, also stresses the enrichment that students who have completed a Social Service Worker diploma bring to the classroom. These students have practical experience, which is helpful in grounding the Social Work theories and approaches, enriching conversations in the classroom.

NEW PATHWAY AGREEMENT

**SOCIAL SERVICE WORKER  
TO THE  
BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK**

For **Emily B**, the new pathway created an easy way for her to pursue her dream of working as a Social Worker. After taking a few years off after high school, Emily knew she wanted a career helping people. She had a few friends attending Sheridan and found their Social Service Worker program, which sounded perfect. As the program came to an end, however, Emily knew she wanted to continue her education rather than move directly into the workforce. After finding and applying through the new pathway, it was a relief to know that she wouldn't have to worry about applying again to the BSW. Though the first term is currently online, Emily has already made friends in her classes and says she can already feel the welcoming community at Renison.



**Omar** is starting at Renison after completing their Social Service Worker diploma from George Brown College. Omar has had a number of various jobs since completing a finance diploma in 2006, but became interested in social work after their experiences with mental health and substance abuse. After a job loss in 2017, Omar's mental health declined and they sought treatment. Through this experience, they recognized that substance use had become a primary coping mechanism, and was able to complete a successful program at CAMH. Omar identifies this time in their life as the catalyst for wanting to work to help others who had similar experiences. After completing their Social Service Worker program, Omar decided to apply to Renison because they would be able to complete the BSW in as little as 2.5-3 years. Though there were some challenges during the application process, Omar feels fortunate to have been accepted to Renison.



**Emily A** had a bit of a different experience, coming from Niagara College in Welland. Emily became interested in Social Work after seeking help from a Social Worker when struggling with anxiety in high school. After receiving help, Emily realized she wanted to have a career in a similar field and help others who are struggling. Emily was drawn to Renison because of the School of Social Work's link to Niagara College. Though the process was confusing at times, Emily's SDS buddy and Renison support staff were helpful in answering questions throughout the process.







# WALKING IN TWO COMMUNITIES

Andrea Charest (pictured left) has a foot in two important communities; maintaining her balance has been a rewarding struggle

Five years ago, Andrea saw a need in her small community of Listowel, Ontario and decided to fill it by co-founding *It Takes A Village* (ITAV): a grassroots, community-funded organization that empowers community members who are living with precarious housing, financial challenges or mental health issues. Listowel, like so many other small communities in Ontario, did not have services in place to address these all-too-common social needs. Folks who are struggling are often forced to leave Listowel for a larger city that has expanded social services; in so doing, they lose family connections, local networks, even familiar bus routes. Andrea wanted to create services that “will meet people where they are.”

The other community that Andrea inhabits is Renison. She is a third-year Arts student planning to eventually pursue a Bachelor of Social Work. Maintaining good grades while meeting the growing social needs of her community has been a challenge, particularly in the wake of a global pandemic.

“COVID-19 put a spotlight on the many gaps that exist for those living precariously, and those gaps began to widen.” The closure of spaces like arenas and municipal offices resulted in the loss of some pretty basic needs such as public washrooms and water fountains.

Andrea shifted her balance from academics to her community activism, and her grades suffered as a result. Though she admits it has been difficult and she has been hard on herself that she couldn’t spend the time on school she needed to, she knows she made the right decision. “I chose the right thing to focus on during that time,” explains Andrea. “I was helping people navigate both addiction and misinformation, and I have seen a significant increase in food insecurity, and clients who articulate that they are financially precarious.”

ITAV has a mission to empower people who are struggling, while ensuring their dignity is protected. ITAV has a storefront location in downtown





# AND FINDING BALANCE

downtown Listowel, Ontario that uses a cashless secondhand business model that works on a points system (shown right). Each visitor is given points that can be used to purchase items in the store. Andrea says that this model helps to maintain dignity for visitors, particularly those who may be reaching out for the first time.

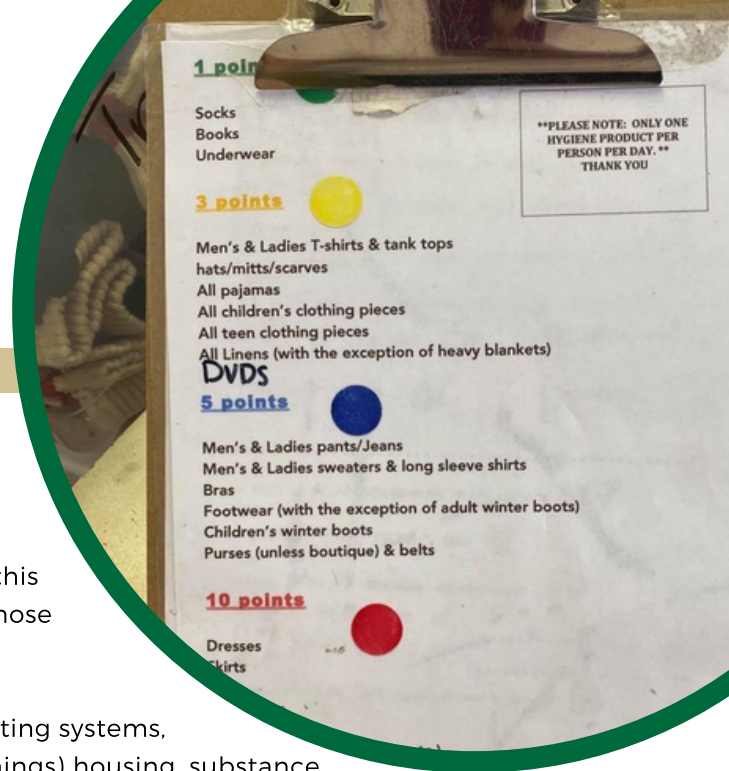
ITAV also provides support and advocacy for those navigating systems, and will assist those who need help with (among other things) housing, substance dependency, and mental health services. Every Monday and Tuesday, ITAV provides access to laptops, phones, or internet access for those needing to attend meetings, appointments, court appearances, etc. They also have a foodbank where clients can access goods without providing any personal identifying information.

The community support has been largely positive, and as Andrea puts it “Some things speak for themselves.” ITAV has been exclusively-community funded for 5 years, and it’s a great model of how a community can care for its own people. There is some negativity, however, and once in awhile when Andrea gets tired in her soul “the universe sends a beacon.” In one instance that beacon took the form of a gentleman who came in and donated transit and grocery cards, and shared his own story. When his son was growing up and struggling there were no resources, and his son had to move away in order to get much-needed support. If ITAV had existed then, his son would have been supported right in his own community. Stories like these come to Andrea quite often, and illustrate how much of an impact the organization has on the community.

Andrea began her studies at Renison driven by her deep feelings of responsibility for her community. She began at Renison years after starting and stopping a degree at the University of Waterloo in the mid-1990s, leaving school after becoming a mother. She admits being afraid to return to academics in her late 40s, but the draw of the community and the coursework were strong. “The courses made me feel like a kid in a candy store,” Andrea says. “The draw to Renison was its community. When I was present I felt like there was a warm quilt around me – like I belonged there.”

There have been times throughout the last two years where Andrea began to doubt herself and her academic career, when she thought she might not be able to continue her studies. “Without fail, at those times, one of my professors would email and check in,” she recounts. “Had that not been the case, I don’t know if I could have kept going – it made all the difference.”

Andrea knows that she will finish her degree and go on to complete a BSW. It may take a long time because of her incredible commitment to her community, but working in tandem also means she can bring her practical experience into the classroom, and vice-versa. Ultimately, Andrea says that her time at Renison has helped her to grow as a person. “The amazing ride of life is to grow and evolve,” she reflects. “Renison has given me a profound opportunity.”



# STAYING INTERNATIONAL IN A TIME WITHOUT TRAVEL

The Conversation Partner Program (CPP) is a mainstay of the Renison landscape, with approximately 300 students signing up each year to participate. The CPP began at Renison during the Fall of 2014, and connects students from Renison's international partners and the English Language Institute (ELI) with students from across Renison and the University of Waterloo. The program allows students to practice language skills outside of the classroom, and is an important element of Renison and Waterloo's internationalization goals. After a relatively small start of 67 partners, the program now typically sees about 150 pairs of students throughout the course of a year.

CPP pivoted as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, with partners speaking online instead of in person. The biggest benefit of the online format is the flexibility for students around the world. Unlike the in-person program, having conversations online means that students are able to participate from anywhere in the world! Interest in the program remains strong. Over the last year, students have connected from India, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kirgizstan – among others.

Students are paired with each other based on personal and language interests, as well as life experiences. Before COVID, each student was interviewed and matched individually. This year, understandably, the process moved online and students were matched using responses from an online form. After being matched, participants receive a check-in email a couple of weeks into the term to see how things are going. Adjustments and any re-matching usually happens at this time, as well as problem-solving related to things like scheduling. In fact, one of the drawbacks with having participants from around the world is varying time zones, which can make finding a convenient time to connect difficult.

One of the great things about the CPP is how it engages partner institutions. These institutions, located around the world, are connected with Renison and most send students to study in the ELI. Partner institutions are provided with a number of spaces in the CPP and then they recruit students who can be matched.

The CPP is closing in on a decade of pairing students for conversation and cross-cultural experiences. The plan is to grow the number of focus group sessions throughout the term, engage students to be CPP ambassadors, and continue to ensure students have a positive experience!!

*Image: Before changes were made during the COVID-19 pandemic, conversation partners like Farzaan (left) and Megumi (right) would connect in person.*





# CONNECTING ONLINE AND ACROSS CONTINENTS

One of the ways that students taking language courses receive support is from their peers, with whom they can practice their language skills. In the Community and Professional Education (CAPE) unit of Renison, the newly established Language and Culture Corner (LCC) program is a way to provide students additional support by connecting them with one another.

The goal for LCC was twofold: connect CAPE language learners, and engage partner institutions. During the pandemic, with fewer students on campus, it became more and more important to create opportunities for Renison to engage students and partners in ways that could be easily translated to online formats. Enter the Language and Culture Corner.

The LCC program was piloted in Fall 2020 with CAPE Japanese language and culture students, followed by students studying Chinese and Korean in the Winter term. The program is group-based, with students meeting regularly over a 6-week period, giving them an opportunity to apply their knowledge of the language and culture they are studying. Activities are flexible, and students are able to direct their own conversations, with the Renison International Office (RIO) providing discussion topics, questions, and support.

Reception to the new program has been positive, with students from across Renison participating. Though it is ultimately intended to engage with CAPE students, there are degree students who choose to participate as well. Overall, nearly 250 students from Renison and partner institutions have participated in the LCC since Fall 2020.

For Son, the attraction of the LCC was that it provided an option for developing English speaking skills without travelling; travel was not possible due to the pandemic. Though dealing with disappointment the LCC was, in Son's words, "the program I was looking for!" Every week, Son's group chose a topic and spent time talking about their culture, interests, and experiences. After getting to know each other, the most interesting part for Son was learning about the culture and experiences of each member. The online format means that participants must be motivated to participate and, according to Son, successful engagement means the development of global as well as language skills.

This is still a new program, and we don't quite know how it will evolve, but we do know that with positive student reception and engagement across Renison - this is a program to watch.



*Image: Son's group meets online to participate in the Language and Culture Corner.*

# RECONNECTING TO RENISON FROM PART TIME STUDENT TO CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Renison's new Board Chair, Karen Spencer, has always been drawn to Social Work, but her journey into the field was, as is the case with many students, not a straight line.

Karen grew up in Sudbury, ON, a small town known mostly for its mining industry and the Big Nickel. After completing high school, Karen found herself considering Nursing or Social Work as possible career paths – both helping professions. After moving to “The Big City” of Toronto, she found a job in an office working for a great organization, but kept hearing the call of Social Work.

It was after the move to Waterloo Region that Karen connected with Renison and the Social Development Studies (SDS) program. Part of the attraction for her was the interdisciplinary approach of the department, which meant that Karen could explore a variety of subjects and really expand her general knowledge. She started as a part time student while continuing to work full time, but “Renison was the place for me!” Karen says fondly.

Part of what made Renison so special for Karen was the small community feeling and the relationships that develop between students and their instructors. Even 30 years later she will run into some of her SDS professors and they still know her name. Now, in her role as Renison Board Chair, Karen can see that those personal touches remain strong, “I had an opportunity to go to one of the Convocation ceremonies after joining the Board and the number of students who were coming up and hugging their profs – you can see how strong those

*Image: Karen and her partner and dog near their home in Waterloo Region*





relationships are. In the helping professions, in the work that we do, relationships are key – and it's truly amazing that it's part of our learning environment right from the beginning."

Now the Executive Director of Family and Children's Services (FACS) of the Waterloo Region, Karen says that it is a privilege to help children and families who may be at the lowest points in their life. "I have completely loved my career in Child Welfare," she explains. "It's a field where people sometimes work for only a few years and then move on, but it has always been my love."

Karen began at FACS 27 years ago as a frontline Child Protective Worker. Since then, Karen says she has filled nearly every role in the organization, which gives her a perspective that few have – though admittedly not all of it is positive. She has come to understand the harm that has been done by Child Welfare to some, particularly Indigenous children and families, and Black children and families. "It's important for us to understand that our helping professions and institutions are colonial systems," she explains. "We have a lot of work to do to understand the impact of systemic racism and white supremacy on children and families who do not identify as white. We are doing better now but there is still so much to be done."

Karen brings her extensive experience to Renison now as Board Chair. She decided to join the Board because her time at Renison as a student had been so positive, and she sees it as a great way to give back to an institution she loves. She knows that higher education is still something typically accessible only to the affluent, but wants to use her time on the Board to ensure that Renison is part of a community that ensures opportunity for those of all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to have the benefit of postsecondary education. How will we do this? "Find ways to recreate ourselves, learn, understand, and come to grips with the truths of how our institutions have caused harm," Karen explains. "Then – we take the necessary steps to make things better."

*Image: Karen standing next to the sign for Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region, where she is Executive Director.*



*Renison's English Language Institute develops eSTEM*

# CREATING ONLINE EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS A WORLD AWAY

As the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic raced around the world, the Renison English Language Institute (ELI) put on hold many of its short-term programs, which typically welcome international students to Renison for a Canadian university experience. The ELI explored creative ways to offer programming in an online way, while maintaining its commitment to provide international students with a vibrant experience. eSTEM was one of those programs, coming out of the ELI's strong partnership with ApplyBoard, and it has quickly become an important part of what the ELI can offer students.

eSTEM (English plus Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Environment, and Mathematics), was launched in 2021 during the Lunar New Year break, and is designed for students aged 13-17. Though it began as a way to reach students online, the potential for reaching prospective students is what makes it such an important new program. The online format also allows Renison to welcome students from around the world who may not be able to attend in person, even without pandemic restrictions.

What's so special about eSTEM? The program gives students an idea of what it's like to study in STEM disciplines at the University of Waterloo, and introduces a wide variety of faculties and career path options. Students receive 10 hours of soft-skills training to develop their interpersonal skills in an English-speaking context, in addition to 10 hours of interactive workshops and events designed to immerse students into the University of Waterloo's dynamic STEM ecosystem. By developing partnerships with exceptional research institutes and departments such as the Robotics Hub, Waterloo.AI Artificial Intelligence Institute, and the Centre for Education in Mathematics and Computing, students can see the types of extraordinary work happening at Canada's innovation university and gain a deeper understanding of study opportunities in Waterloo's respective Faculties.

*Image: A slide from eSTEM orientation.*





One of the benefits of the program is that high school students can reference their eSTEM participation on university applications. Students are also encouraged to stay connected with Renison as an eSTEM alum and are invited to virtual events. As an ongoing member of the Renison community, the hope is that they may consider applying to Waterloo and may even become a BASE student at Renison as they begin their university career. Those students would already know about the supports offered by Renison, which should help ease their transition to postsecondary education in Canada.

eSTEM has already received overwhelmingly positive feedback from past participants. Jointly with ApplyBoard, Renison receives feedback from students and parents, which drives refinements such as the addition of engagement awards to incentivize student participation throughout the program.

Renison's ELI plans to continue this program in a virtual format, offering it three times per year. They will continue to improve and innovate based on student feedback and diversify partnerships within the university to reach departments that would be enthusiastic about being part of the program. What's clear is that there is an appetite for learning in a different way than in the traditional classroom. In fact, though online programs were not on the horizon for ELI in the pre-pandemic world, being forced to think in an online realm has allowed the ELI to create new opportunities that were previously unexplored.

*Image: eSTEM students from the Winter 2022 term gather online for a group photo to celebrate the end of term.*



# "RENISON GETS IT"

Lavorn Hunt did not want to study online. The 2021 Social Development Studies (SDS) grad and current Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) student knew that online classes would fit into her life more easily than in-person classes, but she was skeptical that it would give her what she was looking for.

Lavorn (pictured) attended college right out of high school and worked as an Admissions Officer for the next 13 years, but had always wanted to pursue a career in Social Work. She had a Marketing Diploma and a Social Service Worker Diploma, but really wanted to earn her BSW degree and affect change at a community level. After doing some research, Lavorn found SDS at Renison and the lightbulb went on. When she saw the flexibility of the program, and the wide variety of courses, Lavorn thought to herself, "Renison gets it!" Not only would SDS help qualify her to apply to the BSW program, it was also flexible enough that she could manage a full time job and life commitments while still pursuing her dream.

Her journey began part-time in 2014, long before the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated online learning. Lavorn says that her resistance to online learning meant that she came in with lower energy. She was pleasantly surprised, however, by the culture that was created online by the professors. From the format of the courses to teaching approaches and discussion - each element was framed in a way that helped to cultivate the engagement that Lavorn was seeking. She was also able to digest the material on her own without the influence of her peers at first, which she said she came to appreciate because each student could form ideas and bring their own perspective to discussions. Lavorn also liked that she could log off if needed, "there were times when mentally and emotionally I couldn't connect," she says. "It was great to have the flexibility to log on and off when I needed to." The flexibility extended to the types of courses available as well - Lavorn says that taking courses like Arab Culture have been very important in changing and shaping the way she looks at the world.





# HOW ONE STUDENT THRIVES IN RENISON'S ONLINE COMMUNITY

Though her coursework has been largely online, there have been some in-person opportunities as well. Lavern, who lives in Ajax, recounts making the drive in early 2020 (pre-pandemic) to go to an event that she had been invited to by one of her professors. She says that along the way there were many such invitations, another way that she could connect with classmates, meet professors, and engage with university life as an online student.

Now a BSW student, Lavern is planning to pursue a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree at Renison. She is most interested in affecting change at a community, rather than an individual, level. She hopes to open her own practice where she can create community programming, and perhaps get involved with policy work as well. This vision is, in part, due to a shift in her perspective of what Social Work means. "In my younger years I was around a number of Social Workers who worked at an individual level," Lavern explains. "SDS opened my eyes to possibilities beyond the individual, to how communities and policies/practices contribute to the health and wellbeing (or lack thereof) of the world."

I asked Lavern if she had any advice for someone considering pursuing Social Work, as she was over 15 years ago. "Do your internal work," she responds immediately. "Be willing to critically evaluate yourself, your blind spots, your biases, and then allow that to permeate into how you show up in the world. Social Work focuses on helping and doing good, but if we are not self-aware, we can do tremendous harm."

*Image: looking over the bridge in Renison's East-West garden*



*Alum Malissa Veroni embraces discomfort and thrives*

# STEPPING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE AND ONTO THE STAGE

When Melissa Veroni (Renison class of 2006) was a young girl, she had dreams of being crowned Miss America. The image of the beauty pageant contestant was largely shaped by television images: sparkling even gowns, shimmering tiaras and adoring fans. As an adult, she did not revisit these childhood fantasies; indeed, in her calling as a Social Worker and champion for survivors of intimate partner violence, this childhood fantasy seemed to be in direct opposition with her career path. As a result, Melissa was skeptical of the Miss World Universal Productions pageant system when she first learned of it but, heeding the advice she gives to her own clients, she decided to lean into her own discomfort. She placed third in the global competition.

Traditionally, beauty pageants include swimsuit competitions and evening gowns, but the Miss World Universal Productions place more emphasis on social and community advocacy. “There were many women there who were involved with education and support roles like social work and other mental health fields” commented Malissa. “The competition is more about how we make a positive impact on our community through our field of work.”

Since beginning her journey as part of Miss Universal World, Malissa has found that the pageant program has allowed her to build connections, network and spread awareness about issues that are important to her. “It allows me to have a bigger voice and reach more people,” she explains. “I was recently invited to participate in a podcast to help increase awareness about partner abuse, and I’m hopeful that I’m reaching people who I may otherwise have missed.”

Since completing a Social Development Studies degree in 2006, Malissa has become a Registered Social Worker and lives and works in Grand Prairie, Alberta. She works with a wide range of ages, from young people to seniors, and also mentors a couple of Social Workers in Kenya.

*Image: Malissa (centre, in black and white dress) being crowned 2nd runner up at the 2021 Miss World Universal pageant*



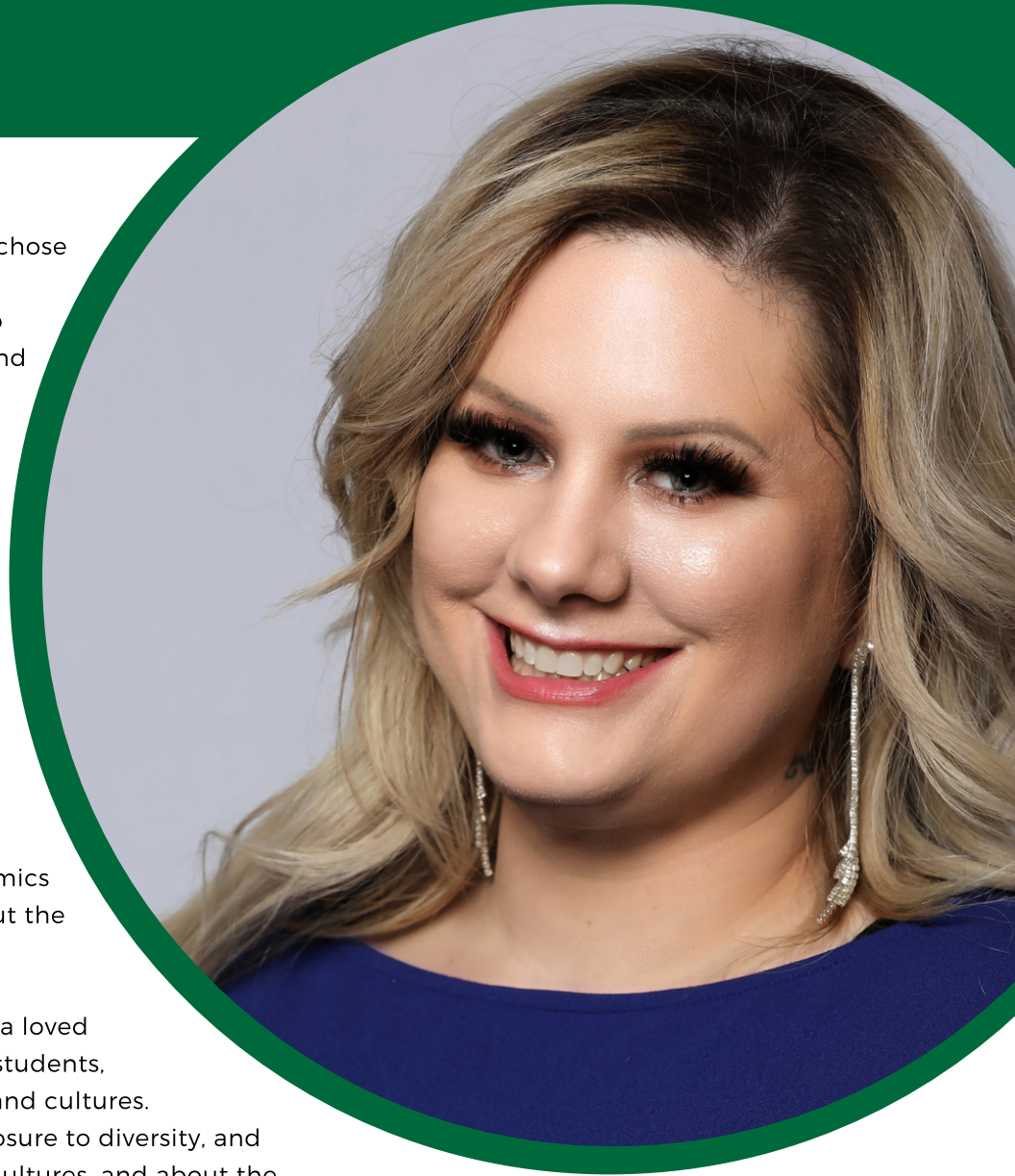


Originally from Guelph, Malissa chose Renison because she was a bit nervous about making the jump from high school to university and wanted a smaller, more supportive environment. The welcoming atmosphere and strong academic programming, along with the diverse student population was a great fit for Malissa. Immediately Renison “felt right” says Malissa. The small class sizes meant she could easily make connections with professors like Dale Payne, whose courses helped shape and challenge Malissa’s assumptions about family dynamics and helped her learn more about the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Outside of the classroom, Malissa loved hanging out with International students, learning about other countries and cultures.

“Renison was really my first exposure to diversity, and I learned so much about other cultures, and about the 2SLGBTQ+ community,” adds Malissa. “I got to know people from all over the world and my eyes were really opened to experiences that were unlike my own; those experiences shaped me both personally and professionally.”

When asked what she would say to someone who was considering a career in Social Work, Malissa answered eagerly, “Don’t limit yourself.” She explains that many get into the field of Social Work to address a specific need, but once they start learning about the different aspects of the field there might be something that connects more deeply. Malissa has clearly found her place in Social Work, and is now using her position as the inaugural Miss Italy World Universal 2021-2022 to help represent and empower women of all abilities, identities and diversities to advocate against gender violence and promoting equal rights for all.



# NORTHROP FRYE LIVES ON IN RENISON'S LUSI WONG LIBRARY

Northrop Frye is quoted as saying, "The most technologically efficient machine that man has ever invested is the book." How fitting, then, that his bust, created by acclaimed Canadian artist Hanna Boos, will reside in Renison's Lusi Wong Library. The sculpture, originally created in 1983, was presented to Dr. Wendy L. Fletcher, President of Renison University College, last November. The sculpture of the distinguished Canadian literary professor is one and one-half times life size; a cement cast mounted on a wooden base.

"Any who have seen Hannah's work know her sculptures capture much more than a physical representation of her subject - they touch at the essence, the heart, the spirit of the person she reflects through her art," commented Dr. Fletcher during her remarks. "Thank you, Hanna, for choosing Renison to be the home for your sculpture. It is most welcome here. We will care for the sculpture and esteem its creator as an ongoing part of the Renison story."

At 92 years old, artist Hanna Boos is a living link to some of Ontario's greatest sculptors. Boos was born in Rotterdam, the Netherlands in 1928. Moving as a teenager to Cologne, Germany, Boos had the opportunity to receive her early training under sculptor Ingeborg von Rath in Bonn and later worked in the studio of Walter Buss in Düsseldorf. When WWII began, her studies were interrupted, but Hanna continued after relocated to Canada in 1955 (Guelph in 1957), and established her studio in 1972.

*Images: Top: Hanna Boos and Wendy Fletcher discuss artistic expression in Wendy's office at Renison.*

*Bottom: Hanna Boos and her family attend the presentation ceremony at Renison, November 2021.*







*Image: Artist Hannah Boos stands next to her sculpture of Northrop Frye, at the presentation ceremony at Renison, November 2021.*

After moving to Canada, Boos studied in the workshop of prominent Canadian sculptor Francis Gage, a friend of the notable sculptors Frances Loring and Florence Wyle, who were closely connected to the Group of Seven. Boos' sculptures are in collections across North America and Germany, including in New York, NY, Washington, DC, Toronto, Mississauga, Oakville, Ottawa, Kitchener, Elora, Guelph, Berlin, Bonn, Düsseldorf, and Munich.

Canadian scholar Northrop Frye is among the most distinguished and celebrated literary critics in Canadian history. Frye developed an important school of literary theory, the archetypal approach called Myth Criticism, which drew on the anthropological and psychological bases of myths.

Originally, Boos offered to donate the bust of Frye to the Elora Poetry Centre, but its co-founder Daniel Bratton, also a lecturer for Renison's Culture and Language Studies department, thought that it should have a larger audience, and the decision was made to move the sculpture to the Lusi Wong Library. A bronze version of the bust is on display at the EJ Pratt Library at Victoria University, University of Toronto. Anyone who would like to see the bust at Renison in person is welcome to visit the library during business hours.

# SDS BUDDIES

## CREATING CONNECTIONS FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

Transitioning into the first year of a university program can be tough, whether a student is entering directly from high school, transferring from another institution, or entering from the workforce. The Social Development Studies (SDS) Buddies program, launched in September 2019, aims to help with this transition, providing peer support by pairing incoming SDS students with an upper year SDS student. SDS buddies provide additional support to new students, as a go-to person for questions or guidance. For upper-year students, it is a great way to engage with new students, connect with other volunteers, and boost their resume. Upper year students are also supported by SDS staff members with regular check-ins and a dedicated website with additional resources, scenarios that might come up, tips/tricks, etc.

SDS Buddies are matched along as many characteristics as possible, with a specific focus on method of entry (direct from high school, transfer, etc.). In its first year, the program included interviews of each upper-year buddy before matching. The ratio of buddies depends on the number of upper year volunteers, with upper year buddies getting as few as one first year buddy, or as many as four. The frequency of communication between buddies is left up to the students, but they are asked to connect with buddies a minimum of once per month. Buddies are also invited to events once per month; another way to create connections among their peers. Throughout the pandemic, events and touchpoints have shifted online, but as some campus events start to become available on campus, in-person events are starting to become possible again.



Miriam (pictured), has participated as an upper-year buddy since the program began and has been a buddy 3 times so far. She thought it was a great idea and said her first thought after hearing about the program was “I wish I had someone like this to ask questions of when I was in first year!” Miriam has found the experience to be very meaningful because of the opportunity to connect and form relationships with different types of people, and she sees it as a learning experience that has been just as transformative for her as her first-year buddy. Miriam says that she often helps her buddy with everyday things like advice on time management, adjusting to the university workload, help with course selection, and direction on how to get involved. The most important thing? Making the connection, so her buddy knows that they are not alone, they have a friend who is there to support them. That's what buddies are for.



Meghan (pictured, right) joined SDS buddies as an upper-year buddy to make a difference for students who were in the same position as she was, only a year before. She has experienced feelings of anxiety and loneliness, and knows how much of an impact having someone there for you can have. Meghan makes a point to send frequent check-in messages to her buddy, and support them as they navigate some of the important first-year tasks like getting a WatCard (Waterloo's student ID), finding a library or good place to study, and meeting their fellow students or professors. She has also made a point to lend a helping hand to any first-year students, and has made even more new friends along the way! Meghan says that her buddies have made as much of a difference in her life as she hopes she has made in theirs. She's grateful to be part of such an important time in a student's life, and thinks all upper-year SDS students should try being an SDS Buddy.



*Image below: Students play cards in the Dunker Family Lounge, one of the SDS Buddies events organized for students back on campus.*



# LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE THROUGH

CW: Mention of sexual assault

Sometimes, when life grows dark, a light suddenly shines through.

That's how Shelby Bolitsky describes her first term at Renison. Before the pandemic took hold, Shelby (pictured) had a job she loved and was making future plans. The pandemic upended those plans, and Shelby found herself without a job and looking for a new direction. She had previously studied at another institution, but after experiencing sexual assault, she decided to take time off. In 2020, Shelby started at Renison as a transfer student, and has flourished. In addition to her studies, she is the student representative on Renison's Board of Governors, she works as a Peer Success Coach, as a Residence Life Team Leader with Waterloo Campus Housing, and is now making plans for a career in either Social Work or Student Affairs.



Shelby chose Renison after reflecting on what was most important to her in a university. Renison had the atmosphere she was craving; smaller and community focused, with priority placed on mental health and wellbeing. "We are often told that we need to be strong," says Shelby. "But that was detrimental to me because what I needed was help and support. At Renison, it doesn't matter if you're strong, you have the support to accomplish your goals."

Since beginning at Renison in September 2020, Shelby has been part of the student cohort learning online. This allows her the flexibility to work and stay involved with the things she cares about, while also managing school demands. She says that professors have been key, and have consistently offered support to students relevant to their needs. "I can see that there is passion on the part of faculty to not only deliver course content, but also to make sure we are benefitting from the classes," says Shelby.

Shelby is drawn to working with children and youth, and most of her courses align with her career goals. Until recently, she has been focused on pursuing a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree and working as a high school guidance counsellor, but she knows that is only one of many options open to her. Shelby is now considering exploring roles in Student Affairs at Renison or Waterloo where she may have an opportunity to give back to the community she loves.



Image: Alex D Alton helps visitors  
find their way at Renison



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