

TESL Ontario's 40th Annual Conference
“TESL Ontario at 40: Thriving, Excelling, Sharing, Learning”

TESL Ontario 2012 Conference Report

The 40th Annual TESL Ontario Conference, “*TESL Ontario at 40: Thriving, Excelling, Sharing, Learning*” was held at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel from November 8th to 10th, 2012. Over 1500 delegates attended, 710 of whom were LINC and ELT personnel who received conference assistance from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. An additional 250 ESL delegates were supported by Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

Our first plenary speaker, Randi Reppen, is Professor of Applied Linguistics and TESL at Northern Arizona University (NAU) where she teaches in the MA TESL and Applied Linguistics PH.D. programs. Randi shared her insights on “Corpora and Language Teaching: Ideas for the Classroom”. Our second plenary speaker, Diane Larsen-Freeman is Professor of Education, Professor of Linguistics, and Research Scientist at the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor spoke on “Progress and Regress in Second Language Learning”.

Drs. Reppen and Larsen-Freeman also joined their peers as they participated in the 13th Annual Research Symposium which is reported on elsewhere.

Conference delegates who attended the 7th Annual Panel Discussion, “*The Evolving Landscape of Language Training in Ontario*”, heard Yves Saint-Germain, Director of Information, Language and Community Program Policy Division, Integration Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada; Mourad Mardikian, Manager of Language Training Unit, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration; Jean-Guy Fréchette, Senior Manager of Program Development Unit, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; and Richard Franz, Director of Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch, Ontario Ministry of Education, as they shared updates and discussed new initiatives relevant to professionals working with English language learners in Ontario.

Thanks go to the numerous individuals who volunteered their time and shared their insights, best practices and innovative ideas with their peers at over 200 workshops and presentations. Participants were also able to enhance their knowledge regarding technology in the classroom which is reported separately.

The extensive exhibitor displays are always popular and provided participants an opportunity to examine and purchase the latest ESL resources.

The "Going to the Theatre" option proved popular once again. Over one hundred delegates took advantage of reduced ticket prices to see either "War Horse" or "La Cage aux Folies" at local theatres.

The inaugural Sparks Awards were presented at Thursday's Welcome Reception. Winners of the various contest categories in celebration of ESL week were recognized. As well, the reception provided a relaxing networking opportunity. Throughout the province 47 municipalities acknowledged the importance of English as a Second Language education by declaring ESL Week.

The Friday evening dinner and entertainment provided an opportunity to relax. Two individuals were presented with TESL Ontario silver pins in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the field of ESL. TESL's 40th anniversary was toasted and those in attendance were the first to hear the announcement that the 2013 conference will be held at the Allstream Centre at Exhibition Place. Accommodations and the Friday evening dinner will continue to be at Sheraton Centre Toronto. Following a delicious dinner, the crowd enjoyed the music of "Footloose".

The success of the conference depends largely on the volunteers who present, monitor doors or staff the registration desk. The conference could not exist without their commitment and effort; the conference committee is most appreciative of their dedication to our profession.

Barbara Krukowski
Conference Chair