

TESL Ontario's 41st Annual Conference
“Merging and Emerging Pathways through Language”

TESL Ontario 2013 Conference Report

The 41st Annual TESL Ontario Conference, “*Merging and Emerging Pathways through Language*” was held from October 24th to 26th. While accommodations and the Friday evening dinner remained at the Sheraton Centre Toronto, Allstream Centre at Exhibition Place was the actual site of the conference, including the Welcome Reception. The spacious environment at Allstream was appreciated by delegates, presenters and exhibitors.

Over 1400 delegates attended, 743 of whom were LINC and ELT personnel who received conference assistance from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. An additional 248 ESL delegates were supported by Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

Thanks go to Oxford University Press for sponsoring our first keynote speaker, Scott Roy Douglas. Dr. Douglas, an assistant professor at the University of British Columbia, spoke on “Production: Exploring Lexical Thresholds in Speaking and Writing”. TESL Ontario is grateful to Cambridge University Press for sponsoring Friday’s keynote speaker, Dr. Martin Hewings, a noted researcher and author of a number of textbooks, Dr. Hewings’ topic was “Using Authentic Language in ESL Materials Development: The (Rocky) Road from Research to Application”. Saturday’s featured speaker, Dr. Deep Saini, vice-president of the University of Toronto spoke on “Professional Immigration and Nation Building”.

The delegates’ conference experience was further enriched by three research symposia. The first, “Blending Technology with Traditional Classroom Techniques for Learning and Teaching” presented findings from Iryna Kozlova, Carleton University, and Geoff Lawrence, York University. In the second symposia, Scott Roy Douglas, University of British Columbia, and Kim McDonough, Concordia University shared their views on “Task-Based Language Learning.” “Canadian Language Benchmarks and Assessment” was the final symposia. In it, Janna Fox, Wendy Fraser and Aparna Chandrasekaran from Carleton University, Carla Hall and Amelia K. Hope from University of Ottawa, and Gail Stewart from Assessment Consulting Services shared their opinions.

At the Eighth Annual Panel Discussion, *"Integrating Pathways to Language Learning"*, delegates heard representatives from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, and Ontario Ministry of Education share updates and discuss new initiatives relevant to the ESL profession in Ontario.

Over two hundred individuals volunteered their time to share their insights, best practices and innovative ideas with other ESL professionals in over 150 workshops and presentations. Participants were also able to enhance their knowledge regarding technology in the classroom by attending our Technology Fair.

The more spacious exhibitors' area proved popular and provided participants an opportunity to examine and purchase the latest ESL resources.

This year's "Going to the Theatre" option included the ever popular "Les Miserables" or "I Love Lucy" and was an opportunity to enjoy one aspect of Toronto's night life.

ESL Week, which was recognized across Ontario by 53 municipalities, was celebrated at Thursday's Welcome Reception and ESL week contest winners were recognized. The Friday evening dinner and entertainment provided an opportunity to relax. Two individuals were presented with Sparks of Excellence awards for their contributions to the field of ESL and the Distinguished Contribution Award was also presented. During dinner, greetings were brought from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, and acrobatic entertainment was provided by A2D2. Following dinner the crowd enjoyed dancing to by a DJ.

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