

# TESL Ontario's 47th Annual Conference

“Cultivating Innovation and Inclusion”

## 2019 Conference Report

The 47<sup>th</sup> Annual TESL Ontario Conference, “Cultivating Innovation and Inclusion” acknowledged how English language teaching is continuing to change and was reflected in the wide range of presentations.

Held at the Marriott Downtown Eaton Centre in Toronto on December 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed just under 1000 attendees, the highest number we have had in several years. TESL is grateful for the conference assistance from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services for enabling 250 delegates to attend the conference. Many of these were among the 118 individuals who attended the Friday afternoon Administrators session.

Dorothy Zemach, presented an entertaining but informative keynote on ‘The (Dis)comfort Zone’, giving the audience plenty to think about in terms of online culture and the effect it has on us. Our second keynote was a remote presentation by Gavin Dudeney whose topic ‘Technology in Language Teaching: What Works, What Doesn’t’ ultimately focused on mobile phones as the key technology to be used in our programs. Christien Lee’s keynote was sponsored by National Geographic Learning. In discussing ‘Food for Thought’, Christien emphasised ways to foster innovation and inclusivity in our classes.

This year’s Techknow session featured 12 tech related topics, in which participants circulated throughout the room to learn more about various aspects of technology. The focus on technology continued with 3 other remote sessions available.

The theme of the 14th Annual Panel Discussion was “Shifting Perspectives”. The audience heard updates from Yves Saint-Germain, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Ontario Region, Yvonne Ferrer from Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, from Joanne Prior Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, and Pauline McNaughton from Ontario Ministry of Education. As always, the delegates appreciated the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists.

Our third annual Career Connections segment provided attendees an opportunity to hear advice and relevant information from a panel of employers, after which they could connect with representatives from 23 organizations who were in quest of potential staff.

Best practices and innovative ideas were shared by 191 volunteer presenters through 120 workshops and presentations. In addition, there were 15 poster presentations, an increase over previous years.

A new addition to our conference also involved technology! The Sched App which was a free download for delegates was accessed by 163 of the delegates, of whom 156 created their personal schedules using the App. No doubt we will see more interest in this next year!

Thirty-five exhibitors displayed their goods in the exhibitor hall, providing participants with the opportunity to peruse and purchase the latest ESL resources.

At Thursday's Welcome Reception the Sparks of Excellence awards for contributions to the field of ESL and the Distinguished Contribution Award were also presented. We continue to be grateful for, and inspired by, the dedication and hard work of our members.

A conference of this size is due part to the generosity of our sponsors who contribute to our success. We are most appreciative of the support of British Council – IELTS, ESL Coin, National Geographic Learning, New Language Solutions, CELPIP CAEL by Paragon, The Retired Teachers of Ontario and the University of Saskatchewan.

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

Barb Krukowski  
Conference Chair