

TESL Ontario's 50th Annual Conference

“Celebrating 50 Years of Community, Leadership, and Innovation”

TESL Ontario 2022 Conference Report

The 50th Annual TESL Ontario conference, ***“Celebrating 50 Years of Community, Leadership, and Innovation”*** was another opportunity for TESL Ontario to connect with its members and the TESL community virtually and offer a diverse range of professional development opportunities.

The conference was held on October 26-28 and welcomed 1090 attendees. 82 virtual sessions were offered, including 4 special sessions of Joint Program Administrator Meeting, AGM, Welcome and Awards and 50th Anniversary Celebration, TESL Ontario Committee Meet and Greet and 4 other networking roundtables, and 8 supplier sessions.

This year’s first keynote speech featured Canadian Olympic medalist Jeremiah Brown, whose talk entitled *“Make the Impossible Possible: Lessons from an Improbable Olympic Journey”* introduced the attendees to the concepts of resilience, understanding of the human transformation cycle, strategies to adopt optimistic resignation to relieve burnout and replace fear with practical perspectives on managing overwhelm. The second keynote speech was delivered by Tyson Seburn from University of Toronto and was titled *“A Pedagogy of Belonging Includes Us All”*. This enlightening session shared important messages and takeaways on the topics of inclusion, representation and equity in the language classroom and introduced the participants to a practical framework for belonging pedagogy. Both keynote sessions were well-received by the attendees.

The 17th Annual Panel Discussion with representatives from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, and Ontario Ministry of Education was organized around the theme of *“Fostering progress. Strengthening connections.”*. As usual, the session featured updates from the ministry representatives and included an interactive Q & A session.

There were 208 attendees in our annual Program Administrators session (a slight increase from last year), bringing together program administrators from across the province as well as representatives from the federal and provincial funders of language training programs.

TESL Ontario’s Research Symposium was successfully held and featured 3 prominent TESL scholars: Nina Spada from OISE University of Toronto, Hossein Nassaji from University of

Victoria, and Ron Thompson from Brock University. The speakers discussed key areas of their research, practice and scholarship as well as major developments and future directions in their respective fields.

The Career Connections Panel Discussion was an opportunity for new adult ESL teachers to find out about employer expectations, learn how to incorporate newly acquired and sought-after skills into their resume, and explore best practices for interviews. We also hosted our second virtual career fair, featuring 14 employers from various sectors.

65 concurrent sessions were offered during the conference through the collective efforts of presenters, moderators, volunteers, the conference planning team and TESL Ontario staff. TESL Ontario's Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday, followed by an interactive Welcome Reception featuring the Sparks of Excellence awards and the TESL Ontario Distinguished Contribution award. The participants shared their words of encouragement with the award recipients during the welcome event and we had the opportunity to celebrate TESL Ontario's 50th anniversary with fun draws and prizes.

Once again, TESL Ontario's 50th Annual Conference was a success thanks to the collective efforts of all individuals involved in organizing the event, as well as our TESL/ESL community members who joined us for 3 days of fruitful professional development activities. It was an honour to celebrate 50 years of community, leadership and innovation with all of you.

Tayebeh Shalmani
Conference Chair