

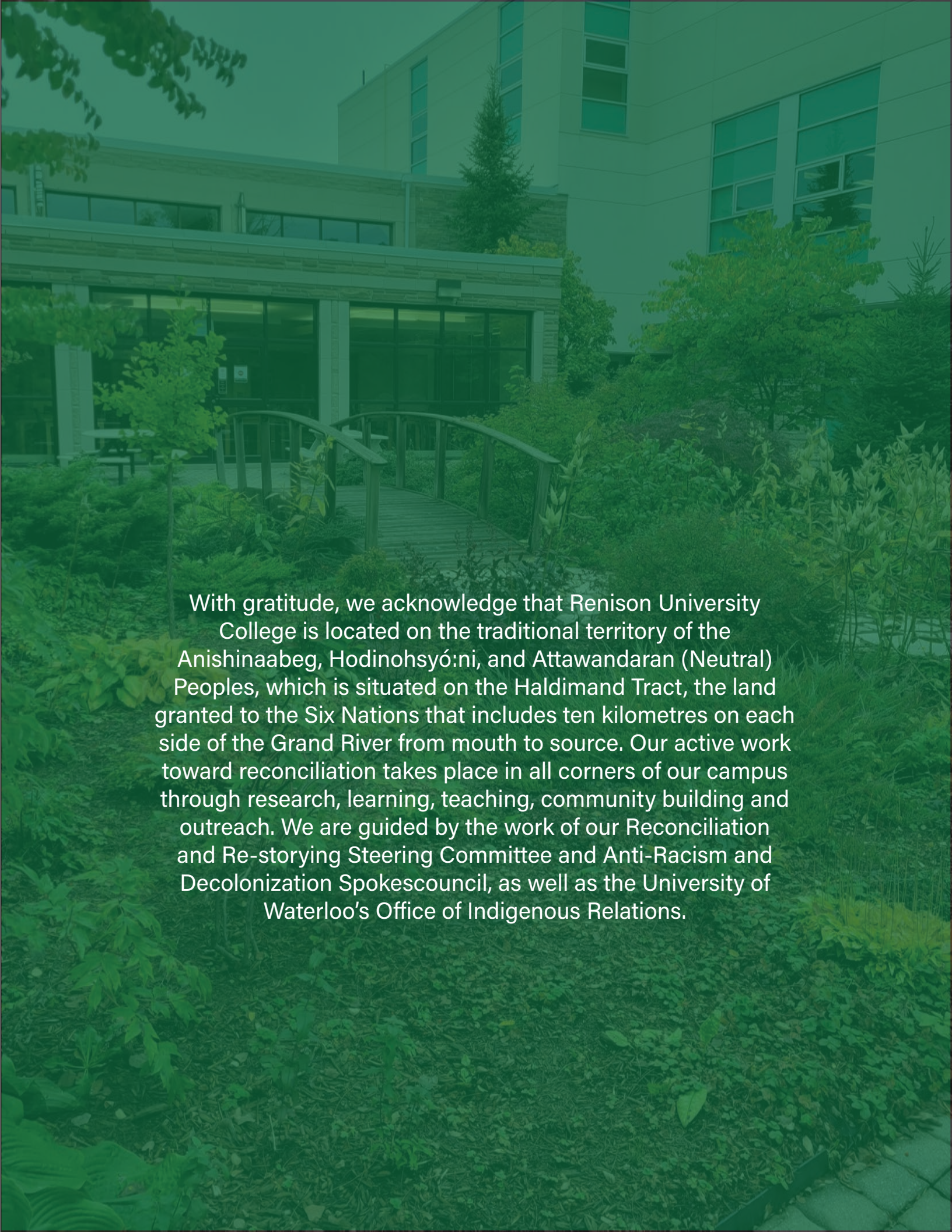
SUMMER 2023

RENISON

REPORTS



AFFILIATED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO



With gratitude, we acknowledge that Renison University College is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Hodinohsyó:ni, and Attawandaran (Neutral) 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 from mouth to source. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place in all corners of our campus through research, learning, teaching, community building and outreach. We are guided by the work of our Reconciliation and Re-storying Steering Committee and Anti-Racism and Decolonization SpokesCouncil, as well as the University of Waterloo's Office of Indigenous Relations.

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Are we there yet?

Wendy L. Fletcher, President
Renison University College



“The Golden Age lies ahead and not behind”

- William Shakespeare




“Are we there yet?” How many times have we heard this question posed over the years of our lives?

So much of our journey is framed as a quest for a destination: graduate with our degree, and then the next one; procure the job that will give us meaning, purpose, satisfaction and an adequate lifestyle; achieve status, recognition, place; make a difference we can measure. Surely if we try hard enough, we will get there.

Many times, over the last months, I have heard the questions: Are we there yet? Are we back to where we were before? Are we recovered from the trauma of the pandemic? Are we there? I have answered these questions in an evolving way as the story progressed: no, not yet; we are getting there; we are almost there.

In retrospect, these were not helpful answers. Because, of course, where is there? We cannot go backwards. Renison will always be different from how it was in previous eras. Our present is dynamic and always changing.

Coming to the beginning of this next new chapter in the Renison story the only helpful response to give to the question are we there yet is: yes, of course we are there. But the thing is: we always were. As living beings, the journey is our home; the journey is itself the destination. Learning to live



*“Are we there yet?
Yes absolutely, we
are there.”*

in the ambiguity of a changing context, as all society must, is how we heal from the trauma of losing a past which cannot be our future. But then, it never could be. The ground we are standing on today will always give way to tomorrow, often in ways we could not have imagined. Learning to hold that changing space is the work.

Writing in the fifth-century BCE, Greek philosopher Heraclitus observed that we can never wade into the same river twice; our world is ever-changing. I suppose, then, that peace and safety comes when we are able to embrace our ever-changing world as the place we call home. The deeply exciting part of this of course is that as Shakespeare once said, “The Golden Age lies ahead and not behind”! Renison knows how to imagine a better future for this world. Our entire *raison d’être* (reason for being) has been framed around this commitment: leaving behind an old world in hope of weaving a more just, equitable and liveable future for ourselves and for the communities entrusted to our care.

Are we there yet? Yes absolutely, we are there. Today is the day from which the future will be born.

Wendy Fletcher

Embarking on a Learning Journey

Karen Spencer,
Chair of the Board

As Chair of the Board of Governors, I am grateful for the opportunity to be in a leadership role of an institution that I have a deep appreciation for. I have written in the past about my positive experiences as a student; I am a graduate of Social Development Studies (SDS). What stood out for me as a student, and what stands out for me now as Board member, is the commitment of Renison's faculty and staff to the students, the focus on high quality education and preparing students to address the complexities of our world, the spirit of collaboration, and sense of community.

As I think about Renison, where we are now, and the path ahead, I am reminded of the legend of the Sankofa Bird, which was shared with me by my colleague Clayton Greaves. Sankofa is a word from the Twi language of Ghana and means to "go back and fetch". The Sankofa Bird sits with its head turned back and holding a golden egg. In the African American context, the Sankofa Bird is used to symbolize the importance of understanding the past when building the future.

As we look to the future, Renison is embarking on a learning journey. Through the Renison Reconciliation and Re-storying Steering Committee we are examining our historical connection to the Anglican Church and our commitment to the Indigenous peoples of this land. In the last year of our Strategic Plan, work has started on the developing a plan that will take us to 2027. This new plan will be informed by what we had learned about the impact of colonialism and systemic racism experienced by Black, Indigenous and racialized people.

Looking back, we have much to be proud of at Renison. The concept of *One Sky Over All*, the vision of a world without division and hatred, is as relevant today as it was in 1959, the year Renison was founded. Our sense of community has created a solid foundation at Renison and there are many positives for us to celebrate. It is equally important to examine areas in our past where we could have done better. It is this candid reflecting back that I believe will be Renison's strength in creating our best future.



Introduction

A few months ago, I met with Doris M'Timkulu at a coffee shop in downtown Elora. Doris is the widow of Dr. Donald M'Timkulu, pictured right, who was a long-time sociology professor at Renison, a key architect of Renison's Social Work program, and served as Acting Principal for several years after the death of Wyn Rees. Donald was described as a "soft-spoken visionary" and was committed to breaking down racial barriers through both his teaching, and his example.

After his death in 1999, a student award was established to assist students in gaining an intercultural learning experience within Canada or abroad, as an integral part of their studies. Donald epitomized Renison's motto of *One Sky Over All*, understanding that the best way to overcome racism and cultural ignorance was through a better understanding of other people and their cultures. I have never met Donald but, after my coffee with Doris, I feel like I have.

Meeting a friend over coffee used to be noteworthy only inasmuch as the coffee or service exceeded or failed to meet expectations. Today, it is the act of meeting that is noteworthy. Doris and I had been attempting to meet for almost three years, but the pandemic and other factors foiled those plans. As Doris entered the diner and I rose from my seat to motion her my way, I felt a wave of emotion.

In the coming weeks, Renison will be hosting a 60th anniversary reunion for former residents of Renison. We have approximately 50 registrants and a full host of programs, meals, fun and laughter has been organized for the three-day event. Hurrah.

On alumni weekend, Renison, along with St. Jerome's, Conrad Grebel and United, hosted a



Above: Dr. Donald M'Timkulu

beer and bites event, pairing locally crafted beer with some savory snacks from the Renison Food Services Team. Importantly, and unlike the last beer tasting event we hosted, this was an in-person event. And what a night it was.

The ritual of communing, of breaking bread, of sharing a cup of coffee together is back. I am grateful that the pandemic has taught that these occasions must not be taken for granted. Finding time to meet in person, share stories and reminisce is fundamental to the human experience. We need to embrace these opportunities and recognize them for what they are: Vital.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cort Egan'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with large loops and a long tail.

Cort Egan, Director
External Relations & Communications



 **RENISON**
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*“Here, our
stories
become
one.”*



Renison Connections, Set in Stone

Rituals help us to remember important times in our lives. They often live within the hidden doorways that exist between endings and beginnings; they help to celebrate and memorialize certain periods in our lives that should not pass without someone bearing witness; connections and relationships are the glue that seal rituals in our memories.

Renison has had many rituals over the years: College Dinners, Wind In/Wind Out, end of term celebrations, Convocation, Founders' Day, and many others. Most have stood the test of time; others have slowly faded away.

Current Renison rituals are typically segmented by the community they serve. Wind In/Wind Out brings together our students who live in Residence; Degree students celebrate through Convocation; we host a series of end of term celebrations for Continuing and Professional Education (CAPE) students; Founders' Day brings together alumni, staff, faculty and Honorees.

Endowed by Darrol and Susan Bryant, the new Renison stone ritual is intended to bring our entire community together in a way that is meaningful to all. Dr. Darrol Bryant, Professor of Religion and Culture, also served as Director of Renison's Centre for Dialogue and Spirituality in the World's Religions. Susan taught English at Renison for 25 years. Together, they have tended the beautiful gardens at Renison, in both its physical and figurative forms. This stone garden symbolizes their commitment to Renison and the many stories that they have touched and influenced.

Several times during the course of the year, Renison will hold an offering ceremony within the Bryant Stone Garden to celebrate various stages of a Renison journey. Move-in days, retirements, new hires, celebrations of lives lived, will all be marked by this new ritual. Community members will lay a stone of their choosing in our community garden; their stone represents their story which is now forever connected to the story that is Renison. These stones become a tangible expression of the many stories that have come together to form our community. After the stone is placed in the garden, community members are invited to select a hand-made, stone bracelet that will represent the next stage of their journey. Renison is now a part of their story.

Here, our stories become one.

The inaugural stone garden ritual was held in June of 2022. Darrol and Susan Bryant, along with a group of staff, faculty and friends, came together to mark the beginning of this new tradition. It was an emotional day filled with music, laughter and a few tears. We are thrilled to have such a meaningful way to honour and celebrate the stories that make Renison so unique.

If you are interested in learning more about the Stone Garden Ritual and how you can participate in an upcoming offering ceremony, contact Cort Egan, cort.egan@uwaterloo.ca.

If you are interested in donating to the Stone Garden Fund, visit renison.ca/stone-garden.



The Sky's the Limit

The hybrid work week, hands-free washrooms, QR code menus and portable air purifiers are just a few of the enduring elements of the pandemic. My favourite by-product of the pandemic by far is Lost Aviator Coffee, which almost didn't get off the ground.

Adam Wright and Steve Zsago (pictured right) are both airline captains more comfortable landing an Airbus 330-200 at Cancun International Airport than operating a steam wand on a cappuccino machine; at least, they were until about two years ago. Today, they are the proud owners of Lost Aviator Coffee in Guelph Ontario; but there was a fair bit of turbulence and uncertainty along the way.

Steve vividly remembers the last flight he operated before the pandemic effectively shut down the travel industry. It was a repatriation flight from Cuba to Quebec City. The flight south

was eerily quiet so close to March Break; the flight home was full to capacity and included the weight of an unknown future. Within days Steve, along with 90% of the North American airline industry, was grounded and subsisting on government pandemic pay. "It was a scary time," admits Adam, Steve's business partner, friend and fellow pilot.

As the pandemic dragged on and the leisure travel business continued to languish, both Adam and Steve went through various stages of grief, having lost not only their careers, but their sense of identity. Once past the depression and loneliness stage, they began the rebuilding stage. It was one of those idyllic June evenings that seem so full of possibility. As the sun set, a few stray cicadas continued their drum-like rattle, promising more heat in the morning. "We sat together over a few glasses of whiskey and smoked cigars, challenging each other

to come up with a plan. Steve was planning to join the OPP, but I thought we should start a company together... I just didn't know what kind of company. By the time I left Steve's house that night," Adam recalls fondly, "we had a name for the company and a strategy that we have employed to this day." Lost Aviator Coffee was born.

Now, there was just the small matter of learning how to roast coffee.

Adam and Steve soon learned that roasting coffee is both an art and a science. "We felt that the best thing to do was to just climb into the cockpit, so to speak. We learned by doing. We bought a roaster and began experimenting with different recipes. Thankfully, we also had some strong and generous mentors who gave us some great tips."

Adam and Steve overcame a lot of obstacles to get their business up in the air: bureaucratic red tape; supply chain issues; learning how to roast the perfect coffee bean – but they persisted.

Within just a few short years – and in the midst of a pandemic – Lost Aviator expanded its operation from the basement of a small bakery to three brick-and-mortar locations and a fourth near Pearson Airport in Toronto. Their socially sustainable roasts can be purchased online or at a variety of specialty food outlets including Rowe Farms in Guelph

In November 2022, Renison partnered with Lost Aviator to create our own, signature roast. A unique blend of beans from Peru, Ethiopia and Brazil, Morning Moose Coffee is available exclusively from Renison. Thanks to the generous support of Adam and Steve, \$6 from every bag of Morning Moose coffee goes directly to Students First in support of student scholarships, awards, and bursaries.

Treat yourself to a bag of Morning Moose – our students will thank you!

Visit renison.ca/morning-moose for more info and to order.



Photo above: Lost Aviator Coffee co-founders Adam (left) and Steve (right) enjoy freshly brewed Morning Moose coffee in their Guelph coffee bar, using (of course) their limited-edition Renison mugs.



Above: Robin Stadelbauer, Renison alum.

Finding Home

Robin Stadelbauer was a shy, high school teenager when her family left their home in the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation and relocated to Waterloo. Robin immediately felt as though she had landed on a faraway planet. Being Indigenous without community or familiar symbols around, Robin struggled to find belonging. She describes this period as one of cultural isolation; she felt disconnected and lost, and there was no money for long-distance phone calls home, let alone visits.

One of Robin's high school teachers saw that she was struggling and encouraged her to interview someone at a local Indigenous centre, Weejeendimin, as a school project, and even drove her to the appointment. That interview led to an invitation to a drumming and social event with what was then known as the Aboriginal Student Association on Waterloo's campus – a bright spot in Robin's dark time in Waterloo.

After high school, Robin chose Renison for her postsecondary studies due in part to familiarity: Robin's mom was a Renison grad. Robin already

knew a bit about the Social Development Studies (SDS) program, its professors, and the campus. Robin wanted something that gave her a broad range of opportunities, and the SDS program fit the bill. Robin didn't have a clear career goal in mind, but she knew she wanted to give back to Indigenous communities, particularly her own.

Starting her SDS degree brought mixed feelings for Robin. She loved learning and listening, but she was painfully shy, and it was tough to connect with classmates. Eventually, Robin knew she was just going through the motions. She made the difficult decision to leave school, return to the reserve, reconnect with family, the land, the water, and heal. Leaving university tasted like failure; she felt as though she was disappointing not only herself but her parents and her community.

Robin came back to school because she wanted to finish and advance her career. She began working on campus at St. Paul's University College in 2007 before moving to main campus

in 2008 and taking on a role in Advancement, a job she loved, and where she would work until 2020. Now at Waterloo full time, Robin turned her sights towards finishing the degree she had started a decade earlier. Renison helped Robin start fresh; she took courses each term, completing a 3-year SDS degree in 2012. She wasn't done though, and after taking a year off of studying, Robin continued her studies to upgrade her degree, completing her Honours Arts degree with a minor in Anthropology in Spring of 2022.

In 2020, Robin started working at the Office of Indigenous Relations reporting to Jean Becker, the AVP. The two had originally met years earlier, only moments after Robin withdrew from university. As she was leaving campus she walked through St. Paul's University College (now United College) and discovered an Aboriginal Services Counsellor had been hired and was working on campus. Robin, feeling the worst she had ever felt, went to the counsellor's office. Here she found familiarity: Indigenous symbols on the walls and shelves, and the counsellor that looked like an auntie. Overcome by emotion at the mere sight and believing she had found the resource too late; Robin burst into tears and ran from the office before the counsellor could initiate any conversation. That counsellor was Jean Becker. Now, Robin gets to work with and learn from Jean. Though there is much to do, Robin is extremely motivated to ensure that others don't have the same isolating experience she did, and that Waterloo is a welcoming space where Indigenous people can thrive.

SDS has, according to Robin, tied into almost every aspect of her work in the Office of Indigenous Relations. SDS helped her understand the systems that Indigenous folks have to live in – the social systems and nuances. On a personal level, SDS helped Robin live in the community outside of the reservation. In SDS, there is emphasis placed on learning about social justice issues and how to tackle them, tying directly to Robin's work.

I asked Robin what advice she would offer students like herself who may be considering studying at Renison or Waterloo. Her words are encouraging. She would tell them to engage, and



Above: Robin with Reni Moose, in 2012.

not be afraid to connect with other students and to utilize support services offered by faculty and staff. When she was studying, she sometimes wondered "how will this help?" In retrospect, she now appreciates how these school assignments helped develop her critical thinking skills – which Robin refers to as the "golden tool."

Robin's journey through postsecondary education has not always been easy, but she describes her time at Renison as transformational. She came into the program, learned how to think critically and how to ask questions. Not only has she been transformed, but she has also gained the ability to help transform society.

As part of the Office of Indigenous Relations, Robin works to support the university campus community about Indigenization and Decolonization at Waterloo. The office is a resource for consultation and advice, with the recognition that the overall responsibility rests on the whole of campus. There is a lot of significance that comes with having an Office of Indigenous Relations at Waterloo, Robin explains, it says a lot about the institution, its values, and its desire to make change. She sees so much potential in the platform that the university has; layering an Indigenous lens can impact research, student life, and society at large – truly transformational.

Robin is now Associate Director in the Office of Indigenous Relations, and recently moved back to her home community with her family. She let us know that she and her family are settling into a new routine and are happy to be home.



Above: Henry next to one of his recent paintings.

A Renison-ce Man

Around Renison Henry Doucette, Renison's Manager of Facilities, is known for his quiet smile, friendly presence, and willingness to help with all things Renison. From building a backdrop for the Founders' Day celebrations to making sure the tap in the staff lounge is in good repair, Henry is an omnipresent figure at Renison, part of a team that keeps the lights on (literally). What many don't know, however, is that Henry is also an accomplished artist. A true Renaissance (or - Renison-ce, if you'll humour me) man, Henry has been creating works of art since his very early childhood.

For as long as he can remember Henry has loved to draw. Among his earliest memories is drawing a picture of Santa Claus at age 7 and promptly giving it away to his brother who struggled to draw his own. Growing up in the small community of Mount Stewart in PEI, one of 18 siblings, drawing was something that fed his creative spirit, and could be developed

fairly inexpensively. To help encourage her son's talent, Henry's mother would bring home large pieces of cardboard from the fish cannery and those would become his first sketchpads.

After moving from PEI to Ontario, once his children were about 10 or 12, Henry decided to pick up a paintbrush. He leaned into his lifetime of drawing skills, and first drew a picture before then painting the same one. After showing it to some of his drawing classmates their praise encouraged Henry to keep going.

Landscapes were often the subject of Henry's first paintings, "I love to paint trees" he explained with a chuckle. He was also fascinated with how the shades could make things look closer or farther away, almost like magic. Eventually Henry wanted to shift to portraits, and figured out that the measurements of a face were the key - "people think it's the eyes, but it's not" he says, and credits portraiture courses for advancing work.

With Henry's art, the learning is constant, and he loves it that way. He recounts a story of being given three great big art books from a teacher who was living in an apartment building he was managing at the time. Turns out, they were a set of art courses, and he's been working his way through them ever since. Right now, Henry's working on the figure drawing course and loves the challenge of it – "It's stretching me and I love it!"

Henry's artistic talents seem to have been passed along to his children too. His daughter is a talented artist, and his granddaughter seems to have been gifted with the same drawing talent, "she's really good!" comments Henry. His son is artistic too; he is a gifted musician, but never took up the family sketchbook.

Henry has had a lot of encouragement from family and friends for his own work, but his dream is to teach and nurture others' artistic skills. He says that in his retirement he'd love to take some

university art courses and teach school-age children drawing and painting. He says it's like sharing a little bit of what you have, and it's rewarding. He mentions teaching a group of Renison students a number of years ago, and being blown away by the artistic talent of some of the students – many of whom had never even picked up a pencil!

Though he has been painting now for years, Henry's passion remains with the simple pencil and paper. Even though he loves painting, "drawing is my passion," he says. This writer has no doubt he'll continue to inspire the next generation of artists by demonstrating his own passion as a future art teacher!

Photos below: Some examples of Henry's work, including a reproduction of Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring (left) and a portrait of a young family member (bottom right).





Above: Veronica Blanco Sanchez, Renison alum.

One Step at a Time

Renison Alum Veronica Blanco Sanchez uses SDS and Law to Affect Change

For Veronica Blanco Sanchez, Renison class of 2016, early life served as a significant source of inspiration. Fleeing her home in Venezuela at age 9, Veronica knew her future would include helping others. Now, a lawyer in Ottawa, Veronica is living her dream.

With big dreams, Veronica worked hard after arriving in Canada as a refugee. After completing high school, she set her sights on top Canadian universities, ultimately choosing Renison as her home away from home. She started her degree studying Social Development Studies (SDS)

at Renison but changed course and became a Sociology major after the Sociology courses became her favourites in the SDS program.

During her time at the University of Waterloo Renison remained Veronica's home and was a strong source of support. She was an active member of Renison's community and lived on TreeTop as a resident during her first year, where she also served as Floor Representative for the Renisix council. Even now, years later, Veronica says her closest friends are among those she met at Renison. After Renison, Veronica chose

to stay one more year at the University of Waterloo, where she earned a Master's degree in Sociology.

Choosing to continue her studies at the University of Ottawa for a law degree, Veronica has found her place as a labour and employment lawyer - and she is determined to make a positive impact.

Veronica has a strong sense of community involvement and advocacy, and says that Renison played a big part of why she is now compelled to connect in meaningful ways with the community around her. In addition to practicing law, Veronica is part of the Mentoring Committee of the Women's Law Association of Ontario (WLAO), which match women-identifying lawyers with mentors to support them in their careers. Veronica is also on the Executive Planning Committee for the PRISME Conference, prepared by the Canadian Association of LGBTQ2S+ Lawyers (CALL), and is involved with the Canadian Hispanic Bar Association, which allows her to give back to her own communities. Ultimately, Veronica wants to give back to the programs that were influential for her, help mentor the next generation of lawyers, and help diversify the profession.

Veronica has already achieved a lot in her career, but she is just getting started. She has made Ottawa her home, and hopes to use the resources at her disposal to fight for those who may not have had the same opportunities that she did - particularly women, people of colour, and queer individuals in law.

We asked Veronica what she would say to a student in SDS considering going into law. Taking a moment to think, she said "Don't give up, take it one step at a time. It's a long process, but it is worth it and has been so rewarding." With those words of wisdom, Veronica reminds each of us that we should never give up on our dreams.

Right: Veronica stands with her friend and fellow Renison alum Erica Jones (2016 SDS graduate and 2017 BSW graduate) in the Renison courtyard on graduation day in June 2016



Engineering a Better World

In the first few months of Jake Hillerby's young life, it became evident that he was destined to follow in the footsteps of his dad, his grandpa and great grandpa, and become an engineer. While most young boys love nothing more than winning a race against their sister, Jake was more interested in inspecting the mechanics of his Fisher-Price Ride-On than concentrating on the race. Twin sister Robin would glide through the finish line while Jake busied himself inspecting the wheel assembly framework.

Jacqui, Jacob's mom, marvelled at Jake's level of concentration at such a young age. While twin sister Robin fussed for attention, Jacob would sit on his play-mat, focussed on the inner workings of a toy, or even the handle on a nearby drawer. Jake's tiny fingers were incredibly dexterous and were always active, probing and exploring his world.

On June 21, 2017, one day before Jake and Robin would celebrate their first birthday together, Jake died unexpectedly and left a devastated family to reflect on all the promise and potential left unfulfilled. Jacqui knew, in her heart, that Jake was destined to make a positive impact on the world; she anguished over never knowing how he would have made the world a better place.

The family sought out a positive outlet for their profound grief and looked for a meaningful way to keep Jake's spirit alive. What if Jake could still have a positive impact on the lives of others?

Within a year of Jake's death, the Jacob Hillerby Memorial Bursary was established. The Fund has a simple mandate: to remove financial barriers from University of Waterloo Engineering students who are residing at Renison. To date, 6 engineering students have been helped, receiving a total of \$12,000 in financial support. "We feel better knowing that Jake is not only making a positive difference in young lives, but he is helping young people who are going on to make a positive difference in the world, in a similar way we imagine he would have: through engineering."

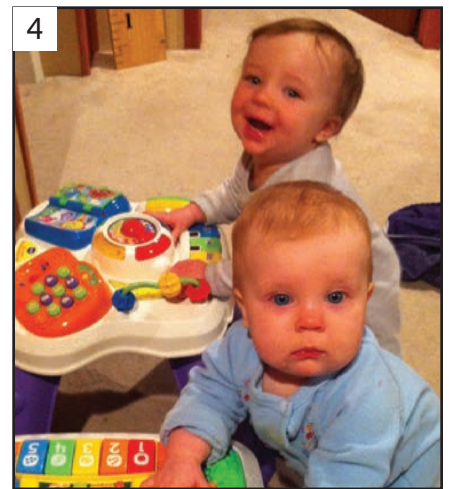
Learn more about the Jacob Hillerby Memorial Bursary at renison.ca/hillerby



Above: Jacob (front) on his truck, with sister Robin and mom, Jacqui behind.

Photos opposite: Some photos shared with us by the Hillerby family:

- 1: Jacob with mom, Jacqui*
- 2: Richard, Zachary, Casey, Robin, Jacqui (Jacob's parents and siblings)*
- 3. Jacob Hillerby*
- 4. Jacob smiling in the back, sister Robin in front.*



Meet Samuel Diaz Sevillano Jacob Hillerby Memorial Bursary Recipient

Samuel came to the University of Waterloo on a scholarship from Ecuador. When the university raised tuition, he had no money to cover the additional amount. If he dropped out of school, he would be obligated to pay his government back all the money they had already spent on him, which he had no way of doing. The Jacob Hillerby Memorial Bursary allowed him to stay in school until co-op positions started, allowing him to earn extra money.

“Since I was a little kid, I always was passionate for robots and technology. I always wanted to create technology that could change people’s lives. When I grew, I realized the way I could help people with my knowledge and passion.

Right: Samuel Diaz Sevillano.



LEVERAGING MOMENTUM

for Mental Health Promotion

February 28 - March 1, 2023



That's a wrap!

The KDE Hub hosts another successful national mental health symposium

Written by Eric Des Effans D'Avernas, Manager, KDE Hub Implementation

The Knowledge Development and Exchange Hub for Mental Health Promotion (KDE Hub) has been hosted by Renison since 2019 and is co-led by Drs. Alice Schmidt Hanbidge and Colleen McMillan of the Renison School of Social Work. The KDE Hub's third Annual Symposium took place virtually over two days on February 28th and March 1st, 2023. Each year, the KDE Hub brings together a diverse community of researchers, community practitioners, policy makers and anyone who supports mental health promotion and mental illness prevention for Canadians.

This year, the 2023 Annual Symposium saw over 300 registrants from national, provincial, and community organizations from coast to coast to coast. Diverse voices were part of a discussion that focused on leveraging momentum, using and sharing knowledge, maximizing impact, and maintaining forward motion. The event included 7 sessions, 14 breakout rooms, 40 contributors (speakers, panelists and discussion leads) and a gallery walk of 50 mental health promotion projects that are funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada and supported by the KDE Hub.

kdehub

Mental Health Promotion
through knowledge development
and exchange



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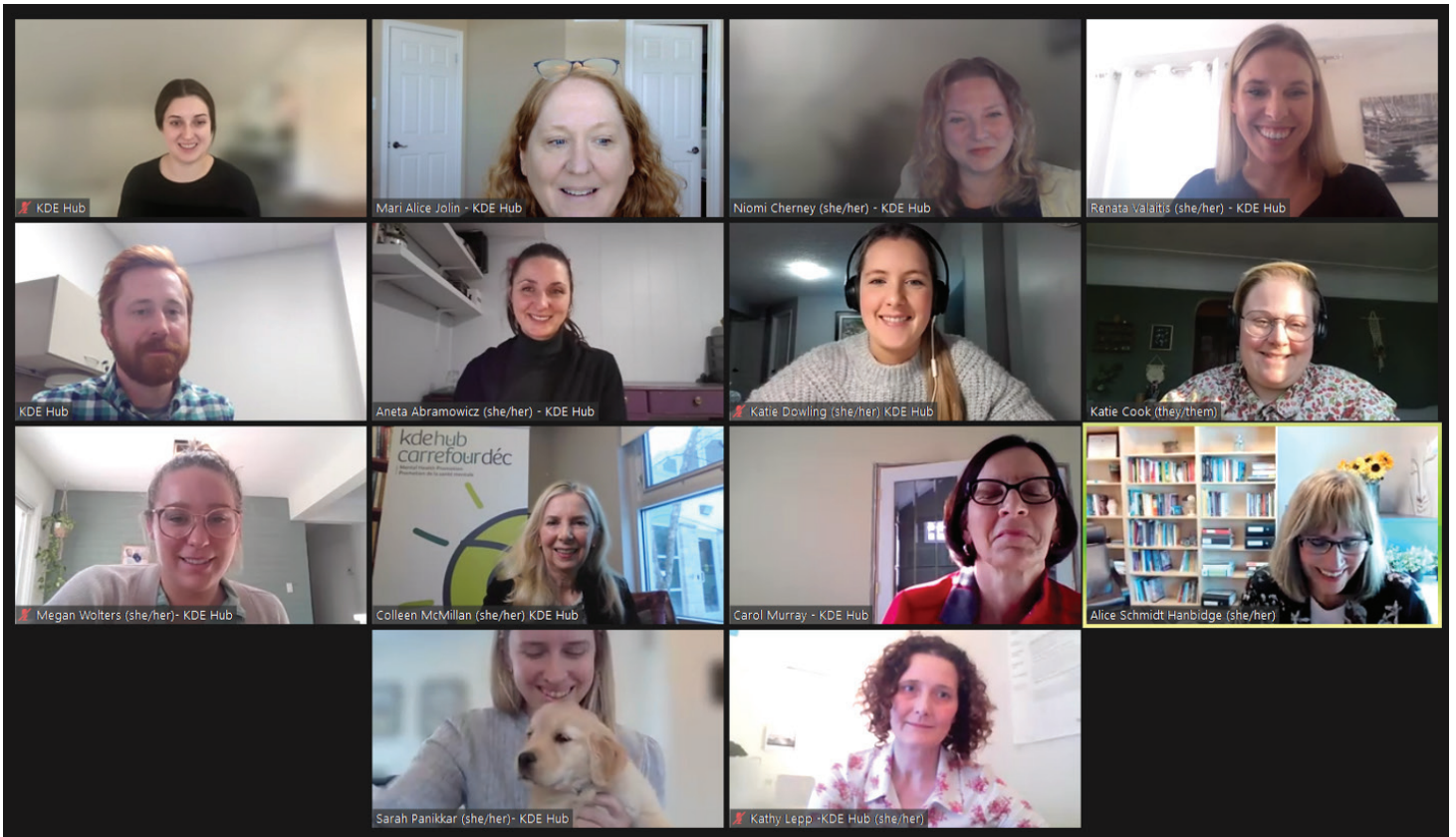
Promotion de la santé mentale
à travers le développement
et l'échange de connaissances

Opening remarks came from the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Elder Myeengun Henry, Indigenous Knowledge Keeper, University of Waterloo President Dr. Vivek Goel, and Renison President, Dr. Wendy Fletcher. In Wendy's words, this gathering reflects a shared "commitment to empowering well-being. Mental health resilience such that all whom this work touches are uplifted, empowered and sustained for the long haul. The long, beautiful haul of this journey." This journey is one with many paths, many origin points and many travelers. The 2023 Annual Symposium was just one intersection, a crossroads for those working to empower well-being to gather, share, and look forward to the journey ahead.

On the Horizon

With our sights set on our first in-person Symposium next year, the planning process has already begun for 2024. Stay connected with the KDE Hub at kdehub.ca for more information over the coming months about next year's Annual Symposium.

If you would like to view the recordings of Wendy's remarks, keynote presentations, panel discussions, or other sessions, check out our website at kdehub.ca/symposiums/



Above: the KDE Hub team gathers to discuss the 2023 Symposium. This year's symposium was held over two days, February 28 and March 1, and brought together over 300 researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and others who support mental health promotion.



Moose Tracks, a year in review

A little less than a year ago, the space that once functioned as Renison Reception was transformed, opening its doors as the Moose Tracks Connection Desk in September 2022. Dedicated as a “students helping students” service, Moose Tracks is fully staffed by students. In fact, the first students hired were grads from programs within the English Language Institute and gave them additional opportunities to develop their English language skills on the job!

Throughout the year Moose Tracks has been very busy; here are some fun facts about Moose Tracks and how it has served the Renison community over the last several months:

8
PAID JOB OPPORTUNITIES
FOR INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS AT RENISON

FUNDED IN PART THANKS TO UWATERLOO'S
INTERNATIONAL WORK-STUDY PROGRAM

35
VISITORS

ON AVERAGE ACCESS
THE DESK DAILY

1,583 VISITORS
FEBRUARY 1 - APRIL 10, 2023

MOST COMMON SERVICES USED

- 🍃 PURCHASING SNACKS/DRINKS
- 🍃 WAYFINDING
- 🍃 STUDENT MAIL PICK-UP
- 🍃 CONNECTING & CONVERSATION
- 🍃 PARKING GATE SUPPORT
- 🍃 LOST & FOUND SERVICES
- 🍃 STUDENT SERVICES DIRECTIONS

BUSIEST TIME OF DAY

THURSDAYS
12:00PM - 4:30PM

1,034

STUDENT
PACKAGES
DISTRIBUTED
THIS YEAR

SEPTEMBER 2022 - APRIL 2023

MOST POPULAR



SNACK

LEAST POPULAR



SNACK

BESTORE SPICY KELP KNOT

77



WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTERS SENT TO RESIDENCE & ELI STUDENTS TO COMMUNICATE SERVICES AND UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY 9 - APRIL 10, 2023



157 EVENT POSTERS MADE FOR MANY STUDENT EVENTS

JANUARY 9 - APRIL 10, 2023

25

MORNING MOOSE MUGS & COFFEE

SOLD DIRECTLY FROM MOOSE TRACKS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS FIRST SCHOLARSHIPS



67

BAGS OF TUMBIS STRIPS SOLD

IN SUPPORT OF GLOBAL BUSINESS & DIGITAL ARTS STUDENT (AND PROUD RENISON RESIDENT!) KEYRANE KOUAME'S ONLINE BUSINESS, SIBKO!





Photo above: Students enjoy the nightlife at a Renison Neon Party in the Atrium.

Supporting the Student Experience

Students arrive on the Renison campus for a variety of reasons, with a wide range of cultural backgrounds and needs for support. At any one time on our campus we will have students who are: studying toward a degree at the University of Waterloo, taking programming through the English Language Institute (ELI), living in our residence, studying part-time, studying full-time – and more. Many students fall into more than one category, and this is where the story of Student Experience and Housing, known as SEAH, begins.

Historically, student experience at Renison was handled in a few different pockets: Student Life and Housing, the Ministry Centre, and ELI's Student Experience team were each responsible for supporting the needs of students. SEAH takes a more holistic approach, wrapping support around students to help them be successful and get the most out of their time at Renison. Going beyond the important social and educational activities, SEAH also includes the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of students.

SEAH began with an evaluation of what builds community at Renison. Socially, there are

many occasions to engage; we have a vibrant calendar of events for students, but educational opportunities, one-on-one support, and chances to both engage with student leaders and build leadership skills are all integral parts of the student experience. The pandemic changed things too; some of the lost social skill development that would typically happen in the last years of high school resulted in students being unsure of social expectations. A good example, says Ryan Connell, assistant director of SEAH, is the Wind In/Wind Out event that happens to open and close the term. Similar to a semi-formal or prom, the events saw a drop in attendance right after COVID because students were uncertain of expectations such as dress code.

Stefany Kraft, Renison's Student Experience Coordinator, has been a member of the Renison community for over 5 years and sees firsthand the positive impact SEAH has on students. Before she became a member of staff, Stefany was a Renison student, resident, Peer Leader, and President of Renison Academic Student Council, among other roles. As a student, Stefany says that sometimes it was unclear to her where to access support because each department

was focused on a specific group. Now, she says, SEAH acts as a central hub for student events and support, and the team can leverage their connections with departments to act quickly in support of students.

SEAH is still a new unit at Renison, but there have already been many changes throughout its first year. Events have a broader focus; most are inclusive of all students at Renison rather than a specific group. Event timing is also chosen according to what's going on with students. Speed-friending, for example, is typically offered in the first weeks of a term to help new students make connections with their peers. On Instagram, the account previously known with the moniker @RenisonResidence has been rebranded to @RenisonExperience, to be more inclusive of students and emphasize that all of our students, resident or not, are an important part of our community. And finally, there has been a big push to build new opportunities to support student-focused communications, increasing engagement and streamlining how students get their information. The connections with main campus have also been strengthened; groups that offer student support including the Student Success Office, MATES (Mentor Assistance Through Education and Support),

RAISE (Racial Advocacy for Inclusion, Solidarity, and Equity), and Peer Health Education are now regularly invited to Renison.

For Stefany, the experience of supporting students has been a fulfilling one. "It's like I've come full circle," she says. "I lived it – I was in residence, I was very involved – and now I get to use those experiences to give back to students. I loved it so much that I never left!"

Next up for SEAH is to expand programming to engage with students in Culture and Language Studies (CLS) and the School of Social Work, two groups that have historically been less involved in student life at Renison. Ultimately, it's all about embracing students and meeting them wherever they are. Our student population has changed dramatically over the last few years, and SEAH aims to foster a community that honours and values the varied experiences and cultural backgrounds of each of our students. For Ryan, he is driven to ensure each student feels like they have a place at Renison, and further shape the student experience in a way that makes sense – for students!

Photos: Students take part in a variety of activities organized by the SEAH team.





Above: Shari poses with Reni Moose, the Renison mascot, at an event.

Dreams Come True in the Renison Registrar's Office

About a year ago, in July 2022, Shari Schultz stepped foot on the Renison campus as the new Registrar. The position had been in transition with the departure of the previous Registrar following a maternity leave, and changes that had been made as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In many ways, the role was not only new for Shari, but for Renison, at least in the way the Registrar's Office (RO) functioned.

One of Shari's life goals was to become a Registrar, but we'll have to go back a bit to tell the story of how she got there.

Shari was the first in her family to attend university and started at Western as a mature student. A single Mom, with two children and two jobs, Shari had little support for her academic goals. At the time, she dreamed of becoming an academic; get a PhD and teach Canadian literature while focusing on gendered spaces in texts.

At university she remembers seeing "lots of people doing a lot of work" around the periphery of her academic experience at university. She

wondered what all of them could have possibly been doing. Shari got a work-study job in the Continuing Studies office at Western and found herself working in administration – she loved it. In her third year of studies, a full-time job opened up and Shari went for it, becoming a Program Assistant at Continuing Studies. Although she was already working at fast-tracking her degree, she reduced her final term to part-time studies so she could complete her degree while working full-time.

Shari never looked back: she loved higher education and supporting students to help make their dreams come true. Throughout that time she worked in several areas across Western, Laurier and Huron University; admissions, records, positions in the President's Office – anything that was student facing and registrarial related. She was well-versed in all aspects of the student life cycle from recruitment to alumni relations.

When the pandemic hit, Shari was working as the Manager of Institutional Research and

Analytics at Huron University. Shari felt the urge to try something new and make a change. She had been learning more about Client Relationship Management (CRM) software and ended up leaving Huron and working for a software company. After less than a year, finding herself missing students and higher education, Shari sought opportunities to return to the sector she loved so much. As it happens, the Renison Registrar position was available; a great opportunity and a chance to fulfill a lifelong dream.

Shari was drawn to Renison because of the motto, *One Sky Over All*. Her previous positions at Huron had helped her to develop an appreciation for the small, community-minded atmosphere. She knew she could make a big impact in the smaller community. That's why she got into higher education in the first place: to help students' make their dreams come true. That and the motto *One Sky Over All* led her to believe that no matter where we are, we are part of a community.

So – what does a Registrar do, exactly? Shari chuckles at this question and says that it can be so different from one organization to another. At Renison, Shari and the team in the Registrar's Office focus on the mechanical, cyclical processes like scholarships, registration, enrollment, exams, reporting, etc. With the changes in leadership in the office and at Renison over the last number of years, and impacted as well by the pandemic, there had been little opportunity to review and streamline processes, let alone consider the role of the Registrar's Office at Renison. Once there appeared to be the possibility of consistency, each member of RO was able to begin asking those questions. The team, which includes Administrative Officer Kelli MacCulloch and Academic Records and Awards Coordinator Pia Grizzle, also supports faculty members with scheduling, course outlines and exams, and supports the Vice-President, Academic and Dean's (VPAD) Office in their work. Most of Renison's scholarships, awards, and bursaries are administered by the RO, and it's one of the main reasons students reach out, along with



Above: Shari is also an avid baker and crochet-maker. This is one of her crochet creations!

questions about enrollment and academic advising.

Shari's first year (or so) at Renison has been an interesting learning experience. The Renison-Waterloo relationship is different than the one between Huron and Western, and she had to spend time getting to know the organization and the people in it, as well as Renison's relationship to other organizations. It's been a year of observation and review – understanding why processes have been put into place and why, looking at ways to improve, and planning to implement some of those improvements for upcoming years. The most significant improvements that have been approved recently and to be implemented in Fall 2024 include a shift in how scholarships are managed within the office. The changes will provide the opportunity for students to receive their scholarships and awards earlier so they can be directly applied to tuition and reduce financial pressure on students.

Shari tells me that Renison is different from other universities and university colleges, and she thinks it's not only because of the programming we offer, but it's more than that.

Over the past year as Registrar, there have been ups and downs of course, but on the whole it has been positive, even transformational. Around the 6-month mark Shari says she looked back at the notes from her first month and could already recognize changes in herself. "Renison has changed me, I'm more empathetic," she says. "I think that's a testament to the community we have here."

What's in a Number? Finding our way with a new map of Renison

What's in a number? It turns out, quite a lot. Renison is undergoing a significant wayfinding and signage project and it turns out the numbers tell a story.


When ever I meet with alumni who attended Renison more than ten years ago, they are consistently amazed by how much the College has grown. Many remember the days before the Founders' Building and the Academic Centre were connected. Students would need to brave the cold, ice and snow in order to make their way to the cafeteria for dinner. Today, all the buildings are connected through a series of links that have joined what is arguably 9 buildings into one.

Today, there is also the North Extension, housing the English Language Institute and classrooms, the School of Social Work wing and, of course, the various Residence wings. A few years ago, an addition was added to the Academic Centre, above the Library, that houses some large classrooms and a variety of offices. We also enlarged the Great Hall with a significant extension to accommodate our growth in student enrollment, staff and faculty.

An aerial view of the building could be mistaken for the aftermath of a giant Jenga game – a C topped by an F with a T outcrop. Little wonder it's hard to navigate.

Luckily, a room and office naming convention was introduced at some point in the College's evolution. A room number, such as "2920" tells you three things: The first 2 (2920) indicates second floor; the 9 (2920) tells you Building Number; the 20 (2920) tells you room number. Unfortunately, this system is not used consistently throughout the College and is not well understood.


In consultation with a signage and wayfinding company that has extensive experience in wayfinding strategies and is committed to AODA compliance, we are developing a strategy to leverage the Building Numbers as a key part of our wayfinding strategy. In order to bring greater awareness to the various Building numbers, we will be introducing large numbers at the entryway to each building; that way, students faculty and staff will now know which building number they are in. We are also introducing colours to coincide with each building number – these colours, over time, will create a mental trigger to identify which building you are in.

Building 1 

TAKE THIS ELEVATOR FOR:

Room/Office	Floor
Classrooms 0104, 0106	0
Classrooms 2102-2107 Meeting Room 2101	2
Offices 3101 - 3112 Classrooms 3106A/B	3

For access to all other rooms, take the elevator in the corresponding building

YOU ARE AT SIGN # 32 



Library

Ministry Centre

Bldg	Department	Floor	Bldg	Classroom #	Floor
4	Administration	2	1	0104	0
4	Chapel	2	1	2101 - 2107	2
9	English Language Hub	1	1	3106 A / 3106 B	3
1	Great Hall (Cafeteria)	1	2	0201	0
1	Library	1	3	0313 / 0318 / 0322	0
1	Ministry Centre	1	5	0502 / 0503	0
4	Moose Tracks Student Info	1	9	0901	0
4	President's Office	2	9	1918 - 1928	1
4	Registrar's Office	1	9	2918 - 2930	2
1	Multi-Faith Prayer Room	0			
1	The KDE Hub	0			
1	The Atrium	1			
1	Culture & Language Studies	3			
5	School of Social Work	1			
6	Social Development Studies	1			



Opposite top: One of the new subdirectories.

Opposite bottom: Samples of the signs that will be used for washrooms, rooms, and stairs.

Left: A draft of the new map of Renison, with new colour scheme.

Above: A sample of a building number sign, which corresponds to the colour on the map.

We will introduce large directories at each entryway to help individuals identify where they are, and where they need to get to. All signage will provide a brief list of commonly sought after offices and classrooms.

We know that if the new wayfinding system is going to work for our community, our community needs to be involved in the process. Our plans include a number of opportunities for our entire community (students, staff, faculty and visitors) to engage with the signage while it is still in Draft form. We will invite our community to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. It is my hope that when you come to Renison in search of office # 2601A, that you'll be able to find me, no problem.

ReIMagined!

The Renison Institute of Ministry (RIM) has been reimagined and will now focus on offering retreats and workshops which address the learning longings of the local Anglican church.

Each year Renison will host an annual youth event convened by our Chaplain, Scott McLeod, an annual Lenten lecture series which focuses on Social Justice and social action toward the common good. All events include free parking, snacks and refreshments.

Recent events included Anglican Monasticism and You and Singing the Liturgies of the Book of Common Prayer. Both events were well attended with comments that included, "thank you for such an informative workshop," and "I'll recommend this to friends." We hope to see you at the next RIM session in the Fall of 2023. More details here: renison.ca/rim.

We are also interested in helping to co-sponsored programs offered in collaboration with parishes in the K/W and Cambridge area. Let us know how we can assist to organize a successful program in your own parish – we will assist with communication and costs. Reach out at reinmin@uwaterloo.ca.

Below: "Mercy" painted by Renison President and Vice-Chancellor Wendy L. Fletcher.





Remembering Erna Borch

On Wednesday, May 17, 2023 we lost an important member of the Renison family. Erna Borch was the beloved "House Mother" for over 25 years for the Women's Residence at Renison University College. Known for her German cooking including apple kuchen and Christmas stollen, and renowned for her luxurious Black Forest Cakes, Erna was much loved by her extended family at Renison who knew her simply as "Omi." It would not be unusual for several students, unable to make it home for the holidays, to be welcomed into Erna's home to share their Christmas feast, though there did not need to be a special occasion for Erna to open her home to our students. The service, held on Tuesday, May 23, included endless accounts of Erna's generous spirit and welcoming heart. Generous to the end, Erna chose to be remembered by donations to Renison's Students First appeal, created to remove financial barriers from students in order to assist them in meeting their academic goals. Erna was 95 years young at the time of her death.

Erna is pictured above (centre) at her 95th birthday party with longtime friends Barbara Checketts (left) and Jean Herzog (right).



Left: Michael Smyth, long-time faculty member and former Associate Dean of Renison.

Smyth passed away in January 2023.



Above: Michael Smyth and Judi Jewinski were long-time friends. From left to right: Marg Smyth, Judi Jewinski, Ed Jewinski, Michael Smyth.

Remembering Michael Smyth

*Written by Judi Jewinski, retired Renison Administrative Dean
and longtime member of the Renison community.*

Michael Smyth and I became friends the fall term of 1975. He was a new Psych professor at Renison University College, and I was a newly-married grad student in UW's English department. For us, it was "like at first sight," for we soon discovered how many interests we shared beyond academics: sports, board games, theatre, music, gourmet food, books . . .

Indeed, the first time we met was at the Grad House on campus. It was over a game of scrabble that we found out just how competitive we both were, in a good way, I like to think, because we eventually played many, many games, and not just scrabble. Both of us were big trivia fans, and over the years our partners accepted that an invitation to dinner inevitably included a game or three of Jeopardy or, starting in the '80s, Trivial Pursuit.

Our friendship was cemented in 1977, when I began teaching part-time at Renison. I was delighted to find Michael was my table companion at the first official college dinner, a six-course affair hosted by principal Ian Campbell, who was a wonderful mentor to us both. When my husband and I moved to Waterloo in 1978, Michael and soon Margaret became our very close friends—and we have shared weddings, births, anniversaries, baptisms, and graduations ever since.

It is in his role of mentor that I am most grateful to Michael. As Associate Dean of Renison, he was my go-to guy for over fifteen years. But it was in 2001, when I stepped in for him while he was on sabbatical, that I discovered how very hard Michael worked and how very committed to the college he was. Before he took his year off, Michael spent ten hours a week for a month showing me the ropes. Thank goodness! Once he returned, I let him know how much all that preparation and experience had meant.

The last few years as colleagues before Michael retired were busy for both of us, as we were on several committees together, but there was still time for fun. Every December, Michael would organize a musical show to conclude the College Dinner. I remember acting as ditzy secretary to Michael's loud-mouthed producer—the best Renison Follies ever!

Writing this reminiscence has been an opportunity to revisit almost 48 years of deep affection for a friend I miss terribly. Everyone knows how committed Michael was to his Renison life, one which continued way past retirement as he cheerfully proctored exams until recently. But I treasure the kindness, the sense of humour, the competition, and the camaraderie we shared. And these I miss the most.

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

MSW 10TH ANNIVERSARY



Some of the architects of the Master of Social Work Program attending the program's 10th anniversary celebration in May 2023. Left to right: Marion Reid, Ellen Sue Mesbur, Peter Donahue.

Celebrating 10 years of the MSW

Trish Van Katwyk,
Director, School of Social Work

It is an exciting year at the School of Social Work, as we take time to reflect upon our 10th year anniversary of the Master of Social Work (MSW) program. Ten years ago, we began the MSW, an online graduate program that brought a health focus to this advanced social work training. We forged a partnership with the Faculty of Health at the University of Waterloo. Since then, our selection of courses has grown, and our enrollment has doubled. Because it is an online program, our students and alumni span the nation, and the health and social work knowledges and experiences relative to all regions of Canada become incorporated into the learning.

We consider the growth that has occurred, and tap into the imagination that has fostered that growth as we draw our attention to the next 10 years. Just as Renison University College continues to grow and expand in its vision of strength, connection, and just ways of being, so too is the School of Social Work committed to transforming in ways that connect us to one another, to our communities, and to the world around us. We are considering how that world is evolving, along with the justice issues that continue to emerge and crystallize, accompanied by important calls to action: environmental justice; enhanced and equity-informed ideas about wellbeing; knowledges and worldviews that guide and inspire. We open ourselves up to the transformation that awaits, and we remain committed to the hope and imagination that will make this transformation possible.

Warmly,

Trish Van Katwyk



Above: Ellen Sue Mesbur (left), with Trish Van Katwyk (right)



Coming Full Circle

Renison's MSW program celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. A key architect of the program is Dr. Ellen Sue Mesbur, former Director of Renison's School of Social Work (2002-2012).

Often, through the lens of hindsight, we discover why we made certain life choices. For Ellen Sue, the roots of her life decisions were nurtured through her family and early community experiences. Her parents, Robert and Della Osten, instilled in Ellen Sue strong family values, the importance of education and hard work, social responsibility, and the pursuit of justice through community involvement in service organizations and community groups.

On this foundation Ellen Sue forged her own career. She grew up seeing first-hand the positive impact caring individuals can have on their communities. While circumstances prevented her parents from going to university, their lives were filled with community service and organizational leadership locally, nationally and internationally. Ellen Sue's involvement from an early age in youth organizations instilled in her a love of working as part of a group and provided many leadership opportunities. These would influence many of Ellen Sue's major life

decisions and, eventually, would inform the framework upon which Renison's MSW program would be built.

After graduating from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Arts, Ellen Sue enrolled at the University of Toronto to pursue her Master of Social Work with a focus on community organization and social policy. After a brief time with the Scarborough Board of Education as a School Social Worker, she was hired to teach in the Welfare Services Program at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute (now Toronto Metropolitan University). This two-year Certificate program, designed for welfare workers to return to school to further their education, grew into a four-year Bachelor of Applied Arts (Social Services), the first professional degree program at Ryerson. The opportunity to be part of building a new social work degree program, despite many obstacles, was pivotal in Ellen Sue's life work. Ellen Sue spent 34 years at Ryerson, and was Director of the School of Social Work from 1989 to 1998. Along with classroom teaching, Ellen Sue always maintained a faculty field consulting workload, recognizing that field education is the cornerstone of social work education.



While juggling multiple responsibilities at Ryerson and raising two sons with her husband David, Ellen Sue enrolled at the University of Toronto (OISE), first for a Master of Education (MEd), and then for a Doctor of Education (EdD), most of which was completed part-time. She served for six years on the Educational Policy Committee of the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (now the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE)) and later for six years on the Board of Accreditation, two years as the Anglophone Co-Chair. Educational policy and development remained a major focus of Ellen Sue's work throughout her career.

In April 2000, as a member of the Board of Accreditation, Ellen Sue conducted a two-day site visit at Renison which was applying to have its BSW program accredited. A few years later when Ellen Sue was approached by Dr. Tom Brenner and Dr. Linda Snyder to apply for the position of Renison's Director of the School of Social Work, she was already familiar with the program offerings, and knew where improvements could be made.

Then-Principal Dr. Gail Cuthbert Brandt welcomed Ellen Sue as Director of the School of Social Work in 2002 and the rest, as they say, is history. Ellen Sue recognized that the first challenge was to update curriculum and develop a part-time BSW Program. Dr. John

Crossley (Principal of Renison), the late Dr. Sandra Campbell, Marion Reid (Administration and Student Services Manager), the late Dr. Michael Smyth (Associate Dean of Renison), the School of Social Work's Advisory Committee chaired by Marilyn Thompson, and key members of the University of Waterloo's Centre for Extended Learning were instrumental in shaping, implementing and moving all the courses to an online format, along with on-campus options. The part-time BSW students were a dedicated group – some travelled great distances to attend evening on-campus courses; some were working full-time, had family and caregiving responsibilities and major commitments to their communities.

Conversations about developing an MSW program began around 2008; it would take four years to move from idea to reality. Dr. Peter Donahue was instrumental in developing the vision and curriculum for a part-time, health focused MSW program. Mindful of the realities of graduate social work education in Canada, rooted in a desire to expand access to graduate education to people who could not study full-time, and building on the success of the part-time BSW Program, the faculty decided to offer the MSW courses online along with two week-long, on-campus Summer Institutes. The cross-Canada makeup of students was seen as a unique opening for enriched peer learning. Housed at Renison, the MSW Program is part of the University of Waterloo's Faculty of Health. This collaboration has resulted in excellent opportunities for inter-professional learning and research.

The four years from planning to implementation of Renison's first graduate program were highly complex, involving support and approval at all academic and administrative levels at Renison, the Faculty of Health and the University of Waterloo, as well as the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). Marion Reid's administrative expertise was significant in shepherding the myriad submissions through every level, in developing the organizational structure and outreach for the program, and in working with Ellen Sue and Peter Donahue on the submissions to the Board of Accreditation (CASWE).

While the program was conceived and implemented at Renison, it was only through the help and support of Renison, the University of Waterloo and the social work community that the School of Social Work was able to launch the program. The Right Reverend Ralph Spence (Renison Chancellor) was a champion for the program on the Renison Board. Marilyn Thompson (Chair, SSW Advisory Committee) provided outstanding leadership at the committee and within the social work community, along with the committee members. Solid support came from the University of Waterloo at many levels. President David Johnston; Vice Presidents Academic Drs. Feridun Hamdullahpur and Geoff McBoyle; Graduate Studies; Admissions; Registrar's Office; Finance; Institutional Analysis and Planning; ITMS; and the Faculty of Health. The Ontario Association of Social Workers' CEO Joan MacKenzie Davies consulted with the School and provided letters of support; members of the Board of Accreditation of CASWE were generous with their insights and consultations; and members of the Ontario Council of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work were helpful.

Working with Ellen Sue, Peter and Marion, the faculty took on the curriculum, planning and teaching for each of the courses. Peter was responsible for the first on-campus Social Determinants of Health Summer Institute, later taught by Dr. Kathy Hogarth. Dr. Colleen McMillan developed and taught the first online course, Social Work Practice in Health which she continues to teach. Dr. Alice Schmidt-Hanbidge developed and delivered Supervision and Leadership in Social Work which she continues to teach. Alice and Dr. Trish Van Katwyk co-developed Knowledge Mobilization and Evidence Based Practice and Alice and Colleen co-developed Social Work Practice in Mental Health. Melanie Misanchuk from CEL on main campus was the technical developer assigned to SSW to work with faculty to ensure that technical aspects included best practices at the time.

Field is the Signature Pedagogy of social work education and is the core component to connect theory with practice. The MSW field program was built on the experience of the BSW program. Deborah Clark, BSW Field Education Coordinator and Marion Reid, instrumental in developing field placements for BSW students interested in international settings and the School's international exchange program with Lady Doak College in India, set the framework for the MSW cross-Canada field program. The first MSW class of 25 began planning for their field practica in the 2013 winter term with the goal of starting in the fall. Deborah de Jong, MSW Field Coordinator, worked with students and faculty field consultants to locate and develop field placements across Canada in the communities where students lived and worked.

Coming full circle, throughout the development process a key focus was to make the program accessible and flexible. Since its inception, the online MSW has allowed professionals who are interested in making a positive difference in their communities, to attain an advanced degree while working or balancing life's activities and responsibilities.



Above: Ellen Sue Mesbur



2012-2022

The faces of Renison's MSW

As a part of our anniversary celebrations, we are featuring one student from each MSW cohort, starting in 2012 when the program began.



Msenwa Oliver Mweneake - 2012 Cohort

Msenwa began his MSW at Renison in 2012, shortly after arriving in Canada in 2011. He chose Renison and UW because of the school's reputation, the program's focus on health, and the use of a diversity and inclusion lens. After graduating in 2014 he founded the Msenwa Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides educational, financial and other supports to orphaned children and widows in Democratic Republic of Congo (his home country). He also published a memoir, *Still With Us*, which was followed by invitations to speak in Canada, the US, and Burundi. He has been a visiting lecturer in the School of Social Work at Hope Africa University in Bujumbura Burundi since 2015, and works in Eastern Ontario



as the Manager of Equity and Transformation at Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington. In 2023, Msenwa established The Mweneake Consulting which offers services to DEI, leadership, change management and mental health services to organizations and individuals.

Advice for those considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a social worker: You get what you put into the program. The program is well designed to prepare social workers for critical thinking from a critical narrative, reflective and reflexive thinking which are very important for anyone who is interested in being successful as an inclusive social worker. I encourage students to be open to various perspectives and challenging oneself. Invest the time and energy needed to absorb the materials and also make connections. Be open to learn and unlearn and use this new wisdom to bring change to our humanity.

Describe Renison in one word: Changemakers

Amna Mirza - 2013 Cohort

Amna started her MSW at Renison in 2013, but was familiar with Renison having completed a BA in SDS with a Minor in Psychology in 2011. She chose the MSW program at Renison because of feedback from fellow students, and the courses were relevant to her career in public health. Amna was one of the students in the first full-time cohort, so it also felt to her like an exciting opportunity to be part of the program's growth. Amna's field placement was at Guelph General Hospital, which prepared her to continue working in a hospital environment. She is currently working as a Social Worker in the Emergency Department at McMaster Children's Hospital.



Advice for those considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a social worker: This is a great opportunity, and if you are someone who wants or needs to maintain a job, be able to balance spending time with loved ones while still obtaining a fantastic educational experience; then the MSW Program at Renison is the place to be!

One word to describe Renison: Intimate

Andrea Bevan - 2014 Cohort

Andrea chose Renison because of its reputation, the health focus, and because the program aligned with her professional and personal commitments. For her, the best part of the MSW program was the people, and the connections she made with folks from across Canada. She says this not only provided her with additional perspectives from which to approach issues, but helped her to create and maintain a network of people she can rely on for advice and resources. Since graduating from Renison in 2014, Andrea retired from working within the provincial correctional system as a Deputy Superintendent of a maximum security detention centre. She now works exclusively in private practice providing assessment and treatment services to people involved in the legal system. Much of her work is devoted to working with people who have atypical sexual interests or domestic violence issues. Additionally, Andrea is a part-time instructor through Conestoga College and Ontario Learn.



Much of her work is devoted to working with people who have atypical sexual interests or domestic violence issues. Additionally, Andrea is a part-time instructor through Conestoga College and Ontario Learn.

Advice for someone considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a Social Worker: Social Work is a rewarding career with many different opportunities. It can be overwhelming at times as there is always more need than there is time or resources. It is a career that can grow with you if you allow it to. I have had a wide range of positions in front line and senior management within government agencies and I have always tried to look at each role as valuable in terms of my development as a social worker and person (even the ones that were somewhat less enjoyable). There is no “bad” experience just different ones.

Describe Renison in one word: Inspiring

Laura Gatién - 2015 Cohort

For Laura, the appeal of Renison’s MSW program was the health focused model. At the time, Laura was working as a social worker in healthcare and felt strongly about incorporating a proactive model into the approach to mental health and health care in general. Her BSW at St. Thomas University in New Brunswick had already developed structural social work roots for Laura, and Renison helped her grow them. Going through the program was transformational for Laura and, in her words, “challenged who I am, who I thought I was... I see clients in a different light now.” In 2018, Laura started a private practice counselling agency that removes barriers to mental health access. What started as a one-person operation has since grown to a team of almost 30 professionals, who are able to see 1300



people each month. Laura is changing the culture and access to mental health supports in Saint John, and across New Brunswick. More recently, the team founded a charitable non-profit to help grow their free and low-cost programs through external support of the business community, individuals, and government.

Advice for someone considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a Social Worker: Learn who you are, always work on yourself, we aren't that different from our clients-the human experience is messy and complex. Be committed to self examining your entire career, be vulnerable, be a social disruptor. Don't be afraid to speak up, don't be afraid to be disliked, be a voice for those without. Remember to zoom out and see that you are not the problem when times are dark, there are systemic limitations that make people feel like a personal failure. Keep your head high, look for where you can make a difference rather than succumb to the systemic challenges taking their toll on you. Educate people on what we do and help advance the role of social workers. We are unique beings who can put things in context and move beyond individual blame. Check your biases, find supportive peers who allow you to be vulnerable and grow.

Describe Renison in one word: Inspiring

Mary Bishop - 2016 Cohort

Mary has been a social worker for almost 14 years, working in the field of child welfare. Originally from Newfoundland, Mary has spent most of her time practicing in the Northwest Territories. One of the reasons she chose Renison was because the online option allowed her continue working without needing to relocate. The program's focus on health, specifically the social determinants of health, was appealing and set it apart from other programs Mary considered. Since graduating in 2018, Mary has taken a position as a Territorial Lead, Training and Practice Improvement. The role facilitated and developed training for new and existing child protection workers in NWT. In March of 2022, Mary decided to move back to her home province of Newfoundland and is now in a similar role as a Learning and Development Specialist with the Department of Children, Seniors, and Social Development. She has also stayed directly connected to Renison, acting as supervisor for an MSW candidate while they completed their practicum hours.



Advice for someone considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a Social Worker: It can be one of the most dynamic and rewarding career choices you could ever make. I think becoming a social worker has not only allowed me to grow professionally but has challenged me personally in ways that have led to significant growth as a person.

Describe Renison in one word: Dynamic

Michelle Williams - 2017 Cohort

In 2017, Michelle was a mature student returning to academia in her 40s. After leaving Toronto and moving to Brant County with her husband and two children, she wanted to make a career change and the flexible MSW program was just what Michelle was looking for. She was already familiar with Renison, having completed a BSW in 2016 and making strong connections with faculty and staff. For Michelle, the connection with the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences (recently changed to Faculty of Health), and the strong community focus were also part of the appeal. After graduating, in 2018 Michelle has launched an online business in professional education and training in grief and loss. For four years they worked with individuals and organizations to train staff and departments. More recently, Michelle has opened her own counselling practice and consulting business in DEI education and training.



Advice for someone considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a Social Worker: Think outside the box! Of course, you can get an MSW and participate in more traditional social work roles, but you can also create something unique and carve out your own niche.

Describe Renison in one word: Inspiring

Norissa Mongrain - 2018 Cohort

Norissa chose to pursue her MSW so she could stay home with her young children and continue working to provide for her family, and she had a friend who had a positive experience going through the program as well. Norissa, spirit name Kiniw Kwe (Golden Eagle Woman), is Algonquin (maternal) and Finnish (paternal) with family ties to the Antoine and Mongrain families of the Kipawa village in western Quebec in the Témiscamingue Regional County Municipality. She was born in Toronto and was raised by her mother until she entered the child welfare system until she aged out of foster care. She is now mother to two daughters and married to Mathew Hupfield from Wasauksing First Nation, in Ontario.



For Norissa, the best part of the MSW program was connecting and building lasting relationships with professors that she now considers mentors. She credits them with helping her to fine tune her critical lens, and have inspired her to pursue a Ph.D. and become a professor. Since graduating from Renison, Norissa has been working as a mental health professional and primary care leader. She currently

supports the Sm̓əlqmix people of the Lower Similkameen Indian Band as their Health and Social Lead, located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of one of seven Syilx First Nations, what is known to many as Interior British Columbia. In addition, Norissa has also continued to run a private practice in counselling called Bimaadziwin (good life/life) Counselling since 2017 and works as a sessional instructor and MSW Applicant Reader for MSW applicants for the School of Social Work at Renison.

Advice for someone considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a Social Worker: I want to encourage other Indigenous academics considering to continue their education and obtain their MSW. To make change and eradicate the systemic racism in policies and service delivery, in all systems toward Indigenous people, it requires higher learning, connecting with allies and developing your critical lens. In order to get into roles where you can make actual systemic change you need know how these systems work, build confidence and get that graduate degree!

Describe Renison in one word: Opportunity

Veen Wong - 2019 Cohort

Veen has been a social worker in Ontario for more than a decade, working in a range of sectors including gender-based violence, mental health and health promotion, substance use, and harm reduction. Most of her practice experience has been clinical and Veen wanted to have more experience with research and policy. She chose Renison for her MSW studies because of the expertise the faculty has in research and policy covering a wide range of social work fields. Veen loved the flexibility of the program, and says that the support of staff was unmistakable – even during the application process Veen was able to speak to staff and get answers to her questions; she knew she would be well supported in the program.

Now graduated, Veen is pursuing her Ph.D. in the School of Public Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo. She continues to work on other projects, including a national one that explored the employment realities of BIPOC folks who experience disabilities. She is currently a sessional instructor at the Renison School of Social Work, and works with the Michener Institute of Education in Toronto to redevelop their Healthcare Ecosystems course.

Advice for someone considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a Social Worker: Social work is such a dynamic and varied field. I highly suggest working in different areas of practice to gain more diverse experiences. If you're thinking of pursuing an MSW, this can be an ideal time to step out of your current area of practice! It can help develop a comprehensive understanding of social issues and build a versatile toolkit to address a wide range social issues.

Describe Renison in one word: Connection



Bernard Akuoko - 2020 Cohort

Bernard recently graduated from the MSW program in the fall of 2022. A black male who lives with partial sight, Bernard wanted to utilize an anti-oppressive discipline, cultural competence and social determinants of health in his everyday practice. He chose Renison because of the focus on the relationship between a client's social determinants of health and access to care. Bernard was able to understand injustices from a systemic lens, and see inequality in health care, government policies, and systemic oppression within organizations and agencies. The best part of the program for Bernard was working with UW Counselling Services, where he focused on the experience of BIPOC students. He observed plans to ensure that policies and procedures were anti-racist, and coordinated a student-led advisory committee where BIPOC students gave input on services and programs delivered by UW Counselling. Bernard is currently working at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) as an Advocacy, Accessibility and Community Engagement Program Lead. He is also a member of the board of directors for ASE foundation for black people with disabilities.



Advice for someone considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a Social Worker: Get ready to challenge your biases. It is okay to challenge your beliefs, considering that not all your clientele will be similar. It is important to become empathetic and understand the barriers that you can potentially see within your clientele.

Describe Renison in one word: Welcoming

Rachael Fowler- 2021 Cohort

Rachael has been a familiar face at Renison since beginning her undergraduate degree in SDS. Interestingly, the year that Rachael was in grade 12 was the first year that the MSW was being offered. She went on to complete her BA, BSW and MSW all at Renison! Rachael chose the MSW because Renison was already home for her. She already knew the staff and the team, and had a community of support. The health focus was also a draw, and led her to focus on the impact of emotional trauma on the body. Since graduating she has trained in trauma, CBT, and EDMR. Rachael is particularly interested in what happens in the nervous system during periods of anxiety. In addition to providing counselling



services for youth, Rachael has been speaking at various organizations, and is even working on an online module about anxiety and the nervous system which she hopes to make available for free as an educational resource.

Advice for someone considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a Social Worker: Embrace every opportunity, you don't know where you'll end up! They help you make connections and it could be a seed for something bigger.

Describe Renison in one word: Community, family, holistic

Lavorn Hunt - 2022 Cohort

Lavorn Hunt is also a familiar face, in fact we featured her in a recent Renison Reports as she was working on her Bachelor of Social Work. Since then, Lavorn has completed the BSW and is currently an MSW student. She is most interested in creating change at a community level, rather than at an individual one. Her goal is to open her own practice where she can create community programming, and perhaps policy work. During her time as an MSW student, Lavorn has had the privilege of doing her practicum at the Toronto District School Board, and participated in two restorative justice events (one at Renison). All of these activities have shifted her perspective of what Social Work is, and how it can change communities.



Advice for someone considering pursuing an MSW and/or becoming a Social Worker: Do your internal work, be self-aware. Be willing to critically evaluate yourself, your blindspots, biases, and then allow that to permeate how you show up in the world. If we don't, we can actually do harm instead of good. Social Work focuses on doing help and doing good, but if we don't know ourselves we can do tremendous harm.

Describe Renison in a word: Relevant, community, progressive



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