Renison University College

Annual Report 2023-2024

Territorial Acknowledgement

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, 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 Anti-Racism and Decolonization Spokescouncil, and the University of Waterloo <u>Office of Indigenous Relations</u>.

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Notes from the Board

It has been a great pleasure to serve another year as chair of the Board for Renison University College. This past year has been a busy and productive year. Dr. Wendy Fletcher successfully fulfilled her contract as President and we welcomed our new President Dr. Marc Jerry. We are thrilled to have Marc lead us into the next Renison chapter. Marc is an experienced academic leader. Most importantly Dr. Jerry shares Renison values and a commitment to keeping students at the centre, to building a trusting community where everyone is welcome, and to a just and inclusive world.

Another accomplishment for Renison is the completion of a three-year strategic plan that will take us to 2027. This plan firmly grounds Renison's commitment to combatting racism and discrimination that creates inequity between us. A commitment to equity means understanding that some groups do not have equal access to opportunity. We will demonstrate our commitment to equity by creating an academic community that ensures access to students, faculty and staff from all groups and prioritizing access to groups under-represented in higher education. We will continue and strengthen our commitment to First Nations people, to reconciliation and to decolonization.

Looking ahead Renison will face both challenges and opportunities. Like many other Ontario post-secondary institutions, sustainability continues to be a challenge due to funding that has not increased in several years. This reality requires a focus on seeking opportunities to change, invest and explore new sources of revenue. The symbol of the Sankofa bird with its head turned back and holding a golden egg symbolizes learning from the past can guide the future. As we look to the future it will be important to reflect on the changes that are needed and the things about Renison that are important to maintain. I am confident that Renison will rise above the challenges, will find opportunities, and will continue to grow as a thriving academic institution focused on excellence in education and graduating students who will have a positive impact on our ever-changing world.

As a Board we care about Renison's success, and we are committed to transparency, collaboration and ensuring that all members of the Renison community have a voice in creating its future. We extend thanks to our supporters, alumni, generous donors, and the University of Waterloo. Special thanks to our faculty and staff for your continued dedication to Renison students and to excellence in teaching and research. Thank you to our students, you continue to inspire us. Together we have accomplished important milestones in this past year. Looking ahead, we have much to look forward to.

Warmly,

Karen Spencer, Board Chair Board of Governors Renison University College

Message from the President and Vice-Chancellor

Dear Renison Community:

This is my first letter to the community in our Annual Report as President and Vice-Chancellor of Renison University College following the conclusion of Dr. Wendy L. Fletcher's term as President from 2014-2024. On behalf of the entire Renison community, I must express my sincerest thanks and gratitude to Dr. Fletcher for her time and service as our President. As you all well know, Wendy's time here has been transformative for the institution having led us through the impacts of the pandemic and more recently through the development of a new strategic plan.

2023-2024 marked a significant period of transition for the college, including a presidential search and the development and ratification of a new strategic plan by the Board of Governors. The strategic plan, entitled "Meeting the Moment," which runs from 2024-2027, was created out of an extensive community engagement process and embodies "who Renison is" in addition to articulating the work that we do. Five priorities emerged:

- nurturing transformative leaders;
- embed indigenization, decolonization, and inclusion, diversity, and equity throughout all aspects of Renison life;
- foster a strong, inclusive, and healthy community;
- continue to be an inspirational place of teaching, research, and learning; and
- establish institutional sustainability.

Moving forward, much of the work needing to be accomplished in this current academic year centres around operationalizing the strategic plan and prioritizing and resourcing the activities that support these priorities. In a time of resource challenges, we also need to engage in the hard work of answering the question: "what are we going to stop doing in order to support these stated priorities?"

As laid out in our strategic planning documents: "...the combination of challenges and opportunities creates a unique moment in time for Renison. Meeting this moment with determination, tenacity, and optimism will allow Renison to be more prepared as we boldly step into our future." Our teaching, research, and community life work are all centred around supporting students who will make a significant difference in the world! I am proud of the work that Renison does and of the people who work, live, and study here as we live out our mission.

I look forward to getting to know all of you as we join together to accomplish these shared goals.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Marc Jerry President and Vice-Chancellor Renison University College

Financial Statement Highlights

May 1, 2023 – April 30, 2024

Total Operating Budget = \$22 million

Statement of Financial Position (in 000s)

Cash	4,474
Investments	3,583
Capital Assets	28,706
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	858
Student deposits and fee advances	619
Debt	8,619
Employee future benefits obligation	3,869
Statement of Operations (in 000s)	
Revenue	
Government grants	5,154
Tuition	10,794
Residence fees and conferences	2,261
Food Services	1,471
Expenses	
Salaries, wages and benefits	18,231
University services	1,487
Contracted Services	823
Utilities, repairs and maintenance	668
Office, general and admin	306
Academic support costs	334_

Endowment Value

Value of Endowment Portfolio as of April 30, 2024 = \$3,582,972 Value of Endowment Portfolio as of April 30, 2023 = \$3,565,030

Giving At Renison

Individual Giving	74%
Group Giving	18%
Alumni Giving	8%
Total Cash and Pledges	\$267,252
Total Funds Awarded	\$262,220

Course Enrollments

Languages and Culture

(Applied Language Studies, English for Multilingual Speakers, graduate and undergraduate English, History, Religious Studies, East Asian Studies, Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures)

5,570

Social Engagement and Innovation

(Social Development Studies, School of Social Work)

6,341

Community and Professional Education

(Renison Institute of Ministry, Sakura Japanese Language School, Renison International Office, non-credit Chinese, Japanese, and Korean language, English Language Institute, Indigenous Studies)

3,234

Leading an Inclusive Community

By Nancy Schnarr, Senior Manager, Central Communications

For Dr. Marc Jerry, Renison's President and Vice-Chancellor of only a few months, one thing is clear – people are important. From all corners of Renison – staff, faculty, students, visitors – Marc wants the community to know that at Renison, you are safe and you are welcome.

One of the first things Marc noticed about Renison were the special people, and the special place that has been created. "I want to honour the incredible people working for our students and community, he says. "I'm proud of what I'm seeing."

Nowhere was this more evident than on move-in weekend in late August, 2024. Renison houses just over 200 students every term and move-in weekend is a time of high activity, joy, and excitement, but also nerves and anxiety for students and parents. Marc describes an interaction with one family where a student's parent was in the process of dropping their child off, and tears were streaming down their face. A grandparent also stood by with tears in their eyes. Marc spoke with the grandparent and reassured them, saying "we will take good care of them." That short moment left an impression, and Marc received an email soon after from that same grandparent to express their appreciation for Marc, and for Renison.

One of the strategic pillars in the recent strategic plan is to foster a strong, inclusive, and healthy community. It's a pillar that's important to Marc and, in his own words, "I am genuinely committed to ensuring that Renison is a safe and inclusive space." As a parent, it matters to Marc that students can grow during their university experience, regardless of identity.

This isn't the first time Marc has prioritized inclusion while in leadership roles. He attributes his success to "being an unrelenting champion for spaces that are inclusive." During his time as President at Luther College, his role immediately preceding Renison, the school flew pride flags at both the university and high school campuses, marched in the Regina Pride parade, achieved gender balance on the executive team, and hired a Chaplain who was a champion for diverse spaces.

For Renison, Marc wants to see concrete examples of how we create inclusive space – like the recent creation of the Link Inclusion Lounge for students. The student connection is key; student leaders who are learning about creating inclusive spaces will help weave that value into our community, to create more spaces with EDI at the forefront.

It's also important to Marc that the community know that he understands his role in the work of advancing goals of inclusion, "I'm keenly aware that I'm a cis-gender, white, male ally," he says. "I intend to use that privilege to make our spaces safe."

Helping students find a deeper sense of belonging at Renison

By Ryan Connell, Assistant Director, Student Experience and Housing

Renison has enthusiastically opened its doors and embraced the launch of a new Link Inclusion Lounge this Fall. As a space dedicated to encouraging student connection and support at Renison, the new space strives to meet an important necessity every student has when they come to university: a need to belong.

Finding belonging as part of any community is easier said than done, however. Especially for students from equity-deserving populations, barriers persist that prevent students from finding acceptance, community, and belonging during their academic journey. For this, the Link Inclusion Lounge is an important bridge to further cultivate inclusion in our community.

Beginning with a series of consultation sessions in Winter 2024, Renison's Student Experience and Housing team wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how students feel they belong — or do not belong — at Renison. As part of the conversation, students were asked about ways Renison could help them strengthen their connection to other students while also learning what ways they could receive more meaningful support.

For the purposes of this initial work and to ensure capacity within Renison to provide adequate support, five specific equity-deserving communities were identified: 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Plus) students; Black, Indigenous, and Racialized (BIR) students; self-identified mature students; neurodivergent students, and; international students and English language learners. From the consultation sessions and an online feedback survey, numerous students shared glowing examples of ways they found Renison to be a welcoming and inviting community that provides positive support. But like any community, work can be done to provide more connection between equity-deserving student groups, as well as opportunities to access support.

Following from this, the Student Experience and Housing team launched the Link Inclusion Lounge, located not far from Renison's Cafeteria. The Lounge, featuring new furnishings with warm-coloured walls and decorated artwork from local Black, Indigenous, Racialized, and queer artists, is a space that welcomes students to relax between classes, as well as a venue for event programming. Beginning in September, the Lounge has received students for dedicated social events including Queer and Cozy, Neuro Night, Racialized Students Hangout, Chinese Students Hangout, and Mature Student Coffee Chat. While the University of Waterloo's Office of Indigenous Relations and the Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre provide considerable mentorship and support for current Indigenous students on campus, Renison understands the importance of ensuring Indigenization and decolonization is embedded through its work. To help usher this work, Renison has partnered with the Moose Hide Campaign, an Indigenous grassroots-led initiative to combat gender-based violence. Through Link Inclusion Lounge programming, Renison already incorporated the Moose Hide Campaign into Waterloo's Consent Week and distributed moose hide pins to encourage men and all students to speak out against gender-based violence in our communities.

To achieve our mission of inclusion and belonging, Renison has introduced two new Inclusion Coordinator roles with offices within the Lounge. The Inclusion Coordinators, who are Renison Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students completing their practicum in the space, are responsible for facilitating events, workshops, and training for the student community. Additionally, the practicum students are responsible for coordinating outreach initiatives to help students navigate the resources, supports, and services available across campus.

The Student Experience and Housing team will be facilitating an open house in October for the student and employee community. To learn more about the Lounge and its events and opportunities, visit the Link Inclusion Lounge webpage.

0&A with the Inclusion Coordinators

By Nancy Schnarr, Senior Manager, Central Communications

The new Link Inclusion Lounge has two Inclusion Coordinators, who are completing the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program at Renison's School of Social Work. The Coordinators, Keziah and Summer, gave us some details about their placement and what they're excited about this term.

What drew you to the placement as Inclusion Coordinator at Renison?

S: I was attracted to this position because I could improve my intercultural competency and learn how to promote DEI in a community by working with diverse populations at my placement. I also loved the vision of making Renison a more inclusive space for all communities.

K: At the placement fair back in April, I had a tough time finding a placement I was interested in but also something that would accommodate my vision loss appropriately. Unfortunately, some roles need adequate vision for their positions which meant that I would not be a good fit. I came across the Renison booth and within minutes it was obvious that this position not only catered to my needs but would also allow me to be an advocate for others like me. This was huge for me. I had so many issues going through post-secondary with my vision condition and I want to make sure other students don't have to face similar setbacks. This was how I got interested in the position of inclusion coordinator and now I get to be an advocate not just for individuals with disabilities but also other marginalized groups.

What kinds of activities do you have planned? Is there anything you are particularly excited about?

S: Even though I have experience planning different recreational events, I have yet to plan any activities at Renison since this is only our third week here. However, I have participated in many activities that were planned previously. I am particularly excited about the diversity of the events here on campus. Each one of them is a learning opportunity.

K: I am particularly excited for our racialized groups session which is just a chill hang where people of colour can gather and speak about their hardships, share their stories, or even just talk about general life events. It's a good way to decompress in a safe space but also build relationships with others and bond over events that everyone may relate to in some way, shape, or form.

I have yet to plan an event on my own, but these first couple months are intended for me to get a better understanding of the demographic and learn more about what they want to see for the future.

What do you hope students will get out of the new lounge and its programming?

S: I hope students will take pride in the space they have collectively created with their voices. Moreover, I hope that students will benefit from the Link Inclusion Lounge programs by developing knowledge of systemic or structural oppression, inequity, and injustice and gaining the power and skills to identify and dismantle the biases and prejudices in their minds established and fortified by their social locations. Lastly, I hope they can experience the power of solidarity and develop allyship with one another.

K: I hope students can experience a sense of belonging. Leaving home and starting new can be very difficult for new students but I hope this lounge can bring people together and make people feel at peace. Not a place where they need to pretend or perform to be someone they are not.

What does inclusion mean to you?

S: Inclusion means a sense of belonging to every individual, disrespecting the group dynamic. It means mindful considerations of all groups' needs and interests. It also means that all community members' attributes are respected and appreciated within the group.

K: I equate inclusion with belonging. As an inclusion coordinator I want to let people know that they do have a place, and they do belong. No matter your gender, age, race, religion, or ability, you belong. Those aspects that make us different are beautiful and that is what makes us whole.

Anything else to share?

S: First, I love working at Renison because it is such a loving and caring community.

Second, I am eager to explore the unexplored aspects of our new role, which presents a lot of learning opportunities.

I am also excited about our potential to shape the futures of those who join us in the future in our practicum.

K: Renison has some amazing support systems in place so please do not hesitate to reach out to staff if you are struggling in any way. The community also offers some amazing events and opportunities, and I highly suggest attending them, even if it's just for the free food. You may make some great memories with some great people. This is something I regret during my SDS career. I only came to campus to attend my lectures and then I would head back home, but your whole student experiences changes when you participate in community. Therefore, I encourage everyone to step out of their bubble a little bit and find some more places or people whom you can call home.

Students can find Keziah and Summer in their office Monday-Wednesday in the Link Inclusion Lounge. They are also available for one-on-one meetings. For more, visit the Link Inclusion Lounge webpage

Magic: Finding Inspiration at Renison in 1962

By Nancy Schnarr, Senior Manager, Central Communications

As a Renison staff member, I hear so often from students and alumni that Renison is "special." This "special"-ness extends back to the early days when it was a much smaller, but no less welcoming, place for students.

Doug Peacock, now 80, spent the first years of his university career at Renison, living in residence for two years while completing his degree in History. When I asked him to give me one word to describe Renison he said "magic."

Let's start at the beginning. Doug was young athlete who grew up in a 2nd floor flat in Scarborough. His family was blue collar, and no one had yet attended university until Doug set off to the small town of Waterloo in 1961. His initially planned to attend Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, but a meeting with an Assistant Registrar changed his course to the University of Waterloo and Renison.

From an Anglican family, Doug was drawn to the new Anglican college on campus called Renison. They had a special rate for athletes, and since Doug was also wanting to play hockey and football, it seemed a perfect fit. When driving to campus from the bus station though, Doug says that the taxi driver hadn't even heard of it. When he arrived at the small campus on Westmount Road, he says it felt like he was in the middle of nowhere, right on the fringe of farm country.

It didn't take long for Doug to settle into life at the new college. He describes it as small, new, and comfortable. His roommate was Rod Ferguson from Fergus, and one of his classmates was Gail Cuthbert Brandt, who would serve as Renison's Principal from 1992-2002. At the time the resident population was made up of about 2/3 men and 1/3 women. Doug chuckles as he recalls that the women's residence was well-patrolled by the Dean, and that often the meeting place for men and women was in the shared laundry room. Doug says that Renison was a very friendly place, there were lots of fellow athletes in the residence, and he appreciated the way Principal Wyn Rees and Dean Rolfe kept an eye out for students.

Doug was impressed with the teaching style of Principal Rees, who was also a History Professor. "I took all of his History classes," he says. "I remember he was a very good teacher; short in stature but his way of teaching was amazing." Doug himself would go on to begin his teaching career in 1966, teaching Physical Education, History, and Special Education before moving into a more administrative role as Principal, and then moving on to Trent University as a Teaching Coordinator and making his home in Peterborough.

After a long career in teaching, Doug was encouraged to make an impact on the community in another way – municipal politics. He was elected to City Council and served for a number of years before stepping back in 2010.

Then, in 2020, Doug's life changed dramatically with the sudden death of his wife while they were on vacation in Australia. The tragedy caused him to re-evaluate his life and he began to focus on grace and hope, leaning on his Anglican faith for inspiration. He spoke at conferences about the importance of intramural sports, and strived to help make school a meaningful place for students.

When he talks about his life, Doug says that his career and volunteer choices have always been to support his community and make a difference; a value that was instilled in him at Renison. Even then

the community was progressive and involved with the issues of the day, which Doug looks back on with pride.

Doug remains tied to Renison and the University of Waterloo through his many relationships, and enthusiasm for athletics. "I became quite the academic," he says. "But my passion was always for athletics." He stayed in touch with many of his friends from Renison and has often been back for homecoming and other athletic events. In 2005 Doug was inducted into the Waterloo Warriors Hall of Fame, in recognition of his many athletic achievements.

Doug was most recently on campus in 2019 for the opening of the Columbia Ice Fields Sports Centre, and gave a tour of Renison to his wife. They took the walk down the hill, over the bridge, and across the creek. Though he says he gets lost on the growing campus, it's a walk he's done countless times before, and he says it was one of the highlights of the trip.

Nowadays Doug can often be found on the golf course, riding his bike, or spending time in his garden. Now remarried, his wife has suggested on more than one occasion that he find a hobby to occupy his time, but he laughs and says that he's done enough!

Magic. It's the word that got us here in the first place, and how Doug describes the Renison community. "I'm so lucky that I met that Assistant Registrar, and that I started out at Renison," he says. "I was blessed to have started off in university at a small place where everyone knew your name. Magic was discovering the way Professor Rees taught classes, I felt the magic of being inspired and that has stayed with me."

Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Equity and Community Building

By Crystena Parker-Shandal, Associate Professor, Social Development Studies

[**Editor's Note**: This year's annual report focuses on building inclusive communities. Many of our faculty are engaged in research in this area. Dr. Crystena Parker-Shandal's work in particular looks at Restorative Justice and how it can be applied within our classrooms. What follows is a bit about her work and some additional resources.]

Restorative Justice in Education (RJE) is critical for fostering equity and community building across various settings—whether in schools, universities, healthcare, or workplaces. My work has primarily focused on K-12 schools in Ontario, where I examine how RJE practices can transform school environments by emphasizing relationships, accountability, and inclusivity over punitive approaches.

Consider a child who acts out in class, but whose behaviour is rooted in their adverse experiences at home. This child may be seeking attention or an outlet for their pain. In my recent book, I share vignettes from my ethnographic research that show how children are often "hurting out" when they are supposedly "acting out." Traditional disciplinary measures, such as suspensions, rely on punitive, carceral logics that fail to address the underlying issues. Instead, we need to approach these situations with empathy and support, recognizing that these young people are seeking connection and care. This principle applies across disciplines and contexts—empathising with people who are calling out for relational connection is crucial to building healthier communities. However, these efforts must be integrated with anti-racist and anti-capitalist principles to truly promote human flourishing.

By implementing RJE frameworks, educators can create spaces where all voices are heard, conflicts are addressed constructively, and a sense of community is nurtured. This approach dismantles power imbalances and systemic barriers that frequently marginalize racialized students and those from lower socio-economic or other marginalized backgrounds.

The benefits of RJE as a method of dispute resolution are multifaceted. It shifts the focus from punishment to healing and learning, encouraging participants to take responsibility for their actions and understand the impact on others. This process promotes empathy, self-reflection, and conflict-resolution skills, which are crucial for personal and social development. Beyond resolving conflicts, RJE contributes to building a more connected and engaged community by nurturing a culture of mutual respect and support.

Ultimately, I hope to see RJE become a foundational component of educational practice, creating more equitable learning environments and empowering students to become agents of change within their communities. Many school boards across Canada are implementing with restorative justice in their schools. It's my hope that this research can contribute to shaping future educators and change-makers.

Resources:

Parker-Shandal, C. A. H. (2022). <u>Restorative justice in the classroom: Liberating students' voices through relational pedagogy</u>. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Podcasts:

Voiced Podcast: Restorative Justice in the Classroom

The Mint House: Restorative Parenting Podcast

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To each of our many donors, thank you for your generous support of Renison University College.

At Renison, faculty and students are helping to change the world. Supporters like you help to ensure that Renison continues its strong presence as a place of education and social change within our community, nationally, and internationally.



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