

Community Engaged Learning

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Western is located on the lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton Peoples connected through four pre-confederation treaties: the London Township Treaty (Treaty 6), Longwoods Treaty (Treaty 21), Sombra Township Treaty (Treaty 7), McKee Purchase (Treaty 2), and the Dish With One Spoon Covenant Wampum. There is also a substantial amount of unceded land in the area we now call Southwestern Ontario. In the work that we do, we partner with communities within and beyond this area, and support students in engaging in experiential learning globally. We encourage students, faculty, and partners to research and understand the lands where they engage in experiences.

As an Experiential Learning team, we commit to working to dismantle colonialism by developing and honoring long-standing relationships with Indigenous community partners. We recognize that, historically, when universities have engaged with Indigenous communities for scholarly work, the process has been extractive and exploitative. We aim to support the disruption of the colonial relationship between Indigenous communities and our institution by focusing our work on partnerships and projects that are community-led and that prioritize reciprocity.

We commit to fostering a culture of inclusion for students in experiential learning, including taking action to remove systemic barriers that prevent or limit Indigenous students' engagement. We will create safe and positive experiences for Indigenous students by recognizing and respecting their diverse identities, cultures, languages, learning styles, and perspectives, as well as centering their interests and needs. We will support students in growing their understanding and appreciation of Indigenous communities through experiential learning, and by engaging with Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

VICE PROVOST'S THANK YOU

Your partnership is creating bright futures.

Learning cannot happen inside the classroom alone. Students need to understand how to translate the concepts they learn in the classroom to practical experiences that have meaningful impact.

With your support, the number and breadth of community engaged learning opportunities for Western students continues to grow. All Western students can choose to engage in this signature form of experiential learning that deepens their understanding and puts their knowledge, skills, and creativity into action.

On behalf of Western, thank you for partnering with us and engaging students in the important work of your organization.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Doerksen', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

John Doerksen
Vice Provost, Students
Western University

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING (CEL) ALLOWS STUDENTS TO TAKE THEIR SKILLS BEYOND THE WALLS OF THE CLASSROOM AND INTO THE COMMUNITY.

Through CEL courses and co-curricular programs, students partner with organizations in the London region and abroad to tackle important challenges and issues. At the heart of this work is the promise of community-driven problem solving, collaboration, and mutually beneficial outcomes for students and community partners.

This year, 5,155 Western students participated in CEL. They engaged in 1,200 projects and events in collaboration with 227+ community members across 85 organizations, both on and off campus. Most activities took place in person throughout the London area, with the incorporation of some hybrid formats for accessibility and efficiency, such as meetings, work sessions, and presentations. This flexible approach allowed CEL partners to choose which option worked best for them, whether out in the community, on campus, or via Zoom. Students and community partners collaborated on semester and year-long projects to create greater impact within London.

We are so grateful for our community partners' generosity, enthusiasm, and dedication to mentoring our students' and contributing to the next generation of leaders in our community.

"I'd say the value of going beyond the Western bubble is really having an understanding of the place in which we're living, operating, and contributing to as students at Western. It can be really easy to get comfortable at the university space, and also to the general way of thinking that comes with the university environment. But with Community Engaged Learning, we were able to go beyond those ways of thinking, kind of push the ways that we were engaging with different things that we were learning. And overall, it was just extremely invaluable to have a different perspective. [With] a project like this, we looked at the disparities that exist, investigated the problem that existed, but then also took it one step further to come up with solutions that were actually tangible and achievable. So, it does give you a sense of empowerment, being able to know that you're not just learning about something, you have a sense of hope for actually generating community level change. And I feel like you can only really do that by engaging with organizations that are operating on the local level."

Amber Carroll | *Scholar's Electives Capstone Student*

"My experience engaging with a CEL course includes three terms as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, and two terms as a course instructor, for the Music Education in Community course offered through the Don Wright Faculty of Music. I have witnessed a great deal of growth in students' self-confidence and reflective practice, through their engagement with our community partners. When beginning this course, students often have a limited understanding of the possibilities for their future career paths. Their experiences actively engaging with our community partners, however, open their eyes to a variety of meaningful opportunities that they may otherwise not have been exposed to in a university setting. Students' appreciation for the benefits to society offered through community music programs grows exponentially from week to week, as evidenced by their reflective video blogs and our class discussions. As course instructor, I am grateful to the CEL team for their efforts to make the experiences of students, community partners, and myself both positive and meaningful."

Laura Curtis | *Music Education in Community Professor*

CURRICULAR CEL

Curricular CEL integrates service to the community with specific course curriculum. As part of the requirements of earning course credit, students complete a project or fulfil a placement that is defined by a community organization to advance their mission. This hands-on, practical experience in the community enables students to gain a deeper understanding of course content as it applies to local and international contexts.



3,255
students

32 CEL courses
across



10
faculties

1,200
projects



86,762
hours of engagement

85

partner
organizations

SELECT 2023-24 CEL PROJECTS ACCOMPLISHED THIS YEAR INCLUDE:

- Pollinator boxes built to educate the St. Thomas community about protecting the bee population in support of their new “bee city” status | STEAM Education Centre | *Environmental Health Promotion*
- New program outlines developed to enhance virtual and residential addiction recovery programs and improve client experience | Westover Treatment Centre | *Addictions: Theory & Research*
- Research report to advocate for a National Disability Insurance Plan (NDIP) and enhance public awareness to the lived experiences of community members and how they would benefit from a NDIP | Every Canadian Counts | *Community Collaboration & Social Change*
- Digital community survey initiative to understand the disparities and linkages between climate change, urban agriculture, and food security in the London community | Urban Roots | *Scholar's Electives Capstone*
- Accessible, engaging narrative performances presented by interdisciplinary students across various CEL courses to increase the reach and impact of research at Western University | Storyhouse Project | *Various Courses*

“The partnerships offered incredible value to our organization: freed up resources as these projects were tackled by the student groups, produced deliverables that the population we serve have been waiting on, developed material to bring to policy makers as we advocate for change, and continued support from one of the students as she takes on a committed volunteer role with our organization.”

Lindsay Parsons

*Project Coordinator, Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation Canada
Partner of Science in Your Community and Canada-US Relations Courses (Fall 2023)*

NEW INITIATIVES

COMMUNITY PARTNER ROUNDTABLES

- In December and April, at the end of each academic term, the CEL team hosted the first Community Partner Roundtable events to celebrate the successes of the terms' CEL projects, while brainstorming ways to improve meaningful partnership outcomes.
- Based on the feedback gathered from these events, the CEL team developed new resources for community partners, including an Orientation Manual and a CEL Course Guide, which are shared on the [CEL website](#).

UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (UN SDGs) PROJECT TAGGING

- All CEL projects were tagged based on their alignment with the UN SDGs to demonstrate to students, community partners, and the Western community the reach and impact of these local-level projects and their interconnectedness with broader global sustainability targets.
- Percentage of projects associated with each UN SDG:

1. NO POVERTY	2. ZERO HUNGER	3. GOOD HEALTH & WELLBEING	4. QUALITY EDUCATION	5. GENDER EQUALITY	6. CLEAN WATER & SANITATION
35%	17%	54%	33%	22%	2%
7. AFFORDABLE & CLEAN ENERGY	8. DECENT WORK & ECONOMIC GROWTH	9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, & INFRASTRUCTURE	10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES	12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION
7%	26%	20%	43%	33%	13%
13. CLIMATE ACTION	14. LIFE BELOW WATER	15. LIFE ON LAND	16. PEACE, JUSTICE, & STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	
13%	0%	2%	33%	26%	

PARTNERSHIP DASHBOARD

- The CEL team has been developing an open-access ArcGIS Dashboard to visually represent their partnerships with local organizations through an interactive, single-screen map that allows users to filter information by program, course, faculty, and final deliverable to see quantitative and qualitative data about curricular CEL.

INNOVATION WORKS

The CEL team maintained their on-site space at Innovation Works, where they are co-tenant members. It is a unique gathering space for community organizations and members to come together and share ideas, best practices, and experiences. We are very fortunate and appreciative to have Innovation Works and the Pillar Nonprofit Network as longstanding partners.



1. Storyhouse Project presentations
2. Orientation Serves
3. CEL Community Partner Roundtable
4. 2023-24 CEL Community Partner logo collage
5. Volunteer Fair
6. Pollinator box building

CO-CURRICULAR CEL

OSERVES

1,900 students **18** partners **5,700** hours of engagement

As a part of Orientation Week, the CEL team collaborated with 18 community organizations to host the 7th annual Orientation Serves (OServes) event on Saturday, September 9, 2023. Over 1,900 first-year students participated in volunteer activities that fostered their connection to the local community and facilitated meaningful relationships. They engaged in diverse projects such as woodworking, crafting zines, decorating kites and gift boxes, cleaning waterways, recording biodiversity, planting pollinator vegetation, writing letters to seniors, creating craft kits for children, and contributing to a library art installation. Moreover, they gained a deeper understanding of HIV/AIDS and mental health awareness initiatives. Participating in volunteer work during their first week at the university allowed students to establish a sense of belonging and recognize the significance of community involvement. We extend our gratitude to the exceptional organizations that provided these enriching experiences, and to the more than 900 Orientation Volunteer Leaders (Sophs) for their excellent leadership during the event.

VOLUNTEER FAIR

270 students **15+** partners

On October 3, 2023, our Volunteer Fair connected over 15 community partners with over 270 students. This event highlighted the variety of volunteer opportunities available to students in the London region. A wide range of community partners showcased the unique volunteer opportunities at their organizations and provided education about their organizations' dedication to advancing positive social change. We would like to thank our community partners for not only enhancing the experiences of our students, but also for their contributions to community development.

WESTERN SERVES NETWORK

The main purpose of the Western Serves Network (WSN) is to facilitate connections between Western students and the larger London community, while promoting awareness about community issues through co-curricular experiential learning. These events involve community speakers and opportunities for hands-on learning. By partnering with nonprofit organizations, students are able to share their perspectives and ideas, as they gain valuable experience and develop transferable skills. This year was dedicated to exploring ways to expand the Western Serves Network and we are excited to launch those strategies in the 2024-2025 academic year to continue connecting community partners to passionate students.

IMPACT EXPERIENCE

Western's signature Reading Week program, Impact Experience, continued to empower students to engage in community service and apply their skills to community challenges. We are delighted to announce the return of Impact Experience for the upcoming 2024-2025 academic year. We look forward to collaborating with our community partners and offering multiple project-based community engaged learning opportunities through our reimagined format. The Impact Experience program will continue to demonstrate Western's commitment to experiential learning and social responsibility, and we look forward to the next iteration of this valuable program. Please stay tuned for our call for proposals for our Fall and Winter Reading Weeks.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Our Community Engagement Student Coordinator is a student leader who assists with planning and executing OServes, Western Serves Network, and Impact Experience. They work closely with the CEL team to design, promote, research, and support year-long co-curricular CEL programming. We would like to thank this year's Community Engagement Student Coordinator, Ashmitha Umaharan, for her leadership and contributions to fostering community engagement during the 2023-2024 academic year. We would also like to welcome Donya Babanezhad as the incoming Community Engagement Student Coordinator for Summer 2024. With program development and community outreach well underway, we would like to thank Donya for her continued dedication to connecting community partners with the Western community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING PARTNERS

227 community members partnered with CEL at Western this year. Organizations are listed below, and those in **bold** partnered with more than one course, project, or event throughout the year.

To our partners—thank you for sharing your expertise, your time, and your enthusiasm with our students. These incredible learning opportunities would not be possible without your partnership and dedication.

Antler River Rally

BGC London

Black Community Employment & Empowerment Services

Canadian Mental Health Association, Thames Valley Addiction & Mental Health Services

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)

Carepoint Consumption & Treatment Service, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

Changing Ways

Cheshire Independent Living Services

ChildCan

City of London

CLAP with Claire

Community Living London

Concussion Legacy Foundation

Consaul Herbarium & Sherwood Fox Arboretum

Crouch Neighbourhood Centre

Daya Counselling

Elgin Ontario Health Team

EPIC Recovery

Every Canadian Counts

Faculty of Health Sciences Students' Council, Dream Team

Family Centre Westminster, South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre

First St. Andrew's United Church

Forest City Microgreens

Gamespeed Data

Gender Equality Coalition

George Bray Minor Hockey

Goodwill

Hutton House

IDHC Health

John P. Robarts Public School

King's University College

KW Rehab

L'Arche London

Let's Talk Science

LIFE*SPIN

Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation Canada

London Black History Coordinating Committee

London Children's Museum

London Cycle Link

London Pro Musica Choir

Louise Arbour French Immersion Public School

Luke's Place

Merrymount Children's Centre

Middlesex County, Department of Economic Development

Middlesex County, Department of Tourism

Middlesex County, Middlesex Workforce Development Partnership

mindyourmind

Motionball

Nature London

Ontario Centre for Talent Development

Ontario Shores

Parkwood Institute, Possibilities Project Plus

People Agriculture Training Community Hospitality

PHSS Medical & Complex Care

Preschool of the Arts

Purple Hands

Reimagine Co.**Rights & Responsibilities Awareness Initiative**

Seniors With Skills

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Hubs (SRHR Hubs)

South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre

Southpoint Klite Festival

St. Leonard's Community Services

STEAM Education Centre

Stem2Stern

Streamliners Espresso Bar

Suicide Prevention Middlesex London

Thames Talbot Land Trust

Thames Valley District School Board

Thames Valley Trail Association

The Canada Network

The Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW)

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army London Citadel

The Salvation Army, Centre of Hope

Trafalgar Public School

Type Diabeat-It

University Students' Council (USC), Food Support Services

University Students' Council (USC), Active Minds

University Students' Council (USC), Crafting for a Cure

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

Urban Roots London

Waterloo Regional District School Board

Western University, Department of Mathematics

Western University, Faculty of Education, Mary J. Wright Child and Youth Development Clinic

Western University, Faculty of Health Sciences

Western University, Libraries

Western University, Recovery Addiction Awareness Day**Western University, Sustainability**

Western University, School of Occupational Therapy

Western University, The Northern Tornadoes Project (NTP)

Western University, Western Heads East

Westland Gallery

Westover Treatment Centre**YMCA of Southwestern Ontario****Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU)**

Zine Creation UWO

RESOURCES

CEL FACULTY COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

To support the work of CEL faculty, the CEL team fosters a Faculty Community of Practice (CoP). The CoP connects throughout the year to discuss challenges and successes, share CEL resources, and explore themes related to CEL pedagogies, best practice, and learning outcomes.

SCHOLARSHIP@WESTERN

CEL has a public repository on Western Libraries' [Scholarship@Western](#) site to publish students' final deliverables from CEL courses. This open-access platform showcases valuable contributions that students have made within the London community and the important work that CEL partners engage in. The site enables students to share their work, while exemplifying possible achievements for future partnerships and projects. CEL currently displays 42 articles, 2 presentations, and 12 reports, with the total number of downloads exceeding 7,000 and continually growing.

CURRICULAR CEL FACULTY

The following is a list of the instructors who taught CEL courses in the 2023-24 academic year, and their course titles. We would like to express our thanks to the faculty members who integrated CEL into their teaching, creating opportunities for students to apply their learning and contribute to the important work of our community partners.

FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES		
Dr. Barbara Bruce	Arts & Humanities 4490X	Experiential Learning in the Arts & Humanities
Amrapali Chatterjee	Intercultural Communications 2500G	Bridging Classroom and Community: Languages and Cultures in Action
	Spanish 1030	Beginner Spanish
Dr. Ana García-Allén	Spanish 2200	Intermediate Spanish
	Spanish 3300	Advanced Spanish
CONTINUING STUDIES		
Janis Wallace	Marketing 6013	Advanced Marketing Strategies
	Public Relations 6036	Media Relations
FACULTY OF ENGINEERING		
Dr. John Dickinson	Engineering Science 1050	Foundations of Engineering Practice
Dr. John Makaran	Mechanical and Materials Engineering 4499	Mechanical Engineering Design Project
FACULTY OF INFORMATION & MEDIA STUDIES		
Jeremy Copeland	Master of Media in Journalism and Communication 9503	Shoot for the Heart - Harnessing the Power of Video Storytelling
Dr. Melissa Adler	Media, Information & Technoculture 2025B	Research Methods for the Digital Age
Dr. Sandra Smeltzer	Media, Information & Technoculture 4999	Media & the Public Interest Practicum
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES		
Dr. Tara Mantler	Health Sciences 2700A	Health Issues in Childhood and Adolescents
Dr. Denise Grafton	Health Sciences 3240B	Environmental Health Promotion
Dr. Carri Hand	Occupational Therapy 9652	Engaging in Occupation: Community and Population Level Practice
SCHULICH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE & DENTISTRY		
Dr. Alison Allan	Biochemistry 4955E	Community Engaged Learning and Research Skills in Transnational Cancer Biology
Dr. Sarah McLean	Medical Sciences 4995E	CEL and Research Skills and IMS
Dr. Nicole Campbell	Medical Sciences 9603	Experiential Community Rotation
DON WRIGHT FACULTY OF MUSIC		
Dr. Laura Curtis	Music 3812A/B	Music Education in Community
FACULTY OF SCIENCE		
Dr. Graeme Taylor	Biology 4920F/G	Seminar in Biology
Laura Reid & Bryan Sarlo	Computer Science 1033A/B	Multimedia and Communication
Dr. Christina Booker & Kristin Zinger	Integrated Science 3002A	Science in Your Community
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE		
Annas Alimorad & Ajit Unnithan	Management and Organizational Studies 9330	Project Management
	Political Science 3201G	International Law
Dr. Dan Bousfield	Political Science 3210F	Canada-US Relations
	Political Science 3510G	Decolonizing Politics
Dr. Leora Swartzman	Psychology 3895E	Social Science in the Community
	Psychology 4874E	Community Psychology
Dr. Riley Hinson	Psychology 4873E	Addictions: Theory and Research
MULTIDISCIPLINARY		
Associate Deans	Scholar's Electives 4400Y	Scholar's Electives Capstone Course
Josephine Agueci & Dr. Katie Oates	School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies 9105L	Community Collaboration & Social Change

“Students in our CEL course have the exciting opportunity to work as a team and apply their scientific skills to an important project in our community. Over the past few years, our students have shared meaningful reflections, highlighting their broadened perspective on social issues, advocacy, equity, and environmental issues. Students have also discussed their strengthened teamwork, communication, and leadership skills. Overall, our students have been encouraged to see how their work can make a meaningful impact on people in our community.

**THIS COMMUNITY ENGAGED
LEARNING OPPORTUNITY IS
SOMETHING THAT I HOPE MORE
WESTERN STUDENTS CAN
EXPERIENCE.”**

Dr. Christina Booker | *Science in Your Community*