

# Project Based Learning Annual Report

## 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.

## Introduction

Project Based Learning allows students to take their skills beyond the classroom into the community and local industries. Through Community Engaged Learning (CEL) courses and co-curricular programs, students partner with nonprofit organizations in the London region to tackle societal issues. Additionally, students enrolled in Industry Project courses partner with small- to medium-sized businesses in the London region on existing challenges to affect organizational change. At the heart of this work is the promise of collaborative problem solving, innovation, and mutually beneficial outcomes for students and partners.

This year, 6,637 Western students participated in Project Based Learning. They engaged in 1,274 projects and events developed across 245 partnerships from 131 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 our partners to choose which option worked best for them, whether out in the city, on campus, or online. Students and partners collaborated on semester and year-long projects that produced mutually beneficial outcomes and made a positive impact in the London community and in local industries.

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

## Student Voices

"Working in a cross-cultural environment pushed me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds. This experience has deepened my passion for cross-cultural communication and strengthened my desire to pursue a career in this field."

Promise Chen | Experiential Learning in the Arts and Humanities

## Community Partner Voices

"As a small not-for-profit charity, Nokee Kwe relies on community volunteerism as one of the most valuable resources they can tap into. The CEL groups from UWO bring enthusiasm, fresh ideas, and essential support that significantly benefit our organization's mission."

Working with student volunteers provides cost-effective support, as they offer crucial assistance without the financial burden of hiring additional staff. This allows us to allocate resources more efficiently, while still achieving goals. Our limited and stagnant funding (no funding increases in over 20 years) means we regularly operate with tight budgets and struggle to afford the necessary staff to meet on-going goals. This also leaves limited or no time and finances for innovation, and additional projects that would ease this financial constraint. The student groups provide an important component to our survival.

Collaborating with such dedicated and passionate teams has been a truly rewarding experience. I deeply appreciate the time, effort, and enthusiasm that everyone brings, regardless of the task. The students' commitment to learning and community engagement is inspiring, and I am grateful to be part of such meaningful opportunities."

Deb Armstrong | Nokee Kwe

"Our longstanding partnership with the Community Engaged Learning (CEL) program at Western University has been truly rewarding. Most recently, in the Together Against Online Crime project, CEL students supported us by designing and conducting a community impact survey that provided valuable insights into digital safety awareness among underserved groups. Their work helped us better understand the needs of our audience and improve how we deliver our programs.

This collaboration is a great example of how academic and community partnerships can lead to real, measurable impact. We deeply value CEL's commitment to social change and look forward to many more shared initiatives ahead."

Hetham Karky | Rights & Responsibilities Awareness Initiative

## Curricular CEL

Curricular CEL involves students collaborating on a project, or fulfilling a placement, developed collaboratively with a community partner to create mutually beneficial outcomes that align with course curriculum. Students earn course credit while advancing the mission and goals of community organizations. This hands-on, practical experience in the community enables students to gain a deeper understanding of course content as it applies to local and global contexts.

CEL courses: 36 across 10 faculties

Projects: 1,239

Students: 3,284

Community partners: 179

Hours of engagement: 66,499

## Select 2024-25 Project Highlights

- Advocated for wellbeing in the community by developing an online resource page and hosted a lunch and learn for Occupational Therapy students | Ontario Society of Occupational Therapy Retired Members Team | *Engaging in Occupation: Community and Population Level Practice*
- Created marketing campaign and surveyed food insecurity awareness; raised funds and collected donations for organization during Western Sustainability conference | Black Community Employment and Empowerment Services | *Project Management*
- Promoted and supported seed saving initiative by creating and sharing engaging digital content to increase availability of native plants impacting biodiversity and climate resilience in London | Urban Roots | *Environmental Health Promotion*
- Led grant-writing efforts to support urban Indigenous women's empowerment, cultural revitalization and storytelling, and Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching models | Nokee Kwe | *Feminist Activism*

## New and Ongoing Initiatives

### New! ImpactLab London

Along with the City of London and London's post-secondary institutions, Community Engaged Learning at Western launched ImpactLab London, a new pilot program that builds upon the success of CityStudio London, engaging students in developing ideas related to the City's strategic priorities. Together, students in select courses at Western University, Huron University, King's University College, and Fanshawe College co-created projects around the common, strategic theme of talent retention in Canada and beyond, and they developed their knowledge and skills to contribute meaningfully to the city's future.

30 Master of Public Administration students at Western examined municipally led interventions related to student retention in Canada and beyond and developed a research report and summary presentation with findings and recommendations | Political Science 9913: *Public Administration*

### Innovation Works

The CEL team has 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.

## Community Engagement Student Leadership

Our Community Engagement Student Coordinator is a student leader who assists with planning and executing Orientation Serves, 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 summer's Community Engagement Coordinator, Donya Babanezhad, for her leadership and contributions to fostering community engagement during her term. We would also like to welcome Kate Radcliffe as the new Community Engagement Student Coordinator for Summer 2025. With program development and community outreach well underway, we would like to thank Kate for her continued dedication to connecting community partners with the Western community.

## Co-Curricular CEL

### OServes

As a part of Orientation Week, the CEL team collaborated with 15 community organizations to host the 18th annual Orientation Serves (OServes) event on Saturday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Over 1,300 first-year students participated in volunteer activities that fostered their connection to the local community and facilitated meaningful relationships through collaborative short-term projects. 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 400 Orientation Volunteer Leaders (Sophs) for their excellent leadership during the event.

Partners: 15

Students: 1,391

Hours of engagement: 3,478

### Volunteer Fair

On November 12, our Volunteer Fair connected over 30 community partners with over 250 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.

Partners: 32

Students: 295

## Western Serves Network

The main purpose of the Western Serves Network (WSN) is to connect over 900 passionate Western Students with nonprofit organizations in the broader London community. In doing so, the WSN promotes an awareness of community needs and issues while emphasizing the practical importance of co-curricular experiential learning. In collaboration with Nokee Kwe, the Western Serves Network created over 100 dreamcatchers for the community. Additionally, through the Western Serves Network Newsletter, 25 volunteer opportunities in London and the surrounding area were showcased. Through a plethora of volunteer opportunities and events, students are given the chance to share their perspectives and ideas, develop transferable skills in high demand, and contribute to the mission and vision of partnering organizations.

Students in Network: 909

Volunteer opportunities showcased: 25

## Impact Experience

Western's signature Reading Week program, Impact Experience, empowered students to engage in their local communities through acts of service in the 2024-2025 academic year. Throughout the program, students learned to apply their skills and knowledge learned in the classroom to solve various community challenges. Examples of student projects included: promoting financial literacy to London students by partnering with Junior Achievement Southwestern Ontario (JA); creating signage plans for youth in the City of St. Thomas through STEAM Education; creating marketing resources for the Ontario Centre for Talent Development (OCFTD); and creating an event to bring people with and without developmental disabilities together at L'Arche London. These projects are wide ranging and demonstrate the breadth of challenges Western students are equipped to face using their education.

Student participants: 41

Partners/projects: 4

Hours of Community Engaged Learning: 1,148

## Community Engaged Learning Partners

Thank you to our community partners—your time, mentorship, expertise, and enthusiasm is greatly appreciated. These incredible learning opportunities would not be possible without your partnership and dedication. Partnering organizations are listed below, and those in **bold** partnered with more than one course, project, or event throughout the year.

### 519Pursuit

Active Minds, University Students' Council, Western University

**Alzheimer Society of Ontario**

**Alzheimer Society Southwest Partners**

Amabile Choirs of London, Canada  
Art 4 All Kids  
**Black at Southwestern Ontario**  
**Black Community Employment & Empowerment Services**  
Brain Tumour Foundation  
Canadian Cancer Society  
**Canadian Federation of University Women**  
**Canadian Health Information Management Association**  
Changing Ways  
**Cheshire Independent Living Services**  
ChildCan  
Children's Health Research Institute (CHRI)  
**Community Counselling London**  
**Community Living London**  
Crafting for a Cure  
Crafting for a Cure, University Students' Council, Western University  
Dale Brain Injury Services  
Daya Counselling Centre  
**DermEffects**  
**Elgin Ontario Health Team**  
Embroiderer's Guild, London  
Epic Recovery  
**Every Canadian Counts**  
Families First CAPC, SLNR  
**Family Service Thames Valley**  
FHSSC Dream Team  
Friends of the Gardens  
First-St. Andrew's United Church  
**Gamespeed Data**  
**Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario**  
Human Environments Analysis Laboratory  
**Hutton House**  
Inclusive Anatomy  
**John P. Robarts P.S.**  
Junior Achievement South Western Ontario  
Kids Kicking Cancer  
**L'Arche London**  
**Let's Talk Science**  
Clinical Research Unit, London Health Sciences Centre  
**LIFE\*SPIN**  
**Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation Canada**  
LOLA Bees  
London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership  
**London Bicycle Cafe**

**London Black History Coordinating Committee**

London Community Hebrew Day School

London Cross Cultural Learner Centre

London District Renewable Energy Cooperative

London Environmental Network

**London Pro Musica Choir**

London Research Information Outreach Team

Louise Arbour French Immersion Public School

Medical Science Community Outreach

**Melanoma Canada**

Middlesex London Food Policy Council

Middlesex-London Health Unit

Middlesex-London, Elgin Ontario Health Team

MINDS of London Middlesex

mindyourmind

Motionball

Museum of Ontario Archeology

Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration

Muslim Wellness Network

**Nokee Kwe**

Ontario Centre for Talent Development

Ontario Institute for Cancer Research

Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists Retired Members Team

Oxbow Public School

Public Health Ontario

PHSS

**Quintin Warner House**

ReForest London

Residence & Campus Life, King's University College

**Rights and Responsibilities Awareness Initiative**

Saint T

Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation & Education Centre

**Salvation Army, Centre of Hope**

Salvation Army London Citadel

Saunders Secondary School

Sclerocare

Seniors With Skills

**Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Hubs**

SHAD Canada

**Single Women in Motherhood**

Social Democracy Party

**South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre**

Southpoint Klite Festival

Start2Finish



## **STEAM Education Centre**

Stem2Stern

The Insititute for Community Sustainability

Thames Valley District School Board

TIME Program, London Health Sciences Centre

**Type Diabeat It**

**Upper Thames River Conservation Authority**

**Urban Roots London**

Waterloo Regional District School Board

Well Spring London

Western University

Black Students' Association

**Centre for Research on Health Equity and Social Inclusion**

Centre for Translational Cancer Research

**Faculty of Health Sciences**

Peer Leader Program

Purple Hands

**Recovery Addiction Awareness Day**

**Schulich Dentistry**

Western Heads East

Western Libraries

Western Sustainability

Westover Treatment Centre

YMAP Program London, YMCA of Southwestern Ontario

YMCA of Southwestern Ontario

## **CEL Resources**

### **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 publicize their work, while exemplifying possible achievements for future partnerships and projects. CEL currently displays 43 articles, 2 presentations, and 12 reports, with the total number of downloads exceeding 8,244 and continually growing.

## Curricular CEL Faculty

The following is a list of the instructors who taught CEL courses in the 2024-2025 academic year, with 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.

### Continuing Studies

Janis Wallace – Marketing 6013: Advanced Marketing Strategies

### Don Wright Faculty of Music

Dr. Laura Curtis – Music 3812A/B: Music Education in Community

### Faculty of Arts & Humanities

Dr. Ana García-Allén – Spanish 1030: Beginner Spanish; Spanish 2200: Intermediate Spanish; Spanish 3300: Advanced Spanish

Dr. Angela Borchert – Intercultural Communications 2500G: Bridging Campus and Community: Languages and Cultures in Action

Dr. Barb Bruce – Arts & Humanities 4490X: SASAH Experiential Learning Capstone

Dr. Kim Verwaayen – Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies 3355E: Feminist Activism

Dr. Tricia Johnson – Studio Arts 3672A: Embroidering with the Guild

### Faculty of Engineering

Dr. John Makaran – Mechanical & Materials Engineering 4499: Mechanical Engineering Design Project

### Faculty of Health Sciences

Dr. Anita Cramp – Health Sciences 4205: Health Promotion in Practice\*

Dr. Carri Hand – Occupational Therapy 9652: Engaging in Occupation: Community and Population Level Practice

Dr. Denise Grafton – Health Sciences 3240B: Environmental Health Promotion

Dr. Tara Mantler – Health Sciences 2700A: Health Issues in Childhood and Adolescents

### Faculty of Information and Media Studies

Dr. Melissa Adler – Media Information Technology 2025B: Research Methods for the Digital Age

Dr. Sandra Smeltzer – Media, Information & Technoculture 4999G: Media & the Public Interest Practicum

Jeremy Copeland – Master of Media in Journalism and Communication 9503: Shoot for the Heart – Harnessing the Power of Video Storytelling

### Faculty of Science

Dr. Christina Booker & Kristen Zinger – Integrated Science 3002A: Science in Your Community

Dr. Graeme Taylor – Biology 4920F/G: Seminar in Biology

Laura Reid & Bryan Sarlo – Computer Science 1033A/B: Multimedia and Communication

### Ivey Business School

Dr. Diane-Laure Arjaliès – Business 4620: Business Impact Assessment

### Multidisciplinary

Associate Deans – Scholar's Electives Capstone 4400Y: Scholar's Electives Capstone

### Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry

Dr. Alison Allan – Biochemistry 4955E: Community Engaged Learning and Research Skills in Translational Cancer Biology

Dr. Nicole Campbell – Medical Sciences 9603: Community Engaged Learning Rotation

Dr. Sarah McLean – Medical Sciences 4995E: Community Engaged Learning and Research Skills in Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences

### Faculty of Social Science

Ajit Unnithan & Abbas Alimorad – Management and Organizational Studies 9330: Project Management

Dr. Dan Bousfield – Political Science 3201G: International Law; Political Science 3210F: Canada-US Relations; Political Science 3510G: Decolonizing Politics; Political Science 3390: Politics of AI

Dr. Riley Hinson – Psychology 4873E: Addictions: Theory and Research

\*New course

## **Faculty Voices**

“Community Engaged Learning at Western is a wonderful support for instructors who want to work with community partners through teaching. I use community engaged projects in an Occupational Therapy course I teach, and students and partners are very positive about the impacts of this work. The students develop so many skills that they can apply in the future, such as communication, creating collaborative plans, negotiating differences of opinion, assessing the strengths and needs of a community organization, making connections between inequities in communities and systemic factors, and making change that can promote equity. I love this part of teaching and seeing the contributions that students can make to our community.”

Dr. Carri Hand | Occupational Therapy 9652: *Engaging in Occupation: Community and Population Level Practice*

## Community Partner Voices

“The Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation Canada has had the privilege of working with multiple student groups through Western’s CEL program. Each student has brought enthusiasm, creativity and new perspectives to our organization resulting in exceptional materials that are used by patients, medical professionals and researchers in the Heritable Aortic Disorder community. We are grateful for the dedication of these students and the ease of working with the program coordinator and course instructors. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Western.”

Lindsay Parsons | Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation Canada

## Student Voice (Impact Experience):

“I am pleased to reflect on my enriching experience during my placement in Grade 8 for the Economics for Success program at Louise Arbour French Immersion Public School as part of the JA Program Delivery through the Western Impact Experience. This opportunity allowed me to engage with students actively, facilitating their understanding of essential economic principles, career planning, and financial literacy. Through interactive discussions and hands-on activities, I supported students in developing critical thinking skills related to their future career aspirations and financial decision-making. Moreover, this experience reinforced my commitment to fostering student learning and development in business education. It provided me with valuable insights into effective instructional strategies for engaging middle school students and enhancing their comprehension of economic concepts in a real-world context. The placement deepened my understanding of educational best practices and strengthened my ability to create an inclusive and interactive learning environment. I am deeply grateful to Western University for providing this valuable opportunity through the Western Impact Experience. This initiative has allowed me to apply my knowledge in a practical setting while making a meaningful impact on students' learning journeys. I look forward to utilizing these experiences to further contribute to the field of education.”

## Industry Projects

Industry Project courses connect students with small- to medium-sized businesses as consultants on existing challenges in order to affect organizational change. Students earn course credit while addressing the operational challenges or needs of a local small- to medium-sized business. This hands-on, practical experience within an industry setting enables students to gain a deeper understanding of course content as it applies to local and global contexts.

Courses: 14 across 5 faculties  
Projects: 15  
Students: 1626  
Industry partners: 15  
Hours of engagement: 16,320

## Industry Partner Faculty

The following is a list of the instructors who taught Industry Project courses in the 2024-2025 academic year with their course titles.

We would like to express our thanks to the faculty members who incorporated industry projects into their teaching, creating opportunities for students to apply their learning, and contribute to the important work of our industry partners.

### Faculty of Arts & Humanities

Dr. Barbara Bruce – Arts & Humanities 3380Y: Introduction to Community and Professional Practices

Dr. Benjamin Hill – Philosophy 2082A: Introduction to the Philosophy of Food

### Faculty of Engineering

Dr. HaoTian Harvey Shi – Mechanical and Materials Engineering 3348A: Manufacturing Processes

Dr. John Makaran – Mechanical & Materials Engineering 4499: Mechanical Engineering Design Project

Dr. Michael Boutilier – Chemical and Biochemical Engineering 2221B: Fluid Flow

Kevin McGuire – Integrated Engineering 4499: Interdisciplinary Design Project

### Faculty of Science

Dr. Ashley McAlpine – Statistical and Actuarial Sciences 4960F/9860A: Business Skills; Master of Data Analytics 9160: Business Skills

### Faculty of Social Science

Dr. Bonnie Simpson – Management & Organizational Studies 3395: Global Sustainability Practices in Marketing

Dr. M. Blair Evans – Psychology 2660A: Introduction to Industrial Psychology

Dr. Mike Dove – History 3813E: Public History

Dr. Wes Kinghorn – Geography and Environment 2144A/B: Geography of Tourism

### King's University College

Dr. Joseph Turnbull – Analytics and Decision Sciences 4294G: Analytics Consulting Project

## Industry Partners

Thank you to our industry partners—your time, mentorship, expertise, and enthusiasm is greatly appreciated. These incredible learning opportunities would not be possible without your partnership and dedication.

Arva Flour Mills  
At Your Service for Seniors  
Better Together  
Carriff Canada  
Filthy Revena Vintage  
Goparity Canada  
GreenTech Painting  
Hetek Solutions Inc.  
KEGO Corporation  
KONNEXIO Inc.  
Maglin Site Furniture  
The City of St. Thomas  
The Green Window  
The London Bicycle Café  
Ukrainian Pierogies Inc.

## Industry Partner Voices

“It would have taken tens of thousands of dollars in consulting contracts to generate comparable research. When do you get the opportunity to have 500 educated people weigh in on your problem? We would not have been able to replicate this on our own.”

Andrew Hunniford | London Bicycle Café (via Western News)

## United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)

### United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) Project Tagging

We tag projects across the Project Based Learning portfolio according to their alignment with the UN SDGs to demonstrate to students, community & industry partners, and the Western community the reach and impact of these local-level projects and their interconnectedness with broader global sustainability targets.

Percentage of tagged projects associated with each UN SDG:

1. No Poverty: 20%
2. Zero Hunger: 17%
3. Good Health & Wellbeing: 55%

4. Quality Education: 39%
5. Gender Equality: 22%
6. Clean Water & Sanitation: 8%
7. Affordable & Clean Energy: 3%
8. Decent Work & Economic Growth: 14%
9. Industry, Innovation, & Infrastructure: 8%
10. Reduced Inequalities: 43%
11. Sustainable Cities & Communities: 25%
12. Responsible Consumption & Production: 12%
13. Climate Action: 15%
14. Life Below Water: 0%
15. Life on Land: 6%
16. Peace, Justice, & Strong Institutions: 20%
17. Partnerships for the Goals: 18%