

ESE in the Initial Teacher Education Program Trent University

Ontario's move to two-year B.Ed. programming has provided us with the opportunity to introduce a core course with an ESE component. Starting in September 2016, *Indigenous, Environmental and Sustainability Education* will be a 36-hour core course taken by all Trent's second year B.Ed. teacher candidates. The components will be approached as separate, yet complimentary elements, with teacher candidates given assignments that challenge them to integrate the different perspectives. Winning the argument that all teacher candidates should take this course required considerable tenacity!

In addition to the core course, all candidates undertake a series of workshops that introduce them to and qualify them in the use of the *Project Wild* and *Below Zero* resources from the Canadian Wildlife Federation. This component will be embedded in the Primary-Junior course in *Social Studies* and the Intermediate-Senior course in *Teaching Intermediate Learners*.

Teacher candidates at Trent are required to complete a 75-hour *Alternative Settings Placement*. Some chose to do this in ESE-related settings. One of the most popular options, coordinated by Trent faculty, in collaboration with local experts, is a *Learning Gardens* project. Typically this sees teacher candidates working with local schools developing school grounds or working alongside educators supporting programming for schools at Peterborough's Ecology Garden.

Trent offers teacher candidates the opportunity to take part in the *Eco-mentor Program*. This is an extracurricular program comprising of a series of workshops run in collaboration with Jacob Rodenburg, director of the award-winning Camp Kawartha. These Saturday workshops address themes such as Nearby Nature, Overcoming Barriers, Inspiring Hope and Exploring Cross-curricular links. The workshops take place at the Camp Kawartha Environment Centre, located on the edge of Trent University's extensive Nature Sanctuary. The building itself is inspirational, having been designed and built by the students and faculty of Sir Sandford Fleming College as a product of their Sustainable Building and Design Program. Teacher candidates complete the Eco-mentor program in the first year of their B.Ed. and then help to mentor the following year's cohort. The Eco-mentor Program has run since 2012 and has proved extremely popular with teacher candidates. A key feature of the program is the involvement of experts from Trent and the local community including role-model teachers, Indigenous educators and educators from non-for-profits. Another feature is that every workshop includes some outdoor learning opportunities – whatever the weather.

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