

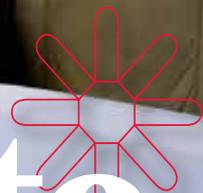
# The York University Magazine

Fall 2024



## Good Taste

Chef Patrick Kriss redefines Toronto's dining scene  
with Michelin-starred mastery





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## The York University Magazine

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## THE PRESIDENT



**RHONDA L. LENTON**  
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

**UNIVERSITIES HAVE ALWAYS** been shaped by the diverse needs of society – meeting future talent needs, seeking solutions to societal challenges and collaborating to build resilient communities. Artificial intelligence (AI), automation and other technologies are increasingly becoming a workforce norm with far-reaching impacts. In response, progressive universities such as York are revolutionizing approaches to teaching, learning and research.

York’s vision is to provide a broad sociodemographic of students with access to a high-quality education at a research-intensive university committed to enhancing the well-being of the communities we serve. To realize this, we are working with partners and alumni to enhance student learning and our communities in ways that bridge the data divide and mitigate common AI pitfalls such as bias and discrimination.

As a forward-looking institution, ranking among the top universities for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we know we must continue to innovate. With 54 per cent of Canadian students expecting higher education to offer AI training, we are actively integrating technology in ways that will enhance the career-readiness and employability of our students. With more than 80 AI-related courses available at York, students can expand their understanding of AI irrespective of their academic program.

New programs are also being created, such as our Schulich Master of Management in AI, comprising an immersive curriculum that explores the evolving ethical landscape of AI and how to support organizations as they adopt and invest in AI. The new Markham Campus, which welcomed its first cohort of students this fall, is designed to offer programs that focus on technology and entrepreneurship, and to foster pedagogical innovation that is scalable to other programs.

York has long embraced the Living Lab concept, testing ideas for research while creating learning opportunities. Recent examples include: the Energy Management Information System – a state-of-the-art cloud technology that uses AI to optimize building energy in real-time; and the recently launched YU Aura (Automated University Response Assistant) – an in-house, proprietary, generative AI tool that uses datasets to create content. Together, we are leveraging technologies to enhance student learning, inform research, improve experiences and processes, and reduce expenditures. Our leadership in socially responsible AI continues to be recognized in initiatives such as Connected Minds: Neural and Machine Systems for a Healthy, Just Society, a \$318-million research partnership with Queen’s University that unites more than 50 partners with the goal of ensuring emerging technology promotes social health and justice.

As an institution dedicated to the sharing, dissemination and activation of knowledge, the rise of AI has reaffirmed our commitment to analyzing the positive and negative affordances of technology, and the role of social regulation in AI, utilizing all the tools we have available to address the SDGs, and equipping the next generation of change-makers with a unique brand of skills and competencies that they will need to advocate for a better world.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

## Harvesting Change

**AS AUTUMN’S VIBRANT HUES** blanket our campus, we embrace these season’s spirit of transformation. The fall 2024 issue of *The York University Magazine* brings you stories that challenge the norm and open doors to new possibilities. Our cover story highlights Patrick Kriss, a York alumnus whose culinary journey has earned him a Michelin star for his Toronto restaurant. His rise from York’s classrooms to the culinary elite exemplifies the transformative power of education, illustrating how the skills and knowledge gained at York can lead to remarkable achievements.

In a similar vein, transformation is a recurring theme in York’s research initiatives. In “Path Forward,” our scholars collaborate with Indigenous communities to blend ancient wisdom with modern climate solutions, reflecting York’s commitment to inclusive and forward-thinking innovation.

In “Bio-boosted Beauty,” York alumnae and molecular biologists are at the forefront of skin-care technology with their RNA-based treatments through the startup Agenek. This venture not only represents scientific advancement, but also highlights York’s dedication to empowering women in science and entrepreneurship.

“Digging for Justice” explores legal advocacy through an Osgoode Hall-affiliated watchdog program, which sheds light on the ethical challenges faced by Canadian mining

companies abroad. This initiative underscores the crucial role of legal scholarship in promoting accountability and justice.

In “The Immigrant City,” York scholars address the pressing issue of affordable housing for newcomers amidst record immigration levels. Their research seeks sustainable solutions to help newcomers navigate Canada’s housing landscape, demonstrating York’s commitment to social justice and community support.

These stories, and more, capture the vibrant and innovative spirit of York University. As editor, I am proud to present this fall 2024 issue, showcasing the transformative ideas and achievements within our community. I trust you will find them as engaging and inspiring as I do. ●

— Deirdre Kelly

## EDITOR’S NOTES



### THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF YORK UNIVERSITY The York University Magazine



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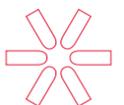
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### ON THE COVER



Patrick Kriss  
Photography by Mike Ford



# View

OUTLOOK & IDEAS

## Safe Harbour

*New leadership for refugee studies at York*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HORST HERGET



Yvonne Su

**F**ORCED MIGRATION is not just an academic interest for Professor Yvonne Su. It is a lived experience. Su's father was a refugee who fled communist China. He eventually brought Su and her mother to Canada for "a typical immigrant life" – which included a move from Scarborough to the small Ontario town of Holland Landing, where the family opened a restaurant.

"Even as a teenager, I remember customers at my family's restaurant making comments suggesting I was the 'right type' of immigrant – as if there was an expectation or assumption about how immigrants should behave or assimilate," Su recalls. Those early experiences, she adds, made her aware of the misunderstandings and nuances surrounding displacement, identity and belonging that are present in her field.

Today, Su is an expert on forced migration in York's Department of Equity Studies. York University recently appointed her as the new director of the Centre for Refugee Studies, Canada's oldest and largest research hub focused on forced migration. In this role, Su leads a \$3.1-million research project funded by the New Frontiers in Research Fund, examining the unintended consequences of climate change adaptation initiatives.

York Professor Michaela Hynie, who serves on executive committees for both the Centre for Refugee Studies and the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, praises Su's work: "Yvonne's scholarship amplifies voices often overlooked in migration policy and research. Her community-engaged approach yields impactful insights."

Su specializes in climate adaptation, migrant remittances, post-disaster recovery, and LGBTQ+ refugee experiences. In 2023, her expert testimony contributed to a successful asylum case for a gay Venezuelan man facing persecution. "My whole academic career led me to this point," Su says. "Rarely do I get to directly influence someone's life chances like that."

While Su's research has real-world impact, she's equally passionate about nurturing the next generation of migration scholars. In the classroom, Su uses innovative methods such as multimedia materials and simulations to give students first-hand perspectives on displacement realities.

"You need to feel those human experiences to truly understand and relate," Su explains. "That's how research can change lives." ● — *Rob Csernyik*

## BIO-BOOSTED BEAUTY

**Skin care personalized to your genetic makeup**



**I**N THE MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR skin care world awash with hyped "anti-aging miracle" claims, a groundbreaking new company is cutting through the airbrushed fantasies. Agenek, launched by York alumnae and molecular biologists Anna Kotova (BSc '16, PhD '22) and Ksenia Timonina (PhD '22), takes personalized skin care to an unprecedented level by analyzing individuals' genes to understand how unique biology impacts skin aging and health.

"Drawing from our backgrounds in molecular biology and genetics, we've always been passionate about leveraging these tools to explore our biological makeup," Kotova explains. Their proprietary process examines facial skin cells and gene data to identify each client's unique "problem genes," then recommends existing product formulations scientifically proven to treat those specific issues.

"We recognized the potential of transcriptomic analysis for personalized skin care solutions," she explains. The co-founders met during graduate studies at York, where they acquired techniques enabling this innovative approach.

While a fledgling startup, Agenek is tapping into an explosive market – global skin care sales are projected to top \$185 billion by 2027, as demand for customization soars. Their company, supported by York's entrepreneurship ecosystem, including the female-centric ELLA program within YSpace, is rapidly gaining momentum.

"At Agenek, we're committed to using the latest molecular advancements," Kotova says. "Our RNA-based testing provides unprecedented insights into gene expression and skin health." For consumers bombarded by overhyped "miracle" product claims, it offers a science-driven alternative.

"We hope to empower individuals to understand their skin's real biological needs and make informed choices, while advancing skin care innovation through cutting-edge technology." ● — *Deirdre Kelly*



**A York watchdog program unearths the dirty truth about Canadian mining companies working abroad**

# DIGGING FOR JUSTICE

**S**ERVING AS THE CORPORATE headquarters of nearly half of all publicly listed mining companies in the world, Canada has long been an international leader in the metal and mineral extraction industry.

And while it's commonly assumed that Canadian-based mining companies uphold ethical corporate standards and follow rigorous environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria when operating abroad, there is no governmental body or industry association tasked with enforcing these practices. As a result, Canadian-based mining companies overseeing \$214.7 billion in assets across 98 foreign countries are not held to Canadian legal standards outside of Canada's borders. Filling the void, a dedicated volunteer-run program affiliated with York's Osgoode Hall Law School acts as a vigilant watchdog, aiming to ensure accountability for any misconduct by these businesses.

The Justice and Corporate Accountability Project (JCAP) was founded by Professor Emeritus Shin Imai more than a decade ago. Now, Imai and six former students make up JCAP's board of directors, while current students – from Osgoode and from other Canadian universities – serve as either volunteers or paid research assistants, investigating

unethical behaviour, liaising with foreign non-profits, NGOs and activists and compiling reports.

“What we try to do as lawyers is to hold Canadian mining companies accountable when they cause harm overseas. Now, companies have voluntary corporate social responsibility programs, but these are just expressions of good intentions, not mechanisms for accountability,” Imai says.

“If you can imagine, this voluntary system that the mining companies say they have is like having a voluntary code of conduct for drivers, but with no police and no way of taking bad drivers off the road. Everyone can promise that they'll follow the voluntary code, but when they don't follow the code, there's nothing anyone can do about it.”

JCAP tries to do something about it by helping international victims file lawsuits in Canada against companies headquartered here, submitting reports to international bodies such as the United Nations about human rights abuses, and informing securities regulators including the Ontario Securities Commission about harmful actions that aren't being disclosed to investors.

Reporting instances where a company has not informed shareholders that protests have halted work at a mine (and therefore the company is unlikely to meet its expected pro-

duction targets), or incidents where people have been killed as a result of actions taken by a mining company, or that Indigenous consent was not obtained before a mine received its permits to operate, are effective actions because publicly traded companies are supposed to disclose information that could affect share prices. When investors realize that they are being kept in the dark, they react – typically in ways that cost the company money and put pressure on its executives to alter the company's behaviour, Imai says.

Part of JCAP's mission is to draw attention to the actions of these companies, in part because the Canadian public may be unaware of the conflicts involving Canadian mining companies.

In a 2022 survey conducted for the Mining Association of Canada, “Roughly 80 per cent of Canadians [gave] Canadian mining companies good or acceptable ratings when it comes to the way they operate in other jurisdictions. This includes measures of how these companies help raise environmental standards and ensure that local communities benefit economically from their mining activities.”

People and organizations outside of Canada, however, tend to see Canadian mining companies differently.

In a 2023 report submitted to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group of the United Nations Human Rights Council, JCAP wrote that Canadian resource extraction companies are often involved in situations involving “strong community opposition, significant levels of violence and criminalization, and credible evidence of environmental contamination.”

It added that Canadian government support for these companies has “exacerbated specific conflicts in Guatemala, Peru, Mexico, Ecuador and Honduras, among other countries, and escalated the risk of harm for affected communities and human and environmental rights defenders who face threats, kidnappings, and assassinations.”

The document also noted that international agencies and treaty bodies are concerned about the actions of Canadian mining companies working abroad.

JCAP research assistants continuously investigate and report on issues of corruption, human rights abuses and environmental harm caused by Canadian mining companies operating abroad, including in Africa. These investigations often uncover sobering details about corporate practices and their impact on local communities and environments. While specific findings remain confidential until publication, the

reports consistently highlight the need for greater accountability in the international mining sector.

In addition to investigative reports, JCAP also supports legal actions. One such case involves a lawsuit launched in Canada by the family of a Mexican mining protester who, according to Imai, was allegedly “assassinated in broad daylight.”

The issues JCAP tackles are often lengthy, complicated and lack neat resolutions. However, Imai emphasizes the importance of the work: “It's crucial for communities engaged in disputes with mining companies to feel like there's somebody involved, that gives them support.”

Board member Angela D'Elia Decembrini, an Indigenous-rights lawyer with her own practice, reinforces this commitment to supporting affected communities.

“I am in private practice, focusing on the rights of Indigenous people,” Decembrini says, “but I am continuing my association with JCAP because we fill an important niche by assisting communities affected by mining. Many communities in Latin America and Africa do not have representation, while the mining companies they deal with have high-paid lawyers advising them.”

JCAP's other board members include Charis Kamphuis (LLM '11, PhD '20), Kate Gunn (LLB '08), Sara Ghebremusse (PhD '20), Bernadette Maheandiran (JD '09), and Leah Gardner, who completed Osgoode Hall's Intensive Program in Indigenous Lands, Resources and Governments in 2015.

With such a diverse and experienced team in place, JCAP persistently addresses complex, long-term challenges in corporate accountability. Their efforts, while often facing significant obstacles, are guided by a broader perspective on social change.

“What we can do,” Imai says, “is very limited, but I have to say, I take the big, long view of this. When I started practicing law in 1980, there was hardly any law around Indigenous people.... Now, 40 years later, it has really changed. I'm not saying that things have been resolved perfectly, but there's a lot more consciousness, and there's a lot more lawyers in the field, there's a lot more concern among politicians and awareness among the public about Indigenous issues. And I see that happening here.” ●

— Carolyn Gruske

# PATH FORWARD

Amplifying Indigenous perspectives  
on climate and tech

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KYLE FINBOW

**YORK UNIVERSITY** is breaking new ground by placing Indigenous knowledge at the forefront of addressing climate change and disruptive technologies. Indigenous Peoples have cultivated this holistic understanding over millennia of close relationships with the land – an approach York is now harnessing to inform sustainable solutions.

Last spring, Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor (MES '92), an expert on incorporating Indigenous knowledge into environmental governance, and Graeme Reed, a former York post-doctoral fellow now with the Assembly of First Nations, co-led the development of the 500-page “For Our Future: Indigenous Resilience” report. The comprehensive national study, authored by an Indigenous team, aims to ensure Indigenous worldviews and experiences directly inform climate policies and action plans. The findings emphasize the importance of Indigenous self-determination and incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems into climate change decision-making for an effective and sustainable response.

“This report represents a significant shift in how Indigenous knowledge systems can directly inform climate policy,” says McGregor, who holds the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Environmental Justice at Osgoode Hall Law School. “Indigenous Peoples’ rights and knowledge are critical to developing equitable and effective climate solutions.”

York’s Indigenous knowledge initiatives extend far beyond climate solutions. This fall, the University unveils a groundbreaking space – Canada’s first Indigenous-led technology research hub on its Keele Campus. Part of the \$318.4-million Connected Minds partnership with Queen’s University, the new hub centres Indigenous philosophies and knowledge systems. Its mission? Mitigating risks that technological disruptions pose to vulnerable populations, while promoting social equity and justice through an Indigenous worldview.

“This continues to demonstrate how our researchers are making positive impacts not only at the policy level, but also through community-led and driven research,” says Mi’kmaw scholar Sean Hillier (BA '10, MA '11), director of York’s Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Languages and an associate director of Connected Minds.

While the new tech hub aims to uphold the UN Sustainable Development Goals, a key focus is examining the societal impacts of human-machine integration through an equity lens.

“Our inclusive, interdisciplinary approach,” says Connected Minds vice-director Pina D’Agostino (BA '96, LLB '99), “aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, making York the perfect place to anticipate how humans and machines will connect in an equitable society.” ●  
— *Deirdre Kelly*

Sean Hillier



# dream weaver

**Ganaele Langlois is interlacing the threads of textile communication**

**BY ALANNA MITCHELL  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HORST HERGET**

**G**ANAELE LANGLOIS, Chair of York University's Department of Communication & Media Studies, didn't intend to become fascinated with the ancient art form of handmade textiles. Or with examining the myriad and unique ways that textiles provide insight into complex relationships. Nor did she expect to write a book about it, *How Textile Communicates: From Codes to Cosmotechnics*, published by Bloomsbury.



Ganaele Langlois in her studio.

In fact, Langlois, an expert in ultra-modern digital media, grew up just outside Paris with a decided dislike of working with fabrics. “I was taught sewing as a kid and I hated it. My grandmother was a cross-stitcher and I hated that,” she says, sitting at a table in the Contemporary Textile Studio Co-op in Toronto. “I came to textiles very late.”

She was on the tenure track at York in 2014, immersed in research on new media and social media, grappling with the blizzard of disinformation and hatred on those platforms and worried about the implications for democracy. It was depressing. And it all revolved around the ways humans communicate with each other. She needed a break. A hobby.

So she thought about other ways that humans have communicated over time, and signed up to learn printmaking on paper. Except she ticked the wrong box, and ended up at a textile class instead. It was here, at what is now her research space at the textile studio co-op on Richmond Street West, just off Spadina Avenue.

And she was entranced. Here was a means of communication that humans have been using since before we invented any alphabets, one of humanity’s most ancient cultural forms. A

question loomed large: in an age of television, Facebook and TikTok, can handmade textiles still teach us anything?

As she speaks, Langlois leaps up to check a huge pot boiling on a hot plate in the studio. She is making a dye out of crabapple tree branches and doesn’t want it to boil too fast.

She says she found not just support from colleagues at York to follow her research instincts, but “absolute” freedom. “The message was pretty clear, to do whatever research you wanted, whatever form you can take. As a new faculty member, it was, do whatever you want. What matters is that you do it.”

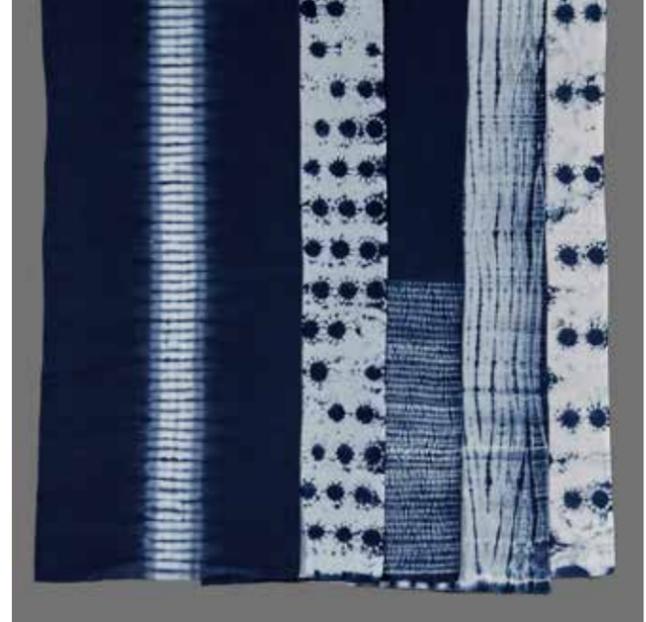
Rachel MacHenry, a colleague at the School of Fashion at Toronto Metropolitan University who is a designer and researcher in textiles, says Langlois is a pioneer in understanding the deep levels of communication that take place with the creation of a textile.

“I feel this is a really new way of looking at what textiles can do and what they mean for the communities that they come from, and also how they can interact with the world at large,” MacHenry says.

Granting agencies were a harder sell for Langlois than col-

## IT’S A COMMITMENT TO YOUR LIFE, TO A HOUSEHOLD, TO AN AESTHETIC

A work by Langlois, with indigo dye.  
Photograph by Thomas Blanchard.



leagues. “It was a bit of a far-fetched idea,” she says. But she eventually won a SSHRC Insight Development Grant and an Ontario Arts Council Grant. The money allowed her to travel to Peru, Japan and France to examine contemporary handmade textiles.

She pulls several out of a carryall bag to show me. First is a piece from the Quechua of the Andes. Hand-woven on a simple back-strap loom in undyed alpaca wool of creams and browns, it is dominated by diamonds and squares, repeated in a complex pattern. Along the edges are stylized snakes, symbolizing the world of the dead, birds symbolizing the world of the gods and alpacas for the world of humans.

It tells a story, some of whose meaning is kept secret by the weavers. These handmade textiles are precious and are under threat in this part of the world as inexpensive machine-made replicas become more common for the tourist trade. But each piece of the pattern holds a clue to an experience that the maker is passing on.

“What I’m trying to argue is that it has always been its own way of communication. For the longest time, it enabled a kind of cultural resilience – throughout millennia – through colonization, through all the horrors,” Langlois says. “So it is important, and especially as we’re thinking about the end of the world and survival and resilience, then these kinds of practices can teach us something.”

The next piece is hand-woven white cotton embroidered in bright colours by women in the Shipibo community in the Peruvian Amazon. The colours leap off the fabric: bright red, psychedelic lime green, neon orange.

The images represent a personal story, a collective history and a shamanistic spiritual story combined into one, Langlois says. They resemble a map. And looking at them is a

form of travel, although it’s not clear to an outsider precisely where you are going, just that you are being guided.

The women who create the work take part in a ritual, imbibing a few drops of plant extracts in order to be open to visions of the cosmos and understand what the patterns mean before they make them – and eventually communicate them in thread.

Next, she shows me an intricately worked bedsheet made in France of snowy linen. Along the top portion of the sheet is cut work, meaning embroidered designs with spaces cut from the fabric. Some of the decoration is white-on-white embroidery in a running floral design. All of it is meant to be seen in only the most intimate space: the marital bedroom. But the information contained within the embroidery is that the sheet, and therefore the marriage, is meant to last and be enjoyed over time.

“It’s a commitment to your life, to a household, to an aesthetic,” Langlois says.

As she explains how she came to analyze this rich method of communication that her own academic discipline has ignored, she begins to reminisce. Just as these handmade textiles represent a powerful archive of information through the ages – like a fibrous hard drive encoded with data – they also represent the tender, one-on-one passing down of information through the generations: a mother to her daughter, a father to his son.

She is a living example. The cross-stitched armchairs her grandmother made, with their complex classical patterns, are still in the family. Her grandfather, who spent part of his career selling wool suiting cloth, passed down his knowledge of fabric to her. He was, she says, always appreciative of a good weave. ●

# GOOD TASTE

**Chef Patrick Kriss redefines  
Toronto's dining scene  
with Michelin-starred mastery**

**BY DICK SNYDER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FORD**

## If you're welcomed with caviar, you feel cool. It gets you in the mood

**I F YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH** to land a coveted reservation at Toronto's Alo – consistently ranked as one of the nation's top fine-dining restaurants – chances are you'll spy chef and owner Patrick Kriss (BA '03) at least once. A history graduate from York University, Kriss has become a transformative figure in the culinary world, bringing meticulous attention to detail and unwavering commitment to excellence to every aspect of his culinary empire.

Kriss is omnipresent at Alo, a testament to his hands-on approach and dedication. In the open kitchen of his sleek, minimalist dining room, housed in a historic red-brick building at the bustling intersection of Queen Street West and Spadina Avenue, you'll find him clad in crisp whites, perhaps placing a delicate leaf of tangerine lace atop an exquisite mackerel "tart" with caviar, or working alongside his brigade, scrutinizing each plate of contemporary French cuisine as it arrives on the pass. His watchful eye ensures every detail is perfect before the dish leaves his domain.

But Kriss's vigilance extends beyond the kitchen. You may spot him strolling by the bar, observing his staff crafting picture-perfect cocktails as they chat convivially with guests. Or he may be perched casually within earshot of a four-top, listening intently to how a waiter describes a dish. He's watching the diners too – for a reaction, a smile, an eyebrow raised in question. No detail is too small, no reaction too fleeting – it all goes in the bank.

This constant presence sets Kriss apart in an industry where many top chefs delegate floor management. For him, it's about maintaining a direct connection with customers and staff, embodying a philosophy of continuous improvement that echoes the academic rigour he encountered during his university years.

"I always want the customer to come into Alo and feel like they can sit in their chair and feel like they're on vacation," Kriss says. "The customer experience is number one over anything – they always tell you what they are looking for ... and if you have something that's not working, you have to tweak it."

Nine years after opening Alo to instant acclaim, Kriss still operates like a mad scientist, constantly tweaking and experimenting. His success is built on a feedback loop that drives continual refinement.

Kriss's academic experience laid the groundwork for his professional journey, but it was in the kitchens of esteemed chefs where he truly honed his craft. He refined his approach under the tutelage of Daniel Boulud. During his three-year stint at the two-Michelin-starred Daniel in New York City, Kriss observed Boulud's leadership skills: always present, coaching his team, giving feedback and encouragement. Kriss considers this the most important training he received.

The dining experiences Kriss has crafted – Alo is the flagship of Alo Food Group and its spinoffs Aloette, Alobar Yorkville and Alobar Downtown – are ever-evolving.



Patrick Kriss



On opening in 2015, Alo was awarded four stars from the *Globe and Mail*, with the reviewer praising the audacious tasting menu concept as giving diners “exactly what they wanted – it’s just that ... city diners did not yet know that they wanted it.”

What they wanted, it turns out, was caviar – in quantity – among other luxurious ingredients such as A5 Wagyu, foie gras and truffles. Kriss loves caviar “because it goes with everything and it’s a sign of luxury.” He deploys it strategically, perhaps on a canapé of raw Wagyu, where it accents the dish without stealing the limelight. “If you’re welcomed with caviar, you feel cool. It gets you in the mood – and it’s exciting for me to put it on a plate knowing someone is going to be able to eat that.”

Propelled by Kriss’s deft touch with rarefied ingredients, Alo debuted in the top 10 in *Canada’s 100 Best Restaurants* magazine, and then claimed the No. 1 spot four years in a row (2017 to 2021). “That was a remarkable achievement,” says Jacob Richler, the magazine’s publisher and editor-in-chief. “Alo opened with a carefully considered concept of conspicuous ambition. The judges responded to the elevated service, elegant room and the luxurious, internationally attuned product sourcing.”

Richler notes that Kriss’s kitchen demonstrates “unusual discipline and cutting-edge techniques” in producing a “highly contemporary expression of French cuisine.” Today, Alo sits at No. 3 on the magazine’s top-100 list. “Nearly a decade old, the restaurant is still pushing culinary boundaries and defining its category,” Richler adds.

When Michelin arrived in Toronto in 2022, Alo was one of only 12 restaurants granted a star. The Michelin star system, originating from the French tire company Michelin, is a hallmark of fine-dining excellence. Restaurants are awarded one to three stars based on the quality of their food, mastery of technique and overall dining experience. A single star signifies a “very good” restaurant, two stars indicate “excellent cooking that is worth a detour,” and three stars denote “exceptional cuisine that is worth a special journey.”

In 2021, Alo placed 98th on the World’s 50 Best Restaurants list (which, despite its name, ranks 100 top spots), the only Canadian restaurant to make the cut.

Kriss makes it all look effortless, remaining poised even when dealing with a full house. But the journey wasn’t easy. Despite the accolades, it took a year for Alo to fill up con-

sistently. Having invested \$1 million in the space, the slow start led to some sleepless nights. The location at Queen and Spadina, known more for its fast food and fashion outlets than fine dining, added to the initial challenge.

“On opening, no one thought it was a good idea,” says Natalie Goldenberg-Fife, founder of event agency Gold & Fife. “At the time, tasting menus were out of favour, deemed precious, expensive and extravagant. But he took a category that most people were rolling their eyes over and made it exquisite, engaging and minimalist.”

Born in Belleville and raised in Scarborough, Ont., Kriss now lives in downtown Toronto with his wife, Donna, and son, William. Though never particularly drawn to cooking, he was attracted to the restaurant world’s energy and camaraderie. His culinary journey began at 14, flipping burgers at Lick’s, a once-popular Toronto chain known for its “home-burgers” and singing staff.

During his York University years, Kriss worked at the Rosedale Golf Club as a waiter and bartender. “I enjoyed my time at school, but I was not a good student,” he admits. While reading and writing didn’t come easily, he valued the discipline of absorbing and applying knowledge. “I had a really good teacher. She taught me how to write an essay.”

After graduating, Kriss enrolled in George Brown College’s apprenticeship program. He devoured cookbooks by Boulud and Thomas Keller, captivated by their meticulous approaches to everything from ingredient sourcing to plating.

Once ahead of its time, Alo now feels timeless, exuding a relaxed confidence in its mature era. Kriss does, too. Yet, as Alo Food Group’s 10th anniversary approaches, he radiates restless ambition.

With 375 employees, Alo Food Group has diversified successfully, from the casual Aloette Go concept to the Salon private dining events space and the restaurant and bar at Toronto’s Ace Hotel. Does Kriss worry about overextension? Not really.

“I don’t have an end goal,” he says. “I think it’s very difficult to stop in business because you start to go backwards. So that’s a worry. But when is it enough? I do ask myself, but I don’t have an answer.” Which is not entirely true.

The answer, clearly, is more caviar. ●

Canada has more immigrants than ever before,  
but can newcomers find work and feel they belong?

BY JOHN LORINC  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ROBINSON

**L**AST FALL, when the federal Liberals finally revealed their immigration targets for the next few years, pundits and experts in the field noticed a few telling details. While the annual numbers will edge up to 500,000 newcomers over the next two years, that figure will then level off as of 2026, a hint that Ottawa was taking note of mounting public pressure to curb immigration – as well as the admission of temporary foreign workers and international students – in the face of skyrocketing housing prices.

Pollster Michael Adams, who has tracked Canadian attitudes toward newcomers for more than three decades, noted that “something significant has changed.”

“In our latest national survey conducted in September,” he wrote in the *Globe and Mail*, “more than four in 10 Canadians now agree with the statement ‘there is too much immigration to Canada.’ This remains the minority view, but it has grown by 17 percentage points from 12 months ago.”

What’s more, sensational media reports about private community colleges that have become highly dependent on international student tuitions – as well as over-crowded student housing and sharp jumps in the use of food banks by those same students – pushed Ottawa to hit the brakes by freezing international student visas and restricting new enrolments to public institutions.

Yet scholars who have spent years studying immigration trends and urban policy in Canada say that the current story is far more nuanced than recent shifts in public opinion and public policy suggest. The issues dogging the immigration file relate as well to changes in the way Ottawa and the

provinces manage immigration, insistent employer demands for temporary foreign workers, and long-recognized bottlenecks that have proven to be exceptionally stubborn, such as credentials recognition and “Canadian experience” requirements.

Housing, notes Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change Graduate Program Director and Professor Liette Gilbert, had become broadly unaffordable well before the federal government began increasing its annual immigration targets. “Those crises existed long before,” Gilbert says. “But it’s used now to say, ‘Well, we don’t want migrants to take our housing.’”

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The housing-immigration nexus has taken on other guises, as well. Although Gilbert and other housing experts point out that the affordability crisis is driven less by inadequate supply than by a shortage of specific types of housing (i.e. rent-gear-to-income, student residences, rental), governments at all levels are pushing for much more construction to increase overall supply. But Valerie Preston, a professor emerita and senior scholar at York’s Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, points out that the push to build more housing has bumped up against an increasingly stubborn shortage of skilled trades workers.

One of the principal investigators in the Building Migrant Resilience in Cities partnership between York and Peel regions, earlier this year Preston attended meetings with federal officials and sectoral leaders in Ottawa to discuss labour shortages and migration. She noted both the intensity

# THE IMMIGRANT CITY



## Regulations, even well-intentioned ones, don't go the whole distance in ensuring that newcomers can gain a toehold in the Canadian workforce

of employer demands as well as potential trapdoors in the race to bring in workers.

“People are saying what we need to do is just build housing, therefore, we need more workers. They’re looking at shortages in the construction trades, which can still offer decent wages, a lifetime career and opportunities for advancement. But they’re also looking to fill labouring jobs in construction, which are insecure in many cases.”

**ALTHOUGH CANADA** is a heavily urbanized nation of immigrants, the country’s immigration policies have swung back and forth between expedient embrace and outright hostility. Migrant labourers from China were brought in to build railways and other infrastructure in the late 19th century, but were also prohibited in various periods from bringing in their families. Until the latter part of the 20th century, immigrants were overwhelmingly white and English-speaking, although the complexion of Canada’s immigration policy began to change, at first grudgingly, and then as a matter of public policy in the early 1960s, when introduced by John Diefenbaker’s Conservatives.

A formal colour-blind, points-based system replaced the old approach in the late 1960s. But by the 1970s, the federal Liberals, traditionally associated with immigration, imposed restrictions in the face of a public backlash against large inflows of South Asians. Throughout the 1980s, Ottawa tinkered with its formulas, for example, offering fast-track approvals for entrepreneurs as a means of attracting newcomers with significant capital. By the early 1990s, the annual targets had risen to about 250,000 people per year, and, later, one per cent of the population. The latest shifts in immigration targets mark a departure and may indicate growing concern within the federal government about low birth rates among Canadian-born residents, especially considering Statistics Canada’s projection that without immigration, Canada’s population growth could stagnate in the next 20 years, due to aging demographics and fertility rates below replacement levels.

Although Canadians pride themselves on the country’s approach to immigration, labour market needs have long

been an important driver, going back to efforts to build railways in B.C. and attract homesteaders to settle in Western Canada. In a contemporary context, the labour force issues are familiar and long-standing: educational or certification obstacles that prevent immigrant professionals from re-establishing themselves in Canada, poor labour protections for temporary foreign workers, and chronic skills shortages in certain sectors, among them construction.

Preston points to some recent policy tweaks that aim to better align Canada’s workforce needs with its immigration policies, including regulations that prevent employers from explicitly seeking candidates who have “Canadian experience.”

Provinces now have more say in nominating migrants as permanent residents, which, in theory, allows them to attract people with needed skills. However, she cautions, this approach “moves away from the model of selecting economic immigrants, where we base it on your education, qualifications and work experience, to a model where employer-identified labour shortages have more influence.”

Regulations, even well-intentioned ones, don’t go the whole distance in ensuring that newcomers can gain a toehold in the Canadian workforce.

Preston cites a highly influential 2011 study by economist Philip Oreopoulos, a research fellow at the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. He and his team sent thousands of resumes to randomly sampled Greater Toronto Area employers representing multiple occupations, and then recorded the responses based on the ethnicity of the applicants’ surnames. The result: “substantial discrimination across a variety of occupations towards applicants with foreign experience or those with Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, and Greek names compared with English names.” Even English proficiency, experience with multinational firms and degrees from leading universities had little impact on these skewed hiring practices.

But racism in the hiring process doesn’t fully explain why some newcomers fare better than others in labour markets.

Recently published research by School of Human Resource Management Professor Jelena Zikic and Viktoriya Voloshyna



## It now takes newcomers a longer time to adjust to the Canadian job market and reach economic parity with Canadian-born residents



(BHRM '14, PhD '21), an associate professor at Thompson Rivers' Faculty of Human Enterprise and Innovation, found that newcomers tend to fare better at integrating into the labour force when they've had positive earlier experiences with their new homes, and are better able to make use of work-oriented information sources – from public libraries to online job boards – in the cities where they settle to find work or even reinvent their careers.

“There were participants [in the study] who realized, ‘Wow, you know, I will never get back into physics or biology,’ for example, but over time, they may have discovered a bridging program or something else,” says Zikic, who is currently working on a new study examining alternative career paths for newcomers.

Voloshyna believes that there are some clear policy implications for these findings, particularly as they apply to the resettlement agencies funded by the federal government. The non-profits, she says, “have to involve different groups if they want to understand migrants, and they have to ask them what they need: what was successful for them and what was not?”

Given that it now takes newcomers a longer time to adjust to the Canadian job market and reach economic parity with Canadian-born residents, she adds that the federal government should consider extending resettlement services, such

as ESL programs, for a longer duration, or develop other programs that allow newcomers who've been in Canada for a little while to upgrade. “Even though they have been living in Canada for five years, it doesn't mean that they're settled in or integrated,” Voloshyna says. “A lot of people are stuck at the initial stage.”

What's clear is that time is not on the side of many newcomers who arrive and remain stuck on the fringes of the urban labour force. “We've seen this in a study of doctors,” observes Zikic. “The longer you've been out of your medical school, the harder it is to go through the hurdles.”

With Canada's immigration levels now at record highs, the broader cultural risks couldn't be greater, particularly in expensive cities that rely on the energy and ideas of newcomers, but struggle to build affordable homes for many to live, work and raise families.

“When we are welcoming higher and higher numbers of immigrants from around the world,” Zikic says, “the societal responsibility and the narrative – whether it comes from policy-makers or the government – has to be around understanding what integration means to all of us, and how it can be facilitated so that we are creating a society where newcomers and locals are, in fact, collaborating and working together.” ●

### A Progress Report on Undocumented Immigrants

Just over a decade ago, the City of Toronto declared itself a sanctuary city, following a lead set by several large American municipalities in response to aggressive enforcement by immigration officials. In a forthcoming paper, Professors Liette Gilbert and Luisa Sotomayor, director of The City Institute at York University, argue that undocumented residents haven't made significant gains since 2011, despite the policy.

While the sanctuary city policy in theory meant that un- or under-documented residents could access municipal services, their lived experiences have been quite different. “Despite this opening in various municipal services, local governments and urban planners have yet to fully address the ‘local turn’ of migration politics at a time when they are increasingly confronted with anti-austerity, anti-racism, and anti-colonial movements.”

The York scholars found that undocumented residents now face similar pressures and exclusion as other marginalized groups, including the members of racialized and low-income communities. ● — J.L.

# Blown Away

Environmental DNA is revolutionizing biodiversity research

BY JOANNA THOMPSON • PHOTOGRAPHY BY HORST HERGET

**WHEN DEOXYRIBONUCLEIC** acid, better known as DNA, was first discovered in the late 1800s, it didn't make much of a splash – but it would go on to revolutionize the field of biology. Today, DNA is used in everything from untangling evolutionary lineages to genetic engineering to storing data. And it is quickly becoming a powerful tool for conservation.

Environmental DNA, or eDNA, is composed of stray bits of material from an organism – be it hair, skin cells, bits of exoskeleton, mucus or some other source. By collecting and analyzing eDNA, scientists can uncover which species are present in a given ecosystem. They can even use it to track things like viruses, or detect the presence of human remains.

“It's one of the very few generalizable tools for biodiversity science,” says Elizabeth Clare, a molecular ecologist and professor at York University.

Prior to the discovery of eDNA, researchers had to rely solely on things like camera traps or direct observation to determine which species inhabited an area. These techniques can give a good idea of the relative abundance of certain species, but they miss a lot – especially rare or hard-to-find organisms. As the climate crisis continues to devastate ecosystems across the globe, eDNA has proven to be a vital tool for monitoring species richness.

For the first several years that eDNA-analyzing technology was available, it was only used to study soil or aquatic environments such as streams, rivers, lakes and fisheries. Researchers didn't expect to be able to extract tiny fragments of genetic material from other sources. But Clare and some

be confused with) and because, at the time, it was free of visitors due to COVID-19 lockdowns. The researchers took air filter samples from all around the zoo over the course of several months. At first, Clare says, they were nervous that they might not find anything to analyze – what if wind or rain carried all of the detectable eDNA away?

As it turns out, the team had nothing to worry about. “There was DNA everywhere,” says Clare. The experiment was an overwhelming success, indicating that eDNA can be extracted from the air with relative ease.

Unbeknownst to Clare and her co-workers, however, another research team led by Kristine Bohmann at the University of Copenhagen was conducting a very similar experiment around the same time – also at a zoo. Both teams discovered one another's research when they tried to submit their results to the same journal.

“Basically, the papers perfectly replicated each other,” Clare recalls. “Which is neat.” Rather than make it a competition to see who could get published first, the researchers decided to continue submitting their papers together, stipulating that whichever journal accepted one would have to accept both. After a couple of tries, the journal *Current Biology* published both papers in tandem.

This open, collaborative approach has benefited Clare and her colleagues while working on other projects as well. After reading about the eDNA samples pulled from air at the zoo, a physicist reached out to Clare with an idea: what if scientists harnessed existing air quality monitors to study eDNA?

Air quality monitoring stations are designed to capture and analyze particulates in the lower atmosphere. They

**The experiment was an overwhelming success, indicating that eDNA can be extracted from the air**

of her colleagues suspected that they might be able to collect eDNA samples from other places – including the air. In 2020, while serving as a senior lecturer at Queen Mary University of London, she proposed the idea to the institution, which was actively seeking “high risk, high reward” research initiatives. “Long story short, we pitched this idea of trying to filter DNA out of air samples, and they funded it,” Clare says.

She pulled together a team and got access to an outdoor zoological park. They chose the location because it had a variety of unique, non-native animals (there aren't very many sources of elephant DNA in the U.K. that their samples could

help alert people to the presence of dangerous pollution or concentrated wildfire smoke, and they exist in virtually every country around the globe. What's more, they're often stationed in or near highly biodiverse areas, such as national parks. If most, or even some, of these sensors are scooping up eDNA in addition to particles like lead, smoke or soot, it could be a game changer for biodiversity monitoring.

Clare and her co-authors are currently exploring this idea. But regardless of how essential air quality monitoring stations end up being for monitoring species richness, one thing is certain: the discovery of airborne eDNA has blown the future of biodiversity research wide open. ●

# Alumni



BY NEIL ARMSTRONG  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HORST HERGET

## NOT FOR OURSELVES

Rosemary Sadlier advocates  
for Black history and social justice

**A** SA CHILD attending church in Toronto with her mother, Rosemary Sadlier (BA '75) always heard the motto, “Not for ourselves but for others.” It’s something she thinks she has “over-internalized,” and which has influenced her lifelong work to ensure that Black history is recognized throughout the city, the province and the rest of Canada.

The former president of the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS), author and advocate against anti-Black racism continues to do Black history work beyond the organization. She views her work as a legacy to the community. “If you don’t see it, then you have to create it; if you don’t see it, you have to be it.”

Starting out as an English major, but not seeing herself reflected there, she switched to sociology, which she thought at the time would be important, “but unfortunately Toronto was still Toronto, so that didn’t make a particular amount of difference.”

“I think what I left York with was more of a global perspective, and also much more a sense of the nature of societal factors on individual expressions, which was very important to what I think I went on to do,” says Sadlier, who studied as an undergraduate at Glendon Campus.

She did a master’s degree at the University of Toronto and completed the course work for her PhD at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). However, she didn’t

do her thesis because she was unable to pay the tuition, and the full-time job she was hoping to secure did not materialize. But she continues to contribute to the department, sometimes participating in conferences or writing articles.

Sadlier said most people know her as having headed the OBHS for 22 years – the only provincial heritage organization in Canada with a focus on Black history – a position for which she was not paid. “I was holding place and space for the Black community through this organization,” she said, noting that it aimed to address anti-Black racism.

In total, she was with the organization for 25 years, visiting schools and making Black history presentations – something she did before becoming the president, and continued to do as the OBHS’s leader.

Sadlier is proud of the work she did to rally support for the City of Toronto to designate February as Black History Month, and for the provincial government to do the same. She was also instrumental in the federal government officially recognizing the month. Jean Augustine, then the member of Parliament for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, brought the motion to the House of Commons that was passed unanimously in 1995.

“That was the reason I was the only non-elected person on the platform in Ottawa when the first celebration of February as Black History Month was held,” she says.



While Black History Month was finally recognized, the historian felt that, for many Canadians, there seemed to be an unawareness of some of the challenges and atrocities that had taken place in Canada.

This led her to work on the recognition of Emancipation Day, which connected Canada with the transatlantic slave trade, and to the diaspora in a way that Black History Month didn't seem to do in its expression. "Black History Month says we're here, we exist, and Emancipation Day says that in that existence, we also have resisted and survived a 200-plus year experience of enslavement in this country."

In 2023, OCAD University presented her with an honorary degree, and this past summer, the University of Toronto did the same, says Sadlier, who was honoured by York University by being included on the Glendon Campus Wall of Recognition in 2023. The republication of her book *The Kids Book of Black Canadian History*, which has been updated with new illustrations by Arden Taylor and a slight name change, *The Kids Book of Black History in Canada*, was released in June.

"It's very important that the effort that I have extended, that I think some people may be unaware of, is being recognized," she says, hoping it will be inspirational for people involved in social justice advocacy.

As Chair of the Linc Committee, Sadlier recently realized the fruition of several years of commitment, when a bust in honour of Lincoln Alexander, the first Black Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario and Canada's first Black member of Parliament and cabinet minister, was unveiled inside Queen's Park.

Funding from the Black Opportunity Fund, RBC Foundation and individual donations resulted in the creation and instalment of the bust in the west wing of the main floor, looking toward the entrance of the lieutenant-governor's suite.

"We do these commemorations because it is a way of honouring the past, but it's also with an eye to the impact that this has for the future. Sometimes it's a reminder that we plan to be here." ●



# Honouring Healers

Amplifying the legacies of Black women in nursing

**K**AREN FLYNN (PhD '03), a women's studies graduate from York University, has been inaugurated as the first Terrance & Karyn Holm Endowed Professor in Nursing at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC). The investiture ceremony, held last April, marked her transition from years in the humanities as a gender and women's studies professor to the College of Nursing, a division rooted in health-care science. Since January, Flynn has actively promoted the Midwest Nursing History

Research Center at UIC, where she now serves as director. Collaborating with UIC Nursing associate professor Gwyneth Franck on the Mapping Care project, Flynn aims to highlight the contributions of Black nurses in Chicago through a travelling exhibit and website.

Flynn's interest in researching women in the labour force was sparked by observing female volunteers at her local church in Toronto, where she grew up. This led her to focus her PhD research not only on Caribbean nurses who migrated to Canada, but

also on Black Canadian nurses born in Canada, reflecting her commitment to introducing inclusive narratives to her field.

"York provided me with the theoretical tools to think about work and to include Black Canadians in the project and not always centre on Caribbean people," says Flynn, whose seminal 2011 work, *Moving Beyond Borders*, is the first book-length history of Black health-care workers in Canada. ●

— Neil Armstrong

Amanda Corder's dramatic reign over Canada's theatre scene challenges perceptions

BY ELIO IANNACCI  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAHLIA KATZ

# EMBODYING THE BODY ELECTRIC

**W**HEN AMANDA CORDER (BA '11) wasn't in class at York earning a degree in theatre, the actor-playwright-director-singer-dancer had a rousing side hustle. A big lover of sports, much of Corder's off-stage, out-of-class free time was spent hosting varsity events across York's Keele Campus. While holding court on various courts, Corder learned how to work stadium crowds into a frenzy whilst hyping up fellow student athletes. "It was one of many things during my time at York that allowed me to create my own educational adventure – and it gave me stamina," says Corder from their home in Toronto.

Corder's days of championing champions has no doubt served the multi-hyphenate well. With a CV that includes cameo spots on CBC's comedy sketch fest, *Baroness Von Sketch Show*, and an unforgettable star turn on *Sort Of* (stealing scenes as the gender-fluid sage, 7ven), each project required Olympic-level improvisational acting. Both television shows are also considered zeitgeist-changers in their own way.

Corder, whose background is Trinidadian and Italian, was drawn to *Sort Of* and *Baroness* because of the cross-cultural social commentary embedded into each series. "It's strange to say, but the combination of my familial heritage and my time getting sports fans so fired up at York led me to make the most outrageous, intersectional work I've made so far."

*Body So Fluorescent* is a surefire example of this. The critically acclaimed play is one Corder co-wrote with high school pal and fellow York University collaborator, David Di Giovanni (MFA '17). The duo has been eating-breathing-sleeping the piece for years. A 2014 sensationalizing piece from *Time*

magazine entitled "Dear White Gays: Stop Stealing Black Female Culture," and a rival editorial clapback response posted on the website Thought Catalog entitled "Dear White Gays: Don't Listen To *Time* Magazine," seeded *Body So Fluorescent's* roots.

To showcase both sides of the appropriation argument, Corder and Di Giovanni's play – built by their shared madonnenara production company – fearlessly presents the debate through comedy and tragedy set in a gay nightclub.

In its many incarnations across Canada in the last three years, Corder has played the two starring roles, mainly inhabiting theatrical spaces alone while taking on two characters: a young Black woman and a white gay man. Corder and Di Giovanni's investment in the piece has resulted in a tour-de-force script that unveils the problematic and powerful synergies in relationships across these communities.

Corder's duo-dialogue is so direct and convincing that the audience often wonders "who's exploiting who?" throughout each act. Corder says that the play refuses to answer this question. "We leave it up to you to come up with your own conclusions," Corder says, "if you can."

Corder's performance is so potent that it further complicates and redefines our communal and conventional perception of identity politics. Yet Corder says this comes at a price. "Every time I perform this play, it's very exposing and vulnerable," Corder says. "For the first half of that play, we've seen many people walk out, even at queer venues. It's a work that is disturbing to me, and obviously to some audience members, but it's so important and we both stand by it." ●

# Classes

## 1973

**LASH, TIM**  
(MES '73, GEOGRAPHY)

Tim is the founding donor and adviser to a new charitable fund, The Rights of Nature (Canada), that works to centre and re-centre the features and requirements of biodiversity, ecosystems and creatures in Canada. Previously, he was an associate with Athena Global, advising on environmental uses of Earth observation from satellites, and was the director of the Fish and Wildlife Division at the Prince Edward Island Department of Environment.

## 1975

**EATON, TIM**  
(BFA '75, FILM AND VIDEO)

Tim worked on several movie projects at TVO until landing a job at Industrial Light & Magic. He is currently devel-

oping a Nikola Tesla biopic trilogy – a project that he has also co-written – as well as a rock opera on Tesla.

## 1980

**SCHWARTZ, SUSAN**  
(BA '80, PHILOSOPHY)  
Susan is a retired teacher, principal, teacher educator/course director at York and author of books for teachers. She is currently an editor, coach and self-publisher helping others bring their books to publication. Most recently, Susan has been preparing for author visits in schools for her soon-to-be launched debut children's book, *Another Monkey? When is Enough ENOUGH?*

## 1989

**WEATHERHEAD, WAYNE**  
(BA '89, ECONOMICS)  
Wayne represented Canada at the

World Masters Squash Championships in Amsterdam this summer.

## 1994

**DINOVO, CHERI**  
(BA '94, PSYCHOLOGY)  
Cheri performed the first legalized same-sex marriage in Canada in 2001. She was the MPP for Parkdale-High Park from 2006 to 2017, and helped pass important legislation, including Toby's Act in 2012, which added transgender rights to the Ontario Human Rights Code. In 2022, Cheri was appointed to the Order of Canada.

**NAYMAN, IRA**  
(BFA '94, FINE ARTS STUDIES)  
Ira has had eight novels published by Elsewhen Press and 30 short stories published in various anthologies and magazines. After serving as the editor of *Amazing Stories* magazine for three years, he started developing anthology projects. *The Dance*, a "multiverse triptychs" story, is the first of his anthology projects to be published.

## 1995

**MCCORMICK, KEVIN**  
(BA '90, MA '91, PHD '95, SOCIOLOGY)  
Kevin was recently named the founding president of the newly established Canadian Institute for Human Rights and Global Health. He has served 18 years as president and vice-chancellor of Huntington University, and was named founding president of the Peruvian Canadian Institute in 2020. He has also worked with the Canadian Armed Forces for many years and is

now serving as honorary colonel of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders.

## 1996

**CUNNINGHAM, RON** (BAS '96, BCOM '96, ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES, BA '00, ECONOMICS)  
Ron is the founder and CEO of Citizens for the Advancement of Community Development (CACD), an initiative designed to empower and uplift BIPOC youth aged 10 to 24. He has received multiple awards for his community work and volunteerism, including the Peace Medallion from the YMCA of the GTA, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award for Community Service and the Black Business Professional Association (BBPA) Harry Jerome Community Service Award.

## 1999

**MOUNSEY, JOSIE**  
(MA '99, POLITICAL SCIENCE)  
Josie recently published her second novel, *I Must Remember*. Following up from her previous novel, *The Weak Against the Strong*, the free-standing story oscillates between a Canadian backdrop and the stark contrast of Siberia.

## 2011

**HOREMANS, CHAVISA**  
(MES '11, ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES)  
Chavisa is a certified divorce coach who started a divorce doula service, providing holistic, emotional, logistical



ROSEMARIE RICHINGS

and practical support, specializing with parents in high-conflict disputes and trauma recovery. Chavisa works with people through divorce, helping them recover from trauma and rebuilding their lives.

## 2013

**DOWNING, BRANDON**  
( '13, KINESIOLOGY & HEALTH SCIENCE)  
Brandon was recently named the manager of Health, Fitness and Aquatics with the YMCA of Owen Sound Grey Bruce. He lives in Owen Sound with his wife, Sarah, and their four children, Charlotte, Clayton, Poppy and Daisy.

**GOETZE, TRYSTAN**  
(MA '13, PHILOSOPHY)  
Trystan taught computer ethics at Dalhousie University, followed by a position as an AI ethics consultant for Ethically Aligned AI, a startup enterprise. They are now the director of the engineering ethics program at Cornell University.

**SALEKI, ZAHRA**  
(BA '13, CULTURAL STUDIES)  
Zahra won the Catherine Bratty Award for Best of Art Fair at the 63rd Toronto Outdoor Art Fair for her work *This Storm is You*. Her artistic work includes video, installation art and photography. Zahra's work has also been featured in group exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ontario, including *Girl Talk* in 2017 and *Richmond 401* in 2016.

## 2014

**RICHINGS, ROSEMARIE**  
(BA '14, DRAMA STUDIES)  
Rosemarie recently signed a book deal contract with Bloomsbury to publish a guide to navigating university as a dyspraxic student. Drawing from her own lived experience, the book will teach dyspraxic students how to navigate accommodations and reasonable adjustments that they need as a disabled, neurodivergent student to thrive in higher education.

## 2015

**HA-REDEYE, OMAR**  
(LLM '15, HEALTH LAW)  
Omar received the 2023 City of Pickering Civic Award - Accessibility Award for making significant contributions, beyond legislative requirements, to the well-being and advancement of people with accessibility requirements.

**AMARASOORIYA, PRAKASH**  
(BSC '15, KINESIOLOGY)  
Prakash has created a production company, Kashamara Productions, that works with studios worldwide to bring productions to life. His next production will be officially partnering with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra to bring

the popular *Final Fantasy* concerts to Toronto in September 2024.

## 2019

**BEHZAD, AFFAN**  
(BENG '19, MECHANICAL ENGINEERING)  
Affan currently works for Fugro, a geo-data collection company, where he uses the data collected in vehicles to analyze and maintain critical infrastructure needs for roads and highways. His work covers all Canadian provinces and all the state departments of transportation in the United States.

## IN MEMORIAM

**PRESSBURGER, NATALIE**  
(BA '83, GLENDON)  
Natalie passed away on July 5, 2024, after a courageous battle with cancer. She was a Glendon alumna who worked at the Leslie Frost Library while she was a student. She also worked for a time in the principal's office.



JOSIE MOUNSEY

**Want to be in Classes?**

Send us your photos and news.  
Email us at [magnotes@yorku.ca](mailto:magnotes@yorku.ca)



**IN THIS PHOTO FROM 1974,** I'm captured mid-movement as an aspiring mime artist during my theatre studies at York University. As I write in my new memoir, *Heart on My Sleeve*, the glorious '70s were a time of big dreams and unbridled creativity, and I was enamoured with the art of physical expression.

After a year of acting studies in New York, I enrolled at York in 1972, joining talented classmates such as Sky Gilbert in the Theatre Performance program. Though I craved an academic degree, my true passion was mime. I supplemented my York classes by studying under a renowned mime artist downtown.

Paris soon called, and I spent a year training with the legendary Étienne Decroux. Longing for more university education, I returned to York to complete my second year of drama in 1974. That's when the student documentary *Portrait of a Mime* captured my miming – it still lives in York's archives, shot by Rene Ohashi (BFA '76), with direction by Alexandra Hoy (BA '75, LLB '78), another fellow student who went on to become associate chief justice of the Court of Appeal for Ontario.

After more courses that summer, I departed for Newfoundland in 1975, becoming the province's only mime artist with a job at CBC Radio as an arts reporter. And so began my incredible media career, sparked by the wild idealism of my York years. — *Jeanne Beker*

## Flashback

Have a great photo from your days at York?

Email us at [magnotes@yorku.ca](mailto:magnotes@yorku.ca)

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