



TESL NB

# NEW BEGINNINGS

Insights and Experiences in Teaching English  
as an Additional Language in New Brunswick

Newsletter | Winter 2026



# TESL NB Newsletter

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*Dear TESL NB community,*

My term as President of TESL NB has come to a close, and I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for these past four years. It was a privilege to work alongside such dedicated individuals who share a passion for teaching and the EAL field.

I am delighted to welcome **Kathy Whynot** as the new TESL NB President. Kathy is far from new to the TESL NB world, and many of you probably know her from other teaching connections and contexts as well. I have no doubt that with her experience, enthusiasm, and leadership, she will take TESL NB to the next level.

While my role is changing, my commitment remains. I want to extend a heartfelt thank-you to the Board for their unwavering support and to every member who contributed their time, skills, and ideas. I am proud of what we have accomplished together and excited for what lies ahead.

With gratitude,

*Erica Thomas*

TESL NB Past President

# Words From Our New President



## Dear TESL NB members and community,

It is with great honour and enthusiasm that I introduce myself as the new President of TESL New Brunswick (TESL NB). I have been involved with TESL NB since 2017 and have served as a Board Member since 2018. Personally and professionally, I believe deeply in the importance of our small-but-mighty organization.

This newsletter's theme—new beginnings—feels especially fitting. A new year brings renewed energy and possibility, and it also invites us to reflect on what anchors us: our shared commitment to multilingual learners, to one another, and to the communities we serve. As the sole professional organization dedicated to supporting ESL and EAL teachers and instructors across New Brunswick, TESL NB offers opportunities for professional networking and learning—and, just as importantly, a place to build connection, find support, and experience joy through shared work.

At the heart of TESL NB is you—our members. Thank you for what you contribute in your classrooms, programs, and communities. Our membership reflects the breadth of language education across the province: colleagues in the settlement sector; educators in the public school system; private teachers and tutors; instructors in community colleges and universities; teachers in private language schools; and many others. We also bring intersecting identities and experiences to this work—as parents and grandparents, new Canadians, language learners, community advocates, and more.

By way of introduction, my own professional journey has included several “beginnings,” each shaping how I understand this work. Prior to this year, I worked as Team Lead at the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), responsible for the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Schools and English as an Additional Language (EAL) portfolios. I have taught in New Brunswick, Toronto, and China—in middle and high school EAL and English classrooms, a private school for adult learners, a multicultural association, and through in-home family and individual tutoring, among other contexts. I am currently a PhD student at the University of New Brunswick, exploring joy as pedagogy in diverse language-learning environments. While I have worked alongside multilingual learners for more than twenty years, I continue to see myself as a learner in service to this complex, evolving field. I am passionate about creating learning environments that honour and sustain the languages and cultures of children, youth, and their communities.



As I begin this role, I am committed to building on the strong foundation created by the leaders who came before me. I am grateful to have learned from our last two Presidents—the late Donna Hoffman (President of TESL NB from 2020–2022) and Erica Thomas (President from 2022–2025)—who each led with passion, care, kindness, and a deeply collaborative spirit. I hope to honour both of them by leading the organization forward with the same care and collaborative mindset. You will find a letter from Erica in the pages of this newsletter, as well as a memorial tribute to Donna, who left us too soon on December 25, 2025. The TESL NB community feels her loss and honours her memory.

As we settle into the new beginning of this year, 2026, I am thrilled to work alongside your incoming TESL NB Board Members. We have an exciting combination of experienced and newer Board Members coming together this year to guide the organization through 2026, and only two Board Member resignations. I extend my thanks and gratitude to outgoing Board Members, Karen Spracklin and Dawn McCluskey. We thank you both for all your hard work and will miss your kind and wise counsel at Board meetings. As we launch this first newsletter of 2026, I share special thanks to Dawn, who skillfully curated our Newsletter for the past two years. This is the first newsletter beautifully curated by our incoming Newsletter Editor, Camila Andrade, and I am excited for you to explore the content she has so carefully crafted.

As we step into this new year together, I hope we can also step toward one another. Our network is here for you. Please reach out—share what you’re interested in, what supports would be helpful, or simply say hello. In a world that can feel increasingly fragmented, community matters—and as ESL/EAL educators, many of us feel that need especially strongly. To that end, I am pleased to announce that your TESL NB Board, led by Vice President Mallory Cunningham, is planning a Spring Professional Learning Event for members on June 6, 2026. Please save the date, and look for more details in the next newsletter! If you have ideas for the day or would like to contribute, please reach out to Mallory at [mallory.cunningham@nbed.nb.ca](mailto:mallory.cunningham@nbed.nb.ca).

I look forward to serving you as your TESL NB President. Please enjoy this beautiful newsletter—and as you peruse it, consider submitting a photo, a story, or an article for the next edition. We would love to hear from you. Thank you for the work you do in your community and for being part of TESL NB!

Yours in education,

*Kathy*

# UNTRANSLATABLE

**UBUNTU (noun)**

*/u:'bʊntuː/ (Nguni Bantu languages)*

A belief that a person becomes fully human through relationships with others. The idea that "I am because we are."





Artwork by Nazila Ahmadi

# Teaching ESL to Adults with Complex Lives: Beyond the Classroom

By Roxana Cárdenas

New beginnings in adult ESL are often mistaken for motivation problems. When learners fall behind, miss class, or disengage, the assumption is simple: they do not want to learn.

My mother's experience taught me otherwise. She was a physician in Cuba. Independent, capable, and deeply disciplined. When she immigrated to Canada at 62, learning English became necessary not for ambition, but for autonomy: to drive, pass a language-based test, and move through daily life with confidence. She learned while coordinating family schedules, managing hearing challenges, adapting to winter and isolation, and navigating a language that moved faster than her processing.

When progress was measured only by speed, she stepped away. What looked like disengagement was actually self-preservation.

This is why flexibility in adult ESL is an ethical practice. Slowing pace, offering multiple ways to demonstrate learning, and treating attendance as a dialogue rather than a rule does not lower standards, it raises them.

When educators design for real lives, classrooms become places where adults are not judged for where they are, but supported in where they are going.

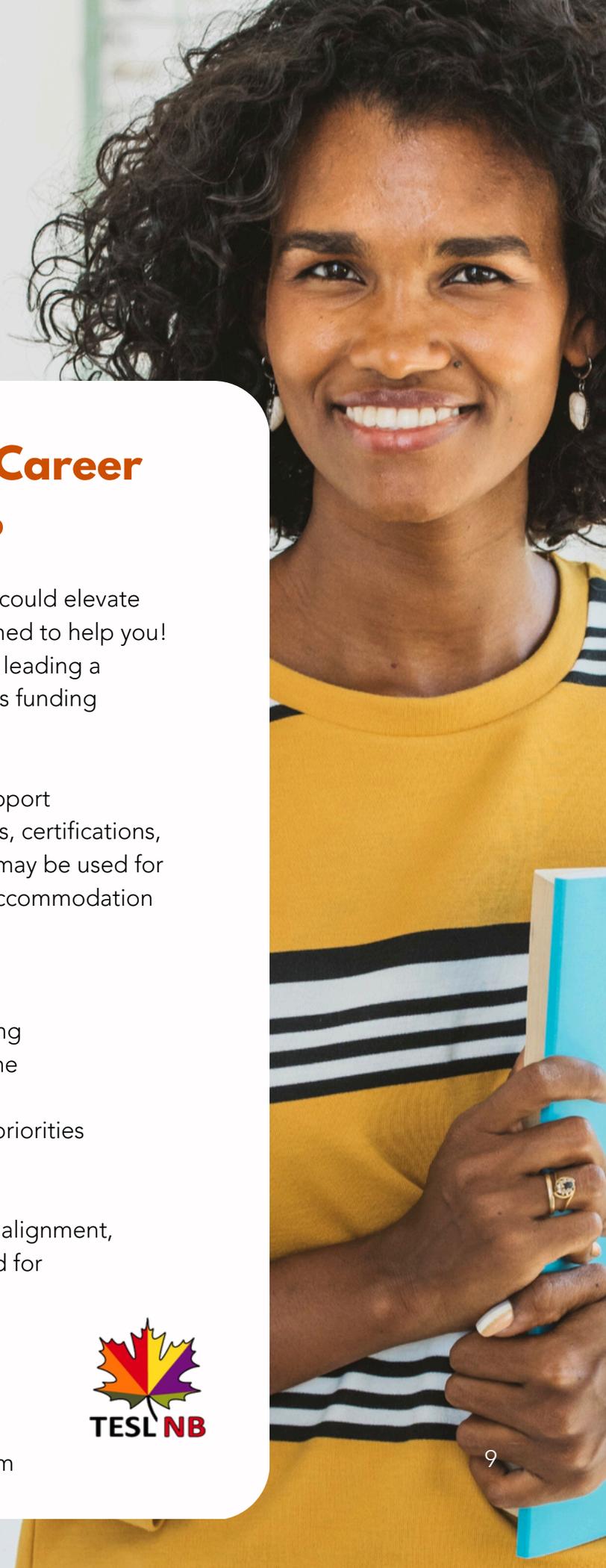


## **Volunteer and Support a Fellow Educator!**

ENGIN for Educators (ENGIN4EDU) connects educators worldwide with teachers in Ukraine for online conversations and professional exchange. In just one hour a week, you'll build meaningful relationships by sharing your experience as an educator in sessions focused on global teaching trends and insights.

By supporting English confidence for Ukrainian educators, you help create ripple effects for generations of students. Registration for this program is only open until March 2nd!

Learn more and sign up for this exciting opportunity on ENGIN's website (<https://www.enginprogram.org/engin4edu-info-for-volunteers>).



## Invest in Your Teaching Career with the Help of TESL NB

Have an idea, course, or conference in mind that could elevate your EAL practice? **TESL NB Bursaries** are designed to help you! Whether you're pursuing professional learning or leading a project that strengthen teaching and learning, this funding opportunity can help turn your goals into action.

One or more bursaries of **up to \$500 each** to support conferences, professional learning events, courses, certifications, and training (in-person, virtual, or hybrid). Funds may be used for registration or tuition fees, as well as travel and accommodation when applicable.

### Applicants must:

- Be current TESL NB members in good standing
- Submit their application by the stated deadline
- Demonstrate clear and measurable impact
- Show alignment with TESL NB's mission and priorities
- Provide a realistic and responsible budget

Funding decisions are competitive and based on alignment, impact, and available funds. Receipts are required for reimbursement of approved expenses.

### How to Apply:

Fill out the form by [clicking here](#) or visiting our website at [teslnb.ca](http://teslnb.ca). For questions or more information contact: [teslnewbrunswick@gmail.com](mailto:teslnewbrunswick@gmail.com)





# Teaching English to Young Learners Certificate

*By Melissa Clarke, EST- EAL, Forest Hills School, Saint John, NB*

I am grateful to have the opportunity to complete the Teaching English to Young Learners Certificate by **ScoreGuides**, a 50-hour program focused on practical strategies for teaching English to young learners aged 3-12.

A key takeaway for me from this training was the reminder of how valuable developmentally appropriate, interactive play is for students acquiring the English language. Young learners thrive when lessons are active, playful, and meaningful. This training reinforced the idea that language learning for young learners should be multisensory, through games, songs, storytelling, and hands-on activities.

Another takeaway from this training is how strategies such as using gestures, visuals, and repeated phrases help make learning more accessible to learners, especially at the beginning of their language learning journey. Predictable routines help young learners feel safe and confident, which is important for language development.

Learning should be enjoyable, and when students are engaged and having fun, they are more willing to communicate, experiment with language and build confidence. I have seen this in my own teaching practice.

Another strength of participating in this course was the opportunity to participate in meaningful discussions with language teachers from other parts of the country and around the world. These conversations allowed us to share strategies we use in our own classrooms to support students while also learning from one another's experiences.

I would highly recommend this course to educators looking to develop more valuable skills and strategies for teaching English and multilingual learners.

Thank you to TESL NB for their support in allowing me to complete this course.



*Member  
Spotlight*

# Henrietta Obajemu



is a proud member of TESL NB and has called Fredericton home for the past six years. Originally from the United Kingdom, she and her family were drawn to the city by its natural beauty and welcoming community.

A passionate advocate for language and culture, Henrietta speaks nine languages, many of them endangered. Her work with newcomer and immigrant communities has allowed her to connect with people from around the world, shaping her understanding of humanity and the importance of empathy, listening, and inclusion.

Henrietta brings over a decade of teaching experience and holds a Bachelor of Education with TESL and Early Childhood Education certification from the University of New Brunswick, as well as a CELTA from the University of Sheffield.

She is currently pursuing a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction and a graduate certificate in bilingual and multilingual education.

She works with the Government of New Brunswick's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on curriculum, teacher recruitment, and equity initiatives, while also volunteering with newcomer communities and tutoring students.

As one of the few Black women educators in the province, Henrietta's lived experience informs her commitment to multilingual education and culturally sustaining practices.

Outside of work, Henrietta enjoys family time, meaningful conversations, and learning from others' experiences, which continue to inspire her teaching and advocacy.



Take it higher... Eventually.

# TESL NB Teaching Tip

*By Geoff North*

Students need to learn the basics when they are starting in a new language. The ability to identify and describe information from something they read or hear is the first stage of comprehension.

However, once students are able to consistently recall and remember details from a variety of content, they will need to move from (what may often be) a mere superficial knowledge of the material to a deeper, more meaningful understanding.

Once your students are showing basic comprehension skills, start moving toward higher-level thinking.

To have a truly authentic grasp of the language, students should be able to explain and summarize what they have read or heard in their own words.

They should be able to compare and contrast, analyze cause and effect, make connections, infer meaning, etc.

The move from a superficial or literal understanding of the content will take time, but with practice, your students will be able to think about and comprehend what they are reading (or listening to) in a deeper, more meaningful way.

Courtney Sarault  
Photo: CBC News



## New Brunswick's Pride in the Winter Olympics

There's something special about watching one of our own glide onto the Olympic podium, and this winter, New Brunswick had every reason to cheer.

Moncton's Courtney Sarault skated her way into history, earning Olympic silver as part of Canada's mixed short-track relay team at the Milano Ice Skating Arena. In a sport known for its speed, chaos, and razor-sharp turns, Courtney showed the kind of focus and grit that makes New Brunswickers proud.

And she wasn't alone. Fredericton's Rikki Doak also represented Canada on the short-track team, giving our province double the reason to gather around screens, refresh social media, and celebrate every lap.

After a challenging Olympic debut in 2022, she returned stronger, grounded, and ready. Four years of perseverance, resilience, and personal growth led to that silver moment...

A true new beginning!



# Supporting Newcomer Families and Schools: The Work of SWIS

Funded by IRCC, the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) Initiative is delivered by six settlement organizations across New Brunswick, helping newcomers adjust to the education system and schools create welcoming spaces for them to thrive.

SWIS services are available to all students, regardless of immigration status. SWIS assist newcomers with school registration, facilitates communication between families and schools, delivers information sessions on school-related topics, runs homework clubs and Lunch&Learn programs, and more. Additionally, most SWIS offer intercultural competency training and help navigate cultural conflicts in their schools. They collaborate closely with school staff, especially ESL teachers – partnerships that are essential to creating welcoming, inclusive learning environments.

ARAISA is a non-profit umbrella organization that supports the settlement and integration sector and provides regional coordination for the SWIS initiative in Atlantic Canada.

We connect SWIS across the region to improve national coherence of the program and ensure consistent service delivery. To learn more about the SWIS initiative in Atlantic Canada, please visit [swisatl.ca](http://swisatl.ca).

*Note: SWIS services may vary by organization. Please contact your local settlement organization to learn about their specific services.*



Olivia Fynamore,  
SWIS Regional Coordinator,  
ARAISA



# Winter Joys

By Zyrene Estallo

Coming from a tropical country where the seasons shift only between the sun and rain, winter still feels wonderfully strange to me. Its cold quietness has a way of slowing life down, a pause and a space that can't be declined, halted, or retaliated.

Winter, it seems, is nature's gentle reminder to rest. On these peaceful days, the warmth of the kitchen becomes my favourite place, especially when my partner uses her magic and makes food that fills the house with comfort.

As I admire this loaf—warm, golden brown, and baked with love—I look out at the snow beyond the window, a simple moment that captures winter's quiet joys. As James Norbury's *Big Panda* (2021) reminds us, the shortest day brings the longest night... and even that "comes with its own wonders."



# My Journey as a Language Teacher in Canada

*By Hugo Magalhães*

My journey into teaching began at 15 when a neighbor asked for my help with her son's Portuguese and English lessons. He was struggling, and knowing my passion for languages, she offered to pay for my tutoring until his final exams. Having never formally taught, I offered my help for free. Two months of intensive study led to his success, and in that moment, I discovered my calling. Word of his achievement spread, and within six months, I was tutoring 25 students, solidifying my decision to pursue a four-year bachelor's degree in Education and Languages at the local university.

Over the next 16 years in Brazil, my career spanned from elementary to high school, preparatory courses, universities, and private companies. A unique opportunity arose to teach ESL to Brazilian crew members and Portuguese to expatriates on oil platforms in the Atlantic. I also had the honor of having one of my books published and used as a supplementary reader for grades 7 and 8.

Arriving in Canada in 2021, I was skeptical about re-entering the education field, daunted by the bureaucratic hurdles of obtaining a teacher credential. However, a surprising opportunity arose in 2022 when the local school district began recruiting tutors for newcomer students.

My Canadian journey in the EAL (English as an Additional Language) department began that year.



I was once again doing what I love most: helping people. It is the most rewarding job in the world. And soon after, a second opportunity emerged: providing linguistic support to adult newcomers through the Multicultural Agency of the Greater Moncton Area (MAGMA).

While working as an EAL Tutor, I aspired to become an EST-EAL (English as a Second Language Teacher - English as an Additional Language). This goal, however, was hindered by a bureaucratic barrier. My Brazilian bachelor's degree was only partially recognized, requiring me to complete additional credits at a local university. The financial burden forced a delay, but by 2025, I was able to enroll at the University of Maine at Presque Isle and finally obtain the necessary teacher's certificate.

The year 2025 brought further opportunities. My work with MAGMA led to a position at the Université de Moncton for their intensive summer course, allowing me to assist university students in their English language acquisition.

To cap off an already incredible year, I was honoured with contract invitations as an EST-EAL from both Riverview Middle School and Frank L. Bowser School at the start of the school year.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities Canada has provided since my arrival. My mission now is to give back by offering students the support, dedication, and attention they deserve. I extend my deepest thanks to the fantastic team at the EAL department of the Anglophone East School District. It is a privilege to be a part of this community.

**Merci, UdeM!**



**“There is no change without a dream,  
and there is no dream without hope.”**

*Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Heart*



# Worth Listening to:

## MMFC In Conversation Podcast

The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research at UNB Fredericton shares research and stories about family violence.

Each episode brings insights from experts in Atlantic Canada and beyond. It's a thoughtful way to learn and stay connected to this important topic. Understanding family violence helps educators recognize, support, and respond effectively to students affected by it.

**Podcasts can also enhance your students' listening habits.** By tuning in regularly, students practice focusing for longer periods, noticing key ideas, and becoming comfortable with natural speech at a steady pace.

Over time, this routine listening reduces the pressure to understand every single word and encourages them to listen for meaning instead. Developing this kind of consistent habit can make authentic English feel more familiar and manageable, gradually strengthening both comprehension and confidence.



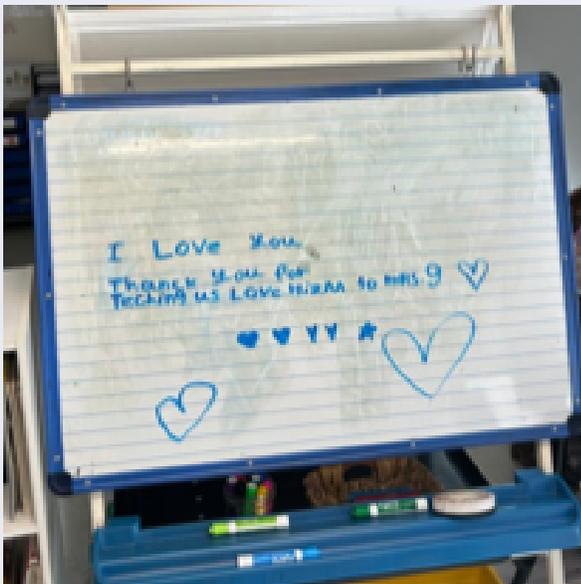
# In Starting Over, I Found My Calling

By Gayathry Sreekantan Nair

I have always been someone who stayed within my comfort zone, be it my home, my job, or my circle. I had never stepped beyond it for anything. It was not fear that held me back, but I simply never knew what was there outside!

So, for someone like me, choosing to cross continents and travel 12860 km to pursue my second master's at the age of 30 came from many reasons, but the strongest was the intense desire for a new beginning.

As a kid, I remember reading in the newspaper about a teacher who travelled through the forest to teach kids in an indigenous community back home.



I was amused by the dedication she puts into her passion. I remember telling my diary that I want to be a teacher one day.

Over the years, my love for creativity, writing and literature led me into a career in Communications. But somewhere along the way, unknowingly, adult life blurred my true passion, and Supply Teaching brought this memory back to me.

This new beginning as an Educator feels like returning to a part of myself I never realized I had lost.

At the end of the day, I feel fulfilled, especially when teaching elementary grades, where the free hugs and drawings remind me how much joy this brings.

Entering this profession was also a learning experience in itself. The school system here is totally different from the one I grew up with. Navigating the change was interesting and challenging. Along with becoming a teacher, I was also becoming a learner. For example, back home, the Homeroom Teacher is called a Classroom Teacher, and even for primary classrooms, different subject teachers come into the 'classroom' to teach their specialized subjects. This reminded me that embracing change begins with respect and curiosity.

When talking about new beginnings, one of the most meaningful things I noticed as a teacher here is how beautifully the schools embrace multiculturalism and multilingualism.

It takes courage for a new student to navigate through so many changes, and it takes determination and care from teachers to help them feel safe as they begin language learning.

The efforts these students show to learn English remind me of the purpose I want to serve. Though my decision to move to a new country was intentional, this new beginning as an Educator became a powerful reminder that change is good.



# *In Memory of Donna Hoffman*

By Paula Kristmanson

On Dec. 25th, 2025, after a lengthy illness, we sadly lost a member of our TESL NB and TESL Canada community. Donna Hoffman was a long-time member of TESL NB who served in many roles, including, most recently, president of the organization. Additionally, Donna was the administrative officer for TESL Canada from 2018 until she retired in 2024. Donna was positive, energetic, and very engaged in her professional communities. As a former LINC instructor, she brought a relevant and knowledgeable background to both organizations. Of particular note was the way she stepped up to support TESL Canada at a very challenging time, first as a volunteer and then as a paid employee. She was always willing to pitch in and did so on many occasions, including the CASLT Languages Without Borders conference hosted in Fredericton in 2019 (pictured on the right below). On a personal level, I want to acknowledge my gratitude for her valuable service and numerous contributions.



Photo on left: Donna (second from the right) with her TESL NB colleagues at a meeting in 2017.  
Photo on right: Donna (second from the right) with volunteers at the Languages Without Borders Conference in May 2019.



# Thank you for reading. We'll see you next time!



## TESL NB

TESL NB is a professional organization affiliated with TESL Canada that aims to support ESL and EAL teachers and instructors working in a variety of institutions in the province of New Brunswick.

TESL NB provides ESL/EAL educators with a venue for professional networking and professional development opportunities.



**TESL CANADA**  
Teachers of English as a Second Language - Canada

All TESL, TESL SK, TESL MB, TESL NB, TESL NS, and TEAL NL members are automatically TESL Canada members, and a portion of your provincial association membership fee (\$16/member) also gives you a TESL Canada membership.

In addition, please note that TESL Canada is the only national certification endorsed by these provincial affiliates. You can find out more about TESL Canada certification here.

For more information about TESL Canada conferences, publications, jobs and more, please check out the TESL Canada website at <https://www.tesl.ca>



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