

The Open Line

TRUOLFA Newsletter • December 2025 • Issue 1

Territorial Land Acknowledgement

Thompson Rivers University is located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (Kamloops Secwépemc). As Open Learning Faculty Members teaching across British Columbia and beyond, we acknowledge that we work and live on the diverse traditional territories of many Indigenous peoples. We commit to advancing reconciliation through our teaching and scholarly work.

Welcome to The Open Line

Welcome to the inaugural issue of The Open Line, TRUOLFA's newsletter connecting our 283 Open Learning Faculty Members across British Columbia.

Teaching in distance education can feel isolating—our screens separate us from colleagues who share our commitment to accessible education. This newsletter aims to bridge that distance by keeping you informed about union matters, professional development, and opportunities to connect.

This first issue introduces your Executive, invites you to our new monthly Virtual Coffee House, and highlights upcoming opportunities. We look forward to growing this newsletter with your contributions and feedback.

NEW: Monthly Virtual Coffee House

When: Third Thursday of each month, 3:00–4:00 p.m. (Pacific)

Next Session: Thursday, December 19, 2025

Where: Zoom (link to follow)

Format: Drop-in—stay for 5 minutes or the full hour

No agenda, no presentations—just a chance to connect with colleagues. This is your staffroom moment, your water cooler chat with people who understand the joys and challenges of distance education. Come as you are, camera on or off.

Thank You, Dr. Mary Kruger

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Mary Kruger for her years of dedicated service to TRU Open Learning—both as a faculty member and as a valued member of the TRUOLFA Executive.

Mary's commitment to distance education and her contributions to our association have made a lasting impact on the Open Learning community. Her leadership, advocacy, and collegiality will be greatly missed.

Thank you, Mary, for everything you've given to TRUOLFA and to your students. We wish you all the best in this next chapter.



Photo credit: Mark Salopak

Membership Updates

Welcome to Our New Members

We're pleased to welcome six new colleagues to the TRUOLFA community:

- Catherine Ortner
- Muhammed Shiban
- Tara Clowes
- Simone Hausknecht
- Amber Hartwell
- Michael Prociuk

We're glad to have you as part of our community. Please don't hesitate to reach out to any Executive member if you have questions about TRUOLFA, and we hope to see you at a Virtual Coffee House soon!

Farewell to Departing Colleagues

We bid farewell to three colleagues who have moved on from Open Learning:

- Serena George
- Maureen Smith
- Sheba Rahim

Thank you for your contributions to TRU Open Learning. We wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Connection Corner

Finding Each Other: Navigating Loneliness in Distance Education

By Amy Tucker, Membership Secretary

There is a particular kind of quiet that accompanies distance education work. We grade papers at kitchen tables, respond to students from home offices, and navigate the rhythms of teaching without ever crossing paths with colleagues who understand what this work demands. For many of us, this autonomy is precisely what drew us to Open Learning. Yet scholarship increasingly reveals what we may sense but rarely name: remote work carries a hidden cost.

Workplace loneliness, understood as the subjective experience of disconnection when our desired social interactions exceed our actual connections (Becker et al., 2022), has emerged as a significant concern among distributed workers. Knight et al. (2022) found that remote employees report heightened isolation and diminished sense of belonging compared to office-based colleagues. The research is clear, yet so too is the remedy: social support consistently buffers against these effects, with individuals who maintain active professional connections reporting markedly higher wellbeing (Gjerstad et al., 2024).

It is with this understanding that TRUOLFA has created intentional spaces for connection. Our **Slack channel** offers ongoing conversation—a place to share a teaching victory, ask a question, or simply greet a colleague. Our monthly **Virtual Coffee House** (third Thursday, 3:00–4:00 p.m. Pacific) provides something rarer still: synchronous presence, colleagues gathering without agenda, simply to be together.

You need not navigate this work alone. We are here, and we hope you will join us.

References

- Becker, W. J., Belkin, L. Y., Conroy, S. A., & Tuskey, S. (2022). Surviving remotely: How job control and loneliness during a forced shift to remote work impacted employee work behaviors and well-being. *Human Resource Management, 61*(6), 697–715.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22102>
- Gjerstad, B., Nortvedt, L., & Fløvik, L. (2024). The hidden costs of working from home: Examining loneliness, role overload, and the role of social support during and beyond the COVID-19 lockdown. *Frontiers in Organizational Psychology, 2*, 1380051.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/forgp.2024.1380051>
- Knight, C., Olaru, D., Lee, J. A., & Parker, S. K. (2022). The loneliness of the hybrid worker. *MIT Sloan Management Review, 63*(4), 10–12.

Executive Members 2025–2026

Your TRUOLFA Executive works to define the terms and conditions of employment and ensure your rights and workplace standards are upheld. We're here to serve you.

Position	Name	Contact
President	Mark Salopek	truol.president@truolfa.ca VOIP: 604-283-7302
Vice President	Doug Loblaw	loblawd@shaw.ca
General Treasurer	Marie Lowe	tres.truolfa@gmail.com
Secretary	Rocky Mirza	rockymirza57@gmail.com
Membership Secretary	Amy Tucker	Doctoramytucker@gmail.com
PD Treasurer	Derek Knox	derekknox@telus.net
Director	John Patterson	jccpatterson@gmail.com
Director	Juan Caldera	—
Director	Gordon Rudolph	gr2442@gmail.com
Director	Erin Woodford	consciouslyinspired@gmail.com

For complete position descriptions, visit truolfa.ca

Important Dates

Event	Date	Details
FLO Workshop: Algorithmic Bias	Dec. 9	9:30–11:00 a.m. PT (BCcampus)
Accessibility Bites: Access Friction	Dec. 11	12:00–12:30 p.m. PT (BCcampus)
SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant	Dec. 15	Application deadline
Virtual Coffee House	Dec. 19	3:00–4:00 p.m. PT – Zoom
GenAI Teaching Lounge	Jan. 13	2:00–2:45 p.m. PT (BCcampus)
Virtual Coffee House	Jan. 16	3:00–4:00 p.m. PT – Zoom

More events: bccampus.ca/events • Research support: ansharma@tru.ca

Contribute to The Open Line

We want to hear from you! For the February 2026 issue, send us your publications, presentations, awards, teaching tips, research updates, or event announcements.

Deadline: January 24, 2026

Maximum length: 250 words per submission

Submit to: Doctoramytucker@gmail.com with subject line 'Open Line Submission'

Your Feedback Matters

This is our first issue—tell us what you'd like to see in future newsletters. Reply to this email or contact Doctoramytucker@gmail.com.

Happy Holidays!

As the year draws to a close, the TRUOLFA Executive wishes you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season and a peaceful, prosperous New Year.

Thank you for your dedication to Open Learning and to our students. We look forward to connecting with you in 2026!

Thompson Rivers University Open Learning Faculty Association

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