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Canadian
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Food Studies

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Photo credit: Celeste Shankland



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The fall of 2025 has been an engaging period of growth and development for CAFS. As we unpack all that we have learned and accomplished over the last year, we are also developing strategies to navigate what will come in the next year. There is much to celebrate as we wrap up 2025.

To start, we are excited to share that CAFS is exploring a new conference model alongside the Common Ground Network, Food Secure Canada, and the Food Communities Network. The inaugural Common Ground Forum will take place June 15-19, 2026, at Lakehead University in Orillia, Ontario. You won't want to miss this rich and valuable experience, unlike any CAFS conference to date. Keep an eye out for the Call for Contributions, which will be circulated amongst our network listservs. Be sure to [submit a proposal](#) to participate in this momentous event.

We are also thrilled about the emergence of CAFS Local Chapters that are blossoming across our membership. [Diana Chu](#) (CAFS board member) and [Amanda Shankland](#) (CAFS member) are taking steps to pilot a Greater Toronto Area local chapter with an upcoming event in Newmarket, Ontario, in January 2026. [Alissa Overend](#) and [Alexa Ferdinands](#) (CAFS board members) are also taking steps to launch a local chapter in Edmonton. Please get in touch with them if you are interested in participating or supporting the delivery of events. We would also love to hear from you if you are also interested in piloting a local chapter in your geography.

We regret to announce that our staff, Michelle Ryan will be leaving CAFS in the new year. Michelle first started with CAFS in 2021 to

develop and grow our social media impact and to support CAFS administrations. Michelle worked alongside CAFS colleagues to deliver the in-person 2023 conference at York University, which brought the largest number of CAFS members together since its inauguration. She has done an incredible amount of work to establish our public-facing voice and brought with her justice-focused leadership, which we will always admire and appreciate.

Thank you Michelle, for your work and energy over the years. We wish you luck in your next steps.

Last but not least, in this belated fall issue, we are pleased to showcase an exciting array of publications and research updates from the CAFS community. The newly published Canadian Food Studies Journal, Volume 12 and Number 3: We're All(ium) in this Together is [now available via open access](#). As always, we are so proud and excited to see the diverse array of food studies research, community engagement, and publications emerging from our networks. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the 2025 Fall Newsletter and the CFS Journal.

As we embrace winter's calls to stay warm and the quieter moments of the season, we wish you, your loved ones, and family a happy new year. Cheers!

On behalf of the CAFS Board,
Patricia Unung and Jenelle Regnier-Davies
CAFS Board of Directors Co-Chairs



CAFS & CFS UPDATES

[CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS](#)



When: June 15 – 19, 2026

Where: Lakehead University Orillia Campus
500 University Avenue, Orillia, ON

How: [Submit here](#) to participate in the program

Building a bigger table: Strengthening our relations will bring four key food networks—CAFS alongside the Common Ground Network, Food Secure Canada and Food Communities Network—together in a forum focused on understanding the social relations necessary for transitioning and transforming Canada’s agriculture, fisheries and food systems to be equitable and sustainable.

This event will bring academic researchers together with agriculture and food systems actors, including civic/community organizations, government, industry organizations, and Indigenous and settler communities, to share knowledge, forge and strengthen connections

across disciplines and sectors, and seed new collaborations in food systems research and action.

The Forum will feature individual paper presentations, organized panels, roundtables, plenaries, keynote speakers, workshops, poster sessions, and an Exploration Gallery, all of which will be organized around four ‘pillars’ of social relations that underpin the work of the Common Ground Network.

We are particularly interested in supporting content that:

- Moves us towards knowledge sharing
- Builds social expertise around sustainable agriculture, fisheries and food systems
- Strengthens connections amongst researchers and affected groups
- Develops shared goals and objectives.

We encourage submissions of any of the above formats on critical and theoretical work, community-based and on-the-ground practice, research-creation and transdisciplinary initiatives, and creative, thought-and feeling-provoking investigations.

In addition to content-based submissions, we also welcome contributions for reimagining the processes by which the Forum’s members and their larger communities interact. The [submission form](#) includes an option for proposing ways to build a bigger table into the forum infrastructure. All submissions are due on January 29, 2026. Notifications regarding acceptance will be communicated in February, 2026 and participants will be provided a presentation date in March 2026.

CAFS COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Are you currently engaged in food systems and food studies research? Are you leading or supporting a community initiative addressing food system issues? In 2026, we aim to draw more attention to the work taking place within the CAFS community and networks.

If you are interested in spotlighting your work or a collaborative initiative via our social media platforms, please share with us a small blurb (50-100 words), an original photo or video (with details on image or video attribution), and any hashtags or links related to your work. To share with us, [submit here!](#)

GTA CAFS LOCAL CHAPTER PILOT EVENT

Join us for A Conversation Potluck, a Canadian Association of Food Studies GTA local chapter pilot event. Welcoming food studies enthusiasts and curious eaters! Bring a dish and a story and come ready for good food, lively conversation, and great company. [Please register](#) to secure your spot at the table!

When: Saturday, January 17, 2026, 2–5 PM

Where: 14 Niagara Street, Newmarket, at Niagara on the Creek Wine School (Historic Old Newmarket)

CANADIAN FOOD STUDIES JOURNAL

We're excited to announce the newest issue of the Canadian Food Studies Journal. To read the full issue, Vol. 12 No. 3 (2025): We're All(ium) in this Together, visit [Canadian Food Studies](#).

ISSUE CONTENTS:

Editorial

Extending food studies' reach across the table and aisle: Reflections from a "square peg" on contemporary silos hindering food system transformation - Sara Edge

Research Articles

Leveraging community agroecological values across scales for food system transformation in

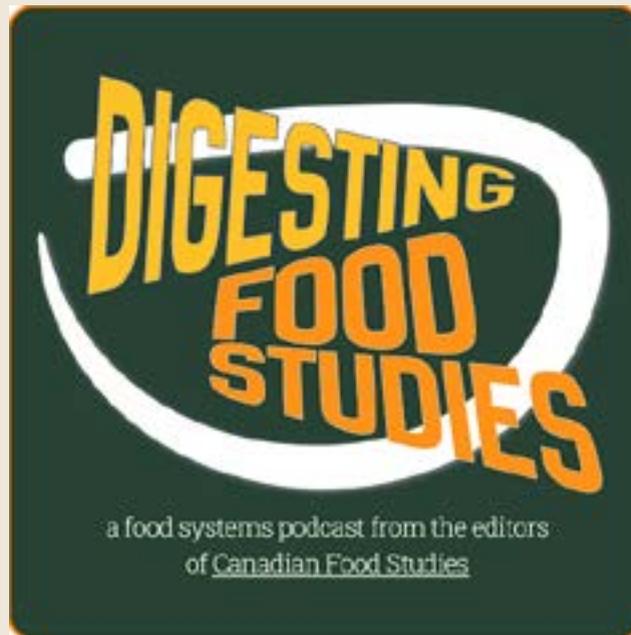
Ka'a'gee Tu First Nation, Northwest Territories, Canada - Jennifer Temmer, Alison Blay-Palmer, Andrew Spring

Rethinking jurisdiction: Mapping federal, provincial, territorial and local government actions related to food loss and waste in Canada - Chloe Alexander

"Food brings people together": The sociocultural factors that shape food literacies - Pamela Farrell

Balancing economic and social dual bottom-lines: Qualitative inquiry of healthy food retailing in rural Newfoundland and Labrador - Rebecca LeDrew, Peter Wang, Holly Etchegary, Kris Aubrey-Bassler, Delphine Grynszpan,

With 20 episodes comprising the first season of DFS/CÉSA, the podcast represents a wide cross-section of the work published in CFS to date. The season kicked off with a teaser episode that looked back at the founding of the journal in 2013, as told through the memories of both Ellen Desjardins (the CFS founding editor) and David Szanto (founding Associate Editor and host of the podcast). Since then, episodes have covered meat studies, critical food pedagogies, art and material practice, infant food insecurity, Indigenous food sovereignty, school food programs, pesticides and politics, un-learning academic conventions, food waste, and feminist food studies. Much more is to come, with episodes released biweekly on RSS.com and across most major podcasting platforms.



“Digesting Food Studies” is supported in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Lakehead University, and the Canadian Association for Food Studies. Its executive producers are Rachel Engler-Stringer, Laurence Godin, Charles Levkoe, Phil Loring, and Kristen Lowitt.

NEWS

SHOULD WE HAVE FOOD BANKS?

In its October issue, the periodical Alberta Views published a “dialogue” between Neil Hetherington, CEO of Daily Bread Food Bank, and me, on the

question “Should we have food banks?” Neil argues for the affirmative side while I argue for the negative. We each had a 500-word opening statement and then 800 words to respond to the other’s opening statement. It is written in an accessible manner, and the format is perfect for undergraduate readings, assignments, and debates. I hope you find it provocative!

Hetherington, N., & Power, E. (2025, October). Dialogue: Should we have food banks? Neil Hetherington says Yes. Elaine Power says No. Alberta Views, (October) p. 30-33. Available at: <https://albertaviews.ca/should-we-have-food-banks/>

Get in touch: Elaine Power, power@queensu.ca

CLOSE TO HOME: FOOD INSECURITY IN CANADA

At a November event in Cobourg, Ontario, Dr. Sara Edge - the Arrell Chair in Food, Policy & Society, and Associate Professor at the University of Guelph discussed what food insecurity looks like here in Ontario. The interview was part of a series of presentations about the food industry, hosted by Northumberland Learning Connection.

In this interview, Dr. Edge Sara sheds light on what can be done to create food equality. Visit [CBC](#) to hear the interview.

Get in touch: Sara Edge, edges@uoguelph.ca

RESEARCH

TOWARDS A GENDER-INCLUSIVE, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ASSESSMENT OF HEALTH (GIFSA): THE CASE OF HAITI

Our CIHR-funded project, Towards a Gender-Inclusive, Food Sovereignty Assessment of Health (GIFSA): The Case of Haiti, is coming to a close, and we're thrilled to share some of its key outcomes with the CAFS community.

In collaboration with Haitian community partners, we co-developed a Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool that brings together local knowledge and global insights. Drawing inspiration from Indigenous Food Sovereignty tools developed in North America, the tool was created to help communities assess and strengthen their own



A Rapid Food Sovereignty
and Health Assessment Tool:
Haiti

2025

food sovereignty on their own terms. The tool is available in English, French, and Kreyol, and has already been piloted in Massabiél, Haiti.

You can read more about the process and our first case study in our new paper, "A Community-Engaged Tool for Evaluating Food Sovereignty in Haiti and Beyond," published in *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*. We've also just released a white paper on the Massabiél pilot, available in English, French and Kreyol.

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PUBLICATIONS

EXTREME HEAT HITS DIFFERENT UNDER CLIMATE CHANGE: A REVIEW OF RISKS AND LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

Abstract: Purpose of Review: This paper synthesizes recent research about the impacts of climate change on farmworkers and analyzes notable features of existing laws in Canada and the United States designed to protect farmworkers from extreme heat.

Recent Findings: Extreme heat presents a widespread and urgent threat to the wellbeing and productivity of agricultural workers globally, and it amplifies occupational exposures such as pesticides and air pollution. Other extreme weather events such as wildfires and flooding also heighten risks to agricultural workers. In Canada and the United States, laws designed to protect workers from extreme heat are limited to a handful of jurisdictions.

Summary: Laws that regulate working in extreme heat are one tool to protect farmworkers from climate change. Important features of these laws include trigger temperatures at which extreme heat measures are required and heat-specific measures related to hydration, acclimatization and administrative controls. More research is needed to better understand how effective these laws are at protecting workers on the ground.

Klassen, S., Weiler, A. M., & Hastie, B. (2025). Extreme heat hits different under climate change: A review of risks and legal protections for agricultural workers in Canada and the United States. *Current Environmental Health Reports*, 12(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-025-00490-x>

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THE DISTINCT DRIVERS OF DIVERSIFICATION AND JOB QUALITY ON BC ORGANIC VEGETABLE FARM

Abstract: Agroecological diversification and job quality are key components of a nature- and people-centered approach to sustainable food production. Organic agriculture is often associated with both ecological health and social justice, but research has shown that organic certification doesn't guarantee more diversified or fair labour outcomes. To better understand the drivers of and interactions between agroecological diversification and job quality in organic agriculture, we conducted a survey of on-farm practices and approaches (how farmers think about their management) on organic vegetable farms – both certified and uncertified – in British Columbia, Canada (n = 135). We found that variations in diversification and job quality were better explained by co-variables than by organic certification status. Small-scale and ecologically motivated farmers were most strongly associated with diversification practices, and motivation

for land stewardship was the only significant predictor of diversification approaches. Farms that were larger in terms of economic size (gross farm receipts and farm income) were most strongly associated with improved job quality practices, while motivation for social justice was the only significant predictor of job quality approaches. While our research suggests that organic certification alone is insufficient to overcome shared barriers to diversification and improved job quality, organic organizations and farmer networks were the most frequently named support for diversification, while respondents highlighted a lack of support for improved job quality.

Klassen, S., Kremen, C., Ramankutty, N., & Wittman, H. (2025). The distinct drivers of diversification and job quality on BC organic vegetable farms. *Agriculture and Human Values*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-025-10793-2>

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GROWING PAINS: SUCCESSES AND BARRIERS IN LONDON, ONTARIO'S URBAN AGRICULTURE STRATEGY

Urban agriculture (UA) has seen renewed interest in Canada since COVID-19. Inflation and pandemic disruptions drove more people toward UA, even as financial pressures made land and resources harder to secure. London, Ontario is distinctive for adopting a stand-alone Urban Agriculture Strategy in 2017, rather than embedding it within a broader food policy framework. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 25 local UA practitioners and a workshop with 41 participants, this study examines how that strategy has played out in practice.

In a new JAFSCD article, “Growing Pains: Successes and Barriers in London, Ontario’s Urban Agriculture Strategy,” authors Richard S. Bloomfield (Huron University College), Kassie Miedema (Independent Researcher), Becky Ellis (Mohawk College), Deishin Lee (Ivey Business School), and Joe Nasr (Toronto Metropolitan University) assess where policy has enabled UA and where barriers remain. Findings show that while London’s strategy legitimized UA and spurred bylaw changes, its practical impact has been limited by a lack of dedicated leadership, weak communication, land-access challenges, and jurisdictional misalignments. The lesson from London is clear: while urban agriculture holds promise as essential infrastructure for inclusion, adaptation, and food security in mid-sized cities, its success depends on



overcoming persistent challenges in leadership, alignment, and communication.

Key findings:

- Municipal role is central: London's UA strategy provided legitimacy and bylaw updates, but limited staffing, funding, and coordination have constrained implementation.
- Socio-economic pressures shape participation: Inflation and pandemic disruptions increased interest in UA while straining access to land, materials, and support.
- Community efficacy matters: Strong grassroots initiatives and partnerships helped UA persist despite policy and economic barriers.
- Systemic land-use hurdles persist: Zoning gaps, ambiguous building code, and short-term land tenure undermine replicability and scale.

Recommendations for practitioners & policymakers:

- Embed UA into broader planning frameworks, ensuring resources and leadership roles to support implementation.
- Expand secure land access through zoning updates, tenure tools, and transparent processes on public land.
- Build coordination and communication channels across community, private, and municipal partners, with multilingual outreach.
- Establish dedicated municipal capacity for UA (staff roles, clear processes, and stable resourcing).

Recommendations for researchers:

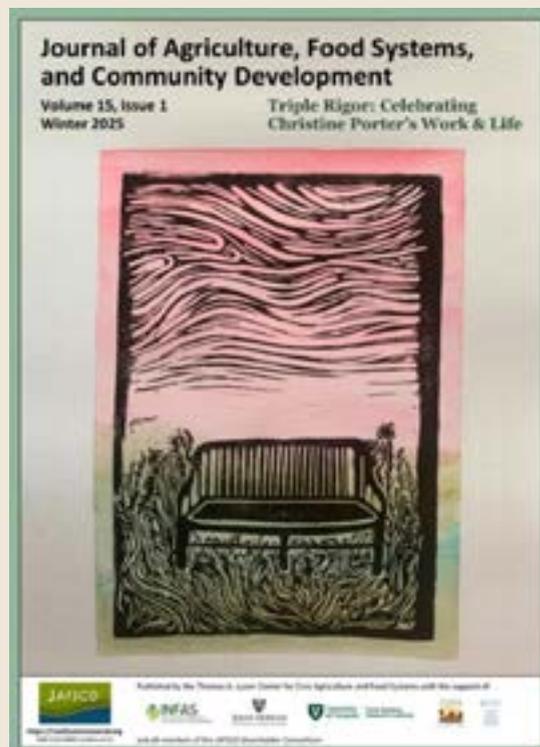
- Future research could compare outcomes

of stand-alone UA strategies with those embedded in broader food systems or food security plans across Canadian cities.

- Evaluate models that integrate UA with housing, climate adaptation, and equity goals, including long-term funding mechanisms.

Bloomfield, R., Miedema, K., Lee, D., Ellis, R., & Nasr, J. (2025). Growing pains: Successes and barriers in London, Ontario's urban agriculture strategy. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 15(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2025.151.009>

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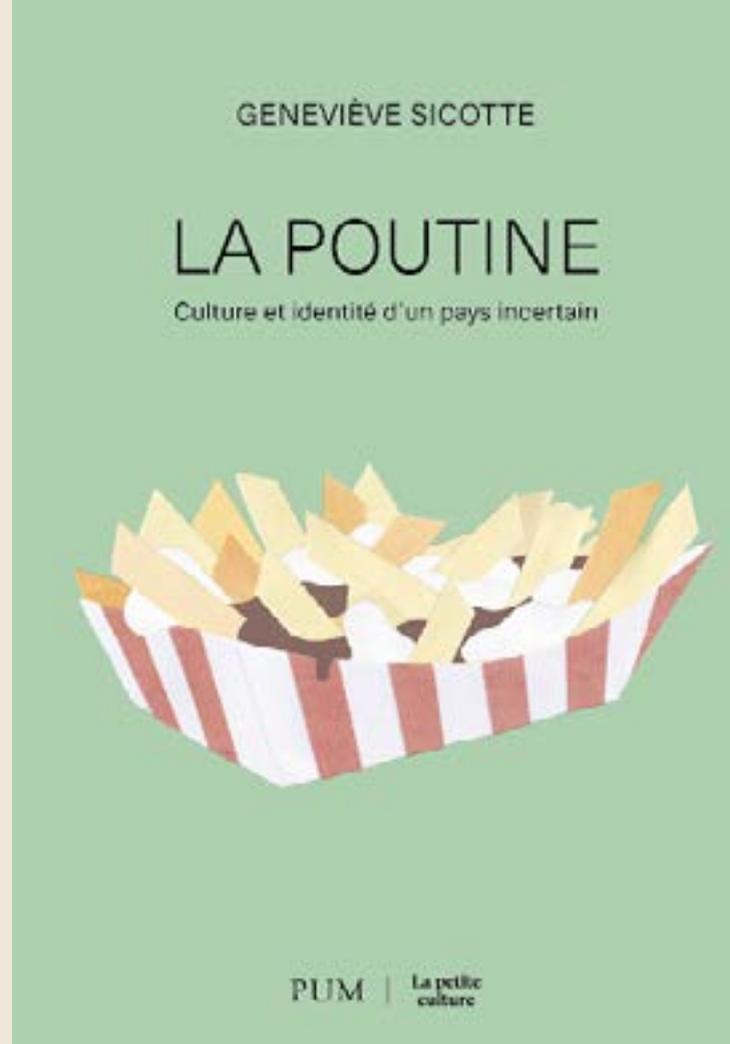


POUTINE: CULTURE AND THE IDENTITY OF AN UNCERTAIN NATION

In just a few decades, poutine has become a new Québécois national dish. Why has it imposed itself today with such force? This book seeks to answer that question, proposing that poutine embodies crucial issues tied to contemporary Québécois identity.

Humble in origin and first associated with agricultural communities and working-class populations, poutine is a banal and often very ordinary product of fast food culture. Yet its ingredients reflect multiple layers of influence that have historically shaped Québécois cuisine. Their materiality, their sensory and aesthetic qualities, and the bodily experiences they evoke are deeply meaningful, expressing ways of inhabiting both the body and the world. Poutine also carries a distinct sense of conviviality: eaters gathered around a shared dish, serving themselves from the same vessel. The sociability it generates reveals relationships characterized by horizontal, egalitarian, almost familial proximity. Poutine is also embedded in ritualized festive consumption, supporting the emergence of collective bonds—but within the parallel world of celebration rather than within the political sphere.

Through these contrasting characteristics, poutine reveals an identity marked by ambivalence—one that resonates with Québec's current social condition. It is the dish of an “uncertain nation,” expressing the unique situation of a peripheral, minority, resilient, and celebratory people who nevertheless struggle to assert themselves and readily take refuge outside the political realm.



This analysis sheds light not only on culinary history, but also on Québécois culture and identity.

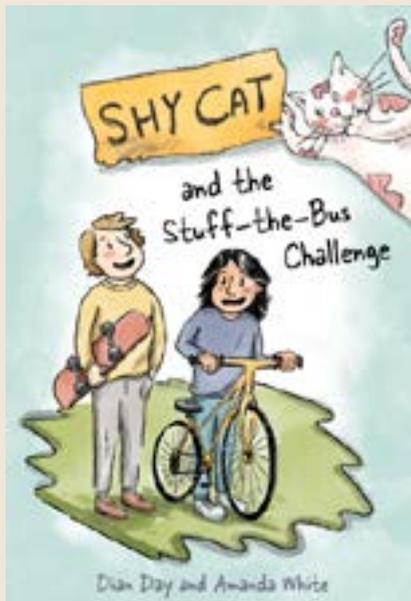
Geneviève S. (2025). Poutine: Culture and the identity of an uncertain nation. Presses de l'Université de Montréal, “La petite culture” series.

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HUNGRY STORIES: CREATING BETTER STORIES, FOR EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO FOOD INSECURITY

Despite decades of research showing otherwise, the dominant narrative regarding food insecurity in Canada depicts the problem as a lack of food and the solution as the provision of food through charity organizations. Aiming to disrupt that narrative, several CAFS members joined together to launch the Hungry Stories project, a cross-Canada collaboration of food scholars, artists, and activists; members include Dian Day, Amanda White (Emily Carr), Elaine Power (Queen's), Jennifer Black (UBC) and Jennifer Brady (Acadia). Our goal is to produce resources for young people that help educators, parents, and kids imagine and advocate for policy-based responses to the root causes of food insecurity.

To that end, we are delighted to announce that our first book, a graphic novel called *Shy Cat and the Stuff-the-Bus Challenge*, will be published by Second Story Press in March 2026. Created by Dian Day and Amanda White, *Shy Cat* is aimed at 8- to 12-year-olds. The story introduces best friends Mila and Kit during their school's Stuff-the-Bus food drive challenge. When Kit has a meltdown at school over a "best before" date, a bag of apples, and a dented can, Mila realizes there's something important she might have missed about her friend. Through her quirky Shy Cat



comics, Mila easily solves the problem of hunger, but in the real world there are only more and harder questions. The food bank is only open one day a week, the community garden plots are all spoken for, people are protesting in front of City Hall—and Kit is still hungry...

Shy Cat is a 2026 Junior Library Guild (JLG) Gold Standard selection! Books can be pre-ordered from the publisher now.

Get in touch: Elaine Power, power@queensu.ca

FROM THE NEWSLETTER TEAM

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue of the newsletter. Thank you to Jenelle Regnier-Davies, Patricia Ungung, Jade Da Costa, Alexa Ferdinands and Tiloux Soundja for your efforts in publishing the Fall 2025 Newsletter.

CONNECT WITH US!

