

## LU students get hands-on experience

Trip to Jackfish Bay opens their eyes to climate, environmental change impact

**BY JULIO HELENO GOMES** FOR LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

When Chris Armiento signed up for a first-hand look at the impacts of climate and environmental change, he didn't know how profound the experience would be. It was during a canoe trip near Terrace Bay that reality literally hit him in the face.

'When you are there you could clearly smell it. When you had your paddle in the water we could barely see the paddle," he recalls of the polluted waters around Jack fish Bay.

"Seeing that was really different from the numbers on climate change you see in the news or read in scientific reports," adds the fourth-year Lakehead University biology student.

"It's different being there and actually seeing the impact that we're having on the environment. That was eye-opening for me."

Armiento was among a group of 10 young adults taking part in a Climate Action Field School in Thunder Bay.

Hosted by the Lake Superior Living Labs Network (LSLLN), the week-long program was held at four distinct locations or hubs across the watershed and consisted of in-person and virtual workshops, site visits and other activi-

"Our intention was to help foster this next generation of climate leaders and climate champions in Thunder Bay and the Lake Superior watershed," says Lindsay Galway, an associate professor in health sciences and Canada Research Chair in social-ecological health.

"This generation of young adults is probably the most important and influential generation when it comes to the climate crisis and climate action, given that it's irrefutable that we have less than a decade to really make a difference. These young adults — who will be our next set of employers, our next set of decision-makers — are really important."

With grants from Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, researchers at Lakehead, as well as partners in Sault Ste Marie, Minnesota and Michigan, launched this initiative to inspire youth and raise awareness of climate change.



PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

A group of 10 young people and Lakehead University researchers took a canoe trip as part of the Climate Action Field School. The Aug. 21 to 27 trip brought them to an "area of concern" at Lake Superior's Jackfish Bay, east of Terrace Bay.

forward.

## RESEARCH IN ACTION

Highlights included learning from Indigenous Knowledge Keepers (such as Marcel Bananish, Eco-Superior's climate health & land relations program co-ordinator),

exploring community agriculture with Roots to Harvest, and a voyageur canoe excursion to an "area of concern."

Galway says experiential learning was influential in her academic

**Chris Armiento** 

training, so she and colleague Charles Levkoe jumped at the opportunity when funding became available.

"It really is unique, this inten-

sive, place-based, experiential focus," says Galway, whose research focuses on planetary health and

climate action. "Honestly, it turned out to be more than we had imagined, more transformative and meaningful than we could've hoped for — for the participants, the academics

and community partners." The program showed partici-

pants that climate action involves different and diverse opportunities, plains Rachel Portinga, PhD student and Lake Superior Living Labs Network co-ordinator

Lindsay Galway worked

with Galway in staging the event. 'Climate action can feel like an overwhelming amount of work,"

'But each person starts some-

where and builds up those other capacities. When we do this work in a community it is easier to move

The work of the Climate Change Field School didn't end in August. Organizers and participants will share their learnings, host additional events, continue cultivating relationships to enhance long-term impact and devel-

op future climate change action across Lake Superior. "Relation-

ships are important for climate action. Galway says.

"Climate change is the chalgrand

lenge of our Rachel Portinga times. It cross-

es boundaries, sectors, scholarly disciplines. We can't address or develop and implement appropriate and meaningful climate action in silos. It has to be done in relationships, and continuing to cultivate those relationships is absolutely

"Moreover, by cultivating these relationships it helps to inspire a sense of possibility and empower young adults."

It has made a difference for

Armiento. When he applied for the program, he viewed it as a chance to get a different perspective on climate change. In meeting community members and other like-minded people, he's now more inspired to seek change.

"I feel I was more connected in that fight than I did in attending protests," he says, noting he's joined the university student union as its sustainability co-ordi-

"Going forward, I feel like I'll use this experience to hopefully make a difference, at least in students' lives and around the city."

Research In Action highlights the work of Lakehead University in various fields of research.



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