



In Memoriam

Michael J Teschuk, PhD (1964 – 2019)

Drs. Lesley Graff, University of Manitoba; Jane Bow, University of Manitoba; Kerri Ritchie, The Ottawa Hospital; Susan Jerrott, IWK Health Centre; and Arlene Young, University of Guelph

Dr. Mike Teschuk died peacefully at home with his family on November 14, 2019, following a courageous battle with cancer. He was the longtime Residency Training Director and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Clinical Health Psychology, Max Rady College of Medicine, University of Manitoba; he was also on medical staff as a child psychologist at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg. He obtained his Bachelor degree at the University of British Columbia, and his doctorate at the University of Waterloo. He was hired directly from his residency at the University of Manitoba, starting on faculty with the department in 1995. Mike's passion for teaching, his genuine curiosity and keen intellect, his humour and compassion were apparent to all who had the opportunity to work with him, patients and colleagues alike. On November 22, the day of his memorial service, the University of Manitoba lowered their flag in his honour.

Mike's leadership and skill in teaching were evident early in his career. He was proactive in engaging faculty in a broader range of teaching activities, facilitating expansion of the department's role in undergraduate medical teaching. He was regarded as an engaging lecturer and a thought-provoking tutorial leader, nominated multiple years by the Manitoba Medical Students Association for their Teaching Excellence Award. Mike's commitment to high standards of professional training earned him the department's Robert McIlwraith Award for Excellence in Clinical Training in 2018, through a unanimous nomination by the residency class. In their nomination letter, the residents identified "commitment to mentoring, teaching, and supervising ... went far above and beyond what was required of a supervisor... in terms of time, presence, and dedication to student learning".

He was also a talented clinician. He had a playfulness and creativity with young children that helped them engage in the hard work of therapy. His warmth and clinical skills sensitively disarmed the most frightened and reluctant teens so they could meaningfully connect. His deep clinical knowledge had trainees and interdisciplinary colleagues frequently seeking his counsel.

Mike served as the Residency Program Director for the University of Manitoba's training program for over a decade, completing his final term in June 2019. He led the program through two successful national accreditations, with exemplary results. He significantly expanded diversity training experiences for the residents; he championed training in emerging areas of care and significant unmet need such as indigenous health and primary care; he enhanced residents' involvement as undergraduate medical student instructors, and in inter-professional training. He elevated the profile of the rural training stream nationally to attract highly competitive candidates.

His genuine enthusiasm for professional and personal fulfillment through a career with Clinical Health Psychology was instrumental in recruitment of beginning career colleagues. In 2015, Mike was invited by the Associate Dean, Postgraduate Medical Education, to serve on the senior Policy Committee, an indication of the respect of his physician colleagues. In 2019, he was awarded the Canadian Association of Medical Education Certificate of Merit, one of only two recipients from the University of Manitoba's College of Medicine.

Widely acknowledged in the professional psychology community as a national leader in post-graduate training, Mike served on the Executive of the Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs (CCPPP; 2011-2017), and was on the steering committee for CPA's 2019 national summit on professional training. He also served on a national residency supply and demand task force (CPA; completed 2017). He was frequently called upon to advise other residency programs across Canada, particularly those undergoing changes or challenges. He was a gifted mentor, especially valued for his wisdom, pragmatism, and humour. Mike was the epitome of mindfulness well before it was a recognized approach; he listened to everyone with genuine interest and embraced the moment. He was also a lot of fun to be with - colleagues consistently identified that working with him in any capacity was a pleasure. In 2017, he was recognized for his mentoring contributions through the CCPPP Executive Special Award.

For Mike, family was first. His dearest friend was also his partner in life: Dr. Patti Fergusson, a psychologist who is also on faculty and medical staff with Clinical Health Psychology. He was immensely proud of their children, and friends and colleagues came to share his joy in their achievements: Cameron, the scholar who shared Mike's commitment to community; Erin, the Olympic athlete and a people person like her dad; and their youngest, James, who is following in his parents' footsteps in the helping professions.

Mike's colleagues locally and across Canada have reached out in their shared sorrow for the loss of an exceptional man whose personal qualities were so seamlessly interwoven with his professional contributions. His greatest professional legacy will be his vision and dedication to the training of the next generation of psychologists. He has launched the careers of close to 100 professional psychologists now working all over the country, who will remember him as a mentor with boundless confidence in them, and endless willingness to talk with them about anything and everything.

Mike's amazing enthusiasm, positive outlook on life, and unique combination of exemplary leadership, energy, and knowledge on one hand and warmth, humanity, and generosity on the other made him a treasured friend and colleague. The profession has lost an exceptional colleague, who enriched the lives of those around him, and whose passing leaves a space in the hearts of so many that will be difficult to fill.