

TONY LINNER

2025 ARBOS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION



Tony Linner (BA 1970, B.Ed. 1972, PGD Ed Psych 1982) began his teaching career in the fall of 1972 with a contract at Riverside Collegiate in the Prince Albert Public School Division. Two years later he moved to Saskatoon Public Schools, teaching at Nutana and

Mount Royal collegiates and as a guidance counsellor at Riverview Collegiate. In 1985, he became principal of Macklin School, a kindergarten to Grade 12 school located in the Kerrobert School Division.

Tony joined the STF's senior administrative staff in August 1987. He identifies coordinating summer short courses and teacher exchange programs, pre-retirement seminar presentations, supporting the Income Continuance Plan and Counselling Services, and working with local associations on local implementation and negotiation committee negotiations as highlights, along with the opportunity to work closely with the STF support staff. Tony retired in 2002 after 15 years of service to the Federation.

He had served as a sessional lecturer in Educational Psychology and following retirement Tony continued to share knowledge gained as a teacher, counsellor and administrator in several ways: as a lecturer in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, a College of Education admissions interviewer, an instructor at Prairie West Regional Community College, and as an educational consultant with the Saskatchewan Office of the Treaty Commissioner.

Beyond education, Tony held leadership roles with several community and business organizations. He was on the board of TCU Financial Group for 18 years and was a public representative on the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses board of directors, receiving an Honorary Member Award in 2013. He was a board member of Nutana Curling Club and served as president in 2021-22.

A CONVERSATION WITH TONY LINNER

What inspired you to pursue a career in education?

I was inspired by my parents and particularly my father, who did everything he could to encourage me to get as much education as possible, so I had options in career choice and job satisfaction. John Duerkop, my internship supervisor at Evan Hardy Collegiate, saw in me what I did not see in myself: an ability to inspire young people to achieve beyond their expectations.

What did you love most about being a teacher?

I loved the challenge of each new teaching year and each new semester. I have many occasions even today to meet former students and smile in knowing how well they have done in so many varied careers. Teaching is a lifelong endeavour, and I have been fortunate to be in situations where I have been able to continue learning and challenging myself as a teacher, guidance counsellor, administrator and person.

What did you find rewarding about your work?

The most rewarding aspect of teaching has always been in the personal, social and intellectual growth of the young persons I have taught and counselled at the high school, community college and university levels.

This extended further to teachers in my work with the STF where I had the honour to serve our profession and support teachers at the provincial, national and international levels. I strongly believed in teachers and their right to be supported in their profession. There are many critics who often have loud voices; I always thought my primary job at the STF was to provide support to the teacher when those voices became too loud or discouraging. I saw teachers move from despair and fear to pride and courage when they knew we would never back down in our support for them. As a teacher, it is important to know that you never stand alone.

What challenges did you face during the course of your career?

The greatest challenge was changing roles, but those challenges also resulted in the greatest growth. For example, moving from Saskatoon to Macklin and then from Macklin to the STF senior administrative staff brought on whole new responsibilities and tensions, which honed new skills as I moved from working with young people to working with adults.

What was a defining moment of your career?

The biggest career-defining moment was moving to Macklin as principal of a kindergarten to Grade 12 school. It took every skill I had ever learned in working with people to ensure I kept in mind that my primary role was to be supportive of the good things teachers were doing in their classrooms to ensure positive student learning outcomes. Being a principal in a K-12 school after years of being a high school teacher and guidance counsellor is quite a professional change. Not to mention moving with a family from a tenured position in Saskatoon and the seemingly insecure notion of non-tenured positions after that.

What career accomplishments are you most proud of?

Any accomplishments I have are a product of the wonderful people I have worked with over the years such as Bill Watson at Riverside, Harvey Morissette in Macklin and Derwyn Crozier-Smith at the STF. These educators were all encouraging and supportive in different times and in diverse ways and exemplified my belief that all teaching is about giving and growing with your students and colleagues. I guess the greatest accomplishment I have is in our three children, their partners and our grandchildren as we encourage them to continue learning and moving forward in their lives and careers.

What advice would you give a new teacher?

If I could give a new teacher advice it would be to simply remind them never to give up on anyone; a student or a colleague or yourself. We all grow in different ways and at different times. Be patient. Listen and observe. I saw so many students and teachers grow and perform exceptionally well when provided encouragement and support, and I saw virtually no one grow under the threat of criticism and discouragement. Teaching is hard work. Get to know your strengths and weaknesses and never pass up an opportunity to learn a new skill or strategy to keep in your toolbox of professional expertise.

Who are the people who helped shape your life and leadership approach?

Without a doubt, the person who helped shaped my life and leadership approach has been my partner for the past 50 years, my wife, Donna. Donna is a gifted professional educator and was always there to offer me support, encouragement and constructive criticism as we moved from one position to another in our educational journey.

What is one lesson that being a teacher taught you?

Teaching provides many valuable lessons, not the least of which are humility and personal and professional honesty. Also, I became a lifelong learner and seized the opportunity to develop new skills and strategies to be a strong professional and person. I learned to share what I had with others, and I became a strong believer in summer short courses and professional development programs to always keep on learning. I did not set out to become an administrator or a guidance counsellor or a sessional lecturer, but the learning opportunities I took and challenges I encountered helped me to succeed at each level. I guess it pays to have an inquisitive mind!