



Kelly Gallagher-Mackay, Assistant Professor
Faculty of Liberal Arts
519.756.8228 x5851 or kgallaghermackay@wlu.ca

Beth Gurney, Associate Director
Communications & Public Affairs, Laurier Brantford
519-756-8228 ext. 5753 or bgurney@wlu.ca

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Donner Prize shortlists Canadian public education policy book by Laurier professor Kelly Gallagher-Mackay

BRANTFORD – Wilfrid Laurier University faculty member **Kelly Gallagher-Mackay**'s book on public education policy, entitled [*Pushing the Limits: How Schools Can Prepare Our Children Today for Tomorrow's Challenges*](#) (Random House Doubleday Canada), has been shortlisted for a **Donner Prize**. The Donner Prize encourages and celebrates excellence in public policy writing by Canadians, on topics of great importance to Canadians.

The book explores the many success stories of Canada's public education system, helping parents and educators understand how schools can change and adapt to support learning to be ready for an unknown future.

"When we teach young children, the best approach is to look at their strengths and see how we can develop those traits and skills, instead of focusing on weaknesses," said Gallagher-McKay. "We wanted to take the same approach for the book, looking at what we do well in Canada's public schools in order to develop and build on those concepts further."

Gallagher-Mackay and her coauthor, Principal **Nancy Steinhauer**, used storytelling to bring their research to life to create a book that is engaging to those outside the policy-making arena.

"It's really important that parents and educators have resources that are written for them, which is why I think the Donner Prize recognized our book," said Gallagher-Mackay. "It was also important for us to focus on Canadian success stories, because there is such a different social context for education than in the U.S."

Throughout the book, the authors reference examples where teachers are approaching education in a unique way to address the needs of their students and communities.

"One example is from Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, the Mi'kmaw school authority in Nova Scotia. The teachers there – mostly Indigenous – are using the strengths of their traditions and knowledge to adapt teaching techniques so that education and learning is relevant to the needs of the community," said Gallagher-Mackay. "Students in MK graduate at twice the rate as other First Nations students on reserve, so we need to look at those examples and see how policy can be adapted to better prepare our students for the future."

Gallagher-Mackay is an assistant professor in Laurier's Law and Society program. Her research focuses on issues of inequality, particularly in educational settings and involving children, youth and families as well as access to post-secondary education. Gallagher-Mackay also recently published the book [*Succeeding Together: Schools, Child Welfare and Uncertain Public Responsibility for Abused and Neglected Children*](#) (University of Toronto Press).

[Read the Donner Prize news release.](#)

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