

## *Dr. Gary Polonsky, I.C.D. – Biography, 2018*

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Dr. Gary Polonsky, a native of Thunder Bay, served students for 42 years, across five institutions in five provinces, and over half of those years as a president.

Starting in the early 1960's as a teacher of Math and Science, he eventually became Chair of Trades and Technology programs at Confederation College, where he oversaw the creation of the Skills Training Centre, which he managed until 1981.

From 1981-1984, Dr. Polonsky served as Vice-President of Lakeland College in Alberta and Saskatchewan (Lakeland is Canada's only inter-provincial college), where he was responsible for introducing university transfer programming, creating a significant campus in Lloydminster and extending Lakeland's programming into over three dozen rural communities.

In 1984, Dr. Polonsky became the first President of Red River Community College in Winnipeg, doubling its skills training centre and opening campuses in Selkirk, Winkler and Portage La Prairie. His constant encouragement for the Indigenous population to study resulted in the growth from zero to 900 Indigenous graduates per year. He also helped the Manitoba college system convert from government governance to board governance.

In 1988, Dr. Polonsky became President of Durham College, a position he held until March 31, 2006. His team's achievements included:

- tripling the enrolment;
- building the Skills Training Centre in Whitby;
- opening campuses in Uxbridge, Pickering, Port Hope, Beaverton and Port Perry;
- adding centres of excellence in Justice Studies, Integrated Manufacturing and Information Technology;
- building a Student Centre;
- building an Arena, Tennis Centre, and new Athletic Complex;
- building Campus Residences (home to 1,400 students).

In addition, and unique in North America, Dr. Polonsky was President of two businesses – Productivity Improvement Centre (PIC), and Business and Industry Development Services (BIDS) - owned by Durham College which together, exceeded 2,500 staff, \$80,000,000 of revenue annually and contributed up to \$10,000,000 annually to the College's bottom line. The primary product of PIC was Quality Assurance services, which primed his interest in TQM-related matters, resulting in Durham College becoming the first college in Canada to earn an ISO-9000 banner (1995) and in him becoming a Founder of the National Quality Institute in 1993.

In 2001, Dr. Polonsky became Founding President of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT), Ontario's newest university in over 40 years. He also remained President of Durham College, making him the only Canadian to have been President concurrently of both a college and university. Dr. Polonsky retired in 2006.

UOIT was created to emulate universities such as M.I.T. (U.S.A.), the Technion (Israel), and the India Institute of Technology (India) - broad-based but applied, research-intensive universities. Dr. Polonsky recruited an exemplary team who propelled UOIT to a remarkably fast and strong start, including being the fastest growing university in Canadian history.

Dr. Polonsky is also active in community, provincial and national affairs. In 1994-95, he served as Chair of the Committee of Presidents of Ontario's Colleges and as a Governor of the Association of the Community Colleges of Canada. His contributions to Ontario's colleges include:

- founder of OCAS (Ont. College Application Service);
- founder of CON\*NECT (College of Ontario Network for Education and Training);
- founder of the Port Hope Accord, a protocol for college and university credit transfer.

Dr. Polonsky's major volunteer forte, however, has been in his community. In Thunder Bay, he was Chair of the Board and the driving force behind building the multi-purpose Thunder Bay Community Auditorium, a 1,500-seat performance hall deemed among the best in North America.

In Durham Region, Dr. Polonsky served as Honorary Chair of the MS Walk for 20 years and currently, is:

- Member of the Windreach Foundation Board
- Honorary Chair of the Whitby Hospital Development Task Force
- Honorary Patron of the Durham Youth Symphony Orchestra.

Dr. Polonsky was named Independent Advisor to the Federal Minister of Transportation and authored a Report in 2017 on the proposed Pickering Airport and development lands.

Dr. Polonsky's awards include:

- 3 civic Leader/Businessperson of the Year Awards - Thunder Bay (2001), Oshawa (2001), Pickering (2005);
- GTA Leadership Award by the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance in (2002);
- Canadian Leader of the Year by the Canadian Institute of Management (1993);
- Honorary Member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (2005);
- Three Paul Harris Fellowship awards (from Rotary Clubs in Oshawa, Courtice and Whitby);
- The College Presidents' Network's Distinguished Service Award from the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) (2006);
- The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Minister's Lifetime Achievement Award (2007);
- Honorary Doctor of Laws, UOIT (2010)
- Fellow, Confederation College (2010)
- Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal (2002)
- Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012)
- Lakehead University Alumnus of Distinction (2014)
- E.P. Taylor/Windfields Award for Innovation (2018)

Since retiring as President of UOIT and Durham College, Dr. Polonsky has taught in UOIT's Faculty of Education and has created a private consulting company. Until recently, he was also a Director of the TBAYTEL and Board Chair of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute. He is currently Board Chair of three of Canada's national museums and overseeing the construction of \$250M of new infrastructure. Previously, he was a Director of Minacs Corporation, a publicly traded company on the TSX.

Dr. Polonsky earned his Doctorate in Education from the University of Toronto; M.A. from Gonzaga University; B.Sc. from Lakehead University; and ICD.D. from the University of Toronto. Most recently, Dr. Polonsky completed a Graduate, Harvard University Executive Education Program in Mediation.