Looking ahead to 2025

Council gives formal approval to new vision document

The document Vision 2025: From Spirit to Action received the first of three formal endorsements April 17 when University Council approved it as both a new institutional vision and a new mission statement.

President Ilene Busch-Vishniac released a first draft of the document in October of last year and has since presented it to more than 700 people for feedback. They include representatives of the university’s governing bodies, student organizations, various colleges and departments and some administrative units. Off campus, the document was discussed with alumni, government representatives and the local Chamber of Commerce executive. An open town hall was held on campus to talk about the vision, and the president received about 100 responses to it via email.

In bringing forward a motion asking for Council’s approval of Vision 2025, Fran Walley, chair of the planning and priorities committee, said she heard it described “as the foundational document of all foundational documents.” The committee discussed the vision document at a number of its meetings and requested some revisions before agreeing to recommend Council approve it, she said.

Walley acknowledged the challenge in agreeing on the document often comes down to personal language preferences of which there are as many “as there are people in this room.” She urged Council members to consider the vision on balance and as a whole.

Vision 2025: From Spirit to Action begins with a mission statement that will supersede the one approved in 1993, an overall vision statement and a list of institutional values. It goes on to describe the University of Saskatchewan’s place in the post-secondary landscape and where the institution will leave its mark. It concludes with a number of guiding principles and a summary comment about the university in 2025.

It also provides a message about what we stand for to external audiences.

Ilene Busch-Vishniac

Speaking to the motion, Busch-Vishniac said a vision document is necessary as a framework for future university plans and other foundational documents. It also “provides a message about what we stand for” to external audiences.

She described the consultation process that shaped the final document as delightful, adding she hopes all people involved feel they were heard. Among the changes made in various drafts were an expansion of the values section, the addition of guiding principles, the incorporation of language from the Learning Charter, and a re-write of the Aboriginal engagement section.

A motion to table the document to allow further study of it was defeated but the president did agree, at the request of several Council members, to remove a clause in one of the guiding principles that read, “We will ensure our employees reflect the values of the university.” That principle now reads, “We will embed sufficient professional development in our operations so that our personnel can grow their skills and expand their knowledge.”

The vision document will continue through its approval process when it goes to a vote at the University Senate meeting April 26 and at the May 27 meeting of the Board of Governors.

Publishing Poets

Bill Robertson is a published poet and the instructor of a creative writing course in the Indian Teacher Education Program. He is also the editor of a recently published anthology that features work by every single one of his students from the past eight years. Read about how the book came to be, and about the importance of creative writing in telling personal stories on Page 5.
Instruments headed up, way up

Shoulders brush the wall as visitors climb a tight spiral staircase to the top floor of the Physics Building, into a technological wizard’s lair where Adam Bourassa, Michael Bradley and their team are developing instruments to study the Earth’s upper atmosphere.

What they learn will inform broad questions on climate change to everyday applications such as more accurate weather prediction and urban smog alerts.

The two associate professors in Department of Physics and Engineering Physics have just received the green light for their two instruments to ride on a stadium-sized balloon into the stratosphere as part of a joint mission of the Canadian Space Agency and France’s Centre national d’Études Spatiales. The Agency and France’s Centre will test the instruments’ capabilities and durability.

“The environment in the stratosphere is similar to space,” Bourassa explained. It features extreme heat from sunlight, extreme cold from space and an unhealthy dose of cosmic radiation.

“There’s really no good way to simulate these conditions on a lab bench.”

The bench in the satellite assembly room hisses faintly as automatic dampers activate, designed to eliminate vibration from errant elbows and the building itself. Two instruments under construction—ALI (Aerosol Limb Imager) and OSIRIS-DM—are screwed securely to the threaded holes on its stainless-steel top.

Bradley explained that ALI employs the “acousto-optic” effect, which uses sound waves in a precision-manufactured crystal to diffract light passing through the atmosphere. Analyzing the light gives a picture of the atmosphere and tiny particles—aerosols—within it. It is a new approach to measurement.

“This will be the first space application for aerosol imaging of an acousto-optic imager that we know of,” Bradley said. “Technology wise, it’s pretty ground-breaking.”

OSIRIS-DM (Optical Spectrograph and InfraRed Imager System-Developmental Model) is designed to measure ozone, nitrogen dioxide (a component of smog), as well as particulates in the atmosphere from human activities or natural sources such as volcanoes. Bourassa said the instrument is intended to replace the current OSIRIS, which has been flying on Sweden’s Odin satellite for the past decade.

“OSIRIS is now 10-year-old technology. It’s making good measurements, but scientifically for weather and climate, the needs are for higher-resolution measurements,” he said. OSIRIS-DM is designed to deliver three to five times the resolution of its predecessor.

This summer’s mission will be a shakedown of the instruments themselves to see how they perform, but also an opportunity to gather valuable research data.

“All of these instruments are being studied by the space agency for a new satellite mission within about a three or four-year timeline,” Bourassa said. “They’re all built to measure a key unknown component of atmospheric composition and climate change.”

MICHAEL ROBIN

www.usask.ca
Exploring the psychology of safety

CHRIS PUTNAM

A joint research project between the Department of Psychology and SIAST will delve deep into the psychology of safety at Saskatchewan mines.

In March, the International Minerals Innovation Institute (IMII) announced $786,000 in funding for a project aimed at making Saskatchewan’s mining industry a world leader in safety. The project, co-led by Valery Chirkov, U of S professor of psychology, and SIAST’s nursing co-ordinator, Lyle Grant, will examine safety programs, practices, attitudes and cultures at six participating mining companies. Teams at SIAST and the U of S will divide the topic areas between them.

“Why do they drive and talk on their phones although they know it is not safe? The same psychology works in the mining industry, with a more disastrous effect when it happens.”

Over a two-year period, Chirkov, grad student Jade Anderson and their team will meet with leaders, trainers and workers at mining companies to assess the ways psychological factors affect safety outcomes. At the end of two years, the researchers will provide the participating companies with a report benchmarking each company’s results against the others and against best practices uncovered in a review of safety research literature.

The report will also detail areas warranting further study for a potential “phase two” of the project. Some of these areas may be unique to Saskatchewan industry. Chirkov gave the example of ethno-cultural factors in remote mines, a large percentage of employees are Aboriginal and international workers who may have cultural preconceptions of work and safety that differ from those of their employers.

“So in order to smoothly integrate these workers into the dangerous environment,” explained Chirkov, “we need to know with what cultural models about safety are they coming into work? Do we need to have sensitivity training or cultural training to make their understanding of safety similar to the rest of the workers?”

Chirkov, who considers himself a “handyman” at heart, the prospect of applying practical changes to industrial safety practices holds great appeal. But such a project also has a deeper pull for the scientist in him.

“It is about the theory of human behavior, the theory of human motivation,” he said. “How strongly we are unconsciously driven to our destructive behavior, even beyond safety, what it tells us about who we are as humans?”

Chirkov and Anderson are currently recruiting a team of psychology graduate and undergraduate students to carry out the work over the next two years.

How strongly we are unconsciously driven to our destructive behavior, even beyond safety?

Valery Chirkov

See Page 8

Space analysis seeks efficiencies for RenewUS

COLLEEN MACPHERSON

A detailed inventory of all the space occupied by the College of Arts and Science expected to get underway this summer is part of an effort to find efficiencies and decrease the pressure for new construction on campus.

A request for proposals has been issued to find a consultant to do a complete space needs analysis of the college, explained Rea Carlson, a planner in the Facilities Management Division (FMD). The project will detail everything from classrooms and labs to offices and storage “and how much each is used,” she said. “We’ll be looking at the needs of all the programs in the college and asking if there are efficiencies and synergies that can be created.”

The project is part of RenewUS, a university-wide effort to address a deferred maintenance backlog by focusing effort to address a deferred main- tenance backlog by focusing on the academic priorities of the institution. Carlson, who is heading the planning and design phase of RenewUS, said the College of Arts and Science is central to the process because it is the primary occupant of the four buildings—Murray, Arts, Biology and Physics—identified as priorities for RenewUS.

Once a consultant is selected, that firm will be provided with detailed information about programming, classes, enrolment projections, even technical requirements for various spaces. The end result will be an inventory report and recommendations on where spaces might be reused for more efficiency. Carlson stressed the process will be “very collaborative and consultative” with significant involvement from college officials. “We don’t want to assume anything.”

A small-scale version of the process was done last year with the Library and the Department of Art and Art History, she said. The analysis revealed a number of similarities between the needs of the two for gallery and display space, “and we were able to take them out of their silos to share space.” Carlson expects there will be similar opportunities throughout the College of Arts and Science.

“We’re really trying to eliminate the need for new building construction on campus. We know we have a space deficiency but if we can
To foster healthy children, you must first start with the community in which they live, something Sarah Oosman learned while completing her doctoral work with the people of the northern Métis village of Île-à-la-Crosse. Her efforts there centred on finding ways for Grade 3 and 4 children to adopt healthy lifestyle choices.

“Some of the work I did really pointed to the importance of the intergenerational aspects of health,” she said. “The adults put a priority on really trying to support their children to achieve optimal health for a strong future.”

Oosman joined the School of Physical Therapy as an assistant professor last September. She maintains a strong relationship with the people of Île-à-la-Crosse, although she and her colleagues are now focused on the older generation. Again, the research starts with the community.

“What do older adults feel they need to be able to age well, to age in place?” she asked. “We’re looking at the factors that they think are priorities that need to be addressed.”

Oosman grew up in Humboldt and came to the U of S for her undergraduate studies in physiology and physiotherapy. Her master’s work took her to UBC, and she completed her doctoral and postdoctoral studies at the U of S.

Her current work is focused on health promotion intervention research in partnership with communities.

“It’s not just developing and evaluating community-based interventions,” she said. “It’s understanding what is needed in order to sustain effective interventions within the context of the uniqueness of individual communities. How can we spread that in ways that are still culture based and relevant to other communities?”

Powerful cultural experience on campus

Recently I had the opportunity to attend a First Nations sweat on our campus. Although I am not Aboriginal, I have a deep-rooted belief that each of us can enrich our lives by studying, appreciating and embracing healing spiritual practices from all the world’s cultures. I was thrilled that such an event was going to occur right here on our campus, and I was honoured to be part of a sacred and beautiful ceremony. Regardless of religious background, I am sure most people will agree we need to take care of ourselves in three ways—mind, body and spirit. I believe every culture taps into the human spirit, each to a different degree and each in a different way.

So what was it like? Imagine walking into a small domed enclosure and seeing in the centre—a small pile of rocks. We enter the lodge facing forward as a gesture of respect. We circle clockwise and find a spot on the floor. Once everyone was inside the dome, we witness a fire keeper bring in approximately 10 hot rocks which had spent the last hour immersed in a wood fire. Referred to as “Grandfathers” the hot rocks used in the sweat ceremony represent our forefathers.

There is a short introductory discussion, and the door flap is closed. It’s pitch black. I can’t see anything—not even my neighbours. Only the faint red glow of the hot rocks, steam bellowing forth, and prayer begins. A gentle heat is heard on occasion, in addition to majestic and proud songs powered by the human voice. In response to those attending this day, prayers were said in three languages including English. When prayers were not in English, I say my own prayers as we were encouraged to do.

Searing hot steam dances across my neck. So hot! Can I make it? Can I hold out? Can I make it to the next break. Drinking water we are asked to pour on a little bit of suffering during the sweat ceremony, we spiritually offer prayers. More water; feels hotter yet but I manage to make it. Nothing removes boundaries here, there is no saying thank you.

For approximately 15 minutes, the door flap is opened. A strong gust of cool air pours across us; what a fantastic feeling. After a few moments ten more Grandfathers are added to the rock pile. The door is closed again. More water. It’s hotter this time. Another spiritual lead offers prayers. More water; feels hotter yet but I manage to make it to the next break. Drinking water is passed around this time. What is left of our drinking water is passed around this time. What is left of our drinking water is passed around this time. What is left of our drinking water is passed around this time. We were told that by taking a little bit of suffering during the sweat ceremony, we spiritually take on some of the burdens of those for whom we pray; in fact the whole ceremony seems to encourage us to think beyond our own immediate needs and ourselves. Thus, a sweat involvess connection to our body, our inner soul, our family, our forefathers, and ultimately to nature and the Great Spirit (or God, depending on the term with which you are most comfortable).

Personally I feel a First Nation sweat is complementary to any religious system. It is universal and all encompassing and I found there was nothing that contradicted in any way my personal religious upbringing, background or beliefs. I would never have realized this congruence however, had I not attended a sweat first-hand.

There is beauty in every spiritual and faith system, and nothing removes boundaries like direct experience with some of the world’s rich cultures. What I have seen first-hand is that anyone seeking reflection, prayer, and an acute spiritual connection transcending ourselves—will benefit from a First Nation sweat. I believe First Nations people can teach us our somewhat generic mainstream society a tremendous amount, all we have to do is open our eyes, ears and hearts.
Their names in print

ITEP student work featured in anthology

Bill Robertson remembers very clearly the thrill he felt when he saw his name in print for the first time, as a byline on a story in The Sheaf, and he has just replicated that thrill for his students in the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP).

Robertson, a published poet and author as well as the instructor of English 365: Introduction to Creative Writing, has assembled an anthology of student work entitled Where I’m From: ITEP Creative Writing 2005-2013. What is unique about the book is what it is not; it is not a “best of” that includes only the cream of the crop. Instead, Robertson selected at least one poem by every student he has taught since 2005. That’s eight years, nine classes and 126 ITEP students in all. And he did it to stop the whining, he said with a chuckle.

In early 2005, Robertson put together a modest anthology featuring 13 student writers and each year since, his students have asked when he planned to publish another. “What impressed them (the students) more than anything is that these people were published, they were in a book. I didn’t realize the impact this had on them. They started to ask, ‘When are you going to put out the next one?’ This went on every year. When? When? When?”

So in January 2013, unknownst to anyone, Robertson hauled out what he called “my bundles of love,” photocopies of all his students’ assignments and all the poems they workedshopping together in class. As he looked through the material, “I made the decision that everybody is going to be in the book, everybody gets a minimum of one poem but some writers are more gifted than others so some have two or even three.”

He did some minor editing on the poems, and shipped in one of his own. When the manuscript was almost finished, “I went to Orest (Murawsky, ITEP director) and asked if I could have some money to print this thing. He said sure, go ahead.”

By September last year, the manuscript was done “and then came the job that I just didn’t realize was going to be so big, and that was contacting all of the contributors.”

Robertson spent months tracking down for his former students, phoning schools, contacting people who might know other people. By the time the book went to print, he had been in touch with all but nine of the 126 writers and through some research, discovered he could publish without permission from those nine because he would not be gaining materially from the book. (Proceeds will be used to repay the dean of education who fronted the cost of printing.)

“One of the most wonderful things about working on this project is I talked to these people and A, they remembered who I was, B, they wanted to ask how I was doing, and C, I found out that in just about every single case, they were having very happy, productive lives.”

And they could not be happier to see their work in print. Robertson has a lot of experience teaching creative writing, both within the university and in other settings, and that experience has taught him that the appeal of his courses is the satisfaction that comes with being able to record a life or just a moment in time in a tangible way.

“In a general sense, people want an outlet for something they feel, something they’ve done. They want to take their lives and make them more meaningful. This event, this passage in my life had huge significance for me and I want to memorialize it, I want to valorize it, I want to codify it in some way. In terms of creative writing, what some people want to do is to try their hand at writing a poem, a short story, a memoir about what happened in their lives, what happened that day, why the leaf on the water looks so amazing to them and maybe ask if it’s more than just a leaf on the water. That, to me, is why people want to write something.”

In the ITEP program, Robertson said he takes a three-pronged approach to teaching creative writing. “The first is strict adherence to the fundamentals of English grammar, spelling and punctuation. Only absolute mastery of the rules will earn a student the right to break them in Robertson’s class. He also expresses in class a genuine interest in the stories his students have, and want, to tell, “and many from a First Nations background have been told their stories don’t matter.” Robertson begs to differ. His third approach is to create a safe, respectful and caring environment where the goal is to bring out the best in each others work. Everyone learns in class, he said, including the teacher.

“These folks, once they get comfortable, start bringing in stories and ways of looking at the world that are so different or refreshingly changed from what I’m used to seeing. “And they could not be happier to see their work in print.”

Robertson and the students have learned that “in a general sense, people want an outlet for something they feel, something they’ve done. They want to make them more meaningful. This event, this passage in my life had huge significance for me and I want to memorialize it, I want to valorize it, I want to codify it in some way. In terms of creative writing, what some people want to do is to try their hand at writing a poem, a short story, a memoir about what happened.”
Second term has a different meaning for re-elected USSU President Max FineDay compared to his fellow U of S students.

For FineDay, second term means lobbying university administrators for more Aboriginal student supports, working on tuition waivers for those who grew up in foster care and representing students’ voice during the TransformUS implementation process.

“I’ve been here on campus for four years, and involved with the USSU for a lot of that time,” said FineDay who received 63 per cent of the votes in the late-March election. “This past year, students came up to the executive and said ‘I feel the USSU is making a difference for the first time that I’ve been here.’ Our work needs to come back directly to students and deliver results.”

A major result last year’s executive can point to is establishing a first-term reading week. “This is a huge one, and it provides students the necessary break to focus on mental health and take care themselves,” the political science student explained.

The USSU executive also spearheaded an open-licensing program with the university and province that will make textbooks more affordable and accessible. “This year, I want to continue to work with faculty to adopt or help create open-license textbooks for students,” said FineDay.

Another project, and one that will continue to be a priority for the incoming executive, is work on TransformUS, the university’s program prioritization project. “When we were left without a seat at the TransformUS table, we took action and now the USSU is involved. This year we will be a strong voice for how to move forward with the implementation plans.”

Last year’s work, FineDay continued, has resulted in the USSU gaining a national reputation as “one of the most effective change makers in student politics. This year we are going to continue that work.”

To that end, FineDay and the other members of the USSU executive—including Desiree Steele (vice-president academic affairs), Jack Saddleback (vice-president student affairs) and Elias Nelson (vice-president operations and finance)—have highlighted a few other priorities for the upcoming year.

One of my passions is making sure post-secondary education is affordable and accessible. One voice that is missing from the university is (that) of children who grew up in foster care. So we are working on tuition waivers as a step to breakdown a barrier to bring those voices to campus.”

FineDay also wants to ensure that the Aboriginal students have the supports necessary for success at the U of S.

“For a long time there wasn’t a strong commitment from the U of S to First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, but it is now a key priority because of the increase in enrollment … But there is still a gap between the percentage of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students who return for a second year.”

The Gordon Oakes-Red Bear Student Centre is a good step, he continued, “but that project, while important, can’t blind us to the work that still needs to be done. Our campus can be and needs to be a more welcoming place for Aboriginal students.”

A key step for university administrators, FineDay explained, is to create two-way communication.

“We are going to talk about Aboriginal success, we need to talk to Aboriginal students. I see my fellow Aboriginal students becoming organized, especially within their colleges, and I want to lobby administration to utilize that group and their knowledge to inform the institution.”

FineDay pointed to other examples to show Aboriginal students the university supports them, including “renaming buildings or streets in Cree and embedding Aboriginal language into the curriculum. We need to hire more Aboriginal faculty and senior administrators, too.”

A lot of Aboriginal students, he continued, arrive on campus from communities—whether in northern Saskatchewan or downtown Saskatoon—that are not often familiar with academia and the university.

“There is a still a cultural difference that I think the university and Saskatchewan are just beginning to understand. Recognizing that Aboriginal communities are different and reflecting that at the U of S is important because Aboriginal people are the fastest growing demographic in the province. We’ve been living together on this land for hundreds of years, but we haven’t been learning together.”

FineDay added that only good could come from learning together. “A biology student learning about traditional Aboriginal ecological knowledge or a political science student learning about treaty will benefit everyone, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.”
Nursing students do pediatric practicum in Northern schools

Third-year nursing students in La Ronge and Île-à-la-Crosse recently completed the first-ever pediatric clinical rotation to take place in northern schools.

In late March and early April, students were placed in two schools in each community as part of the Caring for Kids Where They Live practicum, an extension of a similar program undertaken by nursing faculty in Saskatoon. Using remote presence technology, the students were given interprofessional pediatric learning experiences in northern communities that included health education, physical activities, wellness assessments and health screening, referrals to other health-care professionals, and oral health screening and treatment.

The technology connected students with faculty members from both the College of Nursing and the College of Dentistry. The program received the Provost’s Project Grant for Innovative Practice in Collaborative Teaching and Learning in 2013. “By using this technology from right here in Saskatoon, we were able to support the students’ skill acquisition and watch them develop their knowledge, while conducting assessments and providing health education to the students in the schools in La Ronge and Île-à-la-Crosse,” explained Jill Bally from the College of Nursing.

By the end of the practicum, the students had organized blood pressure clinics, planned and carried out a gym blast, air band competition and penny carnival, and had provided education about allergies, oral health care, dog safety, childhood depression and mental health, self esteem, self care, and puberty and transition.

“The schools have been extremely welcoming, accommodating and helpful during this practicum,” said Bally. “They have greatly appreciated the nursing students’ expertise and support, and have consistently asked for more time together. To say the least, the schools have been amazing to work with and we can’t wait to go back again.”

PAWS-ITIVE EXPERIENCE

Jennifer Pfiefer and her dog Gracie were among the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog program volunteers who visited campus to help the U of S community, especially students, de-stress in time for final exams. Canine cuddles, free massages, snacks and refreshments were available in Convocation Hall April 10 and 11.

2013-2014 Spinks Lecturer

Dr. Samuel I. Stupp

Board of Trustees Professor of Materials Science, Chemistry, Medicine and Biomedical Engineering; Director, Institute for BioNanotechnology in Medicine; Director, Louis A. Simpson and Kimberly K. Querrey Center for Regenerative Nanomedicine Northwestern University

General Lecture: Monday, May 12, 2014
“Supramolecular Self-Assembly of Materials”
3:45 p.m., 18 Edwards School of Business

Specialist Lecture: Tuesday, May 13, 2014
“Managing Cells Biomimetic Nanostructures”
3:45 p.m., 18 Edwards School of Business

Professor Samuel Stupp obtained his B.S. in chemistry at the University of California at Los Angeles and his Ph.D. in materials science from Northwestern University. He spent 18 years at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where he was the Swanlund Professor of Materials Science, Chemistry, and Bioengineering. In 1999, he joined the faculty at Northwestern as Board of Trustees Professor of Materials Science, Chemistry, and Medicine, and later was appointed Director of Northwestern’s Institute for BioNanotechnology in Medicine.

Professor Stupp is a member of the National Academy of Engineering, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Spanish Royal Academy. He is also a fellow of the American Physical Society, the Materials Research Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the World Technology Network, and the World Biomaterials Congress. His awards include the Department of Energy Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Materials Chemistry, Humboldt Senior Award, the Materials Research Society Medal Award, the American Chemical Society Award in Polymer Chemistry, the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Award in Hong Kong, and the American Chemical Society- Ronald Breslow Award for Achievement in Biomimetic Chemistry. He has held the appointment of Joliot Curie Professor at Ecole Supérieure de Physique et de Chimie en Paris, Merck-Karl Pfister Visiting Professor in Organic Chemistry at MIT, Visiting Professor at the Institut de Science et d’Ingenierie Supramoléculaires in Strasbourg, and is currently Distinguished Professor of Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands and of Biochemistry at the University of Hong Kong. He also received honorary doctorates from Eindhoven University for revolutionary research in complex molecular systems, from the National University of Costa Rica and from the Medical School at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Most recently Prof Stupp received the International Award from The Society of Polymer Science in Japan. His research is focused on self-assembly and supramolecular materials for regenerative medicine and energy.
MNGD grad thinking long term

By the following fall however, Sierzycki knew it was that time to embark on graduate studies. For new buildings. It's a much smarter way to go.

Recapitulation some spaces and get better efficiency out of them, we'll decrease the overall space deficiency and decrease the need for new buildings. It's a much smarter way to go.

The need to hire an outside consultant for the analysis relates to the scope of the project, the skill required and the time involved, resources that are not available in house, she said. The estimated cost is $210,000-$250,000, which will be paid from the RenewUS planning and design fund.

Carlson said the report and recommendations are expected to be mid August. Its completion will be followed by consultations with the college and the RenewUS committee, and it will become part of an overall campus space plan report.
The state of food in the North
Panel report reveals serious food security issues

The food situation in Northern Canada is bad and only getting worse.

David Natcher, as part of an expert panel appointed by the Council of Canadian Academies and commissioned through Health Canada, explored the issues of food security, and insecurity, in the North in a report entitled Aboriginal Food Security in Northern Canada: An Assessment of the State of Knowledge.

Natcher said the panel’s report reveals a dire situation.

“People in the South should be shocked and embarrassed by the food conditions in the North,” said Natcher, an anthropologist and professor in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources, who was recently appointed research chair in the social dimensions of food security in the Global Institute for Food Security at the U of S.

“We knew that the situation was bad, but even we were surprised to the extent, that, for example, 90 per cent of preschoolers are food insecure or go hungry.”

In 2011, about 12 per cent of Canadian households, or one in eight, experienced food insecurity, which is defined as a lack of access to safe food in sufficient quantity and quality that meets dietary requirements, Natcher explained. “Aboriginal households off-reserve in Canada are twice as likely to be food insecure as other Canadian households.”

The issue, he explained, is even more pronounced in Nunavut. A survey—the 2007–2008 International Polar Year Inuit Health Survey—revealed that the people of Nunavut had the highest rate of food insecurity, at 68 per cent, of any Indigenous population in a developed country.

“This has all sorts of implications such as malnourishment, obesity, diseases like diabetes and heart disease. There is even a link between food insecurity and mental health. The reasons for food insecurity are always varied and complex and that’s even more so the case in the North.”

One factor is the disparity between northern food prices and household incomes. Natcher pointed to $19,760 as the annual average price of groceries in 2007/08 for a household with children in Nunavut, Nunatsiatuq and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, when considering that 49 per cent of Inuit adults earned less than $20,000 annually, the issue comes into sharp focus, he said.

The nutrition transition, which Natcher explained as moving from harvested and hunted food with high nutritional value to store-bought food with lower dietary quality, is a result, in part, of generational change. But it is also influenced by environmental changes and how those changes affect access to wild food.

“All of this is still affected by issues of colonialism, including removing children from communities, relocating communities, and the residential school systems. In these cases, many Aboriginal people have not had access to the land and resources that they consider traditional territories,” said Natcher.

The panel, which included economists, nutritionists, anthropologists and wildlife experts, was not commissioned to create a report with recommendations. Instead, it was asked to collect existing information and provide a “state-of-knowledge” report on Northern Aboriginal food security. However, Natcher is hopeful that the report, released March 27, will open much-needed dialogue between different levels of government, communities and experts to “create a comprehensive plan that integrates all of the aspects of this issue to create unique policies that can address this extraordinary challenge.

“Unlike a lot of countries in the world, Canada has the resources to fix this problem, but it will take political, public and local will to make the positive changes that are necessary,” he said, adding that the U of S, with a wide range of food-security experts in diverse disciplines, is well placed to lead the discussion.

People in the South should be shocked and embarrassed by the food conditions in the North. We knew that the situation was bad, but even we were surprised.

David Natcher

OCCPAN® NEWS » April 25, 2014
As a crane lowered the multi-tonne magnetic heart of Saskatchewan’s first cyclotron facility into its concrete vault on April 22, medical imaging and nuclear medicine researchers at the U of S are gearing up for the opportunities it will offer.

“This important milestone represents another key step along the path to provincial self-sufficiency for provision of radio pharmaceuticals for PET-CT and molecular imaging,” said Dr. Paul Babyn, head of the Department of Medical Imaging for the U of S and Saskatoon Health Region.

Saskatchewan’s first PET-CT scanner was installed at Royal University Hospital (RUH) last year, offering a valuable tool to diagnose and treat cancer, heart disease and certain brain disorders. Babyn explained that having the $25-million cyclotron facility on campus will overcome one of the disadvantages of PET-CT: the radioisotopes it needs are short lived and must be used quickly after they are manufactured. All of the more than 1,000 scans done every year at RUH are reliant on daily shipments of radioisotopes from Ontario. Cyclotrons use magnets to accelerate protons, a type of subatomic particle, to extremely high speed and bombard target materials with them. This creates radioisotopes.

“The cyclotron will allow us to produce (radioisotopes) right here in the province, hopefully more cost effectively and with more assured access,” Babyn said. “It will also allow us to build stronger molecular imaging research programs for our patients and ensure that the patients of Saskatchewan have appropriate access to this rapidly evolving technology.”

The Sylvia Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation at the U of S will operate the cyclotron and associated lab facility both to produce isotopes for clinical use as well as conduct research and training.

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President appointed to national council

President Ilene Busch-Vishniac has been appointed to the federal Science, Technology and Innovation Council (STIC), a group of individuals from the business and academic communities who provide advice to government on complex policy issues.

“I am truly honoured to be a part of this distinguished council and look forward to continuing the momentum created by the extraordinary work of those members before me,” said Busch-Vishniac in a media release about her appointment. “I will bring refreshed perspectives while contributing to the expertise, knowledge and experience on the council as a whole. Council members are selected from across the country and represent many sectors of the Canadian economy. Speaking in the release about Busch-Vishniac’s appointment, STIC Chair Howard Alper said a strong science, technology and innovation system “is critical to Canada’s economic and societal well-being. The experience and insights that Ilene brings to STIC will make a great contribution to our work.”

In addition to providing advice to government, the council also produces biennial state-of-the-nation reports on Canada’s science, technology and innovation performance and international standards of excellence. Busch-Vishniac holds a PhD in mechanical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is an accomplished acoustics researcher, holding nine patents on electromagnetic sensors, and a strong advocate for engineering education.

Monique Haakensen, an accomplished acoustics researcher, holding nine patents on electromagnetic sensors, and a strong advocate for engineering education.

Key cyclotron component delivered

As a crane lowered the multi-tonne magnetic heart of Saskatchewan’s first cyclotron facility into its concrete vault on April 22, medical imaging and nuclear medicine researchers at the U of S are gearing up for the opportunities it will offer.

“This important milestone represents another key step along the path to provincial self-sufficiency for provision of radio pharmaceuticals for PET-CT and molecular imaging,” said Dr. Paul Babyn, head of the Department of Medical Imaging for the U of S and Saskatoon Health Region.

Saskatchewan’s first PET-CT scanner was installed at Royal University Hospital (RUH) last year, offering a valuable tool to diagnose and treat cancer, heart disease and certain brain disorders. Babyn explained that having the $25-million cyclotron facility on campus will overcome one of the disadvantages of PET-CT: the radioisotopes it needs are short lived and must be used quickly after they are manufactured. All of the more than 1,000 scans done every year at RUH are reliant on daily shipments of radioisotopes from Ontario. Cyclotrons use magnets to accelerate protons, a type of subatomic particle, to extremely high speed and bombard target materials with them. This creates radioisotopes.

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Room with a View

This year’s back-page feature explores the view of campus from various office windows, and the people who enjoy them. Do you have an interesting view? Let us know at ocn@usask.ca

Light and sound

Nick Lloyd and his colleagues in the Institute of Space and Atmospheric Studies may not have the highest window on campus, but it might be one of the most interesting.

From the third floor of the Physics Building, Lloyd looks south across the Bowl out an old curved window, an original from the time of the building’s construction in 1919-1921. The light that pours in is so bright the window blind is often closed but his cacti collection on the windowsill, all grown from seed, seems to appreciate the sun.

The sun isn’t the only thing Lloyd tries to keep out. “We have to remember to close the window at night and on the weekends. If we don’t, pigeons come in and start looking to nest in our office.”

Although he’s got a birds-eye view, Lloyd, a research associate, said he hasn’t seen much of interest out the window. He does, however, hear quite a bit of what’s going on below. Bands playing during welcome week and the graduation powwow are two rather noisy events, he said, “but we have headphones to handle that.”