

## INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES

In this edition of *On Campus News*, we feature a few of the outstanding students honoured during February’s Indigenous Achievement Week student awards celebration. We also highlight Indigenous students in the College of Law, College of Engineering, and College of Education, as well as an Indigenous PhD student and a distinguished researcher in the College of Arts and Science. This edition also includes a look at the College of Law’s Nunavut Law Program preparing for its first graduation class this spring, while our cover story spotlights Elder Norman Fleury in the College of Education, a special lecturer and Michif advisor in the college’s Department of Curriculum Studies.

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*On Campus News* aims to provide a forum for the sharing of timely news, information and feature stories about people and events of interest to the USask community.

We acknowledge we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nation and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

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# Managing the ER during the pandemic

ISTOCK

AMANDA WORONIUK

During the early days of the pandemic, Saskatchewan emergency departments faced uncertainty—not knowing what to expect—but prepared to face the worse.

For emergency medicine staff across the province, initial low numbers of COVID-19 positive cases gave the teams time to prepare before Saskatchewan faced any large numbers of COVID patients.

“I think there was a fair bit of anxiety because we didn’t know what

to expect with the pandemic. I think that was quite common across the province,” said Dr. James Stempien (MD), who is the provincial head of emergency medicine in the University of Saskatchewan’s College of Medicine and the Saskatchewan Health Authority, and practices as an emergency medicine physician.

“The ERs made preparations, both physically (with renovations) as best as they could and with training for the expected COVID scenarios.

We didn’t have high numbers initially and had time to get ready.”

Stempien oversees the emergency department leads across the province. Since the pandemic began, all Saskatchewan emergency rooms in the province have been affected, he said. Additional training and protocols were put in place early to help prepare health-care staff.

“You come into the emergency department now, everyone is wearing a mask, face-shield, and

all the protective equipment. Everyone is careful, washing their hands many, many times a day,” said Stempien. “In terms of operations, we did a lot of training early on how to don personal protective equipment (PPE). All those things had to be learned again by health-care professionals who maybe needed a reminder.”

He noted most health-care worker exposures to COVID occur because of poor doffing (removing) of PPE.

“A lot of simulation was done. We went over the proper way of dealing with a COVID-positive patient and the proper way of intubating (inserting a breathing tube in their trachea),” said Stempien. “With COVID, there is a certain way of doing this so health-care workers aren’t exposed.”

For USask medical students and residents, the onset of the pandemic meant their clinical learning was paused.

“Initially, when we were ramping up and we didn’t know what was going to happen, we

SEE PANDEMIC, PAGE 14



## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

A lot happens at the USask during the weeks when *On Campus News* isn’t published. Here are a few of the top stories from [news.usask.ca](http://news.usask.ca):

### Upcoming terms

The University of Saskatchewan (USask) will continue with a hybrid approach to program delivery for the spring and summer terms, from May to the end of August. Like the previous fall and current winter terms, the hybrid model will combine primarily remote online learning, with limited clinical, laboratory, field-based, and other in-person instruction where required to meet specific teaching goals, and where circumstances permit. The decision was made in consultation with public health officials and key stakeholders, and aligns with other post-secondary partners. A decision on program delivery for the fall term is anticipated in May.

### Elder appointed

Elder Louise Bernice Halfe – Sky Dancer, a highly renowned USask advisor, mentor, writer and honorary degree recipient, has been appointed as Canada’s next Parliamentary Poet Laureate. Born on the Saddle Lake Reserve in Two Hills, Alta., Halfe is the ninth poet to hold the position and the first from an Indigenous community. “*kinanâskomitinâwâw kahkiyaw, âsay mîna kiyânaw ê-nîkânôhtêyahk ôta kîkinaw askiy.* I am deeply honoured and humbled to serve the people from coast to coast,” said Halfe, appointed for a two-year term. She has served as an Elder for the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre since 2016.

### VIDO vaccine trials

The first volunteers have been selected for a vaccine trial of COVAC-2, a COVID-19 vaccine developed by the Vaccine and infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) at the University of Saskatchewan. “We are excited to start clinical trials. Our team has worked hard to advance the development of this vaccine to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic,” said VIDO Director Dr. Volker Gerdts (DVM). The trial is a combined Phase 1/Phase 2 study. Phase 1 will vaccinate 108 healthy volunteers in a placebo-controlled study at the Canadian Center for Vaccinology in Halifax. Each volunteer receives two doses 28 days apart.

### Research Junction

Four new projects to benefit Saskatoon residents are advancing through Research Junction, a partnership between USask and the City of Saskatoon. Sociology professor Dr. John Hansen (PhD) and Edwards professor emeritus Dr. Isobel Findlay (PhD) will study public safety in downtown Saskatoon, while geological sciences professor Dr. Sam Butler (PhD) investigates slope failures along the east riverbank. Dr. Haizhen Mou (PhD) and lecturer Dr. Yang Yang (PhD) of JSGS will examine strategic allocation of business tax incentives, while engineering professor Dr. Xiaodong Liang (PhD) will research renewable energy with microgrids.

FOR MORE UP-TO-THE-MINUTE NEWS, VISIT: [news.usask.ca](http://news.usask.ca) @usask



# Post-Pandemic Shift Project: Focused on the future

 JAMES SHEWAGA

What will the post-pandemic world look like for the University of Saskatchewan (USask)?

One year into the global health crisis, USask's new Post-Pandemic Shift Project (PPSP) is looking for answers.

"We are at a point of tectonic shift in the world today, a moment in time when everything after will be different than everything before," said USask Vice-President, University Relations, Debra Pozega Osburn, tasked with leading the university's extensive external consultations to help set the stage for post-pandemic changes on campus.

"We are all having different experiences. The way we do things, the way we think about things—our lives are changing, and we need to learn about that as a university to help inform our decisions in the weeks and months and years ahead. We want to learn how people's expectations have changed. It is really a path to learning, and the

more we learn, the better decisions we can make to determine how we can be the best university we can be as we emerge into the post-pandemic world."

Pozega Osburn leads one of two teams working to engage in important conversations about the post-pandemic future. Her team has connected with USask alumni and Senate members, leaders in public education, business and government, as well as Indigenous and other community leaders and stakeholders in order to paint a picture of how day-to-day life has changed at work and at home during the pandemic, and what challenges and opportunities lie ahead.

"Global events like this open a portal to the future," she said. "That portal is open and you have to go through it, you can't just stay on this side of it because the future is on the other side, and we all need to move towards whatever that future is. This post-pandemic shift project

allows us to influence what is on the other side. I am really impressed with the university's commitment to changing in the way that it needs to change, in order to be the best university it can be for the communities we serve, as we emerge from the pandemic."

Another project team, a designated PPSP commission, will bring the expertise and connections of university faculty, staff and students to the table to explore possibilities for USask's post-pandemic future.

Among areas the commission is exploring is the renewed impact of the university's research mission—highlighted by on-campus COVID-19 vaccine and therapeutics development garnering national headlines—and USask's dedication to developing the leaders of tomorrow. The successful shift for USask employees to working from home during the pandemic has also opened the door to potentially changing how the work week looks

for some staff members, in addition to refocusing how the university prepares the next generation of students for an ever-changing workforce.

Pozega Osburn also noted how well faculty and students adjusted to remote teaching and learning during the pandemic, for the health and safety of the campus community. That success may open the door to expanding USask's online course offerings to reach more northern and international students.

"We have learned that we can be very nimble, that we could essentially move the university into an online space in three to five days. There would have been a lot of people who would have said that was just not feasible," she said. "So we've seen that we are very focused on what our mission is. We prioritized teaching and learning, and research. And we did that while putting the health and wellness of the community first."

The data gathered by Pozega

Osburn's team will be discussed and dissected by the members of the PPSP commission. Led by co-chairs Vince Bruni-Bossio, professor in USask's Edwards School of Business, and Candace Wasacase-Lafferty, senior director of Indigenous initiatives at USask, the commission will now shift from external to internal consultations to gather input from the university's academic community of faculty, students and staff.

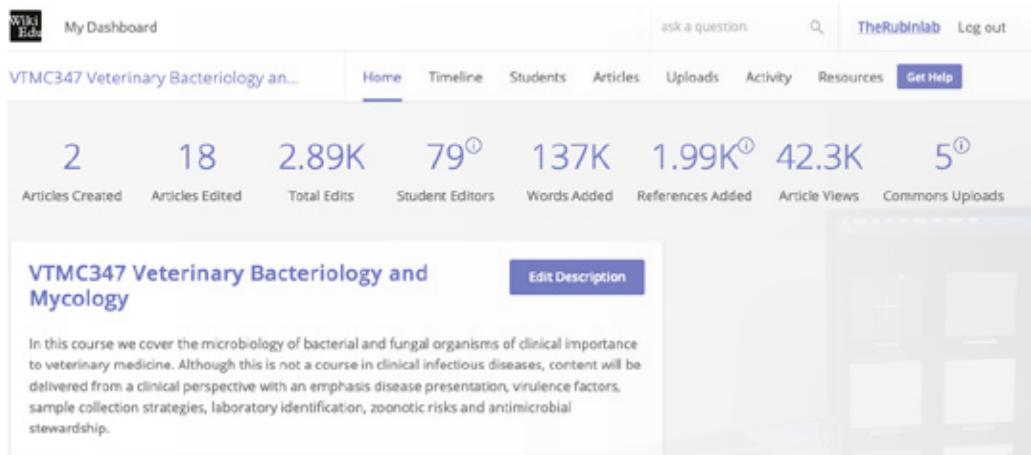
"I am very excited to be part of this important project, which seeks to align our university with the future needs of our community partners," said Bruni-Bossio. "By focusing beyond the pandemic, this project will help our university foster a positive and successful approach to our collective future."

In alignment with USask's University Plan 2025, the work of the commission is guided by the commitment to Indigenization woven throughout the strategic plan to be *The University the World Needs*.

"I am honoured to be a part of this work," said Wasacase-Lafferty. "We will strive to ground ourselves in the principles of *wahkotowin* that teaches us our responsibilities to each other, our interconnectedness, and our kinship. It is important that we learn from this experience."

The commission's timeline is to collect data through the end of April, analyze results and present a final report to President Peter Stoitcheff in June. The report will inform decisions moving forward to ensure the university emerges from the pandemic stronger and with renewed vigour and vision.

"This is a project that has been in formation since those first weeks when we realized the gravity of the situation in which we—and the world around us—found ourselves in, as the virus began to spread," said Pozega Osburn. "We have expertise within this university that is some of the best in the world, from researchers to teachers to people who are immersed in engaged communities. So we have people with lots of different ideas and viewpoints to help shape how we move forward, post-pandemic." ■



A screenshot of the Wikipedia dashboard, showcasing the impact WCVM students had on the pages.

WESTERN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE:

# Writing for Wikipedia enriches students' skills

KATIE BRICKMAN-YOUNG

SUBMITTED

As universities around the world adapted to COVID-19 restrictions for in-person learning and professors looked for ways to deliver their courses' content, creativity was key for Dr. Joe Rubin (DVM, PhD).

Rubin, an associate professor in the Western College of Veterinary Medicine's (WCVM) Department of Veterinary Microbiology at the University of Saskatchewan (USask), spent a few months this summer trying to figure out how to get across the key skills and engage students in his second-year veterinary bacteriology and mycology class.

"In some ways, the class was very similar," he said. "We still had the same basic structure of the course that I've had in the past, but the course generally has an in-person lab component. The lab was something that had to be done very differently since we weren't meeting in person."

Rubin spent many hours figuring out video editing software and creating a number of videos for the lab.

"This is such a stressful time for everyone," said Rubin. "I was going into the year trying to think of strategies for ways to structure the course differently to reduce the number of high-stakes assessments the students had."

One of his ideas was a Wikipedia assignment requiring students to write sections on Wikipedia pages of specific bacteria that are part of the college's Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) curriculum.

"The students worked in groups where they had a set of articles that I pre-selected for them," said Rubin. "I selected these specific organisms because I talk about them in class and there was a deficiency of information on the Wikipedia pages."

The learning experience

throughout the course and semester had its highs and lows. The user-experience of the Wikipedia platform had some technical frustrations, but Xiao Ma enjoyed the assignment.

"We couldn't use language that was too technical when writing the article because the audience was the general public. I think it was good practice because as veterinarians, we need to be able to communicate with our clients," said Ma, a second-year WCVM student. "With this assignment, we got to practise those skills, which was a helpful experience."

Ma and her group worked on the page for *Neorickettsia risticii*, which can cause a series equine illness called Potomac horse fever. Some other selected pages included *Staphylococcus schleiferi*, a pathogen that often affects household pets, and *Taylorella equigenitalis*, a bacterium that causes disease in horses.

Throughout the semester,

students worked independently on their sections and then worked in groups to edit the new information. Through this assignment, Rubin wanted his students to hone their research skills—to practise digging through the scientific literature and evaluating each research publication. The project also pushed the students to find high-quality evidence and to potentially compare it with conflicting pieces of information—an important skill for future practicing veterinarians to develop.

"The science communication component was absolutely critical—taking complex language and distilling it into something the general public could understand was the goal," said Rubin. "In bacteriology, it is important that students understand how the tests we do in a diagnostic lab actually work because interpreting a test and coming up with a diagnosis that fits the clinical

context of the patient is key."

The WCVM students contributed a total of 137,000 words to the new sections and since uploading their content to their Wikipedia pages in December 2020, users have viewed the student-written articles more than 42,000 times.

"Wikipedia is a top-accessed webpage and it is an important resource to the general population," said Rubin. "In middle-or-low-income countries Wikipedia may play an even more important role including the education of post-secondary students who have inadequately resourced libraries.

"I think the words our students added to these articles will go a long way to hopefully improving the scientific literacy of the community." ■

**Katie Brickman-Young**  
is a communications officer  
in WCVM at USask.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Every month in *On Campus News*, we highlight an exceptional graduate of the University of Saskatchewan (USask) in our Alumni Spotlight series. In this issue, in honour of Black History Month, we profile Dr. Ashley Tshala (BSc'16, MD'20), now serving as an obstetrics-gynaecological resident after completing her medical degree at USask.

Dr. Ashley Tshala (MD) is now working in a hospital in Montreal after graduating from the University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine in 2020.



## USask alumna advocates for representation and inclusion

JOHN GRAINGER

Dr. Ashley Tshala (MD) still feels the sharp sting of racism she felt as a youngster growing up in a predominately white Saskatoon neighbourhood.

It's a feeling she likely will never forget, and for her, those memories don't simply wash away or fade over time.

"Having grown up in Saskatchewan, I was often one of the only, if not the only, person of colour in my class," said Tshala. "So a lot of times, the stereotypes fell on me to fulfil where people saw me in a stereotypical way."

The 26-year-old cites examples where classmates would want to touch or play with her hair or expected her to play basketball or ask if she loved to eat watermelon.

"I dealt with a lot of what we would call now, microaggressions," she recalled.

"Looking back, at times I did feel like I was almost an outcast. Or certain opportunities wouldn't be afforded to me because people assumed because of the colour of my skin, I wouldn't be able to do them."

Tshala, now living and working

in a Montreal hospital as an obstetrics-gynaecological resident, recalls one incident in her childhood that particularly hurt. She was playing with a friend who invited her to her grandparents' house. When the grandfather arrived to pick the two up, plans changed instantly.

"As soon as they saw me, they were like, 'Nope.' I just remember the look on the grandfather's face. It was very much like a look of disgust. That is something that really stayed with me."

Instantly, the playdate was over and she was left wondering what had just happened. Despite these microaggressions, this isn't to suggest Tshala's formative years left an indelible scar.

"Overall, growing up in Saskatchewan, it was a pretty good life," she said.

But those memories are part of what drives Tshala now as she pursues a career in medicine. She wasn't going to let skin colour dictate otherwise.

"I think as far as I can remember I have always wanted medicine as a career choice," she said.

When Tshala arrived at USask, she recalls being just one of two persons of colour in her year and didn't think there were that many Black medical students across the country.

She was alerted about a proposed conference for Black medical students and knew she needed to participate and get involved.

"When I found out there was a lot of us and we are going to have a conference, I was blown away. I never imagined this level of representation. I thought I was the only one," she said.

Her participation in the conference filled her with encouragement and enthusiasm when she returned to USask.

Last spring, she wrote an essay published in the USask College of Medicine magazine, *Connective Issue*, calling for a Black medical students' association on campus.

"Going [to Toronto] and seeing what they have been able to affect on their own local level ... and feeling that encouragement, I feel like I actually have a voice now,"

she said. "That's why I wrote that essay because I felt so empowered in that moment, and I thought, we are going to do something. There's a new generation of young Black medical students who are here and I want to make sure that any student of colour has a voice."

The timing of Tshala's essay could not have been better since it coincided with the eruption of the Black Lives Matter movement across North America last spring.

Tshala said she has already observed a shift in how people of colour are treated. Indeed, she has witnessed a higher level of acceptance within the medical community across Canada.

"The face of medicine is changing. I see it right in front of me," she said.

Tshala is quick to point out that there is still much work to do in educating the medical community, as well as the general public, especially in the difficult COVID-19 landscape.

"If we want people to understand us and to understand the power of our word and the power of

our actions we need to go out there and be vocal, visual parts of the community."

With restrictions on gathering, Tshala and her Black colleagues haven't been able to gather, so they have relied on social media to help maintain their momentum.

While Tshala has been working hard on her education and advocacy efforts, her parents have watched her evolve and are proud of the route she has chosen.

"My mom is definitely ecstatic. She's always been super proud of me and med school is like the cherry on top," she said.

Tshala is now using those difficult childhood memories as motivation to create a positive world for herself and other Black people in the province, a place she expects to return.

"Honestly, at some point, I will probably end up back in Saskatchewan. There's a peacefulness, a calmness to Saskatchewan that you don't get out here." ♥

John Grainger is a communications officer in University Relations.



Dr. Manuela Valle-Castro (PhD) is the new director of the Division of Social Accountability in the College of Medicine.

📄 SUBMITTED

# Building a better College of Medicine

✍️ KRISTEN MCEWEN

Dr. Manuela Valle-Castro (PhD) is looking to help build a better College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) by addressing complex issues like racism and equity.

“My huge focus is helping the college to think of itself as an institution, identify its history about the systems, cultures and policies we have inherited,” she said. “We have to take a dispassionate approach and look at how we inherited systems that were absolutely designed to exclude women and people of colour, there’s no question about that.”

The college’s new director of the Division of Social Accountability (DSA) noted that instead of blaming and placing responsibility on individuals, the focus needs to shift to system accountability.

“When you look at portraits of past deans in the college, there are only one type of people in those pictures—and that wasn’t an accident,” she added. “We inherited a racist, sexist, elitist system. What do we do with this system now?”

To address these systemic issues, Valle-Castro will be using tools already available, such as anti-racism and anti-oppression teaching strategies.

“Anti-racism is a strategy that allows us to develop a systematic way of thinking about policies, working cultures, hiring practices within the college,” she said.

Valle-Castro, who joined the college in October, is well-suited to her new role. With a PhD in Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice from the University of British

Columbia (UBC), she has extensive experience in developing and delivering anti-racist and anti-oppressive materials, through her position as a co-ordinator for the Saskatoon Anti-Racism Network since 2017.

Although, her interest in these societal issues started long before she arrived in Canada to continue her education. Valle-Castro was born and grew up in Chile, with a Mestiza (Spanish-Italian and Afro-Indigenous) background. From 1973 to 1990, Chile was under the rule of an authoritarian military dictatorship.

“I grew up in a very Catholic, sexist country, in the middle of a military dictatorship,” she summarized. “Growing up as a woman in that environment, I just thought that I was weird because I was angry and couldn’t believe the things I was expected to be and do as a girl.”

“Also, in general, how those ideas about gender are impacting the distribution of power, wealth and violence in our society,” she added.

Valle-Castro’s mother, who was involved in politics and the human rights movement in Chile, was an inspiration that sparked her interest in social justice issues impacting women. Valle-Castro became a community psychologist and organized and completed research evaluations because of her investment in gender-related issues—the difference between gender equality and gender equity.

At UBC, Valle-Castro explored how systems in our society intersect to generate different gender inequities.

“It’s well-researched and documented how we still have a very homophobic, transphobic and heteronormative society,” she said.

For example, transgender youth are overrepresented in rates of suicide, homelessness, poverty and violence, she noted.

“There is a problem in the way we have set up systems to interact with people, where they’re falling through the cracks and their existence is not being accounted for.”

Systems are well-engrained in all of us, and while we can’t individually be blamed for these systems, we have to recognize our partici-

pation in the continuation of these systems, she said.

“How do we create this shift in our system to produce different outcomes?” she asked. “We need to build capacity internally and build a language to talk about creating equity. We want to create a framework, a way of looking at equity that makes sense to people.”

“We can create better institutions, more diverse institutions that better serve communities—institutions that are safer for women, safer for Indigenous students, for everybody.”

Kristen McEwen is a communications co-ordinator in the College of Medicine.



Dr. Verna St. Denis (PhD), professor in educational foundations.

📄 SUBMITTED

✍️ UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

University of Saskatchewan (USask) education expert Dr. Verna St. Denis (PhD) has been seconded to the position of special advisor to the president on anti-racism and anti-oppression.

In this role, St. Denis will lead the development and implementation of the university’s anti-racism/anti-oppression policy and strategy. Working closely with both the vice-provost Indigenous engagement, and associate vice-president of people and resources, St. Denis will consult across the organization to assist with the articulation of a broad strategic vision for anti-racism/anti-oppression for the university, and report on our strategy and progress.

She will also chair the USask anti-racism/anti-oppression committee and provide leadership to support the shaping of its work and the ongoing evolution of its mandate.

A highly accomplished scholar,

St. Denis’s extensive expertise is sought after across the province, country and internationally.

St. Denis graduated with a teaching certificate from the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) in 1980, and went on to earn her PhD from Stanford in 2002. A professor in educational foundations, she has been a faculty member of USask’s College of Education since 1992. St. Denis is a member of Beardy’s and Okemasis First Nation, and grew up as a non-status Indian and Métis in Parkland, Sask.

“Last summer, I released a statement on anti-racism that involved clear commitments to ensuring that anti-racism/anti-oppression is addressed and acted upon at USask. I am now very pleased to be welcoming Dr. St. Denis in this position, to lead this very important work at USask,” said Peter Stoicheff, USask president and vice-chancellor.

INDIGENOUS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS:

# ITEP student strives to be outstanding teacher candidate



University of Saskatchewan student Kal Ledoux with his *Kohkum* Loretta Wilson (seated), a residential school survivor.

 KIM FONTAINE

Kal Ledoux is a first-year Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) student from Muskeg Lake First Nation, dedicated to being the best student possible.

Ledoux actively participates in classes and learning communities, and motivates others to think beyond their own capacity. For his efforts, Ledoux received an award for leadership at this year's Indigenous Student Achievement Awards, held virtually on Feb. 4, 2021 to honour USask Indigenous students in recognition of their academic excellence, leadership, research endeavours, resiliency and community engagement.

The award ceremony was part of Indigenous Achievement Week (IAW), which celebrates the successes and contributions of Métis, First Nations and Inuit students, staff and faculty at USask, within the context of this year's theme: *nikānihk itohtētān*, walking together into the future. IAW also offered a series of online events and workshops that everyone was welcome to participate in.

We asked Ledoux a few questions about his USask experience:

**Q WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND THE ITEP PROGRAM?**

I chose to pursue education with the intention to become more than just a teacher. I want to be a friend and ally to both my students and colleagues. My choice was made after hearing that ITEP was more than just a program. ITEP is family and I wanted to be a part of that.

**Q HOW HAVE YOUR STUDIES DEVELOPED YOUR KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP?**

Learning about the history of Canada and the consequences that followed have motivated me to strive towards stressing the critical stage of reconciliation. With this knowledge and understanding, I've been able to develop a voice and this will allow me to be a leader.

**Q HAS SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE INSPIRED YOU TO GET TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?**

My *Kohkum* (grandmother) Loretta Wilson, who is a survivor of residential school. She inspires me every day with her strength, resiliency and wisdom.

(My girlfriend) Kelsey Reiber has been with me through some

tough times and we've overcome many obstacles together as a team. Kelsey supports me relentlessly on this academic journey, and for that I am grateful.

**Q WHY IS LEADERSHIP IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

Leadership to me is setting the tone for a safe, fun and respectful environment that leads towards trust within a relationship and is ultimately why it is so important.

**Q THIS YEAR'S INDIGENOUS ACHIEVEMENT WEEK THEME IS *nikānihk itohtētān*, WALKING TOGETHER INTO THE FUTURE. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU?**

Building a safe Canadian society for all walks of life isn't achievable alone and it will take walking together to make that change.

**Q TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF THAT YOU WOULD LIKE US TO SHARE.**

Pursuing a university education as a mature student was a scary thought in the beginning. After my first term, I realize that it's the best decision I've made in my short 24 years here on earth. ♥

Kim Fontaine is a marketing co-ordinator with Teaching, Learning and Student Experience at USask.

A photograph of Elder Norman Fleury, a man with glasses and a mustache, wearing a yellow vest with floral embroidery over a blue and white plaid shirt. He is holding a microphone and speaking to a blurred audience in a large hall.

# Championing language and identity

## Elder Norman Fleury preserving Michif language through the College of Education at USask

Elder Norman Fleury is a leader on campus in promoting, protecting and revitalizing the Michif language at the University of Saskatchewan.

DAVID STOBBE

MEAGAN HINTHER

On Elder Norman Fleury's office door in the College of Education hangs a sign with bright blue letters and the Michif word *pihtikway*, meaning "Come in, you are welcome here."

Since joining the University of Saskatchewan (USask) in 2015 as a special lecturer and Michif advisor in the college's Department of Curriculum Studies, Elder Fleury has been integral in the continued creation of a welcoming space where

Indigenous knowledge and contributions are valued.

"There is one thing I've always done while I'm there: keep my office door open. I've had so many people walk by and say 'good morning' and we end up having a visit. I have lots

of interactions with students, with staff, with faculty," said Fleury.

Though the face-to-face interactions are not happening now, he is as busy as ever—speaking with colleagues and community leaders over the phone, attending virtual

meetings, and conducting interviews with news outlets across the country. Fleury moves seamlessly between languages and is fluent in Michif, Cree, Dakota, Anishinaabemowin, French and English, and is dedicated to preserving the Michif language in spoken word and in print:

*"Norman Fleury dishinih-kaashoon aen Michif niiya ma laang Michif. giinihtaawakin pi gii oohpikin niikinaahk daan nutr pchit farm namooya wahyow ooshchi St. Lazare, Manitoba. ita kaa wiiki-*

*yaahk li Michif gii piikishkwaanaan niikinaahkinaan pi aan Michif gii ishipimaatishinaan."*

Fleury was born on a small farm near the Métis community of St. Lazare, Manitoba. Where he lived they spoke Michif and lived the Michif ways. As he grew older, he was chosen by his family to preserve the language and knowledges of his people.

"When my grandparents were getting older they said 'Norman, we're going to leave this for you, and you're going to be the person that takes it on.' That's the sanctioning, the blessing. Not everybody gets that blessing," said Fleury.

Fleury's maternal grandparents Flora (LePine) LeClerc and Jean Baptiste LeClerc recognized his gift with the Michif language, and helped foster in him a deep emotional connection to what it means to be Michif and the cultural protocols involved. He compares it to the training that happens at the university—the knowledge built and the degrees awarded.

As a child, Fleury helped his grandmother in many ways, by picking medicines, fishing, trapping, baking, and doing all of this in the Michif language. Never was a word of English spoken.

"It's like I went to school all those years and my grandparents were my professors," Fleury shared. "They recognized that I had the gift to be able to speak it and talk about it and carry it on. That's how we're chosen. You have to be able to recognize that and say 'I'm ready.'"

### PRESERVING A FAMILY ORAL LANGUAGE

In the 1980s and 1990s, Fleury embarked on a journey to preserve the Michif language, working closely with others across the continent.

"When I grew up I never thought that we could write my Michif language. We're an oral cultured people," said Fleury, noting that the language has been passed down for generations through song, dance, protocols and traditions. "As Métis and Michif people, we aren't European and we're not First Nations. We're not all trappers.

SEE FLEURY, PAGE 9

# Fleury passionate about truly unique language

FROM PAGE 8

We were buffalo hunters, but we also farmed, we also preserved, we also made gardens. We're a very special people."

Protecting and revitalizing the Michif oral language so that it may be taught and passed on has involved many dedicated people over the years, some of whom were born and raised Michif and others who were drawn to the uniqueness of the only known language that stems from two distinct family groups—predominantly French and Cree.

Fleury speaks passionately of the hard work of the pioneering linguists, community leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers who were involved, across the Prairies and the northern United States.

"About 40 years ago, Patline Laverdue and Ida Rose Allard worked with linguist John Crawford in North Dakota to create—for the first time ever—a Michif dictionary using the Turtle Mountain North Dakota writing system," he said.

Fleury explained how the pioneering work of developing the writing system happened through the efforts of many. Conferences were held and people were brought together to preserve the language.

"For example, we had a conference in Yorkton, specifically talking about heritage Michif. In attendance were Michif language speakers, Knowledge Keepers and community Elders," said Fleury. "They could speak the language, knew all the history, the stories, all these things that make up the Michif language, but because we're an oral people, most couldn't read or write it."

"The late Rita Flamand and I adapted the Turtle Mountain writing system and created a double vowel writing system suggested by linguist Peter Bakker to reflect our heritage Michif. We were then able to document their stories," Fleury added.

Over the years, he has authored and translated more than 20 resources including the comprehensive Canadian Michif Language Dictionary, language guides and numerous children's books. For him, it is much more than the science of analyzing language and developing syntax.

"It's easy to have a grammatical term for 'Hello, how are you?' But it's more than that. There's protocols in the language. It's the understanding of the spiritual connection to the language and to the land and the land-based teachings," said Fleury.

## JOINING THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Six years ago, Fleury joined the college with a focus and passion to promote, protect and revitalize the Michif language.

"We're creating a family," Fleury said. "We're working together in a good way."

Having served as special lecturer for and advisor to the College of Education, Fleury has taken part in teaching classes, offering workshops, speaking at events, engaging in partnerships, working in schools, and contributing to committees and initiatives. All of these have a role in advancing the preservation of Michif traditions, history, song, dance and stories. Most recently, Fleury has been working with others in the college on the development of the Michif Language Certificate. He was also a key contributor to the development of new Bachelor of Education streams in Cree and French, called the Language Teacher Education Program.

"Elder Fleury has been instrumental in moving not only the College of Education, but the entire USask community to a deeper understanding of Michif culture and language," said Dr. Jay Wilson



(Above) Elder Norman Fleury (left) and USask President Peter Stoicheff (second from left) help carry the Métis flag to a flag-raising ceremony on campus to celebrate the MOU signed by USask and the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan in 2019.

(EdD), head of the Department of Curriculum Studies. "He engages in his activities with unparalleled passion and dedication. He recognizes the opportunity to have honest conversations about culture and views his role as one of responsibility and leadership. I consider it a great honour to work with and learn from him."

For Fleury, the development of the Michif Language Certificate brings an important language piece to the education of Métis students in the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), a program delivered in partnership with the Gabriel Dumont Institute. In addition to language pedagogies, the courses are focused on teaching about Métis cultural protocols, food, celebrations and belief systems.

"I'm happy to be there at the College of Education," said Fleury. "For me, it's always about what can we bring to the table for our students? Those 1,500 SUNTEP



Elder Norman Fleury has been a special lecturer and Michif advisor in the Department of Curriculum Studies in USask's College of Education since 2015.

students that have graduated and couldn't take their own language? Now Michif will be offered as an accredited course."

## MÉTIS AND MICHIF PRESENCE AT USASK

More broadly, Fleury is helping further the relationship and initiatives that were outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by President Peter Stoicheff and Métis Nation-Saskatchewan President Glen McCallum in November 2019. He also sits on various university committees.

"As a distinct people, we want to make sure that the Métis and Michif presence is heard, valued and respected at the university," said Fleury. "Through the MOU, we are developing a process to accommodate Métis students at the univer-

sity, building their confidence in their heritage while motivating them to succeed in their education and professions."

Fleury speaks of the opportunity and responsibility that everyone at the university has to work towards a future that is beneficial for all and that creates a safe place to learn, share, work, celebrate and live together.

"We all have a responsibility to educate ourselves and our children to have a balance of life and world-views," said Fleury. "As long we are working towards common goals and an understanding of the values and experiences of others, we will move closer to that place of balance." ♥

Meagan Hinthier is the manager of communications and external relations in the College of Education.



Lana Walker is the new director of the University of Saskatchewan's Nunavut Law Program.

# Nunavut Law Program set for first graduates

SARAH TREFAK

This spring, more than 20 Nunavummiut will graduate with a University of Saskatchewan (USask) Juris Doctor degree.

The final year of the Nunavut Law Program (NLP) has not been without its challenges, but as students prepare to graduate in April, those involved with the program are confident the initiative can be called a huge success—not only for USask, but also for the territory of Nunavut and Canada's North.

Plans for the program began in 2016 after the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Arctic College issued a request-for-proposal to deliver a law program in the territory for Nunavut residents.

The College of Law put together a proposal under interim dean Dr. Beth Bilson (PhD) and was awarded the contract just weeks after Martin Phillipson stepped into his new role as dean in the summer of 2016. Phillipson said the NLP has naturally fit into the overall goals and direction of USask and the college.

“The program has dovetailed nicely with the long-term commitment our college—along with the Indigenous Law Centre—has to the advancement of Indigenous legal education and Indigenous law,” he said.

Lana Walker was appointed director of the program in July 2020 after former director Stephen Mansell was appointed Deputy Minister of Justice for Nunavut. Since then, Walker has been in charge of guiding the students and the program through the pandemic.

As planning for the fall 2020 term began, it was clear that sending USask professors to teach in the territory would not be a viable option. Luckily, Walker was able to line up local legal professionals to teach required courses.

In November 2020, the program faced another hurdle as the territory entered a two-week lockdown following the first confirmed case of COVID-19. Up until that point, classes had been held face-to-face.

“It was a lot of work to transi-

tion online so quickly, and almost more difficult to boomerang back to in-person so quickly,” said Walker.

Learning online posed a particular challenge, as internet in Iqaluit is expensive, limited and largely unreliable due to weather. But Walker was able to secure internet top-up packages and Wi-Fi USBs for students and the two-week remote learning period was, for the most part, successful.

According to Walker, January was a fresh start for everyone and the students are looking forward to seeing some of their favourite professors return to the classroom as they near the finish line.

“Everyone has demonstrated a lot of flexibility and adaptability,” noted Walker. “Everybody is managing to get through and stay positive.”

USask law professor Glen Luther will travel to Iqaluit in April to deliver the law and psychiatry course. He previously visited in the fall of 2019 to teach classes in evidence, as well as Indigenous people and the criminal process.

He was a little surprised to see that students in Iqaluit were not all that different from students in Saskatoon and how they all faced similar challenges in terms of workload and understanding course content.

“The students in Nunavut are a cohesive, constructive and supportive group,” he said, noting a particular instance when a student stopped the class to explain a term to a fellow classmate in Inuktitut. “I found it exceedingly charming how one student would do such a thing for another student, as well translate the conversation back to me.”

He was also surprised to learn that the Inuit students in the program did not immediately identify with the experience of Indigenous people in Saskatchewan.

“I think at the beginning the students resisted that comparison. But the more they learned about the history of the treaties, the more they could identify,” he said. “At

the same time, I very much learned to respect Inuit people as unique in their own rights and cultural practices.”

Luther believes the future of the territory is, in many ways, in the hands of these future graduates.

“Until now, if you needed a lawyer in Nunavut, you most likely needed to hire someone from Toronto or Ottawa,” explained Luther. “Now there will be lawyers living in the territory—lawyers who speak Inuktitut.”

Upon graduation, the students will become USask alumni, joining more than 160,000 around the world.

“It’s a reminder of the national reach our college has,” said Phillipson. “These students will be a wonderful addition to our alumni family and we look forward to closely following their achievements in the years to come.”

Sarah Trefiak is the communications officer in USask’s College of Law.

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—Lilla Watson



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# Indigenous law student chasing her childhood dream

✍ INALIE PORTADES

Second-year law student Jodi Hancheroff is proud to be one of this year's recipients of an Indigenous Student Achievement Award.

Hancheroff was one of the Indigenous students from across the university who were honoured for their academic achievement, leadership, research, resiliency, and community engagement during the University of Saskatchewan's (USask) 2021 Indigenous Achievement Week Awards on Feb. 4.

A Woodland Cree woman from the Lac La Ronge Indian Band in northern Saskatchewan, Hancheroff is recognized for leadership in her community and in the College of Law.

"It has not been easy manoeuvring law school during a global pandemic; I often wonder if I've

taken on too much or if I'm not putting in enough effort into my work, but this award will serve as a sign of my resiliency going forward."

In her third year of studying Indigenous studies at Northlands College, in partnership with USask, Hancheroff applied and was accepted in the Juris Doctor (JD) program at USask's College of Law. She also took the Indigenous Law Centre's summer program, which she credits for preparing her for law classes.

Upon starting her new academic journey, she quickly became passionate in taking leadership roles. Hancheroff is currently the president of the university's

Indigenous Law Students' Association, and known for case summary contributions at ProBono Students Saskatchewan in partnership with the Indigenous Law Centre at USask.

Outside of the student group, Hancheroff volunteers with Level's Indigenous Youth Outreach Program, an initiative that helps expose Indigenous youth to the justice system in a positive and culturally-empowering way. In addition, she is also a teaching assistant for the Academic Success program and for the College of Law course *Kwayeskastowin, Setting Things Right*.

As the first in her family to pursue post-secondary education, she is determined to excel both in academics and extracurricular activities. In her first year of studies, Hancheroff was awarded the Mohinder Chadha Award in

Law, a \$2000 entrance scholarship established by USask alumna Ms. Ena Chadha and her father Rajinder Chadha, in memory of Ena's mother, Mohinder.

Preserving her values and beliefs, Hancheroff is motivated to ensure that Indigenous voices are heard.

"It's important to Indigenousize spaces like the university to represent who we are as a people, because we're each so unique for what we bring to the table."

Hancheroff recalled her childhood ambitions of becoming a lawyer as she grew up. Her strong work ethic, along with her interests in law, have brought her one step

closer to achieving her dream.

"I used to struggle with my dream of becoming a lawyer because I'm coming from an Indigenous worldview, and it's really hard to integrate myself into a colonial institution."

Hancheroff's long-term goals are to contribute to the developing area of Indigenous law. After graduation, she hopes to return to her community and use this knowledge and experience to start her own practice and contribute towards legal processes involving Indigenous people. ♥

Inaliev Portades is a communications co-ordinator in University Relations.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

The Board of Governors of St. Thomas More College (STM), University of Saskatchewan, is pleased to announce the following appointments:



**DR. HELEN HORSMAN** BEd, PGD, MEd, PhD has been appointed Chair of the St. Thomas More College Board of Governors effective January 1, 2021.

Dr. Horsman's impressive academic achievements and extensive resumé include serving as an instructor at both Saskatchewan universities, as well as for ITEP, SUNTEP, NORTEP and the Indian Federated College. She was Superintendent for Moose Jaw Catholic Schools, Director of Education for both Holy Trinity School Division and Saskatoon Catholic Schools, and Assistant Deputy Minister of Learning, and served as Chair of SIAST Provincial Foundation Board. Helen was inducted into the 2010 USask Alumni Wall Of Fame.

Appointed to the STM College Board of Governors as members-at-large effective January 1, 2021.



**MELVIN GERSPACHER**, Q.C., FCPA, FCA  
Partner at Robertson, Stromberg LLP



**GORDON A. MARTELL**, PhD  
Superintendent of Learning Services with Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools



**DR. SAEED MOSHIRI**, PhD  
Economics Professor and Department head for St. Thomas More College

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SUBMITTED

USask law student Jodi Hancheroff wants to inspire incoming Indigenous students through her own academic journey.



Dr. James B. (Jim) Waldram (PhD) was bestowed the title of distinguished professor on January 1, 2021 for his award-winning research with Indigenous communities.



# Distinguished professor works with Indigenous communities

SHANNON BOKLASCHUK

On Oct. 24, 2018, in front of a crowd gathered at the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre, Dr. James B. (Jim) Waldram (PhD) read a statement on reconciliation.

The long-time University of Saskatchewan (USask) faculty member spoke on behalf of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, acknowledging past wrongs in the practice of anthropology and archaeology and affirming the department's commitment to an approach based on mutual trust and partnerships with Indigenous communities.

The creation of the statement, which was prompted by the department's 50th anniversary in 2018, "provided a great opportunity to launch the new era of our work as engaged scholars," Waldram said at the time.

When asked about the statement in a recent interview, Waldram noted that archaeology and anthropology, as a discipline, has a "special responsibility" to Indigenous peoples.

"The discipline was the first to engage with Indigenous peoples in research and advocacy, and because such initiatives are always products of the times, there is deep regret over how that was done. We have worked collaboratively with Indigenous peoples for decades, but the legacy of an extractive discipline remains," he said.

"In effect, (in recent years the department was) engaged in reconciliation-like activities anyway, and so it made sense to action our responsibility to bring the university's commitment to reconciliation down to the local level, so to speak, and show our inherent leadership. We continue to build on this initiative."

Waldram, a medical and applied anthropologist, has long worked thoughtfully and collaboratively with Indigenous communities in Canada and Belize. Highly regarded as an international authority in the study of Indigenous mental health issues and the cultural bases of treatment and healing, his work has included groundbreaking

ethnographic studies of therapeutic programs for criminal offenders, as well as of Indigenous health and mental health policies.

Waldram's passion for working with Indigenous communities dates back to his early graduate student days at the University of Manitoba in the 1970s, when he was invited to explore the impacts of hydro dams on Cree communities in northern Manitoba. After earning a master's degree, he went on to complete a PhD at the University of Connecticut before being recruited to USask's newly formed Department of Native Studies (now the Department of Indigenous Studies) in the College of Arts and Science.

"There were few jobs in my field back then," Waldram recalled. "They were looking for a specialist in Indigenous health, and there were very few around because the field itself had really not even been invented yet. I actually designed and taught the very first university-level course on Indigenous health in Canada."

Over the course of nearly

four decades at USask, Waldram has served as a faculty member in three departments—Indigenous studies, psychology, and archaeology and anthropology—earning the respect of Indigenous communities, students, researchers, and colleagues, as well as many awards and accolades, along the way. In 2013, Waldram won the university's Distinguished Researcher Award and in 2014 was named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada—one of the country's highest academic honours. In 2016, he was celebrated in Ottawa by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) as one of five national recipients of SSHRC Impact awards.

On Jan. 1, 2021, USask's Distinguished Professorship Advisory Committee bestowed Waldram with the title of distinguished professor, meant to honour and celebrate exceptional achievement in research, scholarly, or artistic work by faculty or emeriti. He described receiving the honorary title "as a wonderful affirmation that all the work and

stress was worth it" throughout his academic career.

"It is an individual honour, of course, but one that is really a product of great community collaborators who placed trust in me, and great colleagues in departments whose own efforts facilitated my work in so many ways," he said. "None of us can do this job on our own."

Over the years, Waldram has been lauded for his ethnographic research in more than two dozen Indigenous Canadian communities, prisons, and clinics, as well as for his work with Q'eqchi' peoples in Belize. His recent book, *An Imperative to Cure: Principles and Practice of Q'eqchi' Maya Medicine in Belize*, published in November 2020, documents the practices of a group of Q'eqchi' medical practitioners and outlines the structure and principles of their extensive system of medical knowledge.

"The Q'eqchi' medical practitioners with whom I work and who invited me to do the research requested that I write, in part, for the medical and government professionals, and global scholars, to share their medical knowledge," Waldram said. "Their understanding is that these professionals shape and affect health policy, and they wished to have their medical practice recognized as on par with biomedicine. I have also produced a variety of publicly accessible works, including a film, in the Q'eqchi' language for distribution in Belize."

One of the ways Waldram believes archaeologists and anthropologists can contribute to reconciliation is "through correcting the mistakes of the past, as much as possible."

"This is why my department is engaged in repatriation efforts, to return previously collected material items to communities that so wish," he said. "Also, our contemporary work with Indigenous peoples stands as a model of best practices for collaborative research and knowledge mobilization." ■

Shannon Boklaschuk is a communications officer in the College of Arts and Science.

# RHYME AND REASON:

## Indigenous Storyteller-in-Residence a first at USask

SEAN CONROY

At 13 years old, Lindsay Knight discovered the lyricism and storytelling of hip-hop music.

“I have always been a storyteller through the written word,” the University of Saskatchewan (USask) graduate student recalled. “When I discovered that you could create a poetic flow over a smooth beat, I was hooked. And I still am to this day.”

In addition to the sound and swagger of the genre, Knight identified with the sadly familiar characteristics of the racial inequalities chronicled by hip-hop’s Black and Hispanic founding storytellers.

“There are so many parallels to Indigenous experience when considering colonial violence in the forms of racism, poverty, police violence,” said Knight. “Through identifying with the similar realities of struggle

and survival, hip-hop culture was adopted by Indigenous people.”

Nine albums and several accolades later under the moniker Eekwol, Knight has harnessed her passion for connecting with audiences and sharing her personal experiences.

The latest outlet for Knight’s creativity has been her recently completed term as the University Library’s first Indigenous Storyteller-in-Residence at USask.

In December, the library announced the pilot project introducing the position. The program, the first of its kind at USask and in the province, is a natural evolution of the library’s commitment to sharing and supporting Indigenous worldviews.

“It is important that we never

lose sight that we’re on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis,” said Charlene Sorensen, acting dean of the University Library. “Our sense of place is essential to USask’s identity. Welcoming Lindsay to the library in this capacity to uplift Indigenous voices and lead important discussions with students is vital to the university’s Indigenization efforts.”

Knight is not only an artist, but also an academic. She earned a master’s degree in Indigenous

Studies at USask and is currently a PhD student in the Department of Indigenous Studies. She recently completed a Canada Council for the Arts-granted project titled, *For Women by Women*, which examines Indigenous women in hip-hop. Knight is also a recipient of the University of Saskatchewan Aboriginal Graduate Scholarship.

“Much of my work reflects my identity as a half-nehiyaw (Cree) woman born and raised in the city,” said Knight. “Yet, I’m still

**USask graduate student and artist Lindsay Knight served as the first Storyteller-in-Residence at the University Library.**

very connected to my land-based practices through my family and community of Muskoday First Nation. As with any Indigenous person today, there is no avoiding intergenerational trauma from colonial institutions like residential schools and reserve systems, so these personal struggles also come out in my work.”

One of the signature components of the Indigenous Storyteller-in-Residence pilot program is creating and promoting intercultural understanding and story-sharing between and among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Knight’s residency facilitated this conversation through virtual coffee talk events with USask students via Zoom. She also participated in conversations within the library and these have also sparked some intercultural understandings within a University Library context.

The conclusion of her six-week residency was marked by a performance during USask’s Indigenous Achievement Week in which she performed original songs, detailing the story and inspiration behind them, highlighting the theme of cultural identity.

Although her term as the Indigenous Storyteller-in-Residence has concluded, Knight is encouraged by the storytelling sessions she has led and how she hopes they will be a catalyst for advancing conversations surrounding Indigenization.

“This experience has reminded me that we are all storytellers in our own way because we all have something interesting to share,” she said. “These events have created the good vibes I was hoping for and the topic of cultural identity has been super insightful.”

**Sean Conroy is the communications officer in the University Library.**



SWEETMOON PHOTOGRAPHY

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING:

# There's more to McInnes than meets the eye

DAVID STOBBE

Métis student Dr. Adam McInnes (MD) is now a PhD student in engineering after earning his MD in medicine at USask.

DONELLA HOFFMAN

Dr. Adam McInnes (MD) isn't afraid to jump into things with both feet.

A graduate of the University of Saskatchewan (USask) College of Medicine, McInnes is also: an award-winning PhD student; a local Métis leader; a Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce board member; and president of MedHack (+), a hackathon he founded in 2016 to solve problems in health care through technology.

Recounting key moments of his journey, McInnes admits his path

has included twists and turns—and some adversity as well.

## HE TRIED TO TALK HIMSELF OUT OF GOING TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

"I always knew I wanted to be a scientist, I just couldn't figure out what type."

After high school, McInnes didn't have a lot of resources or direction so he worked. He joined the army reserves, built farm machinery, had a job in the oil patch, and worked in group homes with people with

developmental disabilities.

One day, McInnes heard Dr. Mehmet Oz on Oprah, explaining that he loves medicine because he gets to learn from his patients while making a difference in their lives.

"I thought, 'That's perfect, that's exactly what I want to do,'" McInnes said. "The next thought that entered my head was, 'Holy crap, I don't want to do that. That's too much money, too much time, too much school. I spent the next two weeks trying to talk myself out of it, but I couldn't do it.'"

McInnes started medical school at USask in 2011, at the age of 28.

## A MOUSE INSPIRED HIS CHOICE TO PURSUE TISSUE ENGINEERING

In his early teens, McInnes saw a TV feature on the Vacanti Mouse. Researchers had grown cartilage on its back in the shape of a human ear.

"Later, I thought, 'You know, that mouse is pretty cool' and I think there's a lot of potential in that field because it can revolutionize the way we treat diseases and medicine."

In 2019, as he began his PhD research, McInnes was awarded a \$150,000 Vanier Scholarship to develop a new gel and scaffold design to promote tissue growth for 3D printing of artificial organs that may one day be used for transplants. The Vanier recognizes top-tier doctoral students.

"He brings a real enthusiasm to the lab and passes it on to those around him," said Dr. Michael Moser (MD), who co-supervises McInnes's PhD research along with Dr. Daniel Chen (PhD). "Not only is he a skilled scientist, but thanks to his clinical medical training he appreciates the big picture and sees the ways his research will ultimately help patients in the future."

## HE WASN'T PLANNING TO GET INVOLVED IN MÉTIS POLITICS

Growing up on a farm near Shaunavon in southwest Saskatchewan, McInnes knew he was Métis but had no opportunities to experience Métis culture. In 2016, he

stumbled across an online post about a meeting to revive Saskatoon Métis Local 126, which supports post-secondary Métis students in Saskatoon. McInnes went to check it out and became vice-president when the original candidate didn't show. After the president moved to a new role, McInnes stepped in.

Since then, he's worked extensively with Glen McCallum, president of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, who said McInnes is a very credible role model.

"He's been a student, he knows that it can be tough, but he shows Métis students they can succeed."

## HE SPEAKS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH, LEARNING DISABILITIES AND AUTISM

Near the end of medical school, McInnes said he "crashed and burned pretty bad" and was ultimately diagnosed with bipolar disorder, which causes his moods to cycle between high and low over time.

More recently, his diagnoses of ADHD and autism were confirmed, with the latter being difficult to nail down because McInnes—who has a Mensa-level IQ—has adapted to the diagnosis and doesn't display typical autistic traits.

He is thankful for family, friends and faculty who have helped him move forward when "some of these roadblocks have hit and slowed me down."

In Moser's eyes, they've made McInnes a more resilient researcher.

"He has faced many challenges in his life and this extensive life experience arms him with the strength to navigate the many obstacles found in graduate studies and in biomedical engineering research."

McInnes urges anyone who is experiencing mental health issues to seek help.

"Once I figured out what was going on in my head, I found ways to manage it and channel it so I can create the world for myself that I want to have and help make the world a better place by me being here." ■

Donella Hoffman is the communications officer in the College of Engineering.

## Pandemic stress taking a toll on staff

FROM PAGE 2

stopped medical students from coming into the ER. That was a response by most ERs across the country," said Stempien. "Now we have medical students and residents back in the ER, supporting the services they work with. We greatly appreciate them, and we certainly do our best to make sure they stay safe. We try not to have medical students interact with patients who are potentially COVID positive."

While all members of the ER team don PPE before entering a patient's room, it's not always possible to know at time of treatment

whether that patient has COVID-19. Stempien cited instances of Saskatchewan patients who come to the ER for a minor non-COVID-related trauma, are swabbed, and hospital staff later find out the test result came back positive.

An extra emphasis on hygiene, along with the stress and fatigue of working through a pandemic, has taken a toll on front-line staff. Stempien said that some of the usual stress releasers aren't possible, including meeting up with colleagues in break rooms and sharing food. COVID-19 outbreaks have happened in other emergency departments due to exposure in break rooms and staff

have to be careful.

Still, the emergency medicine teams have been supportive of each other and pulled together in this time of crisis, said Stempien, adding that he works with a "fantastic team."

"I think through it all, emergency physicians, emergency nurses, all the health-care professionals—we are trained in the emergency department for the worst that can happen. I think everyone is responding well, going in, and doing the best work they can." ■

Amanda Woroniuk is a communications co-ordinator in USask's College of Medicine.

# The Epoch era has been epic for the Huskies

JAMES SHEWAGA

Libby Epoch has helped engineer some of the most memorable playoff performances in Huskies history. So it comes as no surprise that the talented point guard has designs on becoming a professional engineer, serving as a point person on projects when she graduates from the University of Saskatchewan (USask).

But first, there is one final year of eligibility to complete in the Epoch era, as the Huskie women's basketball team patiently waits and

prepares—in limited COVID-19 precaution training sessions—for the opportunity to defend its national championship title, post-pandemic.

“Since the basketball season got cancelled, that has been the goal, to come back and play in 2021/2022 and defend our title,” said Epoch, a 22-year-old former Canadian junior national team member from Moose Jaw. “During the start of the school year, we realized how much we lean

on teammates as our second family, and we know that we can have this year to build our rookies into great players and come back as a solid team. So we have already set our minds on next season.”

In the meantime, Epoch continues to work towards completing her Bachelor of Science in Engineering (majoring in civil engineering) and earning a Certificate in Professional Communication from the Ron and Jane Graham



Libby Epoch

School of Professional Development.

Epoch is one of a growing number of young women entering the field of engineering, balancing a challenging full-time academic load with the demands of being an elite student-athlete.

“Being a professional engineer has been a dream of mine for a long time, since high school and coming into university,” said Epoch, who began studying in the College of Arts and Science before transferring into engineering. “It’s definitely a male-dominated field, but there are a lot of women and men working to change that. I am sure that the professors in the college see a lot more women in courses than they used to.”

“For me, I just see engineering as teamwork and leadership. And if I can be a female role model to any athlete or other student who wants to go into engineering, I am happy to fill that role.”

Not only is Epoch one of the top players in the country—named to the U Sports All-Rookie Team in 2017—but also a top student, earning Academic All-Canadian honours (for an average of better than 80 per cent while completing a full course load) for four straight years.

“I’m very proud of myself and I am proud of every student-athlete who puts in the work in the classroom and in their sport,” she said. “When you have the privilege to be able to represent the school and be blessed to receive an athletic scholarship, you want to do everything you can to fulfil your career hopes one day.”

Epoch also makes a point of volunteering to support the community, serving as president of

the Huskie Athletic Council.

“We are a group of student-athletes, with representation from each of the sport teams, male and female, and do a lot of fundraisers and we work on initiatives like Huskie Home Room, going out to community schools and working with children,” said Epoch. “This year was a little different with the pandemic, but we were still able to raise just over \$2,600 in the Secret Santa program. We also did a clothing drive for underprivileged children and we collected over 400 articles of winter clothing, mitts, toques, and boots and distributed them to five different schools.”

Huskies head coach Lisa Thomaidis said she couldn’t be more proud of Epoch’s efforts on the court, in class and in the community.

“If there is one word to describe Libby, it would be that she’s a winner—in everything,” said Thomaidis. “Pursuing an engineering degree while competing as a student-athlete in any sport is an unbelievably difficult task, but to do it as a captain and point guard on a national championship team, achieving Academic All-Canadian recognition all four years, plus serving as HAC president, I don’t even know how it is humanly possible. We talk about excellence as a value on our team—choosing to be excellent in all that you do—and Libby is an outstanding example of that in real life.”

With one more year of Huskie eligibility and two years of engineering courses remaining, Epoch is focused on the future, determined to defend USask’s national championship and to begin her career as an engineer. And she could not be prouder to represent USask as a student-athlete.

“It’s been more than what I could have dreamed of,” said Epoch, who has earned a number of scholarships at USask, including the four-year Bonnie & Art Dumont Scholarship for academic achievement. “To meet amazing women and amazing coaches and make some life-long friends, win a national championship, and tack on an amazing education on top of it, has made me beyond grateful.”



University of Saskatchewan student-athlete Libby Epoch (right) of the Huskies women's basketball team is one of the top point guards in the country and a four-time U Sports Academic All-Canadian.

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## ADASKIN COLLECTION GIVES INSIGHT INTO CANADIAN COMPOSER

CHRIS PUTNAM

A collection of items in the University of Saskatchewan (USask) library deepens the university's connection to one of Canada's most respected composers.

The University Library holds extensive materials relating to the life and work of Murray Adaskin, a composer, teacher and musician who served as head of the USask Department of Music from 1952–66. Adaskin was also USask's composer-in-residence—the first appointment of its kind at a Canadian university—from 1966–73.

"I would suggest he was one of the leading composers in Canada. There's no question," said Dr. Walter Kreyszig (PhD), professor emeritus in the Department of Music.

Born in Toronto in 1906, Adaskin was a violinist with the Toronto Symphony before he began studying under influential composers in Toronto and the United States in the 1940s. He earned a name as a composer during his years in Saskatoon and continued his prolific output of music after retiring to Victoria.

In addition to his legacy as a composer, Adaskin had a large influence on music education in Saskatchewan and on the growth of the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra. He played a major role in bringing Canada's only quartet of Amati instruments to USask.

"I would say Adaskin was really a musical humanist in bridging composition, performance, teaching, education—to put it all under one roof," said Kreyszig, who is currently co-editing two upcoming volumes on Adaskin's life and music titled *The Vision of Murray Adaskin (1906–2002): His Contributions to the Musical Scene of Canada and Beyond*.

Adaskin travelled widely through the country seeking sounds and ideas that were uniquely Canadian, and wrote music that is easy for anyone to appreciate, said Kreyszig.

"He relates directly to the people. He is very concerned that there is a Canadian perspective to his music, and that it is recognized as solidly Canadian."

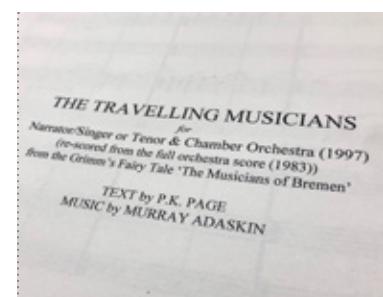
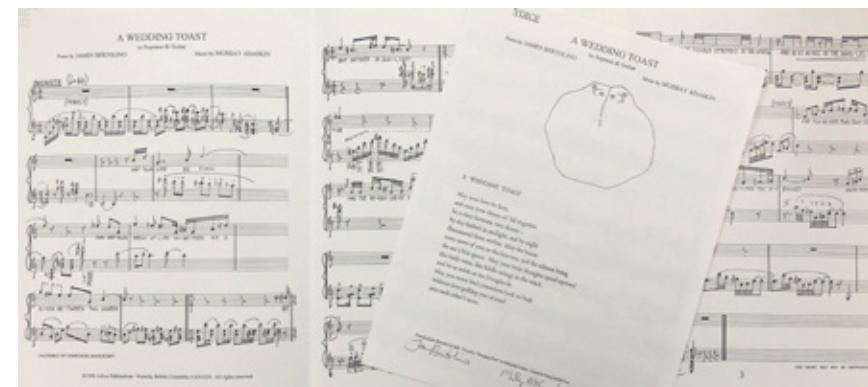
The composer was later invested into the Order of Canada and was awarded six honorary doctorates, including one from USask.

Adaskin began donating his music to USask in his later years, and his wife Dorothea completed the gift after his death in 2002. The donation included a near-complete collection of Adaskin's scores and sheet music, as well as a priceless assortment of his writings and personal effects, including his desk, music stand and metronome.

It's those personal items that make the collection in the University Archives and Special Collections truly stand out, said Carolyn Doi, music librarian in the University Library.

"When you look at those objects, you're really getting a sense of who the composer was and what was going on in their life and how that influenced their compositional process. I think it adds meaning to the music." ♥

Chris Putnam is a communications officer in the College of Arts and Science.



Compositions by Murray Adaskin in the University Library collection.

Former USask composer-in-residence Murray Adaskin composes at his piano in 1957.

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