



achimoowin – *michif*
ocimani – *lakota*
tipa chum owin – *saulteaux (telling stories)*
dene he/honi – *denesuline*
huṅkākāṅ – *dakota (telling myths or fictional stories that can be used in general for storytelling)*

âcimowin

plains cree (achimo/win) storytelling

Think Indigenous Dancers *Photo: Julie Schappert*

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY: JUNE 21ST

Mark your calendars! On this day, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across the country gather to celebrate the diversity, beauty, and resilience of Indigenous peoples and cultures around the world. This event is held annually during the summer solstice (when one of the Earth's poles has its maximum tilt toward the Sun) in Saskatchewan. Between June 20 and June 22 in our northern hemisphere. The solstice has always been a time for Indigenous peoples and communities to come together and celebrate their heritage.

In 1990, when tensions were high during the Oka Crisis and in 1995 during the

Ipperwash Crisis, there were renewed calls for a national day of recognition. The Sacred Assembly organized by Elijah Harper in 1995 encouraged the federal government to establish "National First Nation Peoples Day". They had also recommended this in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report released in 1996.

Canada created an official day of celebration for June 21 in 1996. It has become a day when Canadians join in recognizing and honouring the achievements, history and rich cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. ♥

Rock Your Roots Walk for Reconciliation:

Did you know that it is now a tradition for the University community to join in this powerful event each year on National Indigenous Peoples Day? This brings organizations together to plan the day, including numerous events as well as promotes a healthy dialogue on learning and openness.

We acknowledge that we live and work on Treaty 6 or Treaty 4 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.



Humanity, as a whole, is experiencing extraordinary events, events that will be etched in our minds for a lifetime. I'm continuously amazed by the tremendous positive or negative impact that the smallest of changes, the tiniest of disruptions (i.e., a cellular virus) can have in our individual and collective lives.

This story is scientifically identified as the 'butterfly effect'. Substantive change is not entirely determined by the scale but can be set in motion by the smallest of actions.

Change is inevitable and constant. From time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples have been adaptive and responsive to the ever-evolving environment, the lands in which we've taken the role as stewards. This responsibility continues, much like the constant nature and fluidity of change. Blackfoot Elder and philosopher, Leroy Little Bear explains:

"The idea of all things being in constant motion or flux leads to a holistic and cyclical view of the world. If everything is constantly moving and changing, then one has to look at the whole to begin to see patterns. For instance, the cosmic cycles are in constant motion, but they have regular patterns that result in recurrences such as the seasons of the year, the migration of the animals, renewal ceremonies, songs, and stories. Constant motion, as manifested in cyclical or repetitive patterns, emphasizes process..."¹

How can we be respectfully responsive and not harshly reactive in times of uncertainty? I would suggest reflecting and identifying 'patterns' that promote health, ones that help develop compassionate and caring communities. I would also suggest practicing renewal ceremonies, rituals and actions that are healing. Practices inspired by the Seven Sacred Teachings: Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility and Truth. We need these values to be evident and stronger than ever in our families and society, in general. These values know no boundaries—including the space between each one of us. The smallest of gestures, the kindest of words, can change a life for the better.

The sharing of story can also draw people closer together; drawing people to places, times and realities other than their own—forgetting, even momentarily, the challenges that lie before them. Stories can inspire, entertain, teach. Never stop sharing and seeking stories.

At this time, I'm compelled to share story through moments. This month, in April 2020, I reached the half way point of my 5-year term as USask's Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement. Because of this and because of abrupt stop we've all experienced because of COVID-19, I've been introspective and have reflected on the past 2.5 years. Time has gone by so, so fast. It's been a dynamic, creative and fluid time of flux, of growth as the OVPIE emerged as a viable and vibrant unit—evolving from one person, to now 9 purpose-driven employees (all with overflowing responsibilities), keen on enacting Indigenous and decolonization that would foster meaningful and lasting forms of reconciliation at USask. I am empowered by the anticipation and advocacy for this office, and I overflow with gratitude when I think of the opportunities and people that I've had the privilege to work with at USask.

Since the last newsletter there have been many highlights: Indigenous Achievement Week, working with Elders,

Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and Language Teachers, trips to Ottawa to advocate for Indigenous faculty, research and student support. The event that draws me back to frequent remembrance was the USask's Internal Truth and Reconciliation Forum. The planning committee did an amazing job at ensuring that the day was meaningful and inspiring, and that USask's reconciliation movement included the Truth and was mindful and respectful of the TRC roots—Indian Residential School Survivors. I learned so much from the stories shared by Lieutenant Governor Russell Mirasty, former AFN Chief Phil Fontaine, legal scholar Kathleen Mahoney, Cree scholar Willie Ermine, and our four witnesses: Marilyn Poitras, Eugene Arcand, Regan Ratt-Misponas, and Brian Kachur. I will take heed of Elder Eugene Arcand's wise advise, given at the end of the event: There's no need to outdo this year's event, just let next year's forum present itself. This is an example of fluid anticipation, of trusting that 'all that is good' will converge once again.

I've been very excited and inspired by the creative processes involved in the development of the Indigenous Strategy—which has been informed and guided by Indigenous Voices. We are now seeking final feedback from USask's Indigenous Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers and community and leadership groups. Seven themes emerged as a result of the numerous consultation events. They can be summed up as: safety, wellness, stewardship, representation, right relations, creation and renewal. The Indigenous Strategy, which has yet to be named, will be presented as a gift to the USask community by its Indigenous community symbolizing the covenantal, reconciliatory nature of the strategy. The Indigenous Strategy has me looking forward to what is possible in our future.

Gitchi-miigwetch (much thanks) for taking the time to read the stories within the OVPIE âcimowin (storytelling) newsletter. I hope that they will inspire and motivate good relations.

kikawâpamin minawa (see you again). ♥

Jacqueline Ottmann
Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement

1. Little Bear, L. (2002). Jagged worldviews colliding. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision* (pp. 78-85). Vancouver: UBC Press.



Norman Fleury was one of the participants whose insights, Indigenous knowledge and support went into the weaving of the Indigenous language into the University Plan 2025.

“Most of our Michif, the Métis people were able to speak many languages, because of where we lived, and because of our customs and our history as Métis people. People that come here to the University, some of them are still seeking or searching for who they are and still have a bit of an identity problem I think.”

The weaving of Indigenous Languages is very significant to the goals of Indigenization, decolonization and reconciliation.

Norman’s entire interview along with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Language Keepers can be viewed at: indigenous.usask.ca/our-stories/media-room.php

Indigenous Research Resources

The Canada Research Coordinating Committee (CRCC) plays an important role in reinvigorating Canada’s support for science to meet the current and future needs of the country’s scientists, scholars and students.

This committee would like to acknowledge the many First Nations, Inuit and Métis voices that helped shape Setting New Directions to Support Indigenous Research and Research Training in Canada. The plan identifies four strategic directions to guide the building of new models for supporting Indigenous research and training.

Government of Canada:

**Strengthening Indigenous research capacity
Indigenous research and research training**

INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT CONFERENCE FUND

An on-going initiative of the Indigenous Engagement Strategic Fund is a conference fund to support campus initiatives focused on Indigenous engagement.

Members of the university academic, student, and administrative community are eligible to apply for an Indigenous Engagement Conference Fund Grant.

Eligibility

Members of the university academic, student, and administrative community are eligible to apply for an Indigenous Engagement Conference Fund Grant.

This fund will support staff, faculty and student attendance at the following events:

- National Building Reconciliation Forums.
- Conferences and events related to Indigenization, decolonization and reconciliation.
- Conferences/events that build capacity to respond to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

To be considered for funding, conferences must anticipate a minimum registration of 50 and have a program covering at least one full day.

**To read more or
to apply please visit:
[Indigenous.usask.ca](https://indigenous.usask.ca)**

INSPIRING INDIGENOUS STEM STUDENTS

 **JAMES SHEWAGA**

Matt Dunn wasn't always comfortable with the idea of being a role model.

But having experienced first-hand some of the challenges Indigenous students face when it comes to studying in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields, he is passionate about having the opportunity to help open the door to opportunities at the University of Saskatchewan (USask).

"Growing up I always enjoyed the sciences and I had a goal at one time of becoming an astronaut, so I've always been a proud nerd and math and sciences and the STEM fields have always resonated with me," said Dunn, the Indigenization and Reconciliation Coordinator in USask's Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement. "Having been an undergrad student and a master's student, I was able to experience first-hand what some of the barriers for Indigenous students are in the field. So, it has been great to go on to become a staff member in positions where I can work with others to address those barriers."



Matt Dunn is opening doors for Indigenous students all across campus after graduating from USask's College of Engineering with bachelor's and master's degrees in mechanical engineering. *Photo: James Shewaga*

One of the founding members of the Saskatchewan professional chapter of the Canadian Indigenous Science and Engineering Society (.caISES), Dunn helped to bring the annual national conference—the 2020 .caISES Gathering—to campus from Feb. 28 to March 1. Close to 150 individuals from across the country took part in the annual gathering, in support of Indigenous STEM students.

“With these .caISES national gatherings, we are trying to facilitate more Indigenous STEM students, professionals and allies and bring them together so that they can see they are not alone, and they can see what the opportunities are,” he said. “It was a great opportunity for the University of Saskatchewan to showcase the students, staff and faculty that we have on campus who are doing great work in this area.”

The .caISES Gathering began on the same day as USask's 3rd Annual Building Reconciliation Internal Forum—*māmowī āsohtētān* (Let's Cross This Together)—and three weeks after Indigenous Achievement Week, a trio of events supporting Indigenous efforts underway across campus as part of University Plan 2025 to be The University the World Needs.

“The change on campus has been very noticeable,” said Dunn, who completed his bachelor's and master's in mechanical engineering at USask and earned the prestigious Indspire Award in 2003. “When I did my engineering undergraduate degree, that was 1999 to 2004, I felt like one of the only Indigenous students in the college.

“And coming back to campus in 2014, when I started working for the college, there was a noticeable difference. You could see

more Indigenous employees in more prominent positions, and the community of students and staff was more prevalent and it was a nice change.”

Dunn, who is Dene and a member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, split his time growing up in both urban (Edmonton) and rural (Watrous) settings, before coming to USask to study and compete for the Huskie Athletics track and field team.

“Being a Huskies student-athlete was great for me,” said Dunn, who went on to coach Team Saskatchewan in the 2014 North American Indigenous Games and now helps coach the Running Wild track club. “Huskie Athletics was where I met many of my life-long friends. It was where I met my now wife, Adrienne Vangool, who is a much better pole vaulter than me! We met pole vaulting together.”

“Those relationships that I developed as a Huskie athlete, surrounded by my peers and role models, were really beneficial. You have to balance being a student and an athlete and those skills helped me get my degree and I have been able to utilize them in my career as well.”

After working six years in the field and earning his professional engineer designation, Dunn returned to USask to help the next generation of Indigenous engineers before moving into his new role to support Indigenous and reconciliation initiatives across campus.

“It's nice having the opportunity for broader reach across campus,” said Dunn. “And if students can see some of the things that I've been fortunate to be able to do and if they can see themselves doing similar things, that's great.”



Photos: Photo: Julie Schappert

3RD ANNUAL INTERNAL TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION FORUM

māmowi āsohtētān “Let’s Cross This Together” (maah-ma-wih aah-soh-day-daan)

USask hosted their 3rd Annual Internal Truth and Reconciliation Forum for members of the USask community on February 28, 2020.

There are many initiatives in the area of Indigenization, decolonization and reconciliACTION at USask. The languages, concepts and spirit woven into the University of Saskatchewan Plan (2025) were shaped by our relationships with Indigenous communities. Ideas continue to be drawn from wisdom, knowledges, cultures, traditions, histories, lived experiences and stories of Indigenous peoples.

The university community focused on embracing manachitowin (respecting one another) through active communications and took an integrated approach to respectful and constructive engagement. We know that when we speak collectively, and share our independent ideas about closing the educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations (an issue that is all too real) it is significant, systemic, and historical.

Following the release of the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in June 2015, the University of Saskatchewan hosted the first National Reconciliation Forum on the Saskatoon campus and at Wanuskewin Heritage Park. This event created the opportunity for focused discussions on how the USask community could move forward on the Calls to Action and what on-going work needed to be done with universities across Canada to achieve the needed outcomes.

In 2017, the University of Saskatchewan hosted an Internal Forum that asked the university community to reflect on the work that was happening locally and nationally and to consider what was still needed to undertake Indigenization and Reconciliation on campus. A commitment came from this forum to host an Internal Forum each year.

Now in its third year, this day-long forum was held on the USask campus February 28, 2020. This event provided another opportunity to gather collaboratively and respectfully plan for the USask environment we need and want. This was an opportunity for USask’s Indigenous and non-Indigenous to be inspired and to seek



WHAT IS UNDRIP?

You may have heard the acronym before, it stands for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The Declaration is a comprehensive statement addressing the human rights of Indigenous peoples. It was drafted and formally debated for over twenty years prior to being adopted by the General Assembly on September 13, 2007.

The document emphasizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to live in dignity, to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue their self-determined development, in keeping with their own needs and aspirations. Other U.N. bodies address Indigenous rights through Conventions such as the International Labour Organization's Convention No.169 and the Convention on Biological Diversity (Article 8j).

What rights are ensured?

"The Declaration addresses both individual and collective rights, cultural rights and identity, rights to education, health, employment, language, and others. The text says Indigenous peoples have the right to fully enjoy as a collective or as individuals, all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the rest of international human rights law. Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their Indigenous origin or identity. Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By that right they can freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development. They have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their rights to participate fully, if they choose to, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the state."

February 19, 2020 Prime Minister Trudeau delivered a statement in the House of Commons that tabled the UNDRIP bill in Canada, with no new date announced. ▀

**For more information on UNDRIP
please visit: un.org**

deeper relationships, greater community awareness and mutual understanding. As a campus, we are working towards creating inclusive and welcoming culture—spaces and places—through systemic and system-based transformations through events like the Internal Truth and Reconciliation Forum.

USask's Forum host Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, Vice-Provost of Indigenous Engagement (VPIE) shared, "There was an opportunity to increase awareness around protocols for community engagement, share experiences (positive and/or negative) and contribute to individual and collective healing and learning. Discussions also took place around identifying any university policies, procedures and practices that present barriers to reconciliation and decolonization."

The format of this year's Forum was interactive and dialogue-focused with themes such as: Educational Policy and Racism; Ethical Space; Indigenous Wellness; and ReconciliACTION.

The organizing committee was very pleased to be able to highlight the following guest speakers:

- Lieutenant Governor Russell Mirasty
- Willie Ermine
- Dr. Phil Fontaine
- Dr. Kathleen Mahoney

The day was beautifully and meaningfully summarized by four witnesses: Residential School Survivor and Elder Eugene Arcand, Associate Director of the Indigenous Law Centre Marilyn Poitras, USSU President Regan Ratt-Misponas, and Creative Services Specialist Brian Kachur.

Matt Dunn, OVPIE Indigenousization and Reconciliation Coordinator and this year's Forum committee chair, shared that, "We were humbled to have had the opportunity to bring in these speakers for the forum. One of our goals was that participants become empowered and garner resources and tools to help them take action on reconciliation and Indigenousization in their own lives." ▀

**To review the forums of past or to
follow this year's activities please visit:
[Indigenous.usask.ca/about/Internal-Forum.php](https://indigenous.usask.ca/about/Internal-Forum.php)**

**For more images from this event, please visit
flickr.com/photos/usask/albums/72157713742738153**

INDIGENOUS ACHIEVEMENT WEEK





Indigenous Achievement Week (IAW) is an annual event that celebrates the successes and contributions of Métis, First Nations and Inuit students, staff, faculty and alumni within the context of this year's theme: Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Each year the theme is chosen by Indigenous students from across USask.

IAW began with a pipe ceremony and feast Monday, February 3 and finished with a round dance celebration Friday, February 7 in the Education Gymnasium. Throughout the week, there were various events hosted by USask units and colleges.

One of the highlights of the week was the Indigenous Student Achievement Awards Ceremony. Indigenous students were honoured for their academic, leadership, research and community outreach accomplishments. The awards ceremony took place Thursday, February 6 in the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre. ♥

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



ITEP STUDENT PAVING THE WAY WITH CREATIVE TEACHING METHODS

✍️ ASHLEY SHARP AND JOHN SHELLING

Incorporating Cree into Education is a necessity for Amanda Jobb.

Amanda Jobb is in her fourth year of the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) within the College of Education. During her internship, Amanda created Kokum's Corner, a program featuring a grandmother character who speaks Cree. The program helped children learn Cree in an accessible way.

Jobb's passion for language revitalization and her ability to develop relationships has led to her success within the schools she works. Her efforts were recognized with an award for community engagement at this year's Indigenous Student Achievement Awards on February 6th. Indigenous students from across the University of Saskatchewan (USask) were honoured at a ceremony to recognize their academic excellence, leadership, research endeavours or community engagement.

The award ceremony is part of Indigenous Achievement Week (IAW), which celebrates the successes and contributions of Métis, First Nations and Inuit students, staff and faculty. The

festivities include a public art project, speakers and celebrations in various locations across campus. We asked Jobb a few questions about her time at USask and what motivates her.

Why did you choose the College of Education and the ITEP program?

AJ: ITEP provided me with the opportunity to educate myself alongside other indigenous students.

Why is language revitalization important to you?

AJ: Language revitalization is important because our language is our identity. There are aspects of our culture that are communicated better in our own language.

How do you develop your teaching methods?

AJ: My teaching methods are developed with interest inventories and learning to be flexible and adapting to each students needs.

What inspired you to create Kokum's Corner?

AJ: *Kokum's Corner* was inspired by my desire to give the students a safe and nurturing environment. As children, most of us remember the love and care we received when we went to visit our grandparents. This is a setting I wanted to capture in a classroom setting.

Has there been someone in your life who has inspired you to get to where you are today?

AJ: My mother is a teacher. I grew up watching how much she cares about her students. She is a passionate teacher and spent many extra hours outside of regular school hours making sure the students enjoyed their class time.

This year's Indigenous Achievement Week theme is Indigenous knowledge systems. How can Indigenous knowledge systems improve the world we live in?

Indigenous knowledge systems teach the children about caring for one another. In Indigenous cultures, the community looks after the wellness of each individual.

In addition, the connection with nature and what nature provides, such as food, shelter, and medicine, is important to pass down to the younger generation.

Teaching the students to respect and care for the environment is as imperative as respecting and caring for people. Educating the younger ones on how our ancestors valued their surroundings gives the students a part of their history. ♥



COMMUNITY PLAYS BIG ROLE IN SUNTEP STUDENT'S EDUCATION

 **ASHLEY SHARP AND JOHN SHELLING**

Shaina Hounsell is excited to be learning about her Métis heritage while getting an education.

The fourth-year student in the College of Education is described as consistently positive by those in her program, and she works hard to promote her Métis culture.

Hounsell received an award for community engagement at this year's Indigenous Student Achievement Awards on February 6th. Indigenous students from across the University of Saskatchewan (USask) were honoured at a ceremony to recognize their academic excellence, leadership, research endeavours or 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. The festivities included a public art project, speakers and celebrations in various locations across campus.

We asked Hounsell a few questions about her time at USask and what motivates her.

Why did you choose the College of Education and the SUNTEP program?

I chose the College of Education because I knew after high school that I wanted to be a teacher. I chose the SUNTEP program because I wanted to learn more about my Métis heritage and history and be able to share that knowledge with my future students.

In what ways has your Métis background helped you to build a strong sense of community?

My Métis background helped me during my internship because I was able to share my Métis culture and history with my students. Coming from a small community rich in Métis history, I was able to bring my knowledge and sense of community to the SUNTEP program and more specifically the SUNTEP student council.

You are receiving the award for community engagement. What does your community mean to you?

Community is important to me because growing up I've found that the more active and engaged you are in your community will determine how much you enjoy being there. Community to me means a support system of friends and family who are there

to support and encourage one another. During my university experience I was fortunate to be a part of the SUNTEP team which was my community, and a home away from home.

Has there been someone in your life who has inspired you to get to where you are today?

There have been multiple people throughout the years that have shaped me into the person I am today. However, my family and friends were the biggest motivators and support systems.

This year's Indigenous Achievement Week theme is Indigenous knowledge systems. How can Indigenous knowledge systems improve the world we live in?

Indigenous knowledge systems can improve the world we live in through the importance of sharing stories. Through oral stories, history and culture have been passed on through many generations. Kinship is another Indigenous knowledge system that would benefit the world we live in because if more people viewed the world and those in it as kin, world problems could be minimized. ♥

ICONIC RED RIVER CART SYM



 SHANNON COSSETTE AND MEIKA TAYLOR

Bringing a historic Red River cart to the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre has created a new opportunity for system-wide learning at USask.

Graeme Joseph, Team Leader for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Student Success at the Aboriginal Students' Centre (ASC), believes the historical accuracy of the cart also adds to the possibilities of its use.

"Indigenous students have been asking for more cultural events, like they had in their own communities. Commissioning a Red River cart by George Fayant was definitely a move in the right direction and it was an important step in building cultural capacity at the University of Saskatchewan."

The Red River cart was an important tool of its time, and continues to symbolize a rich history which carries with it the fortitude and belief system of the Métis people.

"This particular Red River cart can be dismantled and easily moved, providing an opportunity to have it at ceremonies, cultural events, and used to facilitate learning," said Joseph. "It offers a great chance for sharing knowledge with the campus community."

The history of the Métis people is documented in both archaeological and oral histories. Métis people would travel in large groups across long distances, with carts carrying many items crucial to the survival of their family units. Proudly independent, the Métis people speak their own language, which the Elders ("the old ones" or *Lii vyeu*) called *Michif*.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, the Métis applied their skills in the fur trade, and after 1821 and the consolidation of the Canadian fur trade, and until the age of the railway, Métis traders crisscrossed the Prairies in vast caravans of Red River carts. They were excellent bison hunters, plainsmen, and skilled business people. Women were especially known for their

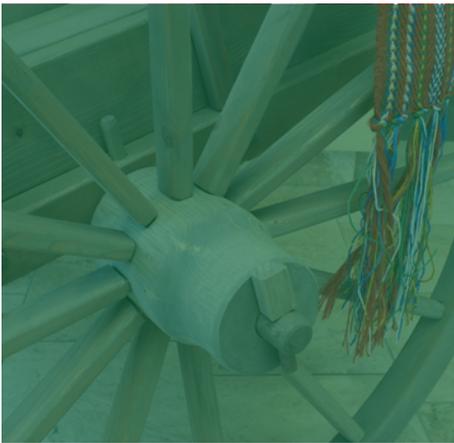
skill in their flower motif beadwork and embroidery. Their hunting trips often took them down into central North Dakota, Montana and Minnesota and they sold great quantities of bison hides, meat, and pemmican to fur traders. Historical pictures will often show Red River carts sitting next to teepees, and Plains First Nations often referred to the Métis as "half-wagon, half-man."

"The Métis Nation didn't just drift slowly into the Canadian consciousness in the early 1800s, it burst onto the scene fully formed," said Jean Teillet, author of *The North-West is Our Mother (The Story of Louis Riel's People, The Métis Nation)*. "The Métis people were flamboyant, defiant, loud and definitely not so-called noble savages. They were nomads with a very different way of being in the world, always on the move, very much in the moment, passionate and fierce. They were romantics and visionaries with big dreams."

When the Red River cart was invented, they featured two wheels and were usually pulled by oxen or horse.

BOLIC OF THE MÉTIS PEOPLE

When the Red River cart was invented, they featured two wheels and were usually pulled by oxen or horse. The oxen could carry as much as 1,000 pounds of furs and meat.



When the Red River cart was invented, they featured two wheels and were usually pulled by oxen or horse. The oxen could carry as much as 1,000 pounds of furs and meat. A horse-drawn cart could carry nearly 500 pounds or as much as five horses could carry on their backs. The carts were made solely from wood and strips of leather (babiche) or sinew and rope, and if the wheels were removed, and its bottom enclosed in a buffalo hide tarp, the cart could be rafted across rivers and streams.

During the winter, the cart could be placed on runners and became a horse-drawn sleigh. However, when travelling across the Prairies in the dust, a loud screeching of the grinding wheels could be heard for several miles away. They could not use grease to ease the friction or noise because the wheels would only get clogged up with dust.

The Métis Nation played a very important part in Canada's history. By the 1870s when the Prairies became part of Canada, the Métis patrolled the Canada-

U.S. border to prevent invasions, serving as guides, scouts, and interpreters. As interpreters they assisted in a number of the Treaty signings, including Treaties 1-7.

From 1896-1929, many Saskatchewan Métis people and ex-treaty peoples came to stay on road allowances after they were dispossessed of their land through scrip. This was a process in which they were issued a coupon to satisfy land claims, dispossessed from where their ancestors had lived for generations. They were considered squatters on Crown land (although they asserted title of their own to these lands) and were also known as Road Allowance People. They formed tight-knit communities where family members would reside typically in log cabins constructed of poplar trees, with tar paper roofs. The women performed the work as midwives for pioneers and tended to the sick using traditional medicines and remedies.

Overseen by the government, hunting and trap-lines were deemed illegal, making it extremely hard to live. Gradually, Métis people saved up enough money to move to the cities and purchase property, or moved onto larger plots to farm.

It was not until 1932 that the first of several provincial organizations or associations were established. From 1934-38 land was secured for Métis settlements by the appointment of the Ewing Commission and the Saskatchewan Métis Society (later known as the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan).

Canada enlisted the services of many Métis people during war time, and after the Second World War, many moved into urban cities, although some were forced

onto Métis farms for the former Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) provincial government in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The Statistics Canada Census 2001 confirmed there were approximately 40,000 Métis people in Saskatchewan. The Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) maintained that their count at that time was closer to 80,000. Between 1991 and 2001 there was a significant increase. The census in 2016 indicates there were as many as 587,540 Métis people in Canada with no slowdown in sight. Projections indicated that by 2036 that number could grow between 18.5 per cent and 22.7 per cent. It is important to note that Indigenous children make up one-quarter of all children in Saskatchewan and at the time of the census, 24 per cent were 15 to 24 years of age, and 27 per cent were 14 and under.

Today, ensuring there is a welcoming environment and a sense of place for Indigenous peoples is vital to the USask community. A student's sense of belonging and identity could mean a prioritization for them in choosing to study, work or stay at the University of Saskatchewan. Relationship-building, stressing academic flexibility and understanding to enable persistence at university are also important.

Understanding the history of the Red River cart is a great example of how to develop an understanding of the shared history of the Métis people. The university's Strategic Plan 2025 supports actively pursuing knowledge through respectful processes and the opportunity at USask is to work towards capacity building and the Indigenization, decolonization, and the reconcile-ACTION of our community. ♥

'WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR LEARNING OUR COLLECTIVE HISTORY':

ART PROJECTS AT USASK ENCOURAGE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE



Artist Catherine Blackburn (BFA'07) took part in a one-month residency at the Kenderdine Art Gallery in early 2020. *Photo: David Stobbe*

SHANNON BOKLASCHUK

As Catherine Blackburn spoke about her artistic practice during an interview at the University of Saskatchewan's Kenderdine Art Gallery in January, candid family photographs were projected on the wall behind her.

The pictures presented an intimate look at family life, showcasing a decades-old photo of Blackburn's parents on their wedding day more than 40 years ago. Numerous pictures featured Blackburn's late grandmother, with the matriarch seen beading at her home in Patuanak, Sask., in one scene; in another, slices of meat were hung to dry in the grandmother's kitchen—something that was once a common sight at her house.

That particular picture brought a smile to Blackburn's face as she recalled the delicious pemmican her grandmother used to make for her—dried meat without berries, just the way she liked it. Another photo featured a group shot of Blackburn's extended



Catherine Blackburn sees working with beads as a form of resistance and as a means of reclaiming identity and sovereignty. *Photo: David Stobbe*

family; yet another depicted Blackburn's great-uncle, a trapper, carrying a lynx.

The slideshow represented what is important to Blackburn and the central themes that influence her work: kinship, community, identity, language, culture, history, land and love. She wanted to feature the photos on the walls to give viewers at the gallery "an overall sense" of her practice.

"Also, the personal narrative behind my practice is important for them to acknowledge, because I think that leads into a bigger conversation of identity and perspectives on identities," said Blackburn (BFA'07), a USask alumna who studied studio art in the Department of Art and Art History in the College of Arts and Science.

"I think it's important for people to recognize that this practice just doesn't come from nowhere; there's very specific reasons for why I chose beadwork, why I'm choosing textile work. They can kind of get a sense of that by understanding my family history or my story."

A member of the English River First Nation in Treaty 10 Territory, Blackburn was born in Patuanak, Sask., of Dene and European ancestry. A multi-disciplinary artist and jeweller who now lives in B.C., her practice is centred on contemporary interpretations of traditional Indigenous art forms, merging elements of traditional Dene culture with her experiences of living as an Indigenous woman in the modern world. Her work has attracted local, national and international attention; for example, she was included on the longlist for the 2019 Sobey Art Award—considered to be Canada's preeminent contemporary art prize.

Blackburn sees working with beads as a form of resistance and

as a means of reclaiming identity and sovereignty. She describes her hands as holding ancestral connections, exemplifying "how Indigenous bodies hold power and resurgence."

"Not so long ago, this very art form was banned by missionaries and the federal government as a tactic of assimilation—just as all other art forms of song and dance, along with prayer and language, were," she said. "Indigenous identity was affected to its very core."

Today, Blackburn is looking at Indigenous identity through the lenses of her own lived experience as a woman on Turtle Island in the year 2020. She notes that culture is always evolving, and she acknowledges this change as she seeks to honour the past. On Jan. 30, for example, during a performance at the Kenderdine Art Gallery, Blackburn was gifted a traditional Indigenous marking by artist Stacey Fayant. Blackburn chose to honour her eyes by receiving markings on each side of her head in Dene syllabics, with a floral pattern from her late grandmother, paying tribute to her family history. The performance, titled *Skin Stitched*, involved using a needle and thread to stitch permanent ink into Blackburn's skin.

This blending of the past and the present is evident through all of Blackburn's work. Blackburn talks about the relationship between beadwork and using her body as a tool, honouring the "ancestral connection that refers to a cultural history of love and exchange." "We are here because of the strength, ingenuity and love of those that came before us, surviving off the land using their hands in the same tactile way to protect and honour each other," she said. "Oftentimes I will bead with thoughts of someone, or concentrate on who I am making it for and what it represents. In this way I am beading for someone and beading is a medicine. It holds immense love."

Through a collaboration with the University Art Galleries and Collection, Blackburn participated in a one-month residency on campus that ended on Feb. 7, 2020. During the residency, visitors were encouraged to visit the Kenderdine Art Gallery and engage with her as she created new works for her solo exhibition with these hands, from this land, curated by fellow USask alumna Leah Taylor (BFA'04).

As a curator at USask, Taylor believes art has a significant role to play in helping people understand the lived experiences of others.

Taylor gives credit to the influential Indigenous artists who are doing, living and presenting this difficult work; for example, through her role at the USask galleries, Taylor has had the opportunity to work with artists and fellow USask alumni such as Lori Blondeau (MFA'03), Ruth Cuthand (BFA'83, MFA'92), Wally Dion (BFA'04) and Joi T. Arcand (BFA'06). In 2019, Taylor curated Arcand's exhibition she used to want to be a ballerina, which was on view at USask's College Art Gallery II. Arcand—who was shortlisted for the Sobey Art Award in 2018—described the show as a “celebration of Indigenous girlhood.”

“I believe art is one of the most powerful tools for expressing ideas that relate to lived experience,” said Taylor. “My interest as a curator has focused on politically and socially engaged contemporary art. I believe that artists are typically the first to challenge social constructions that need to be refigured or deconstructed. Artists are willing to take risks, especially with difficult and challenging subjects, by presenting new or diverse perspectives for viewers to consider. As a curator, I help to frame this work for the public.”

Members of the university community and the wider public have recently had the opportunity to engage with artists on campus through USask's Indigenous Artist-in-Residence program. Initiated by the University Art Galleries and Collection in 2018, the new program aims to recognize and honour the contribution of Indigenous artists, craftspeople and knowledge keepers and create awareness and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

In 2019 and early 2020, renowned Plains Cree artist Ruth Cuthand served as artist-in-residence, offering beading instruction in various buildings on campus.

Lyndon Tootosis, a stone carver and storyteller from



Curator Leah Taylor (BFA'04) believes art has a significant role to play in helping people understand the lived experiences of others. **Photo: David Stobbe**

Poundmaker First Nation, joined the USask community in January 2020 as the newest artist-in-residence; he began by gathering together students and members of the broader community to learn the names and stories of the 13 Nehiyaw lunar phases, laying the groundwork for a collaborative carving project at USask's Gordon Snelgrove Gallery during Indigenous Achievement Week in February.

When Jake Moore took on her new role as director of the University of Saskatchewan Art Galleries and Collection in the summer of 2019, she was pleased that Indigenous representation and engagement were cornerstones of Galleries Reimagined—USask's restructured approach to the visual arts on campus.

She sees USask's Indigenous Achievement Week art projects and the new Indigenous artist-in-residence program as ways to engage in Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (or, more specifically, “Conciliation”—trying to come to a point of agreement—a term used by Métis professor and art critic David Garneau).

“By bringing forward Indigenous ways of working in the arts,



Lyndon Tootoosis, a stone carver and storyteller from Poundmaker First Nation, joined the USask community in January 2020 as the newest artist-in-residence. *Photo: David Stobbe*



Jake Moore took on the role of director of the University of Saskatchewan Art Galleries and Collection in the summer of 2019. *Photo: David Stobbe*

by sharing existing space like the University Collection, the walls of our public buildings and the regular programming stream in our galleries, we will start to put into symmetry the relation between Indigenous artistic works and cultural production and those that continue to bolster and celebrate the Western canon," said Moore, who also serves as a faculty member in the College of Arts and Science's Department of Art and Art History.

Under her leadership, Moore said the galleries will consciously act upon the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 94 calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). USask's main campus is located on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis.

"The 'truth' part of the TRC is one Canadians seem to be having the hardest part with," said Moore. "For the University Art Galleries and Collection to accept our responsibilities of both representing and forming culture, we need to hold space for the multiple voices of this territory and listen to what is made clear in humility and gratitude. How we perform as an instrument of the larger institution in this transitional time can model behaviours for relations based on reciprocity."

Woodland Cree artist Vanessa Hyggen (BA'17), a USask alumna who works as the executive assistant to the Vice-Dean Indigenous in the College of Arts and Science, has witnessed firsthand how art can foster understanding between people with different lived experiences.

She has been involved in two Indigenous Achievement Week art projects on campus that have aimed to spark conversations about decolonization and Indigenization.

During USask's Indigenous Achievement Week in 2019, Hyggen worked with Cuthand on a project called *mikisak ikwa asiniyak | Beads and Stone | Lii rasaad aykwa lii rosh* (written in Cree, English and Michif). The creation of the piece began by breaking a slab of Tyndall stone, a type of dolomitic limestone from Manitoba that is featured on numerous buildings throughout campus. The broken

pieces of Tyndall stone—symbolizing USask's architecture—were then integrated with beadwork as a performative and visual step toward Reconciliation. The completed artwork is now installed on the second floor of the Arts Building, outside the hallway leading to the Dean's Office and other administrative spaces.



Vanessa Hyggen (BA'17) poses for a photo in the Arts Building beside *Beads and Stone*, artwork she created with fellow USask alumna Ruth Cuthand (BFA'83, MFA'92). **Photo: David Stobbe**



Dr. Sandy Bonny (PhD) is a literary and visual artist, geologist and team lead for the College of Arts and Science's Indigenous Student Achievement Pathways (ISAP) program. **Photo: David Stobbe**

Earlier this year, Hyggen and Dr. Sandy Bonny (PhD)—a literary and visual artist, geologist and team lead for the College of Arts and Science's Indigenous Student Achievement Pathways (ISAP) program—proposed a project titled *anohc kipasikônwaw/ we rise /niipawi*. The project, which saw Nehiyaw syllabics inscribed on 100-year-old slate stair treads reclaimed from USask's Thorvaldson Building, evokes the 13 moons of the lunar calendar used by Indigenous peoples to guide their movements and life decisions. With 13 steps, each seven feet long, the project has an ambitious scale; a synchronicity of skillsets between Tootoosis, Bonny and Hyggen, and the engagement of diverse USask students eager to learn syllabics and to try their hand at stone carving, ensured its success.

"The wear patterns on the stones are from students and faculty coming and learning and sharing knowledge for 100 years—so this very western thought process," said Bonny, who noted the steps were transformed "from being physically impacted by the people to inspiring thinking through an Indigenous knowledge lens."

"It has a nice narrative shift for me that way."

It's through projects like *anohc kipasikônwaw/ we rise /niipawi* that Hyggen believes art can help people understand each



Steps

Cree syllabics were carved into reclaimed slate steps during Indigenous Achievement Week in February 2020. Photo: Marcus Miller

other's lives and perspectives; as she points out, "anything can be communicated through art."

"Art history shows us what societies have held in importance, what people's belief systems were and are—from a fertility goddess, to the Last Supper, to Banksy's street art," she said. "All of these pieces can tell you so much by looking at the material used, the way the piece is used or displayed, how it was created, why it was created and, of course, the content of the piece. Many of my own pieces are northern landscapes; some of them discuss current politics. There's a story in my choice of subject matter."

In her own artistic practice, Hyggen explores issues around identity and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Her artwork entitled *is an indian*, scrabble blanket, for example, features a square designed to look similar to a Scrabble board game. The border of the piece is created with status cards of her family members, and under the image on each piece of identification reads "is an Indian within the meaning of the Indian Act, chapter 27, Statutes of Canada (1985)."

"This is a piece which explores my identity—a blue-eyed, fair-skinned status Indian—and it also has special meaning to me because of all of the games of Scrabble I played with my kohkom," said Hyggen. "But, it also has meaning beyond my own identity. When I first showed this piece, most people had not seen a status card, or had known that your status card expires."

"I want pieces like this to spark a curiosity that causes someone to look a little further," she added. "Understanding the histories of treaties and the Indian Act are crucial to Reconciliation. These are the pieces of our collective history that have brought us to where we are today. We are all responsible for learning our collective history so that we can create a healthier and more prosperous future." ♥



is an indian, scrabble blanket

"When I first showed this piece, most people had not seen a status card, or had known that your status card expires."

VANESSA HYGGEN

INDIGENOUS PROGRAMMING

AT USASK

New coordinator excited to grow, strengthen wicêhtowin Theatre Program

 SHANNON BOKLASCHUK



As the new coordinator of the wicêhtowin Theatre Program at USask, Deneh'Cho Thompson is looking forward to working with Indigenous students and theatre professionals in Saskatoon and beyond.

"It's such an exciting opportunity," said Thompson, who took on the role in January 2020. "It's the only Indigenous theatre training program housed in a university in Canada."

The wicêhtowin Theatre Program (WTP), located in the Department of Drama in USask's College of Arts and Science, is a 21-credit certificate program for Indigenous students. Students can take the certificate on its own or in combination with another degree.

WTP offers an intensive applied approach to training emerging Indigenous theatre artists in the areas of performance, playwriting and theatre design. In addition to his new role as WTP coordinator, Thompson will also serve as an assistant professor in the drama department.

Thompson is a Dene director, actor and playwright and a member of the Pehdzeh Ki Nation who spent his earliest childhood years living on a farm south of Edmonton, on the Louis Bull First Nation. His grandfather worked for the Louis Bull band while his grandmother taught at Maskwacis Cultural College.

When Thompson was around five years old he moved to Calgary for about 12 years. After spending some time during which he "traipsed around the world," Thompson decided to go back to school, studying theatre performance at Simon Fraser University.

Thompson has focused on Indigenous theatre for the last decade, and was drawn to WTP because of what it offers to students.

"A program where Indigenous mentorship is built in and Indigenous knowledge systems are central to the learning was very important to me," he said. "I thought with my young exuberance and ambitions, I might be able to help steward that along."

Thompson is currently in his final year of a Master of Fine Arts degree in Indigenous theatre at the University of Alberta. His artistic practice focuses

"A program where Indigenous mentorship is built in and Indigenous knowledge systems are central to the learning was very important to me."

DENEH'CHO THOMPSON

on new play development, Indigenous dramaturgies and Indigenous pedagogies, while centering the values of reciprocity, respect and reflexivity.

Thompson's recent acting credits include the world premieres of *Iron Peggy*, by Marie Clements; *REDPATCH*, by Sean Oliver Harris and Reas Calvert; and *Thanks for Giving*, by Kevin Loring. Directing credits include *Institutionalized*, by Kelsey Kanatan Wavey; *The Girl Who was Raised by Wolverine* (written by Thompson, and the winner of the 2016 Playwright Theatre Centre's Fringe New Play Prize at the Vancouver Fringe Festival); and *The Governor of the Dew* by Floyd Favel.

Although Thompson is new to USask and to WTP, he already has many ideas for the program. He wants to help grow and strengthen it and to help it gain additional recognition.

"As my research suggests, there are aspects of Western theatre training that neglect an Indigenous holistic world view," he said. "I'm trying to, with my work, kind of bridge that." ♥

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ON CAMPUS

Cree staff member making a difference for students

 SHANNON COSSETTE



“The university has improved their support for individual workers and in further developing the role we play here. This has been better for our students and the role the university plays in supporting them.”

LENNARD FOX

Lennard Fox, is from Sweetgrass First Nation located just outside of North Battleford, SK and is currently a student account specialist in Student Finance and Awards, within the Teaching, Learning and Student Experience unit at USask.

He spoke to us recently about his career of over 23 years with USask, after proudly receiving the Doug Favell Staff Spirit Award (2020).

Lennard joined Student Accounts and Treasury (SAT) in 1997 after completing his diploma in Public Administration at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT). As a staff member in the TLSE with Student Finance & Awards (SFA) his duties include collecting tuition and other related fees by means of in person payments, online payments, Flywire, wire transfer payments, and at times applying scholarships/bursaries to recipients. He also administers a range of other student financial services including tuition for graduate students receiving stipends/scholarships by the university.

Lennard deals mainly with third-party authorization forms for sponsored students, domestic and international. He played a lead role in coordinating the student sponsorships program for international and First Nations organizations. He also deals with taxation questions (T2202A), student refunds and financial requirements for international students, and in 2013 he was the recipient of a President’s Service

Award for his professionalism, courtesy and compassion he demonstrated with everyone he helped. He continues his work in Student Finance & Awards helping the students daily with everything from tuition concerns, fee payments, awards and financial aid.

Through his hobbies as a poet and world bronze medal winning slow pitch player, and his role as a father, Lennard brings his passion, joy (especially his laugh) and commitment to every endeavor. He tells us that, “the people I work with are the best”. As a front-line worker his favorite part of the job is interacting with students.

His role at USask has helped Lennard gain patience, respect, and knowledge from all of the people he says he is able to meet. He reflected that, “Over the years the university has improved their support for individual workers and in further developing the role we play here. This has been better for our students and the role the university plays in supporting them.”

What would the next ten years look like for Lennard? He would like to retire one day, knowing that he has made a difference in helping students in their knowledge of institutional education, and working towards a great future. He enjoys playing ball and pool (billiards) in his spare time, although he would love the opportunity to skydive some time. It is fitting then that his personal philosophy in life is “Heaven or Hell”. Every religion has its own concept of what is Heaven or Hell. Lennard says, “You can never get to heaven unless you’ve been through hell. Everyone has their own interpretation on these words.” ♥

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âcimowin (plains cree (achim/o/win) storytelling) is published four times a year by the University of Saskatchewan's Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement.

It is distributed to our campus community in limited print and is available digitally on Indigenous.usask.ca.

The views and opinions expressed by contributing writers and viewpoints do not necessarily reflect those of USask.

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.

BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS



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