



achimowin – *michif*  
ocimani – *lakota*  
tipa chum owin – *saulteaux (telling stories)*  
dene he/honi – *denesuline*  
hun̄kākāṅ – *dakota*

# âcimowin

*plains cree (achimo/win) storytelling*



USask's Dana Carriere with Kiley Vass Photo: Jerrod Dietrich

## 2019: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

The United Nations declared 2019 the year of Indigenous Languages in order to encourage urgent action, to highlight the critical need to revitalize, preserve, and promote Indigenous languages and share good practices through expert/interactive panels and presentation of innovative initiatives on Indigenous languages.

Currently 40 percent of the world's estimated 6,700 languages are in danger of disappearing – the majority belonging to Indigenous peoples. In fact there are at least 2,680 Indigenous languages in danger of disappearance world-wide.

Visit: [un.org](http://un.org)

### The year of observance focused on five key areas:

1. Increasing understanding, reconciliation and international cooperation.
2. Creating favorable conditions for knowledge-sharing and dissemination of good practices.
3. Integrating Indigenous languages into a standard setting.
4. Empowering through capacity building.
5. Elaborating new knowledge to foster growth and development. ♥

### Did you know that USask offers the following courses in Indigenous Languages?

- Certificate in Indigenous Languages
- Study of Indigenous Storytelling
- Conversational Cree Language Program
- Graduate Certificate and Master's Degree in Indigenous Language Revitalization



And this is fulfilling the TRC Calls to Action, it is fulfilling the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), it is fulfilling the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). So it is fulfilling a lot of these obligations, it is even fulfilling treaty obligations. We need to see more of it and our young people especially need to see it, it will feel important to them. It is an act of reconciliation in the spirit of what was shared through our treaties, it is a way of building bridges. It is educating as well, because people don't know much about the treaties, so just knowing the words and what they mean, is very relevant." ♥

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

The weaving of Indigenous languages was very significant to the goals of

Indigenization, decolonization and reconciliation.

"It is very relevant, and very important, we need to see more of the language being represented, not just at universities but across Canada in general, because there is just a lack of it.

Randy's entire interview along with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Language Keepers can be viewed at: [Indigenous.usask.ca/Media Room](https://indigenous.usask.ca/MediaRoom)  
[en.iyil2019.org/](https://en.iyil2019.org/)  
[#IYIL2019](https://twitter.com/IYIL2019) [#UN4Indigenous](https://twitter.com/UN4Indigenous)  
[#WeAreIndigenous](https://twitter.com/WeAreIndigenous)



A few of the Indigenous Strategy Working Group

## THE INDIGENOUS STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

The Indigenous Strategy working group is made up of diverse appointees that work to ensure that colleges and schools intersect with the Indigenous strategy. They provide guidance and expertise to the Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement during development of

the Indigenous Strategy for USask. Their work delivers an opportunity for interdisciplinary approaches to Indigenization, decolonization and reconciliation during the draft phases of the strategy as well as the guiding principles moving forward. ♥

# tawamagun!

Welcome to the inaugural Office of the Vice Provost Indigenous Engagement newsletter that has been named âcimowin, which is storytelling in Cree. As in our other publications, this is also translated into our other Saskatchewan Indigenous languages. The name carries with it all that encompasses story and storytelling.

For Indigenous Peoples, storytelling and oracy is dissemination, pedagogy, methodology, entertainment, and a skill that can be developed—for some more than others because storytelling is also a gift. Stories are gifted and are a gift to all that hear them. Because of their sacredness, some stories can only be shared during the winter. Indigenous perspectives of storytelling are sophisticated and complex.

In his book, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*, author Thomas King wrote, “The truth about stories is, that’s all we are”. From my perspective, this is a profound statement for many reasons. First, truth and stories are in the same phrase. Truth is embedded in stories, in the stories we share, orally or through our actions—expressively, quietly, resoundingly, creatively. Next, the lesson that story is all we are is centering, and provides existential perspective. It has me asking, “Who am I?” “What story am I telling?” and “What story do I want to leave?” As individuals and as collective groups within departments, colleges and institution-wide, we can ponder King’s statement and perhaps consider our role(s) in the USask story and the story we will leave behind—our individual and collective legacy.

The messages and lessons embedded within a story can be clear and crisp, or they could be mysterious, evoking one to take the time and space to deeply reflect and wait

patiently for the ‘truth’ to appear. Kimmerer (2013) asks us to be fully present and to engage the whole of our senses: “Hold the bundle up to your nose. Find the fragrance... and you will understand... Breathe it in and you start to remember things you didn’t know you’d forgotten”(p. ix). In essence, stories have power and spirit and carry with them the responsibility of remembering. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) encourages “collective remembering” (p. 146) and because remembering can be painful, we should also consider how to engage healing and constructive transformation. Stories also carry with them the responsibility to the seven generations that came before us and to those that will come after us, seven generations into the future. Jeanette Armstrong (1998) explains: “Through my language I understand that I am being spoken to, I’m not the one speaking. The words come from many tongues and mouths of Okanagan people and the land around them. I am a listener to the language’s stories, and when my words form I am merely retelling the same stories in different patterns” (p. 181). Stories take many forms, and we are embodied by story.

In conclusion, I ask you to actively *listen* to the stories that are in this newsletter and to those all around us—and to share your own. ♥

**Jacqueline Ottmann**  
**Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement**



Jacqueline Ottmann

## **Blue Marrow**

(Louise Halfe, 2005, p. 28)

*We are here.  
Here.  
Here.  
Patience,  
natânisak. My Daughters.  
We will speak.  
We will fill each leaf.  
Pages of song.  
We will be the loon  
in broad daylight  
moaning spring.  
The deer that rattles her bones.  
We will come.  
Offer us tobacco,  
smudge with sage.  
Sit and cry in the Lodge,  
let your belly grovel,  
let thirst fill your mouth.  
We will hold you.  
We will fill your lungs.  
We will be there.  
Sleep.  
We will leave our tracks,  
Laugh through the thunder.  
Feel the crack in of our whips  
will cast lightning,  
torch hearts  
full of memory.  
Listen.*

## Indigenous Engagement Conference Funding Opportunity

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

### 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 Indigenousization, 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/usask](http://Indigenous.usask.ca/usask)

## The Indigenous Advisors' Circle (IAC)

The (IAC) began as a support for Indigenous advisors and other staff members who wanted a place to share information and ideas and the opportunity to support one another. Since it began in 2002, the membership of the group grew to be comprised of academic advisors and coordinators who work exclusively or extensively with Indigenous students, as well as others who provide supports and services for Indigenous students.

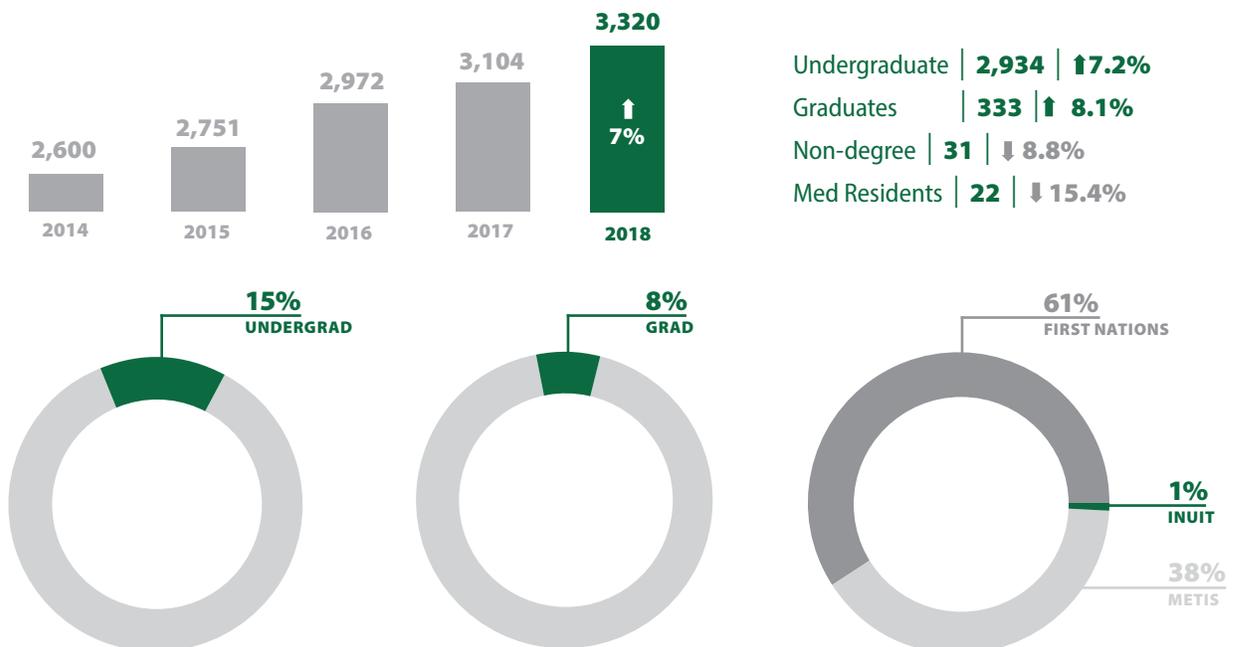
This group was formerly known as the Aboriginal Advisory Circle (AAC) but in 2018, changed the name to Indigenous Advisors Circle (IAC). Members of the IAC are most often the people most connected to Indigenous students, their families and Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan and beyond.

The Indigenous Advisory Circle exists to:

- Make recommendations to the Advising Council on issues related to the academic, social and cultural advising of Indigenous students;
- Make recommendations to the Vice-Provost, Teaching, Learning and Student Experience, and the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement on matters related to the retention and success of Indigenous students;
- Support one another, distribute information and share best practices, and
- Advocate for professional learning opportunities for IAC members.

[Learn more at Indigenous.usask.ca](http://Indigenous.usask.ca)

## 2019 Academic Snapshot - June 11, 2019



# RESOURCES

In this section we will highlight innovative resources that we hope will help you in your work or study.



## kā-kī-pē-isi-nakatamākawiyahk: Our Legacy

Our legacy is a portal of materials relating to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, from Saskatchewan cultural and heritage collections. This site currently has more than 7,000 descriptive records and 137,000+ digital items from nine participating institutions. A variety of formats are represented: archival materials including video, photographs and textual records, as well as artifacts and published works. Introductory and help screens are available in English, Cree and Dene.

Visit: [scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy](http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy)



## WHAT IS SMUDGING [miyâskasikêwin]?

"Smudging is a protocol long been observed by many First Nations and Métis. To smudge is an act of purifying the mind and physical surroundings. When First Nations gather for meetings, ceremonies or personal prayer, smudging is conducted. First Nations in Saskatchewan generally use sweetgrass, sages, cedars and other plants for smudging. When preparations are made to smudge, the plants are lit with matches or hot coals. The smoke is then used with the person's hands in a "washing" manner by pushing or cupping the smoke towards them. Never blow on smudge or sacred fire; rather fan it if required. Sweetgrass is often braided because it signifies the hair of Mother Earth. The importance of sweetgrass at every level of ceremonial life has long made it a valued item. At times, braids of sweetgrass are carried for protection. The sweetgrass, sages, cedars and other sacred plants are from Mother Earth. Tobacco is placed on the ground as an offering and permission is asked from Mother Earth before gathering these items."

Reference: ayisiyiniwak A Communication Guide, City of Saskatoon

## Aboriginal Research Resources

This website brings together interdisciplinary sources and information at the University of Saskatchewan, relating to Indigenous Studies and Native-newcomer relations.

Visit: [library.usask.ca/indigenous](http://library.usask.ca/indigenous)



USask's Liz Duret (left), Elder Marjorie Beaucage and Elder Roland Duquette (right)

# INDIGENOUS FALL GATHERING

The 3rd Annual Indigenous Fall Gathering was a full day event on October 17, 2019 for Indigenous employees of the university to gather together.

This has become a tradition for many employees to give time and space to explore cultural teachings and the USask community. This year the day began in a good way with opening prayers by Elder Roland Duquette, followed by a presentation by Keynote speaker Candy Palmater.

The Fall Gathering is held annually and offers insight and education on topics such as holistic approaches to wellness. This year's sessions included Métis string games and storytelling and an introductory session on wild plant medicines.

Workshops were presented by Louise Halfe, Michela Carrier and Cort Dogniez.

OVPIE would like to thank all of the participants and presenters, and especially Liz Duret and the Organizing Committee. Thank you for putting this thoughtful and insightful event together. There was also an opportunity made available for a second event in the evening for USask students, where they were invited to hear Candy Palmater at the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Students Centre on campus. ♥

## Truth and Reconciliation

The following links are to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Report published in 2015:

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)

[Educational resources from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)

Summary of the TRC's final report: [Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future](#)

Principles of truth and reconciliation: [What We Have Learned The Survivors Speak](#)

Final report, volume 1, part 1: [Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Origins to 1939](#)

Final report, volume 1, part 2: [Canada's Residential Schools: The History, 1939 to 2000](#)

Final report, volume 2: [Canada's Residential Schools: The Inuit and Northern Experience](#)

Final report, volume 3: [Canada's Residential Schools: The Métis Experience](#)

Final report, volume 4: [Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials](#)

Final report, volume 5: [Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy](#)

Final report, volume 6: [Canada's Residential Schools: Reconciliation](#)

Please visit [Indigenous.usask.ca](http://Indigenous.usask.ca) for additional resource recommendations.

## INDIGENOUS SYMBOLS

USask in collaboration with Indigenous leaders, Elders and other campus stakeholders, developed a suite of symbols representing Indigenous cultures from across Saskatchewan. These symbols are integral to the visual identity of the USask and help us promote and communicate Indigenous initiatives and partnerships. Each symbol has special meaning in Indigenous cultures and misuse of the symbols may be interpreted as a sign of disrespect. These symbols should be used when promoting Indigenous initiatives, or in other communications provided their use is appropriate.

**Note: Use in conjunction with the University of Saskatchewan visual guidelines. The symbols are not meant to replace our standard visual elements but rather to enhance them in marketing and communications pieces where their use is appropriate. These Indigenous symbols are copyright of the University of Saskatchewan. If you are unsure about whether a use is appropriate, please email [communications@usask.ca](mailto:communications@usask.ca)**



### Tipi

The Tipi is a dwelling for First Nations people. Being nomadic people and always on the move, the Tipi was designed for easy transport. Secure, mobile and providing shelter, the Tipi symbolizes the Good Mother sheltering and protecting her children.



### Hide With Willow Hoop

First Nations believe that their values and traditions are gifts from the Creator, including the Land, Plants and Animals. Hides are believed to be offered by the animal as the Creator wishes and, therefore, as the animal dies the hunter thanks the animal for its offering.



### Inukshuk

An extension of an Inuk (a human being), the Inukshuk are left as messages fixed in time and space. They may represent personal notes or a grief marking where a loved one perished. They act as markers to indicate people who knew how to survive on the land living in a traditional way.



### Rainbow

The Rainbow is a sign of the great mystery, the Creator's grace reminding all to respect, love and live in harmony. Rainbow colours are seen as stages in life and they follow individual belief systems of various First Nations.



### Eagle Feather

The Eagle Feather is a symbol of truth, power and freedom. The dark and light colours represent balance. It is a very high honour to receive an Eagle Feather, and usually marks a milestone. When one holds the Eagle Feather, one must speak the truth in a positive way, showing respect at all times.



### Métis Sash

The Métis Sash is a symbol of present-day Métis identity but had many uses in the early days, often functioning as a rope or a belt. The Infinity sign ( $\infty$ ) on the Sash symbolizes two cultures together and the continuity of the Métis culture. The Sash uses traditional woven patterns and colours to represent individual Métis communities.



### Buffalo

The Buffalo symbolizes subsistence, strength and the ability to survive. The Buffalo is a spiritual animal as it provides so many things, including food, clothing, shelter and tools.



### Drum

Traditionally given to men for ceremony and prayer, the Drum is the heartbeat of the Earth, and feeds our spirit. The Drum has the spirit of the deer and the tree that were offered as a gift from the Creator for the Drum, and it guides people home.



### Medicine Wheel

The Medicine Wheel contains four quadrants of life each representing a certain aspect of holistic make-up: intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional self. The four colours represent the four directions: red, yellow, white and blue (or black, green or darker colours depending on the Indigenous group). Four is a very significant number in Indigenous cultures.



### Turtle

Symbolizing Mother Earth, the Turtle is depicted with 13 inner markings, each representing a cycle of the Earth around the sun. There are 28 smaller outer markings of the shell representing the days of each cycle.



### Red River Cart

The primary means of travel and transportation of goods for Métis people, the Red River cart has become synonymous with the Métis.



### Star/Star Blanket

The star symbol on Star Blankets ends with eight outer points to represent one's travels from grandmother, to daughter/son and then to grandchild and to Mother Earth. Eight diamond quilted shapes form the centre and pieces are added to each row to increase the size of the star pattern. Star Blankets are given to individuals at times of life changing events such as births, deaths, graduations and marriages. To give a Star Blanket is to show utmost respect, honour and admiration.

# BLANKET EXERCISE BUILDS UNDERSTANDING AT WCVM

 JEANETTE NEUFELD

Two hours can make a big difference in one's understanding of the role all Canadians play in building reconciliation with Indigenous people in Canada.

As part of an effort toward creating awareness of the history of Indigenous people in Canada, 28 staff, students and faculty at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) recently took part in a blanket exercise — a unique “participatory history lesson” created by KAIROS Canada and facilitated by staff from the Canadian Roots Exchange.

The group exercise is an opportunity to learn more about the cumulative impacts of colonization on Indigenous people, and see the effects of treaties, disease, residential schools and the erosion of communities, as those standing around them are separated or removed from the group and the blankets—representing the physical landscape of Canada—are taken away.

It's a thought-provoking and emotional experience. Participants often come away from it with a new appreciation for the struggles that Indigenous people have faced since settlers first arrived in Canada.

“I was really interested to see if it would give me a different perspective, which I found it really did,” says Sarah Thomas, a second-year veterinary student at the WCVM.

Thomas says it's worth investing time into

participating in exercises like this one.

“It's only two hours. It really changes your perspective. There's nobody that can say they don't have time.”

The event was organized by the One-Welfare Veterinary Outreach (OVO) Initiative, a new student club at the WCVM. Its aim is to create opportunities for students to engage with the communities that they will serve as veterinary professionals.

For Chloe Roberts, the club's president, the blanket exercise introduced her to a new level of awareness about Indigenous history.

“Through this club, I've been learning a lot this semester about those issues and the topics talked about. But to place it in such a personal setting was really powerful, and it really sparked empathy,” says Roberts, a third-year veterinary student at the WCVM. “It's important. It's part of Canadian history, and it's something not many people are educated about, and I think they should be.”

The club's 80 members work to develop their understanding of One Welfare — exploring the connection between human, animal and environmental health — through self-study, group discussions, educational opportunities and volunteering.

“So far, we've really been trying to promote community engagement and increase education and awareness of certain social issues that we think veterinarians will come into contact with and should be knowledgeable about as professionals ... who are going to be looked to in the communities as leaders,” says Roberts.

Jessica Alegria, who helped organize the blanket exercise for the WCVM students and staff, says she's excited about veterinary professionals engaging with issues of social justice.

“I was happy to hear about how people are thinking about the communities they're serving,” says Alegria, who led the exercise alongside colleague Bayani Trinidad.

The WCVM's Indigenous Engagement and Reconciliation Fund helped to support the OVO Initiative's work in organizing the blanket exercise, and Roberts says the club's members hope to offer more educational opportunities in the future.

They plan to expand their efforts toward understanding the impact of oppression, poverty and injustice on many different communities, and learning how veterinarians can learn to become effective allies while taking care of the health of both animals and their human owners. ■



College of Arts and Science faculty member Dr. Bob Patrick (PhD) and Eugene Lewis of the Onion Lake Health Board (right) work to install a climate station at the Onion Lake Cree Nation.

*Photo: Katherine Finn/NSRBC*

# ENSURING SAFE DRINKING WATER ON A SASKATCHEWAN FIRST NATION

 **CHRIS PUTNAM**

University of Saskatchewan (USask) researchers have partnered with a First Nation in western Saskatchewan on a project to protect the community's drinking water.

Dr. Bob Patrick (PhD), a faculty member in the College of Arts and Science's Department of Geography and Planning, is one of the collaborators working with the Onion Lake Cree Nation to develop and implement a drinking water protection plan.

"The plan has identified a number of risks to the source of drinking water—shallow wells along the North Saskatchewan River—along with matching management actions to lessen those risks," said Patrick, who is principal investigator on the project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

A working committee was established to oversee the Onion Lake initiative with members drawn from the community, the Onion Lake Health Board and the North Saskatchewan River Basin Council (NSRBC).

One piece of the project involved the installation of a climate monitoring station at the Onion Lake Cree Nation on Oct. 25, 2019. The automated station will record wet and dry periods over time to track weather and climate trends.

"Climate conditions are typically reported in towns and cities often far away from the First Nation. Actual conditions can vary significantly on the First Nation, especially under a changing climate. The goal is to establish an Indigenous climate monitoring network across Saskatchewan—a first in Canada," said Patrick.

The project partners released a video

slideshow documenting the climate station installation.

Other collaborators on the community project include Dr. Krys Chutko (PhD) of the geography and planning department, Dr. Grant Ferguson (PhD) of the USask College of Engineering, and Katherine Finn, manager of NSRBC.

Patrick and Chutko previously partnered with the Okanese First Nation to install climate stations on lands belonging to that southern Saskatchewan First Nation.

The Onion Lake water protection plan was unveiled at an open house event at Onion Lake Cree Nation Nov. 29. Members of the community were invited to provide feedback at the event. The project's \$28,000 in SSHRC funding was provided through an Indigenous Research Capacity and Reconciliation Connection Grant. ♥

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT— AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL VALUES

 SHANNON COSSETTE

“As we gather here today, we acknowledge we are on Treaty 6 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.”



Four years ago, the University of Saskatchewan (USask) officially introduced a new Indigenous land acknowledgement to open public speaking engagements, events and meetings.

The greeting was formalized after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s final report was released, urging governments, institutions and organizations to engage in the process of redressing “the legacy of residential schools” by responding to the TRC’s 94 Calls to Action. At USask, the land acknowledgement quickly became one small but meaningful way to begin that process.

“Acknowledging the land, and all the life within it, in various ways is something that First Nations, Inuit and Métis people have done for generations,” said Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann (PhD), the vice-provost of Indigenous Engagement at USask. “Expressions of gratitude and respect for the land, was practiced long before European settlers arrived on Turtle Island (North America). Indigenous people have had an intimate relationship and knowledge of these places and spaces.

“Land acknowledgement pays respect to those from our past and also those who will experience our territories in generations

to come. Land acknowledgments should be respectful, be reverent to the Creator, recognize the need for the right relationship, be communicated with humility and gratitude.”

USask’s land acknowledgement statement was officially approved at University Council June 18, 2015, presented by project leaders including Candace Wasacase-Lafferty, senior director, Indigenous Engagement.

“It was important to everyone that we emphasize that the land acknowledgments be delivered in a respectful and insightful manner,” said Wasacase-Lafferty. “This

**“It was important to everyone that we emphasize that the land acknowledgements be delivered in a respectful and insightful manner.”**

CANDACE WASACASE-LAFFERTY

statement was certainly a good way to begin.” University officials engaged in extensive consultation with Elders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty, students, staff, and community members, on the language and intention behind the statement. The intent was that the message be respectful and acknowledge the land itself, and the ancestral lands of the people who have resided in this territory for centuries.

Dr. Stryker Calvez (PhD) is the manager of Indigenous Education Initiatives at the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning (GMCTL) at the University of Saskatchewan. GMCTL contributes by offering consultations, workshops and programming to many topics just like this.

Calvez states that, “It is more than just about the land that we belong to, it is also about our relationship to the land and sky, to the plants and animals, to this place that has made us who we are today.

“It is our spiritual connection to a place that has nurtured and shaped our languages, stories, beliefs and ways of knowing. Land acknowledgements don’t just recognize the past and the people who lived here before now, these statements recognize the spirit of the place and our relationship to it, like the relationships we have with our parents and families. It is also about the treaties we signed and scrip that we were offered. The oral stories describing the treaty and scrip processes provide our account of the agreement to share our land and resources, but not to absolute surrender the land.”

Calvez believes that land acknowledgements are meant to be said with your heart and mind to convey the truth about this sacred and special relationship to place.

Treaty agreements also bring clarity to

the importance of acknowledgements. Indigenous leaders signed treaties with the Crown with the intention to share the resources. Even though the treaties were written in legalese English, and because of this, as the Royal Commissions and courts tell us, much of the spirit, intent and oral promises of the treaties were dismissed for the betterment of the new fledgling country. It was not entirely what was lost in translation that was to blame, there was deception and prejudicial reinterpretation during the maligned legislative and systemic processes that the federal government sought to replace the treaties with (e.g., the Indian Act 1976).

Today, with the affirmation of treaties as part of the supreme law of Canada, a new emphasis is being placed on the importance of treaty, land- and place-based education across Canada. This presents an opportunity for the sharing of knowledge and experience of treaties by Indigenous Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers, and experts. The knowledge gained and stories learned from these sources should be treasured and respected.

Ottmann emphasized as well that, “Land acknowledgement is a small step in the right direction, and the next step is educating non-Indigenous and Indigenous people of its significance and some of the work that has already happened in this area. The land is life and it determines and supports our existence – the quality of our health.”

While renewing the connection to the land, we are reminded of the constitutional foundation of Saskatchewan and how we are all reliant on one another. This renewed relationship could be part of healing, and strengthening the spirit of reconciliation. We have the opportunity to help realize

the treaty promises made with Indigenous peoples, to honour the past and the future through traditional and cultural values such as identity, kinship, language and ceremony. The spirit of reconciliation along with meaningful community engagement can strengthen our university, province and country.

For those of us who study, work and contribute at the university, we can pay respect to the treaties and our constitutional heritage through proper protocols, land and place acknowledgement. The Land Acknowledgement statement from the University of Saskatchewan was created with the intention of providing a common respectful practice within our community, perhaps intended to be used for more formal occasions or speaking engagements. It is important for our USask community to affirm a respectful relationship with the land that we occupy and to ensure a sustainable future for us all.

In looking to our future, it is evident that land acknowledgment education is important for us all; it can promote a sense of responsibility for not only ourselves but for our youth.

Canada and Saskatchewan citizens continue to benefit from the treaty and land agreements between federal and provincial governments and Indigenous peoples. So, acknowledging traditional territories and homelands that we are on recognizes and honours this legacy. ♥

**Thank you – Sákéj Henderson, IPC Wiyasiwewin Mikiwahp (Indigenous Law Centre); and Danielle Bitz, USask Libraries, and to those working delivering land acknowledgements... with heart and head.**

# USASK INDIGENOUS STUDIES AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES LIBRARIAN— DELIVERS ON PROMOTING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Deborah Lee is a mother and grandmother who comes from a Cree and Métis family in central Alberta. Her roots are from the Michel Cree Nation, which was one of two First Nations that was disbanded by the federal government in the 1950s. This First Nation tried to get their status back but it was rejected by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1998.

Having been raised for the most part outside of the Cree culture, Lee learned a lot about Indigenous ceremony, protocols and culture as an intern trainer for Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute near Edmonton.

A lot of that learning took place on the land. She believes it was ahead of its time, and trainees from across Canada were able to learn about their cultural differences. Lee wishes she could learn to speak and understand other languages (especially Cree) but shared that a hearing impediment prevents her from making distinctions between various sounds.

For seven years prior to starting at USask, Lee worked at the National Library of Canada. It offered a solid foundation for her in the application of professional practices. But she had always wanted to work in an academic library environment and was very happy to finally have that opportunity.

She was attracted to working at USask because of a new initiative she saw as unique, interesting and compelling – the Indigenous Studies Portal project. Her position as the Portal's team leader and librarian, along with the comparatively high number of Indigenous faculty and Indigenous students, had drawn her attention and interest.

In her current position, Lee develops the Indigenous Studies collection (including

films, books, databases, and journals/periodicals) at USask; teaches students, faculty and others about how to use Indigenous Studies library research resources, responds to research-related questions from researchers; advances the new discipline of Indigenous Librarianship; and works on various initiatives to promote Indigenous knowledges and cultural activities. This has meant everything from organizing storytelling and Indigenous Achievement Week events to planning and developing, on teams, campus-wide conferences (i.e. the New Sun Conference on Aboriginal Arts and Literatures) to decolonizing metadata initiatives, such as working with the library's cataloging unit to improve subject headings for describing Indigenous materials, to developing a decolonization awareness program for library employees and to Indigenousizing the Library Standards for Tenure and Promotion.

Since being at USask, Lee feels she has become well versed in becoming a leader as well as working in the technical side of libraries. She also learned about the tenure and promotion process, how to apply for research and other grants, and various intricacies of doing her own research and publishing in order to obtain tenure and promotion to full librarian status. It is because of these opportunities and work that she has a national and international reputation as a leader in the field of

Indigenous Librarianship.

There is a lot going on behind the scenes that librarians do, to make access to library resources available to their library users. Sometimes Lee spends a lot of time with IT and other technical staff (and others such as film distributors) to make this access appear seamless and effortless.

When asked if she had any favorite projects during her time at USask, Lee reflects, "I am very glad I had the opportunity to lead (with two other librarians) the Ithaka S+R qualitative research project to determine how library resources and services could be improved for Indigenous scholars at USask in 2018. We interviewed eight Indigenous faculty to inquire about what library research resources they used and what were lacking, as well as how the library could provide better supports throughout their research process. We used both western (grounded theory for analyzing the interview data) and Indigenous research methodologies, such as encouragement of storytelling during the interviews, and offering multiple opportunities to participants for consent throughout the research process in conducting this research."

USask was only one of 10 other educational institutions across Turtle Island who prepared their final reports; all 11 were synthesized into a capstone report



Deborah Lee

compiled by Ithaka S+R (a non-profit research organization based in New York City) following trends in higher education, including academic libraries), called *When Research is Relational*.

Although this was a tough question, especially for a librarian, we asked her what is the best book she has ever read? She shared, "This is a difficult one to answer given that there are so many good Indigenous authors. So, I'll choose two, one fiction and one non-fiction: Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (because I love her style of writing and because this novel in particular encompasses some political and colonial aspects that have made life unbearably difficult for Indigenous peoples and because it features a strong Indigenous medicine woman as the protagonist) and Alicia Elliott's *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground* (because she is so intelligent and because she is brave enough to talk about mental illness in her family and her own mental illness)."

Her favorite podcast is the Media/Indigena podcast and last year she finished reading Harold Johnson's *Peace and Good Order: The Case for Indigenous Justice in Canada*.

Lee has a son living in Edmonton and a daughter and son-in-law, grandson and granddaughter living in Vancouver. She says if she weren't working at USask, she would love to be a journalist covering Indigenous-related stories. ♥



Top: Elder Norman Fleury, President Peter Stoicheff, MN-S Education Minister Earl Cook, MN-S President Glen McCallum. Bottom: Debra Pozega Osburn and Vice-Provost Jacqueline Ottmann at the sign unveiling for P.A. campus.

## IN COMMUNITY, WITH COMMUNITY, BY COMMUNITY

Drawing from the wisdom, knowledges, cultures, traditions, histories, lived experiences and stories of Indigenous people, has guided new planning and initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan.

There is a renewed focus on institutional priorities and a systematic change which is giving way to rights-based relationships. In order to build capacity at the university there is an integration of this Indigenous knowledge being made into relevant curriculums.

Moving forward this has also meant the establishment of initiatives such as Indigenous Advisory Committees, a five-year Indigenous Community Engagement Plan, extensive inclusion and prioritization of Indigenous perspectives and aspirations within the University Plan 2025, and the Prince Albert Campus (a hub that will serve as a northern gateway for academic programming, research and engagement).

Partnerships provide USask with the community support as well as mutually beneficial goals and opportunities. The university has continued to sign agreements with organizations such as the Canadian Roots Exchange (CRE), the Federation of Saskatchewan Indigenous Nations (FSIN), the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC), and November 18 the latest MOU was signed with the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MN-S). ♥

# Our USask OVPIE Team

**Respectful and  
constructive engagement**

**Active communications**



**Jacqueline Ottmann**  
Vice-Provost  
Indigenous Engagement

**Systematic and systems  
transformation**

**System-wide learning**



**Debbie Venne**  
Executive Assistant  
Vice-Provost  
Indigenous  
Engagement



**Candice Pete**  
Associate Director  
Indigenous  
Engagement



**Candace Wasacase-  
Lafferty**  
Senior Director  
(Secondment with  
JSGS)



**Matthew Dunn**  
Indigenization  
and Reconciliation  
Co-ordinator



**Robert (Bob)  
Badger**  
Cultural Co-ordinator



**Meika Taylor**  
Project Manager  
Indigenous  
Initiatives



**Darla Isaak**  
Project Officer



**Shannon Cossette**  
Communications  
Officer

# Thank You!

There have been many Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Language keepers who have contributed to our new journey in 2018–19. We would like to thank them for their time and their sincere efforts to help guide us.

They have honoured us by sharing their wisdom, their time and their patience as we learn. All the best in this holiday season!

A special thank you to those who travelled to spend time with us during our gatherings.



Image back row: Senator Sol Sanderson, Cy Standing, Sonia Starblanket, Wendell Starblanket, Rosalie Tsannie-Burseth, Eugene Arcand, Larry Oakes, Anthony Blair Dreaver Johnston, Roland Duquette, Jacob Sanderson, Lorna Arcand, Louise Halfe, (the late) Frank Kayseas, Myrna Severight, Bob Badger, Enola Kayseas, Lyndon Linklater, Marie Battiste

Image front row: Jacob Pete, Leona Tootoosis, Margaret Keewatin, Maria Linklater, Monica Buffalo, Nora Cummings, May Henderson, Mona Creely-Johns

In addition to those not in this image: Maria Campbell, May Henderson, Norman Fleury, Murray Hamilton, Edwin St. Pierre, Harriet Oakes-St.Pierre.

**Third Annual**

**māmowi āsohtētān “Let’s Cross This Together”  
Building Reconciliation Internal Forum**

**An open gathering for all USask employees and students**

**Save the date**

**Friday, February 28, 2020  
Marquis Hall**

**[Indigenous.usask.ca](http://Indigenous.usask.ca)**

**Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous  
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**#USaskIndigenous @VPIE**



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Office of the Vice-Provost  
Indigenous Engagement

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