Before healing. Before reconciliation.
Why we still need to come to terms with the devastating legacy of residential schools.

TRUTH FIRST
“The littlest thing tripped me up in more ways than one.”

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I’ve been thinking about inclusivity—what it is, how to achieve it and what it means to community. As a young girl growing up, our large, circular kitchen table felt inclusive. There were eight of us kids and my parents. Suppertime was busy and noisy and involved jockeying for a spot, but as many as we were, there was always room at the table for an extra seat or two. I grew up in a small town and people often dropped in for a coffee, meal or game of crib. Food and conversation were shared with whoever knocked on our door, and the kitchen table was the gathering place welcoming all. For me, that table was a symbol of inclusivity.

As an adult, I expect more from my symbols. Of course, our kitchen table was a welcoming space and I’d like to think those who joined us felt included. But with time and experience, I know inclusivity requires much more than merely having a seat at the table. Inclusivity means all have voices and all voices are heard. It involves listening, understanding and creating a mutual sense of equality. It requires recognizing, accepting and celebrating the differences that make us the individuals we are.

As alumni, we share the value of education. I’m increasingly convinced education is needed, now more than ever, to build the kinds of inclusive communities we should demand—communities where every one of us has a chance to succeed. We must educate ourselves about who those communities are. By listening to what others have to say, learning about their history and acknowledging their experiences, we gain the insights needed to understand what it means to be University of Alberta alumni and to contribute, as our founders envisioned, to uplifting the whole people. The opportunity is now. Don’t wait. Educate yourself and then look around your many tables and ask yourself if there are voices you might invite into your circles—whether they are corporate, non-profit, activist or public service.

My family is big, our alumni family is bigger. The “kitchen table” that alumni share needs to continue to expand to include the diverse cultures, talents, perspectives, voices and possibilities of wave after wave of students who, in joining us, bring us as engaged and contributing citizens.

It has been my honour to serve as president. I am humbled by the great things U of A alumni achieve each and every day and will forever be grateful to have had this opportunity.

With great thanks and best wishes,
A Cultural Space in a Natural Place

In 2018, a new Islamic cultural garden is set to open in Alberta. The Aga Khan Garden will feature a courtyard with stepped stone terraces and a panoramic view, a fountain, an orchard and an amphitheatre. The University of Alberta Botanic Garden (formerly Devonian Botanic Garden) is creating this space, a gift from His Highness the Aga Khan, who donated in excess of $25 million to create it.

Like the existing Native Peoples Garden and Kurimoto Japanese Garden, the new garden will be a place where people will meander and learn while connecting with culture and nature.

An interpretive program will help visitors understand the garden’s plants and design, as well as Islamic traditions, music and poetry. The University of Alberta Botanic Garden partnered with the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences, a 15-minute southwest of Edmonton. The garden is not only a visitor attraction, but also a research facility and home to educational programming such as summer camps, visual arts and a master gardener certificate program.

The University of Alberta is ranked as the 31st most international university in the world for 2017, according to the World University Rankings published by Times Higher Education. The rankings are based on data about international staff, students and publication co-authors, as well as the school’s international reputation. International students make up nearly 17 per cent of undergrads and almost 39 per cent of grad students, while international professors account for more than 40 per cent of faculty.

This summer, Edmonton welcomes the 2017 World Indigenous Nations Games. Representatives from Indigenous groups in Western Canada, Brazil, Ethiopia, Panama, New Zealand, Russia and the United States will come to the city July 20; Twenty 6 Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild, ’67 BPE, ’75 MA, ’76 LLB, ’07 LL.D (Honorary), has been a strong proponent of an international Indigenous games for more than three decades. In addition to connecting Indigenous peoples across international lines, he said events such as this serve an important purpose for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada. The Games’ athletic events will be held at various venues in and around Edmonton, including University of Alberta facilities.

The Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences plans to implement a new doctor of pharmacy degree program for incoming students in September 2018. This undergraduate, clinical professional degree requires two years of pre-professional studies followed by four years of pharmacy education. The program was recently approved by the Government of Alberta’s Ministry of Advanced Education.

Student athletes and the entire Edmonton sport community can now use Foote Field year-round. A new inflatable dome turns the previously seasonal field into a multi-season training facility. The space can be divided into four separate sections to help support the development of track and field athletes. Foote Field is a used by Golden Bears and Pandas athletes and for special public events. It also hosts intramural and recreational programming.

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Research Rises From the Ashes

A special grant lets researchers look at how Alberta wildfires are affecting firefighters’ physical and mental health

In early May 2016, a large but relatively benign fire burning southwest of Fort McMurray, Alta., suddenly turned into a fierce blaze that became known as “The Beast.” Dozens of fire crews from municipalities and wild-land forces from around the province and beyond worked to save the city.

As weary firefighters returned from the front lines, University of Alberta epidemiologist Nicola Cherry was there to measure the toll that heavy smoke and ash had taken on first responder respiratory systems.

Over the following weeks, Cherry’s team tested more than 350 firefighters across the province. Understanding how mental and physical hardships are affecting those who fought this enormous fire is at the heart of a special two-year, $500,000 grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Canadian Red Cross, Alberta Innovates and other partners.

“Of the people who went to the fire, we want to know if they have any particular clusters of ill health that we didn’t see in comparison groups,” says Cherry.

With regard to mental health, Cherry says her team is focusing on the kinds of support systems that were in place in the more than 50 forces throughout Alberta that sent people to the fire.

This search for best practices also includes finding factors that might mitigate the health effects of fires, such as the type of masks firefighters were wearing and for how long.

“If one force did something that worked particularly well, we can recommend it to everybody else,” she says. -Michael Brown

Fake News and Surviving a Post-truth World

With Oxford Dictionaries naming “post-truth” as word of the year for 2016 and fact-checking sites registering “false” on countless politicians’ claims, many people might question whether accuracy and fact even matter anymore. And, perhaps more importantly, wonder how to sort out what’s real and what’s fabricated in their daily newsfeed.

We asked a journalist, a media expert and a psychologist to offer their thoughts on media literacy in a post-truth world. Listen to their full panel discussion, recorded on Jan. 5, 2017, online at uab.ca/fakenews.

“Opinion that doesn’t have an argument behind it, that doesn’t have evidence behind it, is not the same thing as a well-thought-out, documented, reflective point of view. [Don’t] give up on information or news. Try to become a critic rather than a cynic. Approach information from an open-minded and flexible point of view. Look for indicators that the quality of the information is high and try to suspend having an emotional reaction.”

Jason Harley
Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta

“The real challenge in a time when newsrooms are shrinking is that we still do investigative, original journalism, that we’re not just responding. As a pundit, I never want to be the one who’s just drinking someone else’s bathwater... Things that prey on our fears and our paranoia, things that inspire us to fear our neighbours are often the most dangerous.”

Paula Simons
Journalist and Columnist, The Edmonton Journal

“[Don’t] give up on information or news. Try to become a critical and flexible point of view. Look for indicators that the quality of the information is high and try to suspend having an emotional reaction.”

Tim Currie
Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Alberta
Shaun Smyth, ‘84 BFA, was featured in the Hamilton Spectator as he brought his version of retired NHL player Theo Fleury to the stage this past winter when he starred in Playing With Fire. A one-man show, Smyth has also appeared at the Stratford Festival and in movies and television, including The Killing, Murdoch Mysteries and Arrow. — HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Mai Nguyen, ’14 B(Chem) (Food), is a finalist on the fourth season of MasterChef Canada. Over the course of 12 episodes, the home cooking contestants are tested using mystery boxes, pressure tests and team and elimination challenges. As of press time, Nguyen was in the top five. — YAGOOD FINANCE

A popular mystery dancer on YouTube recently revealed himself to be engineer Michael Starrev, ’09 B(Eng) (Phys), ’11 MSc. Until now, Starrev has been known as a dancer in a suit and bowler hat going by the name Forsythe. His YouTube channel has received 99 million views and has more than 188,000 subscribers around the world. Forsythe’s first self-made video, posted a decade ago, has logged 38 million views. While he has no formal dance training, Starrev has performed around the world and been featured in the New York Times, the Financial Times and Forbes. — CBC

The University of Alberta is a leader in the artificial intelligence industry and will now get a piece of a government-funding pie. The federal government recently announced $125 million for the pan-Canadian AI Strategy to enhance research and recruit talent. It’s unknown how much money is earmarked for the U of A, but it will be shared among institutions in Montreal and Toronto-Waterloo.

“The money that comes here to the University of Alberta is going to be used to … bring in some of the world leaders to interact with the best that are already here,” says U of A President David Turpin.

“The public research is always garnering media attention. Here’s the lowdown on what’s been causing a buzz.

**Oil Pipelines Better Than Rail for Emissions: Study**

Engineering professor Amit Kumar, ‘04 PhD, used computer modelling to show that pipeline transportation emitted between 61 and 77 per cent fewer greenhouse gas emissions than hauling by rail. The research team ran scenarios using bitumen and synthetic crude and varied the distance travelled and the number of barrels transported to measure the greenhouse gas output. It didn’t take many barrels — more than 50,000 barrels per day of bitumen — before pipelines were revealed to emit fewer emissions per unit. This study, which was published in the Journal of Environmental Science & Technology, measured emissions generated by building the railway or pipeline, as well as those output during operation. — ECO

A GLOBAL LEADER IN AI RESEARCH

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**The Factors of Focus**

We go through life weaving around people and objects like a boxer in the ring. There is so much activity and noise around us. How do we manage to focus on anything? Luckily our brains have figured it out. New research shows that our brains select useful information and ignore the rest. Our brains oscillate at different frequencies, and each frequency has a different role. The study, published by Kyle Mathewson, assistant professor of psychology in the Faculty of Science, and graduate student Sayed Kazik in the fall 2016 edition of the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience, looked at 12 hertz alpha oscillations, a mechanism used to ignore a certain stimulus so the brain can focus on something specific and disregard unnecessary information. If, for example, there is a repetitive stimulus, such as a person’s voice in a lecture theatre, these brainwaves lock onto the timing of the voice and allow the listener to block out other minor distractions. Mathewson is now working on stimulating the brain at alpha frequencies to understand how to improve performance, attention and safety in real-world situations. — EDMONTON SUN

A stunning new outdoor garden will bloom in 2018 at the University of Alberta Botanic Garden. The Aga Khan Garden, Alberta, is a symbol of the ongoing partnership between the University of Alberta and the Aga Khan Development Network — a collaboration that has fostered intellectual, cultural and educational exchange for over a decade.

Unique to Edmonton’s northern climate and inspired by Islamic landscape architecture, the garden will offer a space for connection, contemplation and education, enabling cultural understanding to flourish. This is just the second Islamic garden in North America and the northernmost in the world. It will join a network of Islamic gardens built or restored by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture around the globe.

With secluded forest paths, wide, stepped terraces that adapt to the seasons, geometric water features that stream into wetlands, and a spectacular orchard of local plants, the Aga Khan Garden will transform the landscape and perspective of visitors alike.

The University of Alberta is grateful to His Highness the Aga Khan for a gift in excess of $25 million for the new garden. The Aga Khan Garden embodies extensive research, creative design and broad thinking to enhance the visitor experience. Learn more at uab.ca/akg and at akdn.org

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– Megan Strickfaden

Put on Your Cape: It’s Time to Go Out

Danny Wein, ’98 BSc(Hons), is an avid outdoorsman who immerses himself in nature often and enthusiastically.

Wein was in a motorcycle accident in South America in 1998 that injured his lower brain stem and took away his mobility. That doesn’t stop him from getting outside whenever he can with a backwoods-access wheelchair pulled by helpers, but until now his activities have been restricted to summer or to short winter outings because his extremities get cold very quickly.

Now, a clothing system designed by Megan Strickfaden, ’98 BA(Spec), ’02 MDes, means he can be active outdoors for as long as he wants, year-round.

“There are no clothing options for people with mobility challenges when it comes to doing winter outdoor activities, let alone activities that verge on extreme, such as sit-skiing or sit-skating,” says Strickfaden, an associate professor of design studies and material culture in the Department of Human Ecology.

Without functional and comfortable winter clothing, she says, people with limited mobility simply won’t go outdoors for extended periods. “That can create isolation and depression,” she says.

Strickfaden worked with Xiaokun Yu, a visiting scholar from Donghua University, and local manufacturers to develop the clothing, which consists of 60 special features, including a high-tech poncho with fitted shoulders and hood, plus two bottom options.

Wein and others are testing the prototype this winter through the Alberta Abilities Lodges, founded by Wein’s parents, Eleanor and Ross Wein, former U of A faculty members.

The goal is to refine the design and produce the clothing for the global market.

Strickfaden’s designs garnered her an award in December from the Premier’s Council on the Status of Persons With Disabilities. – Helen Metella

Salt Could Save Lives

Salt has been used for thousands of years as currency, a food preservative and a religious offering. We sprinkle it on icy roads and bland foods and wonder: is there anything salt can’t do? Well, there’s yet another reason why salt is amazing.

Hyo-Jick Choi, a professor in the Department of Chemical and Materials Engineering, developed a way to treat common surgical masks with salt so they can trap and kill airborne viruses.

When we sneeze, airborne pathogens travel fast and far. And while surgical masks trap the spray of virus-laden droplets, they don’t kill the virus. Just removing the mask and touching the droplets can spread the infection. Viruses trapped in respirators pose the same risks.

So, while a surgical-style mask protects from infectious droplets, it doesn’t help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome or influenza, says Choi.

Masks that could kill viruses would save lives, especially in an epidemic or pandemic. Choi and his team explored ways to improve the filter on these inexpensive masks. They developed a salt mixture that, when applied to the mask, would “deactivate” the influenza virus.

When an aerosol droplet carrying an influenza virus contacts the treated filter, the droplet absorbs the salt. The virus is then exposed to increasing concentrations of salt and, as the salt evaporates, the crystals’ sharp edges destroy the virus.

Choi sees few roadblocks to implementation and has a provisional patent for the development of virus deactivation systems. His research results appear in the journal Scientific Reports.

– With files from Richard Carney

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Salt Could Save Lives

Salt has been used for thousands of years as currency, a food preservative and a religious offering. We sprinkle it on icy roads and bland foods and wonder: is there anything salt can’t do? Well, there’s yet another reason why salt is amazing.

Hyo-Jick Choi, a professor in the Department of Chemical and Materials Engineering, developed a way to treat common surgical masks with salt so they can trap and kill airborne viruses.

When we sneeze, airborne pathogens travel fast and far. And while surgical masks trap the spray of virus-laden droplets, they don’t kill the virus. Just removing the mask and touching the droplets can spread the infection. Viruses trapped in respirators pose the same risks.

So, while a surgical-style mask protects from infectious droplets, it doesn’t help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome or influenza, says Choi.

Masks that could kill viruses would save lives, especially in an epidemic or pandemic. Choi and his team explored ways to improve the filter on these inexpensive masks. They developed a salt mixture that, when applied to the mask, would “deactivate” the influenza virus.

When an aerosol droplet carrying an influenza virus contacts the treated filter, the droplet absorbs the salt. The virus is then exposed to increasing concentrations of salt and, as the salt evaporates, the crystals’ sharp edges destroy the virus.

Choi sees few roadblocks to implementation and has a provisional patent for the development of virus deactivation systems. His research results appear in the journal Scientific Reports.

– With files from Richard Carney
After more than 100 years, The Gateway newspaper morphed into a monthly magazine with a website for breaking news and interactive features. Karen Unland, who ran the paper in 1992-93, sat down with Josh Greschner, the editor-in-chief who presided over this past year of monumental change. Greschner says the main challenge is to reinterpret The Gateway’s identity and its place on campus.

Q: What were you most afraid of?  
A: Honestly, I was too unaware of everything to be afraid. It was pure piss and vinegar. It was pure dumb hope. With the magazine part, it must have been the same feeling they had 100 years ago, where it’s like, “OK, let’s make it happen.” There was a lot more improving than we thought, and there was a lot more improving than I would have preferred.

Q: Because you didn’t realize the extent to which making a magazine is a different rhythm than a newspaper?  
A: Yeah, rhythm, that’s the word. What has to happen when, and who has to be organized to do what. I came into it thinking, “Oh yeah, it’s an editor job. I’m going to sit and make the content really good.” You realize that no, this role is pretty removed from content production. It’s more like direction.

Q: In my day, we were doing two newspapers a week, so there was no way I could be hands-on with anything at that pace. The job was managing people, not dealing with words.  
A: It’s a good learning experience. It turns you into an adult. You’d better adapt, or you’ll just get steamrolled. I had to change myself in order for [the changes] to work.

Q: How did you change yourself?  
A: I basically learned how the [budget] would work for a publication that has this amount of staff, that has this amount to publish, that gets this amount of money at these certain times. How to file taxes, what an audit requires, a lot of that non-profit stuff! Another part of The Gateway that is overlooked a lot is the applied job skills it’ll give you, not only going into journalism. You could learn how to basically run a small business. —Karen Unland, ’94 BA, with files from Matt Rea, ’13 PhD

This conversation has been edited and condensed.
Remote Electricity

By Karen Sherlock

Imagine not having to hunt for an outlet for your laptop because your cafe table charges it automatically. Or arriving in a disaster zone and tapping into the ground to provide electricity to an entire neighbourhood within minutes.

That’s the future some University of Alberta researchers envision. With a system they’ve dubbed QWiC power—short for quasi-wireless capacitive—the research team in the Faculty of Engineering has wirelessly powered everything from cellphones and lamps to motors and wheelchairs, simply by sitting them on tinfoil, desks and floors. Most recently, in a discovery published by Cambridge University Press, the team transmitted electricity through the ground, opening up a whole new area of potential.

Real-world applications could be ready in as little as two years and the technology could eventually make electrical outlets and power lines obsolete, says Charles Van Neste, a member of the research team led by Canada Excellence Research Chair Thomas Thundat.

At a lab in the Department of Chemical and Materials Engineering, Van Neste explains how “remote electricity” works using a small robotic crab and an everyday piece of aluminum foil.

Why It’s Exciting
Remote electricity has some big advantages over traditional electrical systems, Van Neste says.

• It’s less wasteful. The energy is transmitted only when a “load” is present. (A load is the portion of a circuit, like an appliance or light bulb, that consumes electricity.)
• There’s no risk of electrocution. A human body cannot complete a standing wave circuit, as it can with a traditional looped system.
• Energy is transferred at about 95 per cent efficiency, which is better than current wireless technologies.
• Remote electricity doesn’t fill the air with electromagnetic fields.

Charging Forward
So what’s the big deal? You can already charge cellphones by laying them on the surface of a charging device. The difference, Van Neste says, is that most wireless chargers today use “field coupling.” Two transmitters generate a magnetic field between them, and your device must be within the field to access power. QWiC power doesn’t generate a magnetic field, so its use is restricted only by the size of the charged surface.
Facing the Painful Truth

IT'S SO MUCH EASIER TO RETREAT BEHIND EXCUSES, BUT HEALING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FIRST REQUIRES SELF-AWARENESS

ON A SNOWY DAY IN JANUARY, I joined my daughter's Grade 6 class on a trip to the Alberta legislature.

I had looked forward to it for many reasons. When I was in elementary school I had taken a similar trip, and I am given to nostalgia. I had worked in the building twice—once as a university student and again as a journalist. Upstairs, we walked rather quickly past the galleries of esteemed men with grey hair. There is an excellent display about the Famous Five. But the longest line on the plaque, “In anguish over the declining position of his people … .”

In French, our young tour guide explained about Treaty 6 and Treaty 7, about residential schools, about the Indian Act. My daughter paused at the building twice—once as a university student and again as a journalist. In French, our young tour guide explained about Treaty 6 and Treaty 7, about residential schools, about the Indian Act. My daughter paused at the building twice—once as a university student and again as a journalist.

In middle age, I'm in the same position as my 11-year-old daughter. We're both standing in front of the Crowfoot statue, feeling the word anguish, trying to understand. I have not yet figured out how I might improve things, apart from asking questions honestly and curiously, reading and fighting every instinct to form an opinion on an issue I know nothing about.

Todd Babiak ’85 BA, works at a strategy company called Story Engine. His latest work of fiction, Sun of France, is published by HarperCollins.

The kids asked a lot of questions that day, but the best of them were in front of the statue of Crowfoot. I realized, listening to them, that these students knew far more about Indigenous issues than I did when I graduated from university.

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"WE ARE CALLING ON YOU TO OPEN UP YOUR MIND, TO BE WILLING TO LEARN THESE STORIES, TO BE WILLING TO ACCEPT THAT THESE THINGS HAPPENED. THIS IS NOT AN ABORIGINAL ISSUE, IT’S A CANADIAN ISSUE."

Wilton Littlechild, TRC commissioner, June 2015

TRUTH FIRST

More than 150,000 children were removed from their homes. The government wanted to ‘civilize’ them. The church wanted to ‘save’ them. What really happened to Indigenous people has been Canada’s shameful secret for more than 150 years. In the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report on residential schools, we are only just starting to come to terms with Canada’s true history.
BEGINNINGS

Understanding the history of Canada’s residential school system is not just looking backward; it’s an essential part of learning how to move forward together.

By Lisa Cook

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN HERE?

AT SOME POINT, you inevitably ask yourself — what if it were me?

If the RCMP came knocking at my door. If it was me they told, “Surrender your child or go to jail.” If I had to watch her put on a train, scared and alone, with all the other children who were scared and alone? If I knew that when she arrived they would cut her hair, strip her naked and delouse her with kerosene? That she would be stripped of her name and reduced to a number?

How helpless would I feel knowing I couldn’t protect her? Or would I even know that the people I’d trusted to care for my child would hit her and punish her in countless other ways that could only be called abuse. That she might be dragged from her bed last at night and raped. That she would learn to be ashamed of her family. Ashamed of herself.

And if she died there, where nobody cared or consoled or hugged her; they would keep her body, too, because it was too expensive to send her home to be buried next to her ancestors.

If what it were my child?

The truth is hard to hear. Even if you know about Canada’s residential school legacy, the scope of what happened is difficult to grasp. For more than a century and a half the federal government methodically removed First Nations children from their families with the intention of stamping out Indigenous culture.

The residential school experience was different for Métis and Inuit people, but that doesn’t mean it was better. The truth — of how bad it was, how widespread, how recent, how intentional it was — still comes as a surprise. “How did we know this?” is a recurring question. “How did this happen here?”

For seven years, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada — including Treaty 6 Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild, ’67 BPE, ’75 MA, ’76 LLB, ’79 LL.D; (Honorary) — traveled the country listening to survivors and uncovering the facts. In 2015, the TRC released its final report, laying out some of the hard truths you just read about. The commission issued 94 calls to action, essentially asking every person in this country: Now that you know, what are you going to do about it?

The TRC is officially established in 2008.

The Davison Report calls on the government to establish a boarding school system that separates children from their parents to better “civilize” Indigenous children.

The Indian Advancement Act provides funds for the creation of residential schools to be operated by the government and the churches.

The agreement between the churches and government ends, making the federal government responsible for the remaining schools. A few local bands take control of the schools.

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history at the time, sets aside a multi-billion dollar fund for survivors and funds a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC is officially established in 2008.

Canada and Residential Schools

Canada’s residential school system stemmed directly from the government’s goal of assimilating all Indigenous peoples. Here is a look at how some government policies and laws launched and sustained the residential system.

**Canadian Laws and Policies Concerning Indigenous Peoples**

A royal proclamation by King George III states that all lands remain property of Indigenous peoples unless they are either ceded or sold, saying Indigenous people “shall not be molest or disturbed” in the quest for territory.

The Bagot Commission recommends assimilating Indigenous peoples by separating children from their parents.

Under the Constitution Act, Indigenous peoples are subject to a federal responsibility.

The Indian Act establishes who is an Indigenous person. An amendment to the Indian Act bans two Indigenous ceremonies, including the potlatch. Later amendments outlaw more ceremonies, dances and festivals.

Bans on traditional practices and ceremonies are removed.

Status Indians gain the right to vote without giving up their status.

An amendment to the Constitution Act recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples makes 607 recommendations, including an inquiry into the effects of residential schools.

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history at the time, sets aside a multi-billion dollar fund for survivors and funds a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC is officially established in 2008.

The TRC releases its final report and 94 calls to action.
A DIFFERENT VIEW OF HISTORY:
an elder talks about what the treaties mean to Indigenous peoples and what it means to teach and learn in a traditional way

As told to Lisa Cook

‘WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER. THAT’S HOW IT WAS MEANT TO BE.’

NEW TRAIL

TRUTH FIRST

BEGINNINGS

We, too, sought the elder’s wisdom for this issue of New Trail. O’Chiese, who was raised to respect and listen to his elders, spoke to us about the treaties.

New Trail is available online at

ualberta.ca/newtrail

PHOTO BY JOHN ULAN

The Foothills Ojibway hid their children, so Jimmy O’Chiese was raised on the reservation. The knowledge he shares as an elder stems from traditional teachings.

The Spirit and Intent of the Treaties

‘There’s the constitution from England; there’s the constitution that was here. If you ever look at the wampum belt — the first treaty that was negotiated — it says it right there. Side by side. Not integration, side by side. Because we had our own education; we had our own laws; we had our own governance. We had our way of life, and we shared that with the Europeans that came here. And you must share that — work together. That’s what that treaty was. Two laws, not only one side. Things will never work if only one side of the treaty is interpreted, if only one law is interpreted.

That is why we need to interpret the treaty from our side. The Queen has her own laws and we didn’t decide what those laws are. She [can decide] what’s good for her people, right? What about the other way? No, somebody decided what’s good for the Indian, what kind of Aboriginal laws they should have. We didn’t decide that — we didn’t even decide how this land is going to be divided up and separated. Divide the land also to divide people.

“When the settlers came, we were already here. We already had our own laws, which were later on outlawed by the Indian Act. The Canadian government decided what kind of rights we should have as the original peoples of this land. What I see, where we need to start, is to really understand the agreement. Why we are meant to co-exist here and what that treaty means — then the education that comes with it.”

Why the Treaties Are Unfinished Business

“We shared the land with the Crown. And the Crown has its own constitution and, ourselves, we have our own constitution. Our constitution is part of the four directions, which is our relationship to the land. As long as the sun rises, as long as water flows, as long as grass grows, as long as there’s Native people. Which is why the mark of the X was acceptable when we signed the treaty.

“You can see the X symbol on the original treaty documents. You can see that X symbol on the four directions, too, which is yet to be interpreted from our side, from what that X means based on the spirit and intent of treaties. Among Indigenous peoples, we were already using treaties. We knew about treaties. Speaks in Anishinaabe. So, if we don’t understand each other today, [are the treaties] finished? It’s unfinished business because our interpretation of treaty was outlawed, our education was outlawed, our governance was outlawed.”

Education From Two Points of View

‘To indigenize education’ is to put our native education into a box and teach it from a European interpretation. It’s another way of Europeans describing another and learn what it truly means to each other’s own education. Treaties are about agreeing to co-exist.”

How Individuals Can Make a Difference

‘Learn from one another. Learn about what it means people now call Canada, but that we always called Turtle Island. Share with one another and learn what it truly means to share with one another. Education is part of the treaties. Learn about the education that we once had before Europeans arrived. Recognize the land-based education that was written on the land, and help bring it back the way it has always existed.

“We need to work together. That’s how it was meant to be.”

Sacred Ritual

A pipe ceremony is a sacred ritual that connects the physical and spiritual worlds and is akin to a binding agreement in western culture. Indigenous peoples believe the fire in the pipe represents the sun, the source of life, and the tobacco links the Earth and sky, as the plant’s roots grow into the soil and the smoke carries prayers to the Creator. Before any important matters are addressed, the pipe is presented; only truth and commitment must follow.

Binding Agreements

When Indigenous peoples entered into numbered post-Confederation treaties with the Crown between 1871 and 1921, they saw the pipe ceremonies and subsequent treaty negotiations as significant acts that bound the two sides into mutually beneficial agreements. These “numbered” treaties cover what is now northern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and parts of the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and British Columbia. There are three treaty areas in Alberta — 4, 6 and 8. The University of Alberta sits on Treaty 6 land.

Treaty 6

When Treaty 6 was signed in 1876, it involved 60 First Nations across what is now central Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The Crown, wanting to open the land to settlement without conflict, offered First Nations reserve land and various other guarantees. First Nations, fearing intrusion on their land, starvation due to dwindling natural resources and disease such as smallpox, agreed to settlers’ use of the land in exchange for assistance in the transition to a new lifestyle.

Two Perspectives

The written version of Treaty 6 includes such promises as annual cash payments to band members; agricultural implements including livestock, twine and ammunition; a “medicine chest” for each reserve; a school; the right to hunt, trap and fish; and rations in times of famine and pestilence. From the Indigenous perspective, there were in addition to their existing rights, including their own governance system, laws, language, culture and traditional use of the land.
Stretched flat on the earth just outside the Saddle Lake Reserve two hours’ drive east of Edmonton, I opened my eyes and gazed into the sky. The warm sun was overhead. I was soaking wet but could feel the prickly prairie fescue under my bare back and calves. There were voices nearby, soft and subdued, though one, that of a small child, Atayoh, was more animated. The sweat lodge was being disassembled behind me. Unable to move, I understood that a purification of some kind had just taken place. Elders and knowledge keepers had told us beforehand that inside the sweat’s black void and volcanic heat we might be gifted with answers or struck by visions or pass out, or that ancestors might speak to us or that the Creator might heal a spiritual wound. But in stage after stage of the sweat, what I felt was a peeling away of layers—layers of experience, history, assumption, persona, misinformation. The lodge’s total interior darkness meant there was only one place to look: inside.

The chants and songs and prayers hit a hypnotic level by the time all the rocks were in the centre pit, glowing like molten lava starting to crust over. When the last prayer ended and the lodge tarp was pulled back, I was capable of forming only one thought. Today, we start over.
TRUTH FIRST

you find them. Since Confederation, but even more pointedly during the greater part of the 20th century, it became legislative decree from the pope) to conquer and convert. It was thereafter dissolve their family customs and bonds at every turn. And at home before being placed in a residential school. Another few years of playing with his grandparents, bonding with his mother, delighting his community. And then he’d be gone. His parents and grandparents might never have seen him again.

It was this way for 150,000 Indigenous children and their families across the history of the Indian residential school system, part of a practice that lasted for more than a century. The 2015 final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, a seven-year undertaking, was the first real attempt to come to terms with how residential schools were used by the Canadian government as a tool among many to eradicate Indigenous culture, ceremony and identity. On the very first page of the TRC report, the authors note the residential school system is “difficult to accept as something that could have happened in a country such as Canada, which has long prided itself on being a bastion of democracy, peace and kindness throughout the world.” I saw that day, as clearly as I saw the perfect line of the playing. “Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic,” government in 2012 and 2013 to force it to produce documentation related to the history of residential schools. It took a judicial ruling to obtain much of it. Cultural genocide wasn’t just something that happened in our country; it made our country.

From the words of Sir John A. Macdonald in 1883 when he told the House of Commons that “Indians” were “savages,” to public works minister Hector Langevin telling Parliament, also in 1883, that if left in the family home, Indian children would “remain savages,” to deputy minister of Indian affairs Duncan Campbell Scott telling a parliamentary committee in 1900 that “our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic,” and to Harold Robinson, a survivor of the Kamloops Residential School.

At the time of first contact, European colonizers believed they had divine authority (under a papal bull, a kind of public interest. It would have been (and still would be) fiscally impossible for the Crown to fully meet its treaty obligations.

It was an integral part of a conscious policy of cultural genocide. (See Canada’s inception, have many of which involve education in one way or another. It’s important to understand that virtually everything that took place in a residential school, and many of the atrocities inflicted on Indigenous peoples since Canada’s inception, have been the result of deliberate decisions at the highest levels of government. The crimes against Indigenous peoples cannot be dismissed as the actions of rogue priests or sociopathic schoolmasters. As the TRC states, residential schooling was always more than simply an educational program: it was an integral part of a conscious policy of cultural genocide. (See Canada and Residential Schools, page 21.)

Fay Fletcher, 84, BPE, ’94 MSc, ’04 PhD. Makokis, who is from Saddle Lake Cree Nation, went on to earn her doctorate in education from the University of San Diego and is currently on a three-year appointment with the University of Alberta to work in Indigenous relations. Fletcher, who is of white European descent, is associate dean in the Faculty of Extension and an associate professor focusing on education and Indigenous issues. They often work as a team to help the university, government and business find an ethical, intellectual and emotional space from which to begin thinking about how to make reconciliation possible. Typically, they lead discussions and offer presentations on history and current realities, and where each one of us fits into finding a way forward.

“The possible,” Makokis told me, when we met in Fletcher’s office at Enterprise Square last fall, “that Fay and I are starting to have a bit of success because we’ve been doing this work together for so long. It’s challenging, but it is exciting.”

The first morning of the Building Reconciliation Forum demonstrated precisely how great the challenge is. We were reminded that Canada was, in large part, founded on the practice of a major roadblock to nation-building, namely Indigenous people and their treaty claims. Cultural genocide wasn’t just something that happened in our country; it made our country.

Perhaps not. In 2008, then-prime minister Stephen Harper publicly apologized in Parliament to Indigenous peoples on behalf of the nation, but his government has proceeded to hinder the work of the TRC. In fact, the TRC had to sue the Canadian government in 2012 and 2013 to force it to produce documentation related to the history of residential schools. It took a judicial ruling to obtain much of the documentation that led to the TRC’s final report, more than 900,000 documents in total.

Canada, meaning both the government and individual Canadians, has committed atrocities against Indigenous peoples under many covers. But through a process of cultural regeneration and spiritual preservation a step forward, has had few, if any, of its recommendations met in full. That’s history, part of the truth. We know better now, and we are smarter and more ethically inclined. Right?

The attempts at eradication continued unabated. The Canadian government used Indigenous peoples as lab rats for nutritional experiments in the mid-20th century. They often work as a team to help the university, government and business find an ethical, intellectual and emotional space from which to begin thinking about how to make reconciliation possible. Typically, they lead discussions and offer presentations on history and current realities, and where each one of us fits into finding a way forward.

The CRIMES AGAINST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CANNOT BE DISMISSED AS THE ACTIONS OF ROGUE PRIESTS OR SOCIOPATHIC SCHOOLMASTERS.

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The child’s voice rose with joy. Atayoh was playing with his grandfather, Eugene Makokis, whose wife, Pat Makokis, ’79 BEd, had invited me to the sweat. Atayoh was running around near the sweat lodge, carrying a small piece of birch, waving it like a wand and laughing. My brain was beginning to process again and I began to consider what the future held for a child like Atayoh. He was only two years old, but even a single generation ago he might have had just a few more years at home before being placed in a residential school. Another few years of playing with his grandparents, bonding with his mother, delighting his community. And then he’d be gone. His parents and grandparents might never have seen him again.

It was this way for 150,000 Indigenous children and their families across the history of the Indian residential school system, part of a practice that lasted for more than a century. The 2015 final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, a seven-year undertaking, was the first real attempt to come to terms with how residential schools were used by the Canadian government as a tool among many to eradicate Indigenous culture, ceremony and identity. On the very first page of the TRC report, the authors note the residential school system is “difficult to accept as something that could have happened in a country such as Canada, which has long prided itself on being a bastion of democracy, peace and kindness throughout the world.” I saw that day, as clearly as I saw the perfect line of the perfect line of the playing. “Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic,” government in 2012 and 2013 to force it to produce documentation related to the history of residential schools. It took a judicial ruling to obtain much of it. Cultural genocide wasn’t just something that happened in our country; it made our country.

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Canada, meaning both the government and individual Canadians, has committed atrocities against Indigenous peoples under many covers. But through a process of cultural regeneration and spiritual preservation akin to keeping a single match alight in a hurricane, Indigenous peoples in Canada have somehow managed to survive. And now here we are. Thirty-five million treaty people — Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike — needing to heal from a dishonourable and
contemptible past. Which leads us to a rather vexing question. Now what?

Back at the Building Reconciliation Forum, Wab Kinew—political broadcaster and advocate—offered one starting point. Non-Indigenous Canada must “recover” from the myth of cultural superiority. “It still persists,” he said. “It’s still with us. There is a spiritual and intellectual legacy to Indigenous culture. And it’s not too much to ask that people learn about the nations where they live.” Indigenous scholar Steven Newcomb put it a different way. The shared history of the two peoples, he said, has been about domination and dehumanization. “And if we can’t tell the truth about that, we can’t reconcile. The point of the forum to talk about reconciliation, particularly in the post-secondary setting. Wendy Rodgers, U of A deputy provost, told the assembly about her own awakening, which began as she confronted her ignorance around the damage done by our colonial heritage. “I see the world differently,” said Rodgers, “recognizing that our university, like our country, has absorbed some of the colonial assumptions about the superiority of white, western ways and the inferiority of Indigenous peoples and their cultural practices. We have to learn that way of thinking. If we can, maybe the learning can begin. And as I found out a couple of weeks later, the process will be painful.

Number tags remain beside coat hooks in the downstairs mud rooms at Blue Quills university. Students at residential schools were assigned numbers and, for some, that became their only identity.

The stories about children who died at residential schools are certainly the most difficult sections of the TRC findings. Here is some of what the commission discovered.

We Don’t Know How Many Children Died

Many residential school records have been destroyed. Where there are records, principals often reported the number of children who died but didn’t name them. Deaths were not always reported to federal and provincial authorities, meaning there was no way to know for sure how many children died. A 2015 statistical analysis by the TRC of existing records lists 3,202 reported deaths from 1887 to 2000. In nearly half the cases, no cause of death was listed.

Death Rates Were Much Higher Than for Other Children

From 1941 to 1945, children in residential schools were 4.9 times more likely to die than children attending other schools. Tuberculosis accounted for nearly half of recorded deaths. Even as late as the 1960s, the death rate was still double that of other children.

Many Bodies Never Made It Home

In many cases, schools denied parents’ requests to send the bodies home because it was deemed too expensive. Many of the children who died in residential schools were buried in plots far from their homes and marked only by plain white crosses.

Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, pages 50-52
Jackson’s mother was released from residential school not long after that because her own mother died. She would’ve been 13 or 14, my mom 10 or 11.”

Jackson paused before sharing yet another horrifying story—one that had been told to her—voice faltering slightly. ‘Some sexual abuse were submitted as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The commission also worked to uncover the truth about deaths in residential schools. Volume I of the TRC report, Missing Children and Unmarked Burials, noted that fully half of the 3,200 children whose deaths were accounted for had no cause listed. One-quarter of those who did have a cause listed were attributed to natural causes. The commission identified one-third of the deceased were not named. One-quarter of those who did have a cause listed (who made up more than half of those who did have a cause listed). One-third of the deceased were not named. One-quarter were attributed to natural causes. The commission identified those people don’t understand the complex legacy of the residential schools, how generation after generation of Indigenous children were taken from their homes and taught to feel ashamed of their families and their culture. “I've been teaching about historic trauma for years, and I look at our community and it's so heartbreaking to see people in disparity and poverty and family violence and all these things. And I look around and I can see generations, three at least in some of these families, where they’re traumatized so badly that it's still rolling out in the problems in their families. And it's just heartbreaking. It's so heartbreaking because I understand it's all about unresolved grief.”

“Intergenerational trauma” is the term psychologists use to describe how generation after generation of survivors develop coping methods, lifestyles and even parenting styles rooted in the traumatic experiences of the past. The next generation adopts these lifestyles and parenting styles and then inevitably passes them along to the generation after that. Makokis knows finding a way to break that cycle is key to moving forward. “Our families to stop thinking about the veterans who died in the Second World War, just Get Over It? Why don’t you tell your friends and relatives of all of your ancestors who died? Why don’t you turn down and burn down all of those headstones that you put up for all of your friends and relatives over the years? It’s because it’s important for us to remember. We learn from it.”

And until people show that they have learned from this, we will never forget. And we should never forget, even once they have learned from it, because this is a part of who we are. It’s not just a part of who the survivors are, it’s a part of who their children and children of survivors and relatives of survivors, but it’s a part of who we are as a nation. And this nation must never forget what it once did to its most vulnerable people.”

Sen. Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, said Pat Makokis, the program director of Indigenous programs, Faculty of Extension and Law, at the University of Manitoba, told him about an incident where she was. The nun said she went home … these were five-year-old girls.”

Happening: Know the Disparity of What's Happening to My People.

“This sign has no graffiti. That's because it was a doctor and a lawyer? You know? We were poor like everybody else but we hung onto that culture. We could see the strength and the beauty and the teachings in that, in the sweat lodge and how, in a different era and just a few years older, he would have been forced into living conditions just like these. We eventually made our way back downstairs to the rear exit and walked out toward a second building, the newer administrative and teaching centre of the university. I thanked Jackson for the tour. She shook my hand and we parted.”

We’re keeping moving at the same pace, though trying to walk calmly is not at all calming. The animal followed us for about a hundred metres down the muddy, semi-gravelled road. Once we'd passed out of sight of its house, the dog stopped and stood in the middle of the road, watching us, almost daring us to come back that way. We’d been walking around the townsite on the Saddle Lake Reserve for about half an hour. I had met Makokis at the hockey arena, from where we went out. She wanted to show me what was happening to the place where she lives, a place that had never been prosperous but that at least had once been safe.

In September 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Among other rights—self-determination, language equality and aid—and Article 27 calls on governments to “take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continued improvement of their economic and social conditions.” In other words, Indigenous peoples have the right to live a safe and comfortable life with access to economic opportunities. Yet to walk the roads of Saddle Lake is to understand that many of Canada’s Indigenous peoples do not have these opportunities. The roads are in worse condition than many an off-road hunting trail. The housing is squatted. One of the roads is blocked by concrete barriers to deny drug dealers quick entry and exit in residential zones, though it doesn’t seem to have worked—there are worn tire tracks through the long grass in the ditch beside the barriers. And then there are the dogs. “The people who live here have dogs for two reasons. Either they’re drug dealers or they’re scared of the drug dealers and their dogs,” Makokis explained. We passed so we could point out some signs in front of the local grade school. “You see that?” she said. “That sign has no graffiti. That’s because they were made by students, and they’re signs about hope and perseverance and staying clean and respecting family.”

The gang boys don't care because a lot of them are still kids.”

Makokis knows that some people see all of this as proof of stereotypes—but those people don’t understand the complex legacy of the residential schools, how generation after generation of Indigenous children were taken from their homes and taught to feel ashamed of their families and their culture. “I've been teaching about historic trauma for years, and I look at our community and it's so heartbreaking to see people in disparity and poverty and family violence and all these things. And I look around and I can see generations, three at least in some of these families, where they’re traumatized so badly that it's still rolling out in the problems in their families. And it's just heartbreaking. It's so heartbreaking because I understand it's all about unresolved grief.”

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“Look at my own family and I think, Oh my God, if people only understood that hanging onto culture is part of the answer.”

Because to me, when I look at my family, how the hell did I end up with (children who are) a doctor and a lawyer? You know? We were poor like everybody else but we hung onto that culture. We could see the strength and the beauty and the teachings in that, in the way we have to live.

That tradition and ceremony have been a part of young Atayoh’s life since 31
Sacred ceremony has always been at the heart of Indigenous cultures, law and political life. Traditional knowledge keepers and elders have long dealt with conflicts and harms using spiritual ceremonies and peacemaking practices, and by retelling oral history stories that reveal how their ancestors restored harmony to families and communities. These traditions and practices are the foundation of Indigenous law; they contain wisdom and practical guidance for moving towards reconciliation.

Many survivors told the TRC that reconnecting with Indigenous spiritual teachings and practices has been essential to their healing. Losing the connections to their languages and cultures in the residential schools had devastating impacts on survivors, their families and communities. Land, language, culture and identity are inseparable from spirituality; all are necessary elements of a whole way of being, of living on the land as Indigenous peoples.

When we got back to our cars, we paused with doors open. “People need to know the disparity of what’s happening to my people,” she said. “You can go to Cold Lake and see what they’re doing there then you can go an hour and a half down the highway to here, to another reserve, where you can witness the direct effects of poverty and trauma, where we barely have drinkable running water. When you have economic opportunities, the community collectively can figure out its growth plan. If there were the same opportunities on every nation, you would probably see those communities thrive.”

As we continued our walk, she paused with doors open. “People need to know the disparity of what’s happening to my people,” she said. “You can go to Cold Lake and see what they’re doing there then you can go an hour and a half down the highway to here, to another reserve, where you can witness the direct effects of poverty and trauma, where we barely have drinkable running water. When you have economic opportunities, the community collectively can figure out its growth plan. If there were the same opportunities on every nation, you would probably see those communities thrive.”

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that they, in fact, own. Once these moneys are disbursed, each individual nation then assumes the responsibility to pay for services such as health care, education, and income located on a reserve.

No. 7
We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students who are not able to access a secondary education.

No. 11
We call upon the federal government to provide the adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students who are not able to access a secondary education.

No. 62
(a) We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with survivors, Aboriginal peoples and educators, to provide the necessary funding to ensure that all post-secondary institutions and teachers achieve effective and explicit learning outcomes for elder and country knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.

A CALL TO EDUCATION
Believe few of the more than 70 TRC calls to action related to education, directly or indirectly:

1. We call upon the federal government to develop a federal Aboriginal education strategy that reduces the educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

2. We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students who are not able to access a secondary education.

The Myth of Taxation
assumes that Indigenous peoples do not pay taxes. This is certainly true to the extent that people who do not pay income tax do not pay property tax. Steinhauser is an associate professor in educational policy studies at the Faculty of Education of the University of Alberta, which recently ran a course called “Aboriginal Education and the Context for Professional Engagement.”

The Myth of Free Housing
assumes Indigenous peoples have an exemption from federal taxes that most Indigenous peoples do not pay taxes. This is certainly true to the extent that people who do not pay income tax do not pay property tax. Steinhauser is an associate professor in educational policy studies at the Faculty of Education of the University of Alberta, which recently ran a course called “Aboriginal Education and the Context for Professional Engagement.”

The Myth of Progress
assumes that Indigenous peoples have exchanged treaties and final agreements or have negotiated the full cost associated with post-secondary education building one afternoon as the early winter light was bleeding into evening. I asked her to tell me about the controversial events that around after decades of doing things the western way and maybe the same thing for our collective mother, our Earth, and they, Oh my God, Indigenous people are the poorest on this land and yet they’re fighting this fight.

The biggest barrier in pursuing reconciliation through education, said Makokis, is simply the lack of knowledge of who Indigenous people are. “When we don’t know each other, it’s easy for someone to walk down a street and see a Native man panhandling and think that’s who we all are without realizing what that man’s story is.” We stood up to go, but Makokis offered a parting thought. “The question is: ‘Why do you get people to think about is, ‘How have we been indoctrinated, all of us, by what we’ve been taught?’” That’s certainly a question Evelyn Steinhauser, ‘92 MD, ‘96 LLB, has been grappling with of late. Steinhauser is an associate professor in educational policy studies at the Faculty of Education of the University of Alberta, which recently ran a course called “Aboriginal Education and the Context for Professional Engagement.”

The Myth of Alcohol
assumes that Indigenous peoples drink more alcohol than in the general Canadian population. Heavy drinking is, however, more common among Indigenous drinkers than non-Indigenous people. Steinhauser is an associate professor in educational policy studies at the Faculty of Education of the University of Alberta, which recently ran a course called “Aboriginal Education and the Context for Professional Engagement.”

The Myth of Reconciliation
assumes that reconciliation is a process that will lead to post-secondary education building one afternoon as the early winter light was bleeding into evening. I asked her to tell me about the controversial events that around after decades of doing things the western way and maybe the same thing for our collective mother, our Earth, and they, Oh my God, Indigenous people are the poorest on this land and yet they’re fighting this fight.

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Attendants worked for their band councils. In the accounting or law firms. A couple of Indigenous students must complete five non-credit courses the faculty of extension. The four-day Indigenous Laws, Lands and Current issues primers. In late November 2016, I attended ualberta.ca/newtrail.

What Does the TRC Mean is the mass killing of people, Canada did all these things.”

“Let me explain it like this.” He took his collection of small language …” He handed another drum to another participant.

Michael, who went to the farthest corner away. “So, you do all that. And then you take all the little children (child) in every family, and you take them away from their parents, and you strip them of everything they know and did not return, and I assumed he was simply doing what most of Canada has been doing for decades: shutting out the truth because it’s too painful to confront.

Then he back to us. “And so, all of you, you’re who is left. You have no children, you can’t practise your culture, you forget how to parent, your language …”

“Enjoy the tour?” Vincent said, his eyes crinkling. I nodded, glanced back out at the old building. “I understand how some people, survivors, just can’t go in there.”

Vincent thought about it for a minute. “OK,” he said. “Let me explain it like this.” He took his collection of small, handheld drums and a couple of pipes. He put them in the middle of our circle. “Imagine that all these things are your culture and your people. Take away your sense of family.”

He picked up one of the drums, handed it to a participant and asked him to go stand alone in a corner. “Then you take away language.” He handed another drum to another participant and asked her to stand in a different corner. “Then you take away cultural practices.” Again, the same, this time with Michael, who went to the farthest corner away. “So, you do all that. And then you take all the little children (child) in every family, and you take them away from their parents, and you strip them of everything they know and did not return, and I assumed he was simply doing what most of Canada has been doing for decades: shutting out the truth because it’s too painful to confront.

Then there he was the next morning, back in his chair sipping a coffee. We started the day with a sharing circle. There were many tears shed. There was outrage. But more than anything else, there was determination. A commitment to not go back to the same place we’d just come from. “I am going to go back to tomorrow,” said one woman who worked with the City of Edmonton, “and every person in my office is going to start it all over. They’re going to know because I’m going to tell them.”

When Michael’s turn came, he had things to say. “For the past 15 years, every professional development course I ever took was about accounting. But this has been a little different.” He paused and the group chuckled. “The more you learn the more frustrated you become. I just don’t know how white people can’t get it, can’t get what this is about. Being here has been … well, it’s been, life-changing.”

Makokis and McAdam thanked Michael. And then we kept moving around the circle.

Michele’s Office was something that I never expected. When I had finished my tour of Blue Quills with Corinne Jackson, I had met with Vincent Steinhauser, the university’s president, Vincent Steinhauser, ‘01 BPE, ’01 MA. I went in and slumped in a chair. The view out his window was of the back of the old school.

“Impressive!” Vincent said, his eyes crinkling a bit with his own joke.

“I told him that I was struggling. “I don’t even know how to say it,” I said. “I just feel … I feel so ashamed, so sorry.” The emotion was thickening in my throat and my next words were hard to squeeze out. “I feel inadequate, not even qualified or that I have any right to even tell you what I’m feeling or what any of us should do.”

“Then the best place to start,” he said quietly. “With the inner debate. To let people know how conflicted and inadequate you are. That you’re searching for answers just like they are.”

“I nodded, glanced back out at the old building. “I understand how some people, survivors, just can’t go in there.”

“Yeah, there’s some friction between the generations, actually, because some people are scarred by it and want to tear it down. Some of these people are so damaged that they walk the streets under the influence, and not just this town, but in many cities and towns in Canada. And people blame them for what happened.”

“But others see this place as a symbol of survival and education.”

Steinhauser’s office, the southern education tower was unusually quiet. The halls were unoccupied, and it didn’t feel peaceful.

The faculty of extension offers certificates in Indigenous Community-Industry Relations, and students must complete five non-credit courses on what you might call entry-level Indigenous issues primers. In late November 2016, I attended the four-day Indigenous Laws, Lands and Current Industry Government Relations course. About 20 percent of the staff was Indigenous, the remainder white, most working for various government departments, local businesses, small accounting or law firms. A couple of the Indigenous attendees worked for their band councils. In the opening sharing circle, as person after person opened a few words about why they were there, it became clear that knowing more, understanding more was at the heart of their attendance.

As a legal scholar, Janice Makokis, ’95 BA(NativeStu), (Pat’s daughter and Atayoh’s mother) walked the group through the history of Canada’s legal relationship with Indigenous people. Kurtis McAdam, a Cree knowledge keeper, also led sessions.

After an early career working to develop Indigenous programs in the correctional system, he now spends his energy trying to locate elders to draw out and preserve the knowledge residing in them. As McAdam detailed the history of how Indigenous oral law developed over centuries, and how it gets interpreted today, the group was moved by a story he told: centuries ago the Blackfoot and Crees, tired of civil war, agreed that they had to cement peace between tribes and did so by sending their young children to live with each other, so that each tribe knew it could never attack the other because they would be killing their own children.

Over the course of the four days, there were a number of emotional moments, particularly when one or two of the Indigenous participants told the group that they had come to the course to learn about their own heritage, and that they themselves had been shocked to learn the details of what had happened to their people—not just in residential schools but over the course of the entire relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada. More than once, a white participant would say something like, “But how could that happen?” To which Makokis or McAdam would say, “Good question.”

The most pointed moment of the class, however, came on the second day. McAdam was talking about the difficulty of trying to preserve knowledge when it is stored in oral tradition. “And it doesn’t help, obviously, when your people are subjected to cultural genocide.”

At that point one participant, Michael, (not his real name), put up his hand. A curious and genial man who looked to be in his late 40s, he had told the group on Day 1 that he was an accountant working with a firm in St. Albert. He had enrolled in the course because he wanted to know the truth about things. McAdam stopped when he saw Michael’s hand up. “Yes?”

“I have a question,” said Michael, choosing his words carefully. “You use the term ‘cultural genocide.’ That’s a pretty big term, you know, genocide, the Jews, the Nazis. What exactly do you mean by this when you say it in this context?”

A slight tension came over the room.

McAdam thought about it for a minute. “OK,” he said. “Let me explain it like this.” He took his collection of small, handheld drums and a couple of pipes. He put them in the middle of our circle. “Imagine that all these things are your culture and your people. Take away your sense of family.”

He picked up one of the drums, handed it to a participant and asked him to go stand alone in a corner. “Then you take away language.” He handed another drum to another participant and asked her to stand in a different corner. “Then you take away cultural practices.” Again, the same, this time with Michael, who went to the farthest corner away. “So, you do all that. And then you take all the little children (child) in every family, and you take them away from their parents, and you strip them of everything they know and did not return, and I assumed he was simply doing what most of Canada has been doing for decades: shutting out the truth because it’s too painful to confront.

But then there he was the next morning, back in his chair sipping a coffee. We started the day with a sharing circle. There were many tears shed. There was outrage. But more than anything else, there was determination. A commitment to not go back to the same place we’d just come from. “I am going to go back to tomorrow,” said one woman who worked with the City of Edmonton, “and every person in my office is going to start it all over. They’re going to know because I’m going to tell them.”

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Makokis and McAdam thanked Michael. And then we kept moving around the circle.
It made me think of what Jackson had told me as we parted. “To me, this is actually a positive place, a place of success,” she’d said. “I got two degrees here. I came for upgrading. I was a dropout. And I managed to pull up my socks and get things done. And now enrolment is growing. We’re becoming more well-known. And all those things that were taken away—the ceremony, the identity—that’s what students learn here, to grow, to come into the cultural identity that was lost during the residential school time.”

The transformation of Blue Quills from a repository of shame and horror into a conduit for knowledge and hope is not just uplifting but symbolic. It’s what needs to happen in the hearts and minds of Canadians. A few weeks later, I asked Janice Makokis over coffee what such a person would look and act like, a white person who has turned that corner. “Well, I guess for starters, they’d understand their privilege. They would understand the privilege they carry as a non-Indigenous person. They would understand the history and issues of Indigenous peoples. They would know when to use their privilege in places and spaces to advocate for Indigenous peoples if there is not an Indigenous person there. And they would know how to work with Indigenous peoples in a respectful way where they don’t try and control the agenda. And they would listen, respectfully, and genuinely want to learn our perspective and values.”

“She laughed, too. “You know, in this process of coming to understand the history and going through this decolonization process, I realized that the public education system plays a huge role in shaping the narrative of what this country is and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. I remember a quote—someone was giving a talk about Indigenous ways of knowing, and how to incorporate that into a teaching curriculum. And the presenter put up a slide that said ‘White privilege is having white history be required and Indigenous history be an option.’ The public education system is responsible for a lot of the issues, so that trickles up to the universities, and then their role is to train teachers to understand it all from a different lens. Because then they go back in the education system and teach the students.”

It’s too much symbolic weight to place upon the head of one child, yet I couldn’t help but think of Atayoh and the world he’ll occupy by the time he gets to his post-secondary education. Will he follow his mother and grandmother to the U of A? Will he be going to a university that celebrates Indigenous culture? Will he find municipal, provincial and federal governments in which positions of actual power are held by Indigenous people? Will he be able to walk the roads of Saddle Lake and not be tracked by the pit bulls of drug dealers? Will he be attending a political science class thinking that he might one day be Alberta’s premier? Or will he be sitting in a classroom wondering why he’s fighting the same fights as his mother and grandmother?

I thought back to those moments immediately after emerging from the sweat, when I’d first met Atayoh. I’d watched him as he scampered around the grassy circle, waving his little arms, his black hair flopping around in the breeze. He was whooping with delight as his grandpa pulled his stick away from him and gave it back, teasing him. Atayoh zipped here and there, waving his stick as if it were a magic wand. The simple joy of it all was visible on his face, the joy of imagining that one swoosh of a stick could change everything. If only it were that simple.

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“What’s so hard about that?” I said, laughing. She laughed, too. “You know, in this process of coming to understand the history and going through this decolonization process, I realized that the public education system plays a huge role in shaping the narrative of what this country is and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. I remember a quote—someone was giving a talk about Indigenous ways of knowing, and how to incorporate that into a teaching curriculum. And the presenter put up a slide that said ‘White privilege is having white history be required and Indigenous history be an option.’ The public education system is responsible for a lot of the issues, so that trickles up to the universities, and then their role is to train teachers to understand it all from a different lens. Because then they go back in the education system and teach the students.”

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TRUTH FIRST

As an environmental studies grad of Anishinaabe heritage beginning to realize.

MOVING FORWARD WITH THE CALLS TO ACTION at the University of Alberta are... By Karen Sherlock

and individual Canadians—most of all, Indigenous peoples—have been coming to terms with what it means. And relationships. It’s going to be slow and we have to be patient.

cultures. She brings that awareness to the role she took on last window of opportunity. … That if we can’t deliver, if we can’t show that this can work, it’s never going to happen.”

For post-secondary institutions, the implications exist today.

When she worked on campus in the 70s, there were 15 Indigenous students.

directly or indirectly. At the U of A, people are wrestling with the calls to action and what they mean—in their personal lives, in their professional lives and as an institution. It’s a complicated, slow process. And an emotional one.

It’s essential that the university tread carefully and respectfully, Dokis-Jansen says. “Indigenous communities are skeptical of… non-Indigenous institutions proclaiming, ‘We’ve solved the problem and we know how to move forward.’ It’s a very tricky balance we know we have all this internal work to do (at the university) and we have systems that need to change, but we also need to do it in consultation with Indigenous communities.

The university’s new strategic plan, shaped by consultations with faculty and staff, commits to developing “a thoughtful, meaningful and sustainable response” to the TRC report. “What we’re trying to imagine in a pragmatic way is what do we need to put in place over the next three to five years that will have a lasting impact? How do we shift the way the institution operates?” asks Dokis-Jansen.

One challenge has been taking inventory of the many initiatives that already exist, ranging from long-term health research to Indigenous language preservation to course development. At the same time, the U of A is building the resources it needs to begin addressing the long-term calls to action, including hiring additional Indigenous employees and creating an Indigenous support team in the provost’s office (see sidebar).

Marlyn Buffalo, from Samson Cree Nation, has a unique perspective on what’s happening at the U of A. She served as adviser on Indigenous affairs conversation both on and off campus, Harry Gunning from 1975 to 1979 and was founding chair of the General Faculties Council Committee on Native Studies. As of November, she is back serving as cultural adviser in the university’s new Indigenous advisory office. She and the elders and others she works with in the ‘70s helped lay the groundwork for many of the Indigenous initiatives that exist today.

When she worked on campus in the ‘70s, there were 15 Indigenous students.

This year, there are 1,100 self-declared Indigenous students. “Thousands of kids have graduated from, and we think, yes, we should celebrate that, but we have to remember that’s not enough. There are 68 First Nations in Alberta, and every one of them should have an Indigenous doctor, nurse, economist, accountant, educator, writer, historian.”

In an institution as large and diverse as the U of A, responding to the TRC is complex and disagreement is inevitable. Requiring students to take courses in Indigenous history, for example, as a number of faculties are doing, has led to some push-back. Another source of friction for every research institution is the question of how to actually implement the TRC’s recommendations and how do you then evaluate that.

Chris Andersen, 03 PhD, interim dean of the Faculty of Native Studies, has been at the U of A for almost 20 years as a student, professor and senior administrator. In his eyes, a shift toward reconciliation would look like this: more Indigenous faculty and staff; and a greater Indigenous content throughout faculties and departments; and campuses on which, from an art and architecture perspective, “we can see ourselves.”

Andersen is encouraged by the sheer volume of things going on across U of A campuses, he says, and that the university has committed symbolic and financial resources. “There’s a long way to go in terms of the tough stuff… but I’m really excited about what’s happening.

The TRC’s greatest value, he believes, has been in sparking public conversation both on and off campus, and in creating space and a restorative space. “It’s getting Canadians to think about what areset relationship would look like. How do we move from where we are now, where Indigenous peoples are mostly seen as problems to be solved, to where Indigenous peoples are seen as partners to be engaged with?”

“For me it’s really important that not only do we have initiatives in the university, but that there are partnerships that are developed and are working together. There are organizations that are working with Indigenous communities, I think there’s a need to develop curriculum, workshops, and resources that address Indigenous history and contemporary issues.”

The TRC calls to action have implications for the U of A in its roles as educator, researcher, institution and employer. Among them is the need to develop curriculum, workshops (above) and resources that address Indigenous history and contemporary issues.

“EDUCATION IS WHAT GOT US INTO THIS MESS … (BUT) EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO RECONCILIATION.”

Murray Sinclair in an interview with CBC’s Peter Mansbridge

This or that: educating the University of Alberta

An Indigenous advisory office has been created within the provost’s office to support faculty and staff in working to fulfill the calls to action.

The provost’s office has funded the hiring of 22 additional Indigenous faculty and staff across eight faculties and units, increasing the number from 17 to 39 since June 2016.

An Indigenous strategy is being created to act as a guiding document across the university.

A university council of elders is being developed with representation from different Indigenous communities.

A new Indigenous faculty and staff group is being created to support employees, particularly newcomers, and to advise the president and provost.

Two working groups, created in direct response to feedback from Indigenous communities, are examining current U of A practices; one in research and community engagement and one in content development.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning has hired an Indigenous content development adviser to develop new course content specific to the needs of different Indigenous communities.

An online Indigenous hub has been created to consolidate information about university resources, initiatives and events.

Faculties, campuses and departments have hosted conferences and workshops, initiated courses and worked on numerous initiatives related to the TRC.

Workshops and resources have been developed to educate U of A employees about Indigenous history and guide them in incorporating Indigenous knowledge and protocol.
In its journey across the country speaking to residential school survivors and other Canadians, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recognized the power of creative expression as an essential part of reconciliation. The arts help bridge cultural divides, opening new avenues for learning about our shared histories, responsibilities and visions of the future. They provide a platform for alternative voices to challenge the settler-dominated telling of Canada’s history and its present reality. And the arts can be healing and transformative — for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples — by giving voice to unspeakable truths.

“The arts have opened up new and critical space for survivors, artists, curators and public audiences to explore the complexities of truth, healing and reconciliation,” the TRC report noted.

Three artists reflect on their work related to truth and reconciliation.

By Stephanie Bailey, ‘10 BA(Hons)

Lana Whiskeyjack is a multidisciplinary Cree artist from Saddle Lake Cree Nation in northeastern Alberta. Among her early influences were her mother’s creative skills in traditional arts and her grandmother’s gifts in quilting and song. Whiskeyjack studied visual arts at Red Deer College and the U of A, and environmental sculpture at Pont-Aven School of Contemporary Art in France. She has a BA and MA from Carleton University. She is now reprogramming her brain and filling her spirit by completing her PhD, combining academic and artistic skills at the University nuhlot’įne thouyot’sį nitsitameyimâkanak Blue Quills, a former residential school attended by her mother and grandmother. Whiskeyjack works in the U of A Faculty of Extension as an Indigenous visual arts scholar.

In the Artist’s Words

“I began this series after a very challenging time in my life, when I realized how much the intergenerational trauma of Indian residential schools affected me and my relations. This trauma ruptured my inherent strength and my connection to the wombs I came from. When I feel stuck in those dark moments, I go to my ceremony of creating. I smudge, pray, pick up a paintbrush and transform my pain into a teaching. Each painting in the series represents a connection of a grandmother, mother and daughter. This painting represents the connection of my grandmother, mother and me, as I need to see them — blanketed by love, security and strength in spite of the trauma of residential schools. During the process of creating this series, my vision changed from one of trauma to resilience, with the final painting of me as a grandmother with my daughter and granddaughter.”
About the Artist

Jane Ash Poitras, ’77 BSc(Spec), ’83 BFA, ’15 DLitt (Honorary), is a painter, printmaker, lecturer and writer of Cree descent. Born in Fort Chipewyan, Alta., she was orphaned at age six when her mother died of tuberculosis. She spent time in foster homes before being raised by a woman in Edmonton. After completing an MFA at Columbia University, Poitras went on to influence the development of a new visual vocabulary for First Nations perspectives in contemporary art. Her unique style combines postmodern art-making techniques—like collage and found objects—with a deep commitment to the politics and issues common to Indigenous peoples. She was a sessional lecturer in the Faculty of Native Studies for more than 20 years and has lectured extensively internationally.

In the Artist’s Words

“Residential schools were designed to assimilate Indigenous peoples, taking them from their families and denying their language and culture. They were treated not as equals, but as secondary citizens, trained to be kitchen help and farm workers. This strategy rejected the rich history, knowledge and wisdom they had to offer. It is satisfying that their valuable contributions, which were denied by systematic assimilation, are now at the forefront of many scientific fields. Indigenous people are now taking leading roles in the evolution of ethnobotany, environmentalism and the inclusion of traditional healing in modern medicine, among others.”

Two panels of this large-scale work, 25 feet x 9 feet, graphically contrast the history of forced assimilation, on the left, with the academic and professional achievements of Indigenous peoples today, on the right.

“I THINK THAT THE ROLE OF AN ARTIST TODAY IS TO BECOME FREE, TO TRANSCEND. THEN THEY CAN TRANSFORM, ENLIGHTEN AND BECOME EMPOWERED.”

Jane Ash Poitras

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“ART MOVES US BUT DOES NOT NECESSARILY MOVE US TO ACTION, ... IT CHANGES OUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IMAGINARIES BY PARTICLES, AND THESE NEW PICTURES OF THE WORLD CAN INFLUENCE BEHAVIOUR.”

David Garneau

About the Artist
David Garneau is a descendent of Métis activist and homesteader Laurent Garneau, who used to own part of the land where North Campus now sits. Born and raised in Edmonton, Garneau received a BFA in painting and drawing and an MA in English literature from the University of Calgary. He taught at the Alberta College of Art and Design (1994-99) and is now associate professor of visual arts at the University of Regina. Garneau is interested in creative expressions of contemporary Indigenous identities and moments of productive friction between nature and culture, materialism and metaphysics. He is currently working on a public art project for the Tawatinâ Bridge, part of a new LRT line in Edmonton.

In the Artist’s Words
“This painting is based on a popular postcard from the 1950s. The photographer is W.J.L. Gibbons of Calgary and the image features an unknown young Mountie and Ubi-thka Iyodage (1874-1970), also known as Chief Sitting Eagle or John Hunter, who was a prominent leader of the Chiniki band of Stoney Nakoda people of southwestern Alberta. I reversed the image to suggest some irony: the men are now shaking their left hands. I wanted not simply to reproduce the image but re-present it. The image is of an “Indian” and a representative of the state’s power. I suppose the intention of the original image was to show the old giving way to the new country, but the young man (who isn’t given a name) is clearly out of his league. I repurposed the image to suggest two very different ways of thinking and seeing the world.”

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

David Garneau

Not to Confuse Politeness with Agreement
Oil on canvas, 2013
The TRC findings are not easy to talk about, but talking about them is key to healing and reconciliation. Three groups of people get the conversations started.

Photos by John Ulan

Three educators discuss how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can work as allies

HOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER

From left: Fay Hether, Pat Makokis and Etienn Moostoos Lafferty
FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, Pat Makokis and Fay Fletcher have worked together to bridge two worlds. A young educator in Edmonton.

It’s relational work, and ally, ’09 BEd, is from Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation and was born and raised in Saddle Lake Cree Nation and Yadda work in her own life.

Pat Makokis and Fay Fletcher have worked together to bridge two worlds. A young educator in Edmonton.

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Three students and one alumna talk about their university experiences

INDIGENOUS ON CAMPUS

From left: Shana Dan, Grant Bruno, Robin Howse and Tiffany Orenda Johnson
WE ASKED THREE STUDENTS AND THE director of the University of Alberta Aboriginal Student Services Centre to talk about their experiences at the U of A. All three students are the first in their families to go to university and two have parents or grandparents who attended residential schools.

By Rhonda Krykon, ’08 BA(Hons), ’17 MA

Grant Bruno, ’16 BA(NativeStu), from Maskwacis, Alta., is working on a master’s degree in the Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology. Robin Howe, a second-year student in the Faculty of Native Studies, has roots in the Kehewin Cree Nation, is the director of the University of Alberta Aboriginal Student Services Centre.

Grant Bruno: Can you begin by sharing some of your personal experiences at the U of A?

Robin Howe: I am very light-skinned and, as such, I don’t see as much direct racism as somebody who’s visibly Indigenous. But I listen to conversations that go on on this campus and it blows my mind. The outright racist or ignorant things that are being said sometimes — it’s hurtful to hear. The fall before I came to Native Studies was when the teepee was “TP-ed” [defaced with toilet paper]. Hearing that, I was like “What?” At the U of A? Then the attempted arson of the Red River cart, the vandalizing of the Aboriginal Students’ Council lounge, the racism on social media. Where do we go from there? I don’t want my kids to be dealing with it when they come here.

Tiffany Johnson: I’ve slowly become disenchanted with being able to celebrate our culture at the U of A. There’s so much covert racism as well as overt racism — certain practices that sororities and fraternities have here that make fun of Indigenous people. At a flash round dance in the middle of Quad, someone was standing behind us and ululating.

Just outright racism. I don’t feel like this is a safe space as a student. I don’t feel like the administration is doing anything to protect me as an Indigenous woman.

Grant Bruno: When we’re talking about racism, what we don’t want is sympathy from me. I don’t feel sorry for myself. In the classroom, you get students saying things like, “Why are we learning Indigenous history? European history is superior.” And the professor doesn’t do anything. People are allowed to open spaces and aren’t being challenged. That’s what I have a problem with.

Shana Dion: Hearing these stories, it’s really hard to not be angry. I want students to be proud. I want the university to be a place where they feel respected. The responsibility of faculty, professors, admin — when something happens on this campus that disrespects First Nations, Métis, Inuit peoples, that’s an open door for conversation to happen. What I know here, as a former student and now in administration, is intergenerational, it could be childhood — and as an adult, you bring that with you to university. They should have supports in place for students.

RH: If the university wants to talk about its truths, it should start by incorporating Indigenous knowledge and histories into each aspect of the education system. Seeing that presence of Indigenous staff at the university is also lost for me — professors but also elders; those knowledge keepers are our original professors.

GR: You go to an Indigenous literature class and taught by an Indigenous person, why is that? Why is that person telling our story? I’ve had a professor tell me the sweetgrass story, which is something I hold very personal. I was gifted the sweetgrass story, and that story changed my life. It was butchered by a professor who was well-meaning, I know, but at the same time, there’s ignorance still. They don’t realize they can actually hurt people.

RH: I go into classes where western science is the be-all and end-all and traditional knowledge, if mentioned, is “less than.” It’s hard for me, coming from a perspective where I hold traditional knowledge very high.

GR: One of the big things for me is supporting the students. The university does a really good job of selling itself as a place of growth and opportunity. It’s the followup that I find inadequate. There’s so much trauma with these students — it could be intergenerational. It could be childhood — and as an adult, you bring that with you to university. They should have supports in place for students.

TJ: I’m pretty outspoken. I advocate a lot for myself. When somebody is blatantly waving their ignorance flag out there, I want to know what the root is, why they have that stereotype. It’s also important to find allies — other students, professors. There are a lot of people who are open to discussing what happened. I’ve even invited people from my classes to have stew and bannock.

The responsibility of faculty, professors, admin — when something happens on this campus that disrespects First Nations, Métis, Inuit peoples, that’s an open door for conversation to happen.

R: How do you cope with these challenges?

GR: For me, it’s community. I’m able to go engage with like-minded individuals here at the [Aboriginal Student Services Centre]. Students have to support students, because it’s not coming much from elsewhere. Another thing I’ve been doing is a lot more reconciliation. That rebalances me. The fact that students are here should be celebrated. We should be able to celebrate on our own terms at the university. We should have the power to have a celebration, the positives, it’s not all negatives.

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TRUTH FIRST

VOICES

I didn’t have ceremony in my student institution [residential and great-grandchildren and sciences] because I brought me here. They’re at ASSC [the Aboriginal Student Support Centre].

Our parents mean well, but to see Dad do it. And my father. To set a precedent for Indigenous ways of life. Having my son made me not walk into foster care. … We want to live our lives and be our best selves.

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.
After seven years spent listening to residential school survivors, two TRC commissioners remain hopeful about the future.

A CALL TO BEAR WITNESS
NARROWLY TWO YEARS AFTER
the Truth and Reconciliation
Commission’s final report, two of the
TRC commissioners talk about what
has happened since and how
Canadians can move forward.

Treaty 6 Grand Chief Wilton
Littlechild, 69, B.F., ’75 MA, ’84 LLB, 97 LL (Honorary), is from the Cree community of Maskwasis and spent 15 years in residential schools. He is the first First Nations person elected to Parliament. Marie Wilson, who will be co-chair of the TRC, is a university professor and president of the Native Women’s Association of Canada. … When the federal government was passing the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, she was a negotiator for the TRC.

Shelah Rogers: Where are we right now, as we look at the scale of having the truth? Where are we on the road to reconciliation? How does one think? What do you see?

Wilton Littlechild: Many times, at least in the early stages, survivors told us — or asked me directly a couple of times — “What makes you think you’re going to believe me?” I’ve told my story seven times and no one believes me. Look at children who tried to tell their parents about the abuse they were suffering in school and the parents didn’t believe them. So there is a right to be believed. And you, each and every one of you, also have another right: the right to know. You have the right to know the truth of what happened.

Shelah Rogers: Well, we’ve had a tremendous beginning on this path of reconciliation. I’ve been to over 75 communities since we gave our final report and I’m very, very encouraged about what I see across the country. I see, for example, colleges and universities getting together for the first time as post-secondary institutions, to look at the calls to action on education, that cluster on education, and mapping out five years forward. I went to boardrooms, especially in the city of Calgary, where private industry wanted to know what can we do from the private sector.

So, in schools, in the communities in the boardrooms, in government chambers, legislatures, I see and I feel this commitment, and it’s so inspiring for me. Because the biggest fear I had as a commissioner, knowing the history of some of the previous commissions, was that our report would just sit on a shelf and gather dust. But you know what? Thanks to Alberta, thanks to Canada … When the federal government said, we’re addressing a lot of the 45 calls to action directed at us as the government, I think that’s great. When a prime minister directs the ministers — all of them — to take action and actually sends a mandate letter to the minister of Indigenous Affairs, calling on him to continue to work on truth and reconciliation, and the next sentence was, “And begin with the implementation of the UN declaration.”

If we were gathered here two years ago and I said that, “You know what? Canada’s going to implement the UN declaration,” you would have said, “Uh-oh, that’s right,” the reason that school finally got him.” (Laughter) You would have thought I was nuts. But here we are, here we are in Canada, embarking on this journey. So, I’m really encouraged. Shelagh, about where we are now because it’s a tremendous start, I think. People say of reconciliation, we have a long way to go, but still, we’ve got a tremendous start.

Shelah Rogers: So, Marie: Wilson: I come from a journalistic background before the commission work and so, you know, I am a trained skeptic, (laughter) That’s my professional training. (Laughter) So, the professional grooming and I would say that we have to keep our eyes on the game plan. Because a lot of talk is a lot of talk. The question is consequence. Activity is not result and activity is not change. So, I do believe fully that a lot of dialogue is necessary. But we are always starting from the beginning, so we have this dual role of constantly restating and starting from the beginning while trying to make these changes happen.

As citizens, we must play our role as government, to act as if we are the government, and make sure that we are giving the direction to the leadership that we do want and that we hold them to deliver on it. Because in the end, down the road, if nothing changes it won’t matter what we said we promised to do. We’ve already had that experience with treaties which were both legal and moral promises — and they have been broken so many times they can’t be counted. We need to be vigilant and make sure that no one is let off the hook and let off their promises toward reconciliation. And that the talk is actually delivering some practical changes.

Shelah Rogers: There are a lot of people who would love to know what individuals can do — two or three simple actions that will push reconciliation forward. If you, say of reconciliation, you know, you’re still here, what should they do?

Wilton Littlechild: Well, I always start with this one. … (Have you) read the 45 calls to action of the TRC? Start there. Read that. It’s, it always say, not 94 pages, it’s about 10 pages. Very readable.

And then I say, as you read it, be consciously asking yourself, Where do my initials belong? What is my profession? What is my life? What is my community? What are my personal affiliations? Where are you located? What are your responsibilities? What are your needs? Where do you belong? And then figure out from there whether it’s something you, yourself, can do or others.

Because a lot of people in here are involved in book clubs — this is, after all, a book. Here is a Library event — put it on your reading list. Read the calls to action and read the summary report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report. There are many residential students, wherever you are, callers, who are available to come and engage with you in conversation. Why not do that? You will build relationships by doing that. And deepen your understanding of things.

Shelah Rogers: I think, for me, it is to reach out. Reach out to us or reach out to a neighbour and have a dialogue or a discussion. I sometimes reflect on an experience with treaties, I had when I was in a previous life and coming back from the United Nations, where I worked for a long, long time, to report back to the elders. And I said, “Well, I can’t tell you from the UN again and this time dialogue almost broke out” (laughter). So, you know, I come from a world of someone, and just having a dialogue, is a good first step. But it will take an individual to do. Reach out to you, of us or your neighbour, and talk about truth and reconciliation.

You know I found it very difficult, the mandate that was given to the TRC by the court. I found it difficult to ask the people (residential school) survivors to share their truth and immediately go to reconciliation. Yes, it’s important to know the truth. It’s equally important to have an apology. The prime minister of Canada gave an apology on behalf of Canadians. But it’s also equally important — I think sometimes more important — that be given an opportunity to forgive. It’s equally important that we have parents about before in their homes. Know what your children are in school and we are not making the same errors by either negative stereotyping or positive stereotyping.

This province is on the record as saying a curriculum is being developed. Be impatient about that and expect it to be done as an urgent priority. And then, the key is that beginning with everyone that has an adult population in Canada that has been dramatically ignorant of all this history because we have not taught it in school and you need to be the ones who need to make sure that we are teaching, and we are not making the same errors by either negative stereotyping or positive stereotyping.

What Can I Do?

Roberta Jamieson, Mohawk lawyer and CEO of Indspire, offered some advice at the University of Alberta last November.

• Acknowledge the facts.
• Work proactively to build relationships.
• Do what you can to do in your own sphere.
• Start a conversation every day with someone you know on this topic.
• Raise it in your place of worship, in your classroom.
• Keep these issues alive.
• Create the political will: call your MP and elected officials. Make it an issue wherever you are.
• Ask every leader how they will implement the calls.
• Keep it alive and do what you can in your personal life. What is my sphere of influence?

Roberta Jamieson is the first First Nations woman in Canada to earn a law degree and the first woman elected chief of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. She is president and CEO of Indspire, an Indigenous-led organization that invests in the education of Indigenous people.
Spencer Sekyer looks for teachable moments. Wanting to set an example for his students in Sherwood Park, Alta., the high school social studies teacher and former University of Alberta Golden Bears linebacker began travelling the world, particularly to developing and war-torn countries, to teach and volunteer during his vacations. He wanted to learn more about the world and to make a difference. Sekyer’s passion for helping children and animals grew with each trip. In 2010, he rescued seven dogs from the streets of Kabul, Afghanistan. Most recently, Sekyer rehomed a baby chimp named Manno from a zoo in northern Iraq.

You have a real passion for animals. What do they mean to you?
My first two dogs, Mac and Chloe, warmed my heart to the animal kingdom. I think of the quote by Gandhi: “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” People around the world are in difficult situations, so animals aren’t always treated the best. But when I travelled, I had a soft spot and would care for animals I came across.

Like Manno the chimp. How did you meet him?
In December 2013, I travelled to Kurdistan to volunteer at an animal rescue organization. The first time I met Manno, he was running loose at the [Duhok Zoo’s] candy store, ripping apart bags of sunflower seeds. [The zookeeper] let me hold him and I felt an incredible bond. Then I found out he was being kept in a small birdcage most of the time. I felt a little niggle, like a pebble in my shoe. Something just didn’t sit right with me. I emailed legal authorities, wildlife foundations and non-governmental organizations. Ultimately, one of those connections was the catalyst to Manno’s rescue.

You met primatologist Jane Goodall at an event in Edmonton. How did that change things?
I showed her a picture of Manno, gave my spiel and her eyes lit up. She connected me to her team and they got me in touch with Sweetwaters Sanctuary in Kenya. In November 2016, Manno moved to the sanctuary. It’s the perfect place: he is fed every day, has access to vet care and acres of forest to roam in. He was released from quarantine in March and began the integration process into the chimpanzee group.

How did you go from teacher to activist?
It’s funny how the world works. I was teaching phys-ed and coaching, but that had run its course. I wanted to teach social studies but speak from experience, like I could with athletics. I researched countries where I could teach during my summers off. The first place I heard from was a school in Freetown, Sierra Leone. I travelled there in the summer of 2008; it was an eye-opener and [that trip] started everything. I used all my holidays for the next five years teaching in developing countries.

How have your students reacted to stories of your adventures?
One of my former students contacted me on Facebook to tell me he was travelling to the Central African Republic to volunteer at an orphanage. You never know how what you say, think or do can affect people and maybe plant a seed or inspire a student who will go on to do great things.

What advice do you have for people who want to make a difference?
If you see something you don’t think is right, step up. Don’t think, ‘Somebody should do something.’ You’re somebody. It may seem like you can’t get something done, but if you set your mind to it and stick with it, it will happen.

This interview has been edited and condensed.
1. Alumni and friends use the green screen photo booth at the 2017 FOG Men’s Volleyball National Championship in March. An Edmonton-based adult and youth volleyball club, FOG — for friends of George — was established in 1986 by Golden Bears volleyball alumnus George Tokarsky, ’68 BSc(Hons), ’80 BEd. Photo by Don Voaklander, ’88 BPE, ’94 PhD.

2. Griffin DenBok channels his inner artist at the Kids Create event for alumni and their favourite little ones in December. Photo by Laughing Dog Photography.

3. Globe-trotting alumni visit the Abu Simbel Temples in southern Egypt while traveling with the Alumni Travel Program’s Legends of the Nile trip in February. Photo by Jeremy Rossiter, ’77 MA, ’86 PhD.

4. Cindy Gonzalez-Silva, ’14 BSc(ChemE) (left), and Shirley Du, ’16 BCom, volunteer at the annual Easter Eggstravaganza in April, featuring treats and entertainment for the whole family. Photo by Laughing Dog Photography.

5. Joan Skinstad, ’78 BPE (left), and Yvonne Becker, ’74 BPE, ’81 MA, sport their new sweaters at the second annual “Block A” alumni and student-athlete celebration in March. The ceremony honored the 2017 Golden Bears and Pandas student-athlete Block A sweater recipients and Pandas alumnae who competed before 1989. Photo by Don Voaklander.
Based on in-depth interviews with over 150 business leaders and experts, PeopleShock combines case studies, data and actionable advice to help organizations succeed in the new economy.

The PeopleShock lists do not denote endorsement by the authors, the companies featured, or the institutions with which they are affiliated. Inclusion is based on merit and does not imply approval by the authors.

PeopleShock: The Path to Profits When Customers Rule by Tasha Frank, 978-1-5087-9788-5, CreateSpace, available on Amazon

PeopleShock combines original case studies, data and useful advice to help organizations succeed in a hyper-competitive, digitized economy.

People Travels: Migrations in Europe and America: Nation Building Prehistory to 1913 by Myrlie Macdonald, 44 (2016), 40, 8 RIS. CreateSpace, available on Amazon

People Travels shows how the movement of tribes and changing borders of nations contributed to the formation of culture, languages, science, health care, music, art and architecture.


Drawing on primary accounts, these essays take an in-depth look at Alberta’s involvement in the First World War, reflecting experiences both on the battlefield and on the home front.

The Frontier of Patriotism: Alberta and the First World War

The Promise of Gamma Globulin

Selling Science: Polio and the Promise of Gamma Globulin

Stephen E. Mawdsley, 978-0-7735-3714-8, University of Alberta Press, ups.ualberta.ca

Recounting the story of the first large clinical trial to control polio in the 1950s, Mawdsley explores the ethics of scientific conduct and the shaping of public opinion on medical experimentation.

Selling Science: Polio and the Promise of Gamma Globulin

Behind the Bodice: A romance author takes us beyond happily-ever-afters by Sarah Pratt

Romance might be the most hated genre of fiction. If you do a highly unscientific Google search of “why I hate romance novels,” you will find a long list of blog posts disparaging the world of romantic escapism. Some say romance novels are formulacpuff, while others are uncomfortable with what they say are perfect, image-obsessed characters. Melanie MacGillivray, 978-0-88890-560-9, RCS. doesn’t agree. Having written five romance novels under the pen name M. Summers (which she originally adopted for privacy), MacGillivray says romantic fiction is more valuable than its stereotypes might suggest.

Do you feel judged because you’re a romance writer? Some people think if you write romance, you’re overshadowed. Someone once said to me, in response to that, “Well, do people ever ask Stephen King how many people he kills?” Good point.

Do you think there are people misunderstanding the genre? Many [romANCE] readers are college-educated women who are professionals. At the annual Romance Writers of America conference, there are these highly educated, business-savvy, incredibly smart women who write books as their business. They are [at the conference] to improve their craft and make money.

What about people who say romance novels are just porn for women? I think the romance industry did itself a disservice with the bodice-rippers and alpha male-dominated novels that were popular in the 1980s. My books are about the characters: strong people who are better at talking and solving problems than most of us are in real life.

We all find different kinds of escape and entertainment: reading fiction, watching TV, playing video games. Aren’t romance novels just another kind of escape? Absolutely. They give people a different world to disappear into.

There are wonderful chemicals that your brain releases when you fall in love, and you have a more intense version of that chemical release when you read romance. If someone can find that escape and it has benefits, they shouldn’t feel silly about that, although the covers [of romance novels] are often very cheesy.

Is romantic fiction evolving? Such as featuring L.G.B.T.Q, characters, for example? For sure. I met Christopher Rice—author Anne Rice’s son—and he writes gay romance. A lot of women read the male-male romance and they love it as a totally different escape.

Despite what critics of the genre say, what have you learned from writing romance? I stopped worrying so much about what people think, and it’s really liberating when you can shake that. Right now, my journey is to know there’s value in what I do. One of my readers told me she reads my books while sitting at her hospital bedside and it helped her through that difficult time. I’ve had women say their love life was dead until they started reading my books. [Romantic fiction] helps people, and there is something important about it even though a lot of people think it’s silly or wrong. And that OK.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

See us at our next public event. Meet your write-up and book to New Trail Books, Office of Advancement, Third Floor, Enterprise Square, 3-501, 10320 Jasper Ave. NW, Edmonton, AB, T5J 4P6. Or email a write-up with a high-resolution cover image to alumni@ualberta.ca. Inclusion on this list does not denote endorsement by New Trail.
by Chelsea Vowel, ’00 BEd, ’09 LLB, HighWater Press, portageandmainpress.com

Vowel’s essays explore the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada, focusing on issues surrounding the terminology of relationships, culture and identity, myth-busting, state violence, and learning, law and treaties.

The Duende of Tetherball
by Tim Bowling, ’97 MA, Nightwood Editions, nightwoodeditions.com

Bowling’s poetry strives to account for and address our human need to resolve the tension between personal freedom and a world burdened by increasing homogenization and centralized control.

A Canadian Childhood
by Carolyn D. Redl, ’79 BA(Spec), ’83 MA, ’91 PhD, FriesenPress, friesenpress.com

A memoir of growing up on a northern Saskatchewan farm in the 1940s and ’50s captures a vital moment in Canada’s social history, when women’s roles were just starting to become less restricted.

Tar Wars: Oil, Environment and Alberta’s Image
by Geo Takach, ’81 BA, ’85 LLB, ’03 MA, University of Alberta Press, uap.ualberta.ca

Tar Wars offers a critical inside look at the international battle over Alberta’s bituminous sands, as leaders negotiate escalating tensions between continuous economic growth and unsustainable environmental costs.

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1940s

‘44 Myrtle Macdonald, Dip(Nu), ‘45 BSN, recently self-published People Migrations in Europe and America: Nation Building Prelatory to 1913 (See page 66).

Now 96, Myrtle enjoyed a fulfilling career. In 1946, she and her husband Allison Macdonald, ’43 MSc, ’43 MD, moved to India, where Myrtle served as an outpost nurse for several years. After receiving her master’s degree in applied nursing research and education from McGill University in 1971, she launched a pioneering community followup program for psychiatric patients of the former Douglas Hospital in India and working at a refugee camp in Thailand.

In 1989, she settled in Chilliwack, B.C., to assist her mother and disabled sister and brother. Here she became active in the Schizophrenia Society and the Mental Health Advisory Committee and devoted more time to researching the cultural history of her ancestors.

1970s

’72 Ruth Collins-Nakai, MD, ’98 MBA, was recently named to the Order of Canada for her contributions as a physician leader. She is a cardiologist who spent more than 30 years at the U of A as a professor of pediatrics and associate dean of the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry. She was the first female president of a number of organizations, including the Alberta Medical Association, the Canadian Cardiovascular Society and the Inter-American Society of Cardiology. Ruth was also the first Canadian to chair the board of governors of the American College of Cardiology. In recent years she has been consulting for biotechnology companies and working to improve early child development policies in Alberta and Canada.

’75 Darwin Eckstrom, BEd, ’81 BA, and me the chance to tour the Baltics, as well as St. Petersburg, Russia. It was a great trip and we hope to attend the Worlds next year in Sweden.”

1980s

In 1990, Allison Macdonald, VMD, joined the faculty at the Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where she spent 16 years as a professor of biology. There, she worked with students on research projects and served as a mentor for young women in the sciences.

Now retired and living in Calgary, Allison continues to be active in her community. She volunteers with local organizations and is an advocate for women in science. She is also a musician and enjoys playing the piano in her spare time.

1990s

Ruth Collins-Nakai continued her work in the medical profession, serving as a board member for several organizations. In 2001, she was awarded the Order of Canada for her contributions to the field of medicine.

In 2005, Allison Macdonald was awarded the Order of Canada for her work in the field of science education. She continues to inspire and educate students in her role as a professor and mentor.

2000s

In 2010, Allison Macdonald was named to the Order of the British Empire for her contributions to the fields of science and education. She is a role model for women in science and continues to inspire and mentor young people in the field.

In 2015, Ruth Collins-Nakai was named to the Order of Canada for her contributions to the field of medicine and public health. She is a leader in her field and continues to work tirelessly to improve the lives of those in need.

Now retired, Allison and Ruth continue to spend time with their families, who are spread across the United States. They remain active in their communities and continue to make a difference in the world.
CLASS NOTES

1980s

‘80 Grant Armstrong, Mid, former dean of Hendry Hall and assistant to the dean of students at the U of A, recently received the Onggi Teachers Certificates Award from the Chinese Biological Medical Onggi Association. Grant discovered Onggi, a holistic system of co-ordinated body postures and movements, breathing and meditation, while recovering from a life-threatening accident in Taiwan.

Three-quarters of the way through a 50-year career in education, Grant moved to Taiwan to take up a new post as an educational school principal. Now semi-retd, Grant leads two Onggi classes each week and lectures on stress management throughout Taiwan and mainland China. He wrote to express his gratitude for the help he received at the university, namely from a professor who supported him.

“In this world, so many people help us grow, develop and touch our lives in a positive way. We need to stop and reflect on the contribution these individuals make and show our gratitude while we can. My time at the university shaped my life and career as a lifelong educator. Onggi saved my life and helped me continue that journey. I am and always will be eternally grateful for all the help I received at the university, namely from former U of A president Myer Horwitz, ’59 Mid, ’90 LLD (Honorary), former chair of the Department of Educational Administration John E. Seger and professor Joseph Kirman.”

‘81 John Geiger, BA, the CEO of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society (RCS), was featured on CBC’s Marketplace in the episode “Money Where Your Mouth Is.”

John Geiger in front of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society’s new building

Grant Armstrong

Michael Zuk

Chris Menard

Chris Menard, BA, the CEO of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, has worked in many roles that have required him to continuously learn and adapt. While most of his roles have been based in Edmonton, he and his family relocated to Kelowna, B.C., five years ago, where he is now the vice-president of mortgage specialists based in Edmonton, he and his family relocated to Kelowna, B.C., five years ago, where he is now the vice-president of mortgage specialists.

For nine years on the society’s board of governors, including a term as president, he hopes will help patients suffering with above-average tooth decay rates. A general dentist in Red Deer, Michael says flossing and brushing are not always enough. He is also lobbying Alberta’s health minister and the Alberta Dental Association for changes to the profession, encouraging whistleblower protection to help reduce the risks of speaking out. His book, Confessions of a Former Cosmetic Dentist (2016), was featured on CBC’s Marketplace in the episode “Money Where Your Mouth Is.”

RECONCILIATION PROJECT HONOURED AT HISTORY AWARDS

In December 2016, the governments of Alberta and British Columbia announced appointments to their respective provincial courts.

‘86 Michèle Collinson, BA, ’89 LLB, has been appointed to Provincial Court, Edmonton Region. Much of her legal career was spent with the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service, most recently serving as co-ordinator of the High Risk Offenders Unit in Specialized Prosecutions. She has also served as an assistant chief Crown prosecutor in the Edmonton office and as lead counsel for the Criminal Justice Division of Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, where she provided legal advice and support for legislation, division policy and operational plans. Michèle is active in the community, including volunteering for animal rescues and local food banks.

‘88 Lynal Doerksen, BA, ’89 LLB, has been appointed to Provincial Court in British Columbia. Lynal has practised in many areas of litigation, including family, employment, commercial, personal injury and criminal law and has appeared before all levels of court in British Columbia and Alberta. Lynal previously served as Crown counsel in Alberta, before taking on the role of administrative Crown counsel in Cranbrook, B.C., in 2005.

‘91 Julie Lloyd, LLB, has been appointed to Edmonton Provincial Court; Family and Youth. Since being admitted to the Alberta Bar in 1992, she has focused mainly on the areas of family law and human rights law, including advancing legal rights for members of Alberta’s gender and sexual minority community. Prior to her appointment, she was legal counsel at Legal Aid Alberta’s Legal Services Centre in Edmonton. Other notable achievements include serving as a member of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and being elected a bencher of the Law Society of Alberta. Julie has also served as a sessional instructor and guest lecturer at the U of A’s Faculty of Law.

APPOINTMENTS TO PROVINCIAL COURTS IN ALBERTA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA

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RECONCILIATION PROJECT HONOURED AT HISTORY AWARDS

‘81 Anna Marie Sewell, BA(Spec), and Jennie Vegt, ’82 BFA, along with Miranda Jimmy and Anna Marie Sewell, ‘89, BA(Spec), and Jennie Vegt, ‘82 BFA, along with Miranda Jimmy and Anna Marie Sewell, ‘89, BA(Spec), and Jennie Vegt, ‘82 BFA, received an honourable mention at the Governor General’s History Awards in November 2016 for their poetry and art project Reconciling Edmonton. The project used seven historic photographs—captured during the time between the signing of Treaty 6 in 1876 to present day—to explore the idea of reconciliation. Jennie transformed the black-and-white images into a series of paintings, each accompanied by Anna Maria’s poetry. Funded through a grant from the Edmonton Heritage Council, the project launched in November 2015 with what organizers believe was the first round dance to be held inside Edmonton’s city hall.
CLASS NOTES

1990s

‘90 Camille Hancock Friesen, BMedSc, ‘92 MD, ‘97 MSc, was appointed full professor in the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie University in May 2016. In September, she became the head of the Department of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery at the Dalh’s Children’s Medical Center in Austin, Texas, and was appointed full professor of cardiovascual and thoracic surgery at the University of Texas Southwestern.

‘91 Robert “Rob” Kinniburgh, BSc(Dent), ‘93 DDS, ‘99 MSc, is the new president of the Canadian Association of Orthodontists. Bob maintains a private orthodontic practice in Calgary, has served on the executive of the Calgary and District Dental Society and the Alberta Society of Orthodontists, and currently sits on the Canadian Dental Specialities Association. Bob and his wife Shannon have three teenage children, who bring amazing busyness and joy to their lives.

‘91 Ron Labrie, BSc, a teacher at Ponoka Secondary Campus in Ponoka, Alta., has been working with the students on the Ponoka Canoe Project since 2009. Participating students research the personal biography of fallen soldiers listed on Ponoka’s community cenotaph before traveling to the Canadian battlefields in Europe, where they create the soldiers’ life stories. Ron writes: “Last year, two of my students researched Kenneth Gordon Forsika from Ponoka, who was killed while a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force during a secret mission in the Second World War. He was a U of A student in the Department of Engineering, and he also may have played for the Golden Bears hockey team. His name is engraved in bronze at Convocation Hall. In March 2016, we travelled to Chelby War Cemetery near Nancy, France to tell Kenneth’s story at his grave. Interestingly, the two student researchers began their studies at the U of A in fall 2016.”

‘92 Hector Mayani-Viveros, PhD, recently published Songe Blanco (White Blood), which charts the history of leukemia. He writes: “In 1994, I returned to my home country of Mexico to take a position as a research scientist at the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social National Medical Center in Mexico City. My research interest has been stem cells and cancer, particularly leukemia. I was appointed head of the Oncology Research Unit at the same institution. I established the first public cord blood bank in Mexico, and I was the founding president of the Mexican Society for Stem Cell Research. I hope to come to Edmonton for a visit soon. I had wonderful teachers, made good friends and I survived five consecutive writers there—a significant achievement for someone coming from the country of tequila”

‘96 Juliet Williams, BA, was named news editor in San Francisco for The Associated Press in November. After a decade of reporting for the AP from the state capital, Juliet was the Sacramento correspondent who oversaw the 2016 California election coverage. She started with the AP in 2000 as a reporter in Milwaukee, Wisc., after working at the Calgary Herald. Juliet earned a National Headliner Award for environmental policy and planning at institutions and conferences around the world. She is also an adjunct professor at the U of A.”

‘98 Noor M. Ansari Rahman, PhD, has been awarded the 2016 Middle East Regional Reservoir Description and Dynamics Award from the Society of Petroleum Engineers. He is a petroleum engineering consultant at Saudi Aramco’s Well Testing Division in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

Community Minded

Association president-elect looks to harness the time and talent of alumni

by KATE BLACK, ‘16 BA

Family and faith instilled a sense of volunteerism in Ayaz Bhanji, ‘91 BSc(Pharm), early in life. He says volunteering leads to seniors, helping to prepare for prayer services and giving rides to families without cars. Today, the former pharmacist owns the largest Retail real estate office in Edmonton, and service to community continues to permeate his life—from past involvement with the Children’s Miracle Network to serving as president of the Aga Khan Foundation for Canada. It wasn’t until he volunteered with the University of Alberta’s Alumni Council, though, that he realized the potential of the alumni body. Now that he’s poised to take over the association’s presidency in July, Bhanji wonders about the benefits of giving back.

You graduated back in 1991: what made you want to stay connected to the U of A? I often tell my children that university will be the best time of their lives. I became the vice-president of the Ismaili Students Association in my third year of pharmacy school. Each year we would organize a camp for first-year students to help them get comfortable with their new environment and to network with peers—socializing, cooking together, singing songs around the fire. Now, as an alumna, I realize that the warmth and passion I have for my university stems directly from the opportunity it gave me as a student to serve and meet the people who are now my best friends.

What led you to get involved with the Alumni Association? When I was still practising pharmacy, I was a clinical instructor at the U of A. I was also a guest speaker on entrepreneurship in the economics course taught to third- and fourth-year pharmacy students. Becoming a member at Alumni Council really opened my eyes to what the association does for alumni—from offering OneCard access to the campus libraries to events like Alumni Weekend. It also offers a lot of ways to give back to the university and community, such as volunteering or becoming a mentor to current students.

Volunteerism is a huge part of your life. What do you get from giving back? Without volunteering, my life would feel empty and without purpose, and to me it is a privilege and a blessing.

What excites you most about the future of the association? A lot of people want to make a difference to society once they graduate, and becoming involved with the association is a great vehicle for that. We have the opportunity to mobilize the time and knowledge of more than 275,000 alumni. I believe time and knowledge are the most valuable currency—if we can harness it, it’s as precious as any other resource.

To learn more about the University of Alberta Alumni Association, visit alberta.ca/alumni.
2000s

'O6 Kuen Tang, Bld, has led a busy life since a car accident rendered her quadriplegic in 2001. She has achieved a number of firsts among quadriplegics: first to earn a bachelor’s degree in education with elementary specialization, first to letter comic books for DC Comics and first to ascend H2 Ling Peak in the Canadian Rockies. In September 2016, she became the first quadriplegic to walk on the Great Wall of China—30 years after Canadian Paralympian Rick Hansen’s legendary journey. Wheeling on the wall is the greatest and most difficult thing she has done in her life, so far, Kuen will continue to follow her motto: “Don’t let my disability scare you, let my ability impress you.”

‘07 Shannon Lively (Kleinschnitt), LLB, formerly known as Shannon Brochu by marriage, lives in Toronto, where she is pursuing a career as a realist artist. Shannon studied art at the Academy of Raulito’s Art between May 2014 and July 2016. Recently, her self-portrait drawing, Morning Shave, was included in 100 art and design publications in the world. which was recently named one of the top Creative Quarterly of Genius 9: Creative Discoveries of the 2010s.

‘07 David Zeibin (right) with MIZA Architects intern Warren Scheske (left) and principal Mike Wartman. David Zeibin (Vicki) Zhou, David Zeibin, MIZA Architects in 2015. The architecture firm was recently honoured with two top awards in the 2016 City of Edmonton Infill Design Competition: Best in Class for the Single Detached Home category and Best Overall in the entire competition. MIZA’s entry, titled SlimCity, describes a 17-foot-wide “skinny” house designed with a variety of users and the capacity to quadruple the number of people living on the average-sized residential site. The modern design is intended to complement mature low-density neighbourhoods.

‘07 Christopher Le, BSc, ’13 MQ, a family doctor in Chilliwack, B.C., is collaborating with Sport Central, an organization that provides sporting equipment to kids who cannot afford to buy it themselves. A recipient of donated hockey gear during his own childhood, Chris hopes to “return the favour” by helping to improve other kids’ futures through sports.

‘07 Tianyu (Vicki) Zhou, MA, received Samuel Óghale Oboh, ‘10, 109-year-old professional organization. The app was launched in Calgary and in November 2016. Recently, her self-portrait drawing, Morning Shave, was published in issue 46 of Creative Quarterly, which was recently named one of the top 100 art and design publications in the world. The self-portrait will also be included in Strokes of Genius 9: Creative Discoveries of the 2010s.

2010s

‘10 Samuel Oghale Oboh, MA, received the 2016 Leadership Award in October from the Mitoglobal Television Excellence Awards program, which showcases the best of Africa and its diaspora. Samuel is the 76th president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, the first Canadian of African descent to lead the 109-year-old professional organization.

‘13 Tianyu (Vicki) Zhou, BA, partner in Alberta-based online food delivery startup Nomme App, has launched ClickDishes App, a smartphone application and online platform that partners with local restaurants to enable their customers to order in, order to go, dine in and pay. The app was launched in Calgary and Vancouver in January.

‘14 Janet Isabel Mofita, BA, ’60 Bld, of Edmonton, AB, in September 2016.

‘14 Frank Virginia Pears, BA, ’77 Dip(En), ’83 RD, of Edmonton, ON, in October 2016.

‘15 Helen Margaret Jones (Rose), BSc, of White Rock, BC, in October 2016.

‘15 Elizabeth Louise Bell, Dip(Nu), of Victoria, BC, in September 2016.

‘15 Norman Alexander Lawrence, BSc(Cy), of Edmonton, AB, in November 2016.

‘15 Laura May Wright (Nicholson), Dip(Pharm), of Edmonton, AB, in December 2016.

‘15 Joseph Vincent Chary, BSc(Phy), ’44 LLD (Honorary), of Okotoks, AB, in September 2016.


‘15 Sheila Jean Gainer (Murrin), BSc(Phy), of Edmonton, AB, in October 2016.


‘15 Audrey Ann Helenar Carleton (Peccekeal), Graft, BSc, of High River, AB, in October 2016.

‘15 Monica Kathleen Chittick, BSc, in October 2016.

‘15 Arvind Rakesh, BSc(Phy), ’90 LLD, in January 2017.

‘15 Michael Skala, BSc, ’55 MSc, ’55 PhD, of Edmonton, AB, in October 2016.

‘15 Mary Myfanwy Dayney (Stephens), Dip(Phy), ’67 Dip(NuPhy), ’70 BA, of Victoria, BC, in December 2016.

‘15 Edith Maria Charteron (Smith), BEd(Phy), of Edmonton, AB, in November 2016.

‘15 Jeanne Arvella Johnston (Smelzer), BSc, of Edmonton, AB, in February 2017.


‘15 Audrey May Woodward, BSc(Phy), of Edmonton, AB, in November 2016.

‘15 Wanda Eva Young, BSc, of Saskatoon, SK, in October 2016.


‘15 Evelyn Virginia Medley (Waltz), BEd(Phy), of Calgary, AB, in November 2016.

‘15 William Gordon Morrison, BSc(Phy), of Vancouver, BC, in December 2016.

‘15 Jeanne Berenice Randle (Guski), Dip(Phy), ’49 BEd, of Woodstock, ON, in January 2017.

‘15 Kay Ardell Burnham, DDS, of Edmonton, AB, in October 2016.

‘15 Robert Joseph Faunt, BSc(Phy), of Calgary, AB, in November 2016.

‘15 Audrey Myrtle Hodgen (Wilcox), BFA, of Edmonton, AB, in August 2016.

‘15 Ian Worthington Lindsey, BSc(Phy), ’52 MSc, of North Search, BC, in December 2016.

‘15 Steve Pyrcz, BSc(Phy), of Edmonton, AB, in January 2017.

‘15 Israel Szatzer, BSc, of Calgary, AB, in November 2016.

‘15 Tapan Dabulibook, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in December 2016.

‘15 Leslie James Perry, Dip(Phy), ’55 BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in December 2016.

‘15 Beverley Norman, BSc, of Edmonton, AB, in December 2016.


‘15 Jane Herberich, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in December 2016.

‘15 Lee Faye Conger, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in December 2016.

‘15 Dareen Elaine Cohan, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in August 2016.

‘15 Alene Hubert McLeene, BSc, ’56 MSc, of Edmonton, AB, in November 2016.


‘15 Barbara J. Murray, BSc, ’51 MSc, of Edmonton, AB, in December 2016.


‘15 Robert William Underhill, BSc, of Edmonton, AB, in January 2016.


‘15 Mary Elizabeth Fitzgerald, BEd(Phy), ’54 BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in September 2016.


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IN MEMORIAM

John Matthew Hrynew, BSc(HEc), of Calgary, AB, in January 2017

Rae Clifford Howe, BA(Hons), of Red Deer, AB, in January 2017

Mavis Irene Sund, BEd, of Medicine Hat, AB, in December 2016

Roy James Mutter, BEd, of Medicine Hat, AB, in November 2016

David Morley Aboussafy, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in October 2016

George Henry Martin, BEd, of Calgary, AB, in January 2017

Boris Zenith Woloschuk, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in December 2016

Edward John Zuk, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in January 2017

Margo Nell Tackaberry, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in August 2016

Carla-Anne Margaret Gatz, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in August 2016

Margaret Joan Parsons, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in August 2016

Harry Kim Hay, BSc(HEc), of Edmonton, AB, in August 2016

James Frederick Walker, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in January 2017

Larry Wallace Jacobs, BSc(SpecCert), of Calgary, AB, in January 2017

Patricia Louise Dooley, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in January 2017

James Frederick Hiebert, BEd, of Edmonton, AB, in September 2016

Karen Elaine Jacobs, BEd(Collage), of Edmonton, AB, in January 2017

If you've lost a loved one, contact alumni records at alumni@ualberta.ca, 780-492-3471 or 1-866-492-7516.
Student Charis Auger makes a tobacco offering to the Earth in prayer and thanks to the Creator. “I do this every so often to reconnect and remember those who came before me and those yet to come.” Auger learned the importance of ceremony from the late Marge Friedel, who was an elder at the U of A’s Aboriginal Student Services Centre.

Cultural Connection

Giving back can be simple, one eligible purchase at a time.

Let your University of Alberta Alumni Association MBNA Rewards MasterCard® credit card give back to you and to your school at the same time.

Earn MBNA Rewards points redeemable for cash back, brand-name merchandise, international travel, gift cards from participating retailers, restaurants and even charitable donations.1

• Earn 1 MBNA Rewards point for every $1 spent on eligible purchases2
• Receive 1,000 bonus points3 after your first eligible purchase
• Enjoy the added security of Purchase Assurance4, offering coverage for the first 90-days from the date of purchase against loss, theft or damage
• Take comfort in Extended Warranty Benefits5 for up to an additional year on most new purchases made with your MBNA credit card
• Every eligible purchase benefits student and alumni programs at the University of Alberta6

See how fast your points can add up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Purchases</th>
<th>Monthly Expenses</th>
<th>Monthly Points</th>
<th>First-Year Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groceries</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>7,200</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$500</td>
<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merchandises</td>
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<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus Points††</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Potential first-year total (Redeemable for $250 cash back and more‡) 25,000

For illustrative purposes only. Actual rewards earned will depend on individual eligible purchases

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Secure Your Future with a Charitable Gift Annuity

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