Creating Pathways for Indigenous Success

It has been busy a few months at the University of Manitoba, especially on the Indigenous Achievement front!

In September, my office partnered with the Access Program and the Engineering Access Program (ENGAP) to celebrate their milestone anniversaries for Indigenous Homecoming. Dr. Lisa Monkman, a family physician and an Access alumna, and Jerry Henderson, an Engineer and ENGAP alumnus, were the invited guest speakers. Both shared their life journeys to a full house of students, faculty and community at Migizii Agamik - Bald Eagle Lodge. Celebrating the U of M’s Indigenous alumni is a great way to motivate a new generation of Indigenous students. Dr. Lisa Monkman and Jerry Henderson are exceptional role models and community leaders.

In October, the U of M announced its “Front and Centre” philanthropic campaign, which includes a $17.5 million Indigenous Success Fund (ISF) and $35 million to support the development of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR). The ISF will provide scholarships and bursaries, establish connections with Indigenous youth through mentorship and outreach programs, and facilitate the transition from early years through to post-secondary education.

The NCTR had its official opening November 3-4, 2015. On the first day, Survivors were honoured through a traditional ceremony, and Phil Fontaine, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, was acknowledged for his trailblazing role in bringing awareness to Canada’s Residential School system. The day ended with a panel discussion on reconciliation.

Day two saw more than 2,000 students and educators from across the province come together to learn about Residential Schools. The NCTR will be the home of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC’s) four million historical records, 7,000 residential school testimonies, and gifts that were collected throughout the life of the TRC.

From a Strategic Planning and Enrolment Management perspective, the University is moving forward on developing implementation plans to support the various commitments outlined in both Taking Our Place and the Strategic Enrolment Management Plan (SEM). Indigenous Achievement is featured prominently in both, and the development of a five-year Creating Pathways Implementation Plan is underway. This plan will build upon the activities we identified at last summer’s strategic planning sessions.

An important dialogue that our University needs to have is how to integrate Indigenous perspectives into our learning environment. Indigenous Awareness Week, scheduled for January 25-29, 2016, will focus entirely on this important subject. My office is also partnering with University of Manitoba Aboriginal Students’ Association (UMASA) and University of Manitoba Student Union (UMSU) to host a series of “sharing circles” on Indigenizing the curriculum. Details will be posted shortly, so stay tuned!

I hope you enjoy the Indigenous Connect Newsletter.

Deborah G. Young
Executive Lead, Indigenous Achievement
Indigenous Student Centre programming in full swing

The Indigenous Student Centre has been buzzing with activity this semester. Programs such as Zongiigabowen (We’re Standing Strong), Full Moon Ceremonies, Fireside Chats, and Science Research Talks are attracting a wide range of students, faculty and staff to Migizii Agamik - Bald Eagle Lodge.

Zongiigabowen is a wellness group for Indigenous men. The group comes together weekly to explore their strengths and to examine what it means to be Indigenous men. Participants are encouraged to address issues that will assist them in achieving their academic goals and to successfully take on challenges. New members are welcome at anytime. Meetings take place in the Circle Room, every Thursday from 5 PM - 6:30 PM until December 10, 2015. For more information, please contact Carl Stone: carl.stone@umanitoba.ca or 204-318-2928.

Christine Cyr, director of the Indigenous Student Centre, invites women to learn more about Full Moon Ceremonies. Full Moon Ceremonies are a time for women to honour themselves, other women and their relationship with Grandmother Moon. They are a time to come together and celebrate life. There are two more Full Moon Ceremonies this calendar year. They will take place on Wednesday, November 25, 2105 and Tuesday, December 22, 2015. Answers to some frequently asked questions about Full Moon Ceremonies and what you need to prepare if you’re planning on attending can be found at umanitoba.ca/indigenous or you can email christine.cyr@umanitoba.ca to ask Christine any questions directly.

Returning to the Indigenous Student Centre this year are the Fireside Chats: Talks on Indigenous Knowledges. These talks take place Tuesdays from 11:30 AM until 12:30 PM in Migizii Agamik - Bald Eagle Lodge. The Fireside Chats are lead by Elders and Traditional teachers. The following is the schedule for the remainder of the calendar year:

- November 24, 2015: Elder Norman Meade
- December 1, 2015: Dr. Michael Hart

Science Research Talks at Migizii Agamik

Science Research Talks at Migizii Agamik are a huge success. Join us Mondays at 12:30 PM to learn about current research opportunities with scientists at the University of Manitoba and about undergraduate research awards. The talks will take place in the Circle Room in Migizii Agamik. Light refreshments will be served.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 23, 2015</td>
<td>Dr. Scott Kroeker</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>In resonance with the Earth: NMR spectroscopy and materials research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 30, 2015</td>
<td>Dr. Jay Kormish</td>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>Big ideas from little worms: lessons learned in organ development and plant parasites.</td>
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For more information contact Justin Rasmussen: (204) 230-2505 justin.rasmussen@umanitoba.ca

Orientation events a huge success

As part of this year’s orientation activities, the Indigenous Student Centre (ISC) hosted Indigenous Celebration Stations. Three stations were set up around campus, each featuring a different activity. Upon completing an activity, students were given one of the tools (bowl, spoon, cup) that they would need for a Feast that would take place at the end of the event.

“The stations were very successful,” says Christine Cyr, director of the Indigenous Student Centre. “Participants loved the hands-on and fun activities. They were able to engage with students leaders as well as Elders – it was awesome!”

At one station Blair Robillard led sessions on Traditional Indigenous Games. The Metis University Students Association and ISC brought in Dean Davis to teach the basics of jigging at the Metis station. The third station tested students’ knowledge of Indigenous pop culture.

The second annual ISC/Centre for Aboriginal Health Education orientation event was held at Bannatyne campus for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Twenty-seven Indigenous students attended a Welcome Feast.
The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) held its official grand opening November 3-4, 2015. The opening events took place at Fort Garry Campus and the RBC Convention Centre, where more than 2,000 students and educators joined the journey of reconciliation.

The first day began with the lighting of a sacred fire outside of Chancellor’s Hall, which houses the NCTR. From there Carl Stone, an advisor with the Indigenous Student Centre, lead a procession to University Centre where hundreds of people gathered to take part in the opening ceremonies.

During the ceremonies, former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Phil Fontaine was honoured for his work in bringing the truth about Residential School to light. It was 25 years earlier when Fontaine first spoke publicly about his own experiences of abuse at Residential School. In 2005 he successfully negotiated the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The NCTR is mandated by that agreement. It will preserve the memory of Survivors’ Residential School experiences, and advance reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

In a powerful demonstration of reconciliation, Fontaine asked his two children who were in attendance for forgiveness for how he dealt with the pain he carried from attending Residential School, explaining “Among other things in my life, I was a terrible drunk. The worst imaginable drunk.” A smudging ceremony followed his testimony, so he can walk lighter and better.

On the second day, the students and educators who gathered at the RBC Convention Centre were asked to reflect on what reconciliation means to them, and the NCTR’s online database was officially launched.

The NCTR archive can be found at: www.nctr.ca

President and the Poet

Ovide Mercredi launched his first book of poetry at an event held October 22, 2015. The book, called My Silent Drum, is published by the University of Manitoba’s Aboriginal Issues Press.

The Eagle and the Heron spoke
Two winged messengers that talked
In spirit sounds of wind and wings
Touching him in unison, spirit to spirit
In a dance of new changes abounding.

- excerpt from The Omen, by Ovide Mercredi

All proceeds from the sales of My Silent Drum will go to the Ovide Mercredi Bursary Endowment Fund for Indigenous students.

Watch video of the event.
PhD student organizing conference on Indigenous research

Like a lot of people, Leo Baskatawang started his university career right out of high school. Unlike most people, he took some time off and enlisted in the U.S. Army. He served for five and a half years, including two tours of duty in Iraq. He returned to his studies, got his undergraduate degree and went on to do his master’s, during which he made headlines for walking from Vancouver to Ottawa, dragging a copy of the Indian Act that his master’s, during which he made headlines for walking from Vancouver to Ottawa, dragging a copy of the Indian Act.

When did you start at U of M?
Originally I started back in 1998 when I first graduated from high school, but I dropped out after about a year and a half because I wasn’t able to manage my time or my money at that point. I went into the workforce and ended up joining the U.S. Army subsequently. After my military experience I knew I was ready to be an academic, so I came back in 2008 and pretty much have been in school ever since.

Why U of M?
When I first went to school I didn’t really know anything about Native Studies, didn’t really know that it existed. I was almost whitewashed so to speak. I thought I was going to be a lawyer. When I started taking psychology courses, I wanted to be a psychologist. It’s such a common experience for so many undergraduates. I never really considered Native Studies. I knew if I was going to have a second opportunity to go to school that I’d have to do something to give back to my community. In my mind the only way to do that was to educate myself about our community’s issues. Native Studies seemed like a logical choice. Once I became involved with the department I became enlightened, I guess. I knew this was the right track for me and to do what I could do to contribute back to society.

What is your focus of study?
For my master’s program it was very much arts and literature related. Basically talking about the importance of arts and literature and their ability to be a transformative pedagogy. That’s where it started for me, but I knew there were other issues. I knew one was Treaty Rights and interpretation and implementation, and so when I was considering topics for a PhD dissertation, I was aware of the fact that the Treaty Right to education wasn’t being implemented properly. At the time I thought that the government transfer payments that communities receive had something to do with the Treaty education clause, but as I dug into the subject more I realized that the government doesn’t consider that a Treaty Right; they consider that a social policy that they provide for Indigenous communities. So to me it’s something that can be used almost against the government: okay, this is a fine social policy, but now what are we going to do about the Treaty right to education? I have ideas on how that can be implemented.

What do you do to build a school in the territory where Treaty 3 was signed, which is my home. I want to build a university. One of the challenges for me is making the institution accessible for everybody because – because it will be grounded in Indigenous Treaty rights and it will be for Indigenous people, but I also want it to be accessible for non-Indigenous people. That’s going to be a very tricky balance that hopefully I’ll be able to flesh it out more with my research.

You won a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) award. What did it mean for you to get that?
I was very excited. My application was successful and it went on to the national competition. Two thousand of approximately 5,000 applications got to that point and then out of those 2,000 only 1,000 (approximately) were successful. These are really the best students across the country, in all different fields within social sciences. To receive one of these awards was so validating for me because I knew I had a good idea, but for it to be recognized by this committee of prestigious scholars was very meaningful. Also being an Indigenous person, I know how important that is.

What are you doing when you’re not in school?
I’m a sports enthusiast through and through. Right now I love the Toronto Raptors. I was rooting for the Blue Jays when they were in the playoffs. I love sports both playing and watching. What else? Just socializing with friends. Watching movies, I really love the cinema. I’m a huge music fan too: Zeppelin rules!

You walked across Canada. Tell me about that.
In January 2012 there was a Crown/First Nations gathering regarding the Indian Act. It was a highly anticipated event at the time. I think a lot of people, including myself, thought there was going to be some sort of action or resolution regarding the Indian Act. But of course there wasn’t. My understanding was that the only thing that came out of that meeting was that they would reconvene in a year to issue a progress report. I couldn’t believe it. Why can’t we get a progress report going next week? Let’s figure out what we need to do and let’s start working towards it. Why do we need a year just to do this? I was incensed about that, so I took it upon myself to raise awareness about what I thought was an issue of social justice. I planned for this campaign where I would walk from Vancouver to Ottawa with a copy of the Indian Act chained to my waist to try to raise awareness about this. So that’s what I did.

It was a unique experience. Obviously the changes to the Indian Act that I had hoped for didn’t come about, but I met lots of interesting people. I learned a lot about myself and my culture along the way, which was really beneficial for me. Like when I was writing my master’s thesis, I didn’t have the knowledge and experience to be able write effectively at that point. Once I went on the march I learned much more about my people and ceremony. It helped me be able to write a lot better and more effectively. It came with a bunch of other experiences too as far as fundraising, and doing media interviews.

Tell me about the conference you are organizing.
The conference we’re hosting is called Rising Up. It’s a conference on international compact, knowledge, and research in Indigenous studies. The conference will be presented by graduate students in the field of Indigenous studies. So presenters don’t have to be Indigenous, but they need some sort of Indigenous content in their research.

We want it to be a free event so it will be accessible for everyone. I really believe that is important. It will be March 4-5, 2016 and we’ll invite everybody to come out. I think we’ll see cutting edge research on Treaty Rights, Indigenous Knowledge, pedagogy, education, social justice issues, environmental issues, health issues, social work, land claims, nutrition, it could be on anything.

For more information and to register for the Rising Up Conference on International Compact, Knowledge and Research in Indigenous Graduate Studies visit: wwwumanitoba.ca/student/indigenous/risinrup/ or email: RISINGUP@umanitoba.ca

A feature of our quarterly newsletter is a profile of one of the more than 2,000 Indigenous students who attend the U of M. To recommend a student for this section, please email Ruth Sheadruth.shead@umanitoba.ca

universityofmanitoba.ca/indigenous
Inspiring Indigenous Youth explore careers in health

By Noreen Wichart and Wayne Heide

Fifteen high school students spent part of their summer exploring health career options at the U of M. They participated in the Health Career Quest Summer Camp, which gives Grade 11 students from Northern Manitoba hands-on experiences in areas such as medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and medical rehabilitation.

Indigenous students, particularly where health care services are limited, may have little to no exposure to health professions. They have limited or no role models in health fields to encourage their path to a health career or even a university education. The Health Career Quest Summer Camp strives to ease apprehension about post-secondary education by providing students with an overall sense of the university experience. The camp gives a “face” to the health professions and inspires students to think about a career in health.

The camp’s unique partnership and experiential learning techniques have translated into an exciting experience for students and an innovative opportunity for faculty and staff at the U of M. Mentorship through staffing with health professional students has remained its hallmark and its greatest strength.

The Health Career Quest Summer Camp gives hands-on experiences at the U of M’s Bannatyne Campus through the Biomedical Youth Camp. Participants experience a variety of activities in the schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Medical Rehabilitation, as well as clinical and/or research areas and departments.

Delivered as a pilot project in 2008, the camp was originally envisioned by Manitoba’s Office of Rural and Northern Health (ORNH) and the U of M’s Access Programs, which support Indigenous and other non-traditional students seeking a post-secondary education. Of these, the Health Careers Access and the Professional Health Programs offer support to Indigenous students seeking a career in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, medical rehabilitation, nursing, or dental hygiene.

ORNH is a long-term recruitment and retention program for all Indigenous and other non-traditional students seeking a career in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, medical rehabilitation, nursing, or dental hygiene.

The Health Care Quest Summer Camp gives a "face" to the health professions and inspires students to think about a career in health. Through funding from ORNH and the U of M’s Access Programs, a Remediation Fund is available for each student to pay for post-secondary education. The Health Care Quest Summer Camp also promotes life skills and personal development through programs like the Life Skills Coach, which focuses on practical and personal development, communication, goal-setting and empowerment, among others.

The camp’s partnership with the University of Manitoba, the School of Medicine, the U of M’s Bannatyne Campus, and ORNH have been successful in increasing Indigenous students’ awareness of health careers. Since its inception, the camp’s partnership has grown to include Frontier School Division, the U of M’s St. John’s College, and the School of Medicine’s Biomedical Youth Camp. Camp Co-Directors include Ms. Noreen Wichart (AAFP), Mr. Wayne Heide (ORNH), and Tyson McGillivray (Frontier School Division).

The camp has been largely successful due to in-kind contributions of the partners as well as a variety of funding sources. Thanks to these financial contributions, the camp is offered at no cost to participants.

The key camp components include:

1. One week of hands-on activities and experiences at the U of M's Bannatyne Campus through the Biomedical Youth Camp. Participants experience a variety of activities in the schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Medical Rehabilitation, as well as clinical and/or research areas and departments.

2. Academic assessment in the areas of math and science is conducted by Frontier School Division. A remediation plan is developed for each student and tutoring is offered paid for by the camp throughout Grade 12.

3. Camp Counsellors are students currently enrolled in pre-professional studies or a health professional school. The staff participate in mentorship training and must possess valid child abuse registry and criminal records checks. They also must have valid CPR and first aid.

4. Living in-residence at the Fort Garry Campus. Camp Counsellors/mentors live in-residence with participant students and supervise activities at all times. Participants are exposed to life on a university campus and in a large city. In addition, students are mentored by camp Counsellors who serve as role models.

5. Exciting and active evening/weekend program which includes tours of the campus, Indigenous games, evening activities such as baseball games, theatre, shopping, cultural activities, etc.

6. Life skills workshops, delivered by an Indigenous Life Skills Coach, which focus on practical and personal development, communication, goal-setting and empowerment, among others.

The students are also provided with information relating to entrance to university, particularly supports available to them such as the Access and Aboriginal Focus Programs, the Indigenous Student Centre, as well as other campus resources. Should students decide to pursue post-secondary education, they are given conditional acceptance into the Access and Aboriginal Focus Programs.

The camp is scheduled to run again in the summer of 2016. Application forms are currently being developed.

For further information on the 2016 Health Career Quest Summer Camp, including application forms and deadline for application, please see the Office of Rural and Northern Health website: www.ornh.mb.ca
Speaker series aims to build bridges

The Association of Aboriginal Commerce Students (AACS) has launched a speakers series called Wahkotowin.

“Wahkotowin is Cree for relationships. I hope to foster stronger relationships through this series by providing a safe place where Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can learn together,” says Ashley Richard, president of AACS.

The series launched in September with a talk focusing on the importance of connecting cultures in business. James Wilson, Treaty Commissioner for Manitoba, spoke about contemporary issues in Treaty relations. He was joined by Elder Harry Bone of the Keeseekowenin Ojibway First Nation.

The second session looked at "The Top 5 Issues in the Indigenous Community Post Election." Niigaanwewidam Sinclair, acting head of the department of Native Studies, lead the discussion. He was joined by Indigenous activist Lenard Monkman, who is an active member of Aboriginal Youth Opportunities (AYO!), as well as Elder Daabasaanaqwat 'Lowcloud' a.k.a. Peter Atkinson of the Turtle Clan.

Everyone is welcome to attend the events, which take place in the Drake Centre’s Commemorative Room. Refreshments are provided free of charge.

“We would like to thank the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, the Office of Indigenous Achievement and the University of Manitoba Aboriginal Students’ Association for their support of Wahkotowin,” says Richard.

The next session will take place November 30, 2015 at 6 PM. Gregg Hanson, former president and CEO of Wawanesa will be speaking about the importance of building bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. He will be joined by U of M law student Ashley Richard.

Mrs. Universe brings star power, message to campus

Leading up to the 2015 federal election, the University of Manitoba Aboriginal Students’ Association (UMASA), the University of Manitoba Inner City Social Work Student Council, the University of Winnipeg Aboriginal Students’ Council, and the Canadian Federation of Students organized Empowering the Indigenous Students' Vote – a half-day event featuring Mrs. Universe Ashley Callingbull-Burnham as the keynote speaker.

The event included workshops on sovereignty, Indigenous governance, policy making and an introduction to Canadian politics. Students also heard from MKO Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson, AMC Grand Chief Derek Nepinak.

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact Ashley Richard: adrichard90@gmail.com

Ashley Callingbull-Burnham (a.k.a. Mrs. Universe) posted this picture to social media with the caption:

“Best bathroom selfie yet. There are words on all the mirrors at this school. Who said you can’t leave the bathroom feeling empowered! Lol But for real this is a great idea for students and guests! It gives you a better perspective of yourself and builds your confidence when you look in the mirror.”

UMASA update

Submitted by Jeremy McKay, Coordinator, UMASA

National Treaty Meeting

Eleven UMASA members attended the National Treaty Meeting in Regina on October 16, 17 and 18.

At the meeting UMASA participated in a youth forum asking questions about the source of Indigenous sovereignty, how that sovereignty might be expressed today, and the challenges in doing so. A highlight of the weekend was being asked by Grand Chief Derek Nepinak, with the help of University of Winnipeg professor Leah Gazan, to compile the written record of the youth forum and to share it with general meeting participants.

UMASA also participated in the ongoing and always controversial conversation regarding extractive industries and the environment. Should First Nation communities participate? Should First Nation communities receive a share of the wealth extracted from territories under Treaty confirmed title? Or should First Nation communities instead direct their efforts and resources towards a renewable energy transition and what might this look like?

UMASA looks forward to working with the youth leaders who are hosting the next National Treaty Meeting next spring in Saskatoon.

Treaty Ambassador Program

UMASA is currently involved in establishing the “Treaty Ambassador Program” aimed to begin in the spring. This is in partnership with the Association of Aboriginal Commerce Students, the Office of Indigenous Achievement, the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, and students in professor Wanda Wuttunee’s “Aboriginal Community Development” course.

The "Treaty Ambassador Program" aims to be one part of an effort to ensure that the U of M is responding to a demand for Treaty education, Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing.

More information about the program and how to be involved can be expected in the new year.

Strategic Plan and Sweat Lodge

UMASA intends to respond to the U of M’s Strategic Plan, particularly as it relates to Indigenous students. This can only be achieved through consultation with students. More information to come.

UMASA has asked professor Michael Hart to host a sweat on Sunday, November 29, 2015 (at day break). U of W students are also expected to attend. If you would like to attend please RSVP to UMASA cultural coordinator, Robert Caribou: caribou@myumanitoba.ca.

UMASA council members pose with Mrs. Universe, (L-R) Kristin Flattery, Alana Whirford, Chance Paapanekis, Mrs. Universe Ashley Callingbull-Burnham, Robert Caribou, Lionel Daniels, and Dillon Courchene (Photo by Doug Thomas)
Indigenous Homecoming celebrates decades of success

This year’s Indigenous Homecoming was a celebration of two programs: the Engineering Access Program (ENGAP) turned 30 this year, and the Access Program marked 40 years. A standing room only crowd gathered to hear special guest speakers talk about how these programs contributed to their success.

Jerry Henderson graduated from the U of M with a BSc. in Mechanical Engineering in 2014. He spoke about his journey through ENGAP and recalled the time when he decided to move back to his northern community of Opaskwayak Cree Nation. Staff from ENGAP continued to check in with him after he left and encouraged him to return the program. If it hadn’t been for their support, Henderson says may have never come back to the U of M and fulfilled his dream of becoming an engineer.

"The support I received from the staff and students during my time at ENGAP was life defining." - Jerry Henderson, (BSc. ME/14)

ENGAP has graduated more than 100 Indigenous engineers (106 and counting), more than any other post-secondary institution in Canada.

Dr. Lisa Monkman, an alumna of the Access Program (BSc/00), and a family physician (MD/04) also spoke at the event. When Access began in 1975, its original focus was on health careers, in particular medicine. Over its 40 years, the programs’ supports have expanded to include a broader range of health related disciplines, for example nursing, pharmacy, and dentistry, as well as non-health related professions such as education, social work, and science. The mandate of Access is to support students who face personal, cultural and/or financial barriers at the post-secondary level, who, with academic, personal and sometimes financial supports, have an enhanced likelihood for success.

Approximately 87 percent of students in the Access programs are Indigenous. Since its inception, the Access Programs has graduated well over 500 students from a diversity of programs. Examples include (approximate numbers):

- Doctor of Medicine, 40
- Bachelor of Arts, 217
- Bachelor of Social Work, 78
- Bachelor of Science, 118
- Bachelor of Education, 59

Access graduates, like Dr. Lisa Monkman, have come to exemplify excellence within their own professions. They have influenced positive change locally, provincially, nationally, and at the world stage. Access graduates, through their outstanding achievements, have embodied the definition of what it means to be trailblazers, innovators, defenders, rebels, and visionaries. Their past, current, and future achievements will continue to define the success of the program.

A big thank you to everyone who came out to celebrate the success of these programs and our Indigenous alumni.

National Chief calls on campus community to “close the gap”

When the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) set out to share his message to “close the gap” he first stop was the U of M. National Chief Perry Bellegarde said, “I wanted to come somewhere that is in the heart of Turtle Island and I couldn’t think of a better place than the U of M.”

National Chief Bellegarde began by sharing statistics, or what he describes as “harsh realities,” to illustrate “the gap” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. For example, he pointed out that the life expectancy of Indigenous people is five to seven years lower than the national average; more than 40,000 Indigenous children and youth are in foster care; 132 First Nations communities are under boil water advisories; and Indigenous people make up 4.3 percent of the population of Canada, but 25 percent of the people in jail are Indigenous. He also pointed out that “the gap” hasn’t closed at all since 1981.

Approximately 200 students, faculty, staff, and community members listened intently as National Chief Bellegarde laid out six themes that he believes will help “close the gap.”

National Chief Bellegarde’s six themes for closing the gap are:
1) Strengthening First Nations families and communities.
2) Sharing and equitable funding.
3) Upholding rights.
4) Respecting the environment.
5) Revitalizing Indigenous languages.
6) Truth and Reconciliation

Watch video of the event.
Wise Kid-Netic Energy celebrates 25th anniversary

Since 1990, Wise (Women in Science and Engineering) Kid-Netic Energy has delivered science and engineering workshops, clubs, and camps to youth throughout Manitoba. The program is committed to connecting with Indigenous communities. In 2014-2015, camps were held in Skownan First Nation, Norway House Cree Nation, Hollow Water First Nation, and Sapotaweyak Cree Nation. Workshops were delivered to the same communities, as well as Opaskwayak Cree Nation, and Sagkeeng First Nation.

WISE Kid-Netic Energy will be holding a social on Friday, November 20 at 8 PM in EITC E2-229 (Fort Garry Campus). Tickets are $10 and can be picked up at the WISE office, located near the Tim Horton's in the Engineering atrium.

WISE Kid-Netic Energy is looking for Indigenous students pursuing science and engineering for full-time employment May-August, 2016. Apply here: www.wisekidneticenergy.ca/employment/

Nursing students host Orange Shirt Day

Dozens of nursing students, faculty, staff, Indigenous community members, and allies wore orange shirts to campus on September 30. They were taking part in Orange Shirt Day - an annual day for recognizing Residential School Survivors.

Orange Shirt Day started in Williams Lake, BC in 2013. A Survivor named Phyllis (Jack) Webstad shared her story of arriving at Residential School in her brand new orange shirt, only to have it taken away from her. She said that the colour orange always reminded her that her feelings didn’t matter. The movement’s goal is to show Survivors that every child does matter.

Participants in the U of M’s Orange Shirt Day walked from the Helen Glass Centre, around Migizii Agamik - Bald Eagle Lodge, and to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

U of M students win big at Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Achievement Awards

Congratulations to all of the students who won Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Achievement Awards (MAYAA)! This year four students from the U of M’s Asper Business Education Partners (ABEP) program have been selected. The MAYAA will be given out November 19, 2015.

Laura Kiefer
Business/Entrepreneurship
Laura, who will graduate from the Asper School of Business in 2016, has a keen business sense and excellent leadership qualities. She has been twice elected to Asper’s Indigenous student group and has been instrumental in bringing changes to the ABEP program, where she also works part-time.

Carter Wilson
Personal Achievement Senior
Carter is a third year Asper student who has demonstrated leadership in a variety of areas. Carter is an accomplished athlete, having earned a bronze medal in the World Junior Trials and dual gold medalist at the North American Indigenous Games (javelin). He is an avid volunteer, serving on many committees and groups at the U of M. In addition to these activities, he has earned an exemplary GPA that has earned him many scholarships.

Michael Teichrieb
Academic Senior
Third year Asper ABEP student, Michael Teichrieb will receive the 2015 Academic Senior Award. Having earned a 4.00 GPA across 68 credit hours, Michael joined Asper’s Beta Gamma Sigma, an honour society to which Asper’s top 10 percent are invited. He has been actively involved in the Association of Aboriginal Commerce Students, while being an active participant in the Co-op program.

Jesse Yarechewski
Community/Volunteer Junior
Giving back to the community has always been important to second year student Jesse Yarechewski. In high school, Jesse was actively involved in a number of activities and causes, including Volunteer, Oxford Heights Community Club Senior Dance Club and the Manitoba Metis Federation’s Liberty Local. During his first year, Jesse became involved in the Association of International Management Students, P.A.C.T., St. Paul’s College, University of Manitoba French Club, and the Association of Aboriginal Commerce Students.

Maria Cortes-Toro, Heather Waloshuk, Hannah Curtis, Donna Martin, Jessica Loepky, Kendra Rieger and Elaine Mordoch.

In 2014-2015 WISE Kid-Netic Energy:
Delivered 291 workshops to 10 First Nations communities, reaching 5,603 Indigenous youth.
Held week-long camps that were attended by nearly 250 Indigenous youth.
Aboriginal families learning languages together

Submitted by Adrienne Carriere
Acting Director, Access and Aboriginal Focus Programs

Earlier this year, Aboriginal families in Winnipeg’s inner-city had a chance to take Cree and Anishinaabemowin language classes. The U of M’s Access and Aboriginal Focus Programs in Extended Education secured funding from Canadian Heritage to offer the classes twice a week to families whose children were enrolled in Dufferin School. The instructors for the Anishinaabemowin classes were Elders Barb and Clarence Nepinak, while Rena Wilde and Ida Bear taught the Cree instruction classes. More than 35 students took the opportunity to learn their traditional languages.

“One of the most exciting things about this program is that it gives our family a chance to learn our language together,” said Stephanie Edwards. “In this class alone, I am attending with my mom and my daughter. That’s three generations of one family reclaiming our language and culture together. Plus, we go and visit my grandmother and we get a chance to speak our language with her so that’s four generations learning together.”

“The language classes were part of a transformative reconciliation process. It brought the parents and families of students who, because of the residential school experience were not engaged in the school. It allowed an opportunity to build trusting relationships between the staff of the school and the parents – that in itself made the program successful.”

— Wayne Wyke, principal of Dufferin School

Another class was offered for those interested in learning Dakota. This was done in collaboration with the Aboriginal Education Directorate. Approximately 10 students regularly attended the classes, which were offered once a week for five months and included a two-day intensive language camp that ran over a weekend in June at the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre at the University of Winnipeg.

The instructors, Elders Wanbdi Wakita and Pahan Re San Win, delivered the language program by providing cultural teachings and an understanding of the Dakota Nation that was grounded in their history and culture. They used storytelling as a strong and relevant teaching method and always integrated humor throughout the classes. This helped the students to engage and feel more comfortable in learning to speak the Dakota language.

“I love, love, love this class,” said one student. “It’s my dream fulfilled to improve my understanding of language. Being able to feel confident enough to try speaking is a great achievement to me. I witnessed my classmates’ confidence to speak Dakota increase over the week.”

A second phase of the Aboriginal Families Learning Languages Together Program was offered during the summer months. It was developed in collaboration with the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre and the University of Winnipeg - Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre. Anishinaabemowin classes were offered as a one-week intensive camp that taught language skills in the classroom, along with activities in the community. The primary instructor was Jason Parenteau, who involved numerous Elders and guest instructors. Participants had the opportunity to do things such as jiu jitsu and yoga, and learn about plants and animals at Assiniboine Park, all while speaking the language.

For Dawnis Kennedy, learning to speak Ojibwe is about so much more than just learning a language. “I want to be who I was born to be,” said 38-year-old Kennedy, who is of Ojibwe descent. “Without the language, how do I understand that and see that?”

Cree Language classes were also offered during the summer. The classes were held twice a week at the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre (MERC) at the Spence Neighborhood Association. Learners had the opportunity to engage in activities in the classroom, as well as to participate in cultural activities and ceremonies in the community. They attended a concert with the very talented Cree musician Winston Wuttunee. Instructor, Rena Wilde interpreted the songs he performed in the Cree language. They also attended a sweat lodge ceremony where they had the opportunity to listen and begin to learn songs in their language. The feedback received from the students in the Cree class was very positive. According to one student, “This was a great class. I did learn a lot. As well as was reminded of what I forgot as a child. I enjoyed my time here.”

Overall, the Aboriginal Families Learning Language Together was a huge success. It was an opportunity for participants to reclaim some of the language and cultural practices that were lost through the intergenerational impact of the residential school system in Canada. It was an opportunity to bring the U of M’s Access and Aboriginal Focus Programs to the community – to support families to learn their language together in a safe and culturally sensitive space and place.
Supporting Indigenous Students

Third Annual Indigenous Health Symposium: Mapping the Way Forward
Hosted by the Manitoba First Nations Centre for Aboriginal Health Research, Mapping the Way Forward brings together community and academic researchers, students, Elders, health leaders and policy makers in Manitoba and the neighbouring region of Nunavut, who share the common goal of improving the health of Indigenous communities.

Day one will include the launch of the Honouring the Voices video - a retrospective look at the last 40 years of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Indigenous health research in Manitoba. This celebration will honour the voices of individuals, families and communities that have transformed health research to what it is today, and will highlight a collection including over 45 oral histories, photographs, reports and stories.

Tuesday, November 24 - Thursday, November 26
U of M Bannatyne Campus, Brodie Centre, Basic Medical Sciences Building

Wahkotowin Speaker Series
Hosted by the Association of Aboriginal Commerce Students, Wahkotowin is Cree for relationship building. At the third session of this series, Gregg Hanson, former president and CEO of Wawanesa will be speaking about the importance of building bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Monday, November 30, 2015 6 PM
Commemorative Room, Drake Centre

Rising Up: A Graduate Student Conference on International Compact, Knowledge, and Research in Indigenous Graduate Studies
Hosted by U of M’s Native Studies Graduate Students Association, Rising Up invites all graduate students across all disciplines to gather together, rise up, and present their knowledge on international compact: the colonial edifice. It is a new era of Indigenous scholarship. To present, please submit your abstract to risingup@umanitoba.ca by February 1, 2016. To attend without presenting, please RSVP to risingup@umanitoba.ca by February 1, 2016.

Conference dates: March 4-5, 2016 - more details coming soon.

Indigenous Awareness Week - Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into the Learning Environment
Our second annual Indigenous Awareness Week will take place January 25-29, 2016, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action challenge the education sector to develop and implement curriculum and learning resources about Residential Schools, Treaties, and Indigenous peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada. The U of M has made advancing Indigenous Achievement an institutional priority. As our University moves forward in fulfilling its commitments, this week-long series of panel discussions and presentations will explore some of the questions, challenges and opportunities that come with Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into the Learning Environment, as well as look at some innovative work that is already being done in this area.

Monday, January 25, 2016 - Integrating Treaty Perspectives into the Curriculum
Noon - 1:30
Room 553/554 University Centre

Tuesday, January 26, 2016 - Respecting and Protecting Indigenous Knowledge in the Learning Environment
Noon - 1:30
Room 553/554 University Centre

Wednesday, January 27, 2016 - Surviving the Colonized Classroom
Noon - 1:30
Bistro Two O Five, University Centre

Thursday, January 28, 2016 - Indigenous Course Requirement: Good or Bad?
Noon - 1:30
Room 553/554 University Centre

Friday, January 29, 2016 - Bringing Residential School Survivors’ Perspectives and Knowledge into the Curriculum
Noon - 2
Room 553/554 University Centre

Student Meet and Greet Luncheon
Please join Deborah Young, Executive Lead for Indigenous Achievement, and staff from the Indigenous Student Centre and Access and Aboriginal Focus Programs, for an informal lunch.

Upcoming dates:

Thursday, November 26, 2015  Noon - 1 PM
Thursday, January 21, 2016  Noon - 1 PM
Thursday, February 25, 2016  Noon - 1 PM
Thursday, March 31, 2016  Noon - 1 PM

All students are welcome. Lunch will be held in the foyer of Migizii Agamik - Bald Eagle Lodge.

Coffee with the Executive Lead
Please join Deborah Young, Executive Lead for Indigenous Achievement for an informal chat over coffee. Come say hello, ask questions, and have your voice heard. Everyone in the U of M community is welcome. This academic year’s dates are:

Wednesday, January 13, 2016  9:30-10:30 AM
Thursday, February 11, 2016  9:30-10:30 AM
Thursday, March 10, 2016  9:30-10:30 AM

Coffees are held in the foyer of Migizii Agamik - Bald Eagle Lodge.