The Bentwood Box

(Also pictured on the front and back pages)

A Bentwood Box, commissioned by the TRC, arrived at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg on April 9, 2013. The Bentwood Box is a lasting tribute to all Indian Residential School survivors. The carved panels represent the unique cultures of former First Nations, Inuit and Métis students.

The TRC Bentwood Box reflects the strength and resilience of residential school survivors and their descendents. The Bentwood Box honours those survivors, who are no longer with us, and pays respect to his or her own grandmother by depicting her residential school experiences at Kuper Island in the carvings. As the Box travelled with the Commission to different provinces and territories, offerings were made to it to commemorate personal journeys to healing and reconciliation. At the end of the TRC’s mandate, it will be housed in the permanent NRC venue.

The moving and powerful signing ceremony on June 21, 2013, established the University of Manitoba as the home of the National Research Centre for Residential Schools was a highlight in a year of milestones where our world-class faculty and staff demonstrated their enormous commitment to our country and community.

At the signing ceremony, Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Murray Sinclair proclaimed that our proposal stood “head and shoulders” above other submissions. The importance of this national research centre to our province, country and the world is power to help us all move forward on a path of reconciliation and healing.

I cannot overstate the need for this transformational change to address the brokenness of our shared history. It is critical to ensuring that Indigenous peoples and cultures are respected in schools, workplaces and all public institutions.

I am proud that our faculty, staff and students have embraced and championed the need to reject the status quo when it comes to our relationships with Indigenous communities and cultures and aspire to something better for all the right reasons.

You often hear me speak about the need for the evolution of our community of learning, discovery and engagement. The pace of transformation of our world — politically, economically, technologically and socially — is at times difficult to comprehend.

At the University of Manitoba, we are witnesses, champions and at times challengers of change that we have and will continue to experience.

If the University of Manitoba is to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of students, faculty and staff, as well as the broader community it serves, we too must evolve in a way that makes sense to all of us.

Faculty and staff are living that change and we have asked a lot of you as we consider how we can best advance our mission as Manitoba’s only research-intensive university. The process of evaluation and re-evaluation of how our community functions, as with the Academic Structure Initiative, is important and necessary, and will lead us to a better place.

Hundreds of staff members have been involved in service-oriented projects that are on-going across our university. Many of the initiatives that have been implemented are a result of your suggestions and feedback. These initiatives have inspired our community to adopt a culture of change that will help propel us forward as a more effective, modern and efficient organization.

As a result of the progress we have made together over the past year on creating suitable spaces for our community, initiatives that enhance our student experience and efforts to attract and retain faculty and staff.

The passion, commitment and quality of our world-class climate change team, and the critical relevance of their work to the future of our fragile planet, has inspired us to build the Nellie J. Cournoyea Centre for Arctic Research, which opened this March.

I want to congratulate our staff for making such a strong case for new investments in our libraries. The result of those conversations is the redevelopment of the Elizabeth Dafoe Library, now one of most popular student learning and study spaces on the Fort Garry Campus.

Over the years, we have heard that “The Grumpy Grotto” does not meet the needs of a community committed to healthy, active and sustainable living. As a result, we are now building a state-of-the-art Active Living Centre. We broke ground on that project in October. This spring we also saw the opening of the new state-of-the-art stadium, the Investors Group Field, where we will welcome the wider community to our campus as our Bison Football team and the Bombers electricity the crowds.

The enormous capacity for collaboration among faculty, staff and students, and the broader community enabled our graduate students to shine at the University of Manitoba first-ever Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition late this winter.

When I reflect on the past year, it becomes abundantly clear that the strength of our university is its people: remarkable individuals who meet and exceed the extraordinary high standards you have set for yourselves and our community.

While I am proud of what we have achieved over the last 136 years, I know the best days for the University of the Manitoba are ahead of us, thanks to all of you.

SUBMISSIONS

The Bulletin welcomes submissions from members of the university community letters to the editor, columns, news briefs and story and photo suggestions.

EVENTS

The Bulletin publishes notifications of events taking place at the University of Manitoba or events that are of particular interest to the university community. There is no charge for running notices in the events columns. Send event notices to Bulletin@umanitoba.ca

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