Gi-miigiwemin Gi-gikiinô’ amaagoowininaan: Giving of Our Scholarly Learning

2011 Profile of Students in the PhD Studies for Aboriginal Scholars (PSAS) Program
Dedicated to our families and the mentors and Elders who have helped each of us on the paths of our life journeys. Miigwetch! Chi-miigwetch! Ekosi! Pidamaya! Marci/Marsi/ Marsee! Merci! Thank you!
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Members of the PSAS Council

Dr. Jay Doering, Chair
Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Manitoba

Dr. Deo H. Poonwassie, Coordinator
Professor Emeritus, University of Manitoba

Dr. Verna Kirkness, OC², OM³; Community Representative
Associate Professor Emeritus, University of British Columbia

Dr. Kathryn McNaughton
Vice President, University College of the North

Dr. Don Robertson, OM⁴, Community Representative

Dr. Fred Shore
Assistant Professor, Department of Native Studies, University of Manitoba

Ms. Margaret Amyot, Ex-officio Member
Development and Advancement Services, University of Manitoba

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1 This initiative was strongly supported by Dr. Emőke Szathmáry, CM, OM, FRSC, past President of the University of Manitoba.
3 Order of Manitoba (2007).
4 Order of Manitoba (2004).
Message from the Chair of the PSAS Council

I am pleased to see that students have taken the initiative to chronicle this cohort of students in the PhD Studies for Aboriginal Scholars (PSAS) program at the University of Manitoba. This program is testimony to the University’s commitment for enhancing the advancement of Aboriginal peoples and the courageous efforts of selected scholars.

The PSAS program began in the fall of 2007. It supports Aboriginal students who have been admitted to doctoral programs with financial assistance and program counseling. At present there are 15 students pursuing doctoral studies in Education, Native Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies, Microbiology, Clinical Psychology and Interdisciplinary Studies. After four years of concentrated studies our first student graduated in October 2011. This program is highly successful: it brings Aboriginal scholars together and provides training and education at the highest level. The graduates will provide essential leadership for promoting the goals and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples in Manitoba and Canada. I wish every current student success in their studies and the achievement of a rewarding career.

In addition to pursuing course work and research in their selected academic areas, PSAS students have had the opportunity for exposure at academic meetings nationally and internationally. Students have presented research papers in Canada, USA, Australia, Peru and Iceland. Students are able to establish contacts and discuss issues at a global level while developing a worldview that encompasses various aspects of humanity.

We hope that this is only the beginning and that we will be able to secure sufficient funds to continue supporting students both financially and academically in this worthwhile program. We shall continue to seek support both externally and internally from the private and public sectors for the promotion of this important endeavour.

On behalf of the Council I wish to thank the PSAS students (especially the coordinator, Marlyn Bennett and Mike Elliott for the photography) for this excellent publication which will serve as a catalyst to other aspiring Aboriginal students. I also wish to thank members of the PSAS Council for their guidance and concerted efforts in making this program a successful reality.

Wishing you the best in graduate scholarship,

John (Jay) Doering, Ph.D.
Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Chair PSAS Council
For further information about the PhD Studies for Aboriginal Scholars Program, please contact Dr. Deo Poonwassie at poonwass@cc.umanitoba.ca.
Introduction

and how this student initiative came about

This compilation of student profiles is the collective effort of 16 doctoral students in the PSAS program at the University of Manitoba. The profiles offered in this publication are intended to share who we are and is our collective way of giving back to the university for the educational and financial opportunities that we each have been granted because of the PSAS program.

The PSAS program is composed of students and allies committed to advancing Indigenous worldviews and creating institutional change while supporting each other emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. The 16 students profiled in this document thought it was important to showcase our scholarly efforts and learnings thus far. So over the summer of 2011, we met with a majority of the students to photograph them for this initiative. We met at various locations on campus at the university and around the City of Winnipeg. In the course of meeting and photographing the students, we learned much about the diversity of the students and their areas of study. We are impressed by the wealth of knowledge that exists among these students and we are humbled by the opportunity to showcase these amazing and emerging Aboriginal scholars. We see this publication as a tangible tool for recruiting future students. These profiles represent our way of reaching out to encourage other Aboriginal persons, who may be interested in obtaining a doctoral degree, to consider the University of Manitoba as the destination for attaining their educational goals.

We feel strongly in ensuring that Aboriginal students have the opportunities for furthering their education at the doctoral level; we are optimistic that our collective efforts in sharing our scholarly learning, knowledge and experiences will bring more attention to this important program. We hope that by sharing our profiles in this publication that it becomes a tangible tool in helping the university with future fundraising efforts to ensure the longevity of this important and much needed program.

In closing, on behalf of the students in the PSAS program, we would like to thank Dr. Deo Poonwassie and Verna Kirkness and the members of the PSAS Council for their guidance and continued efforts in advocating for the creation of this important program. Miigwech! Chi-miigwetch! Ekosi! Pidamaya! Marci/Marsi/Marsee! Merci! Thank you!

Respectfully,

Marilyn Bennett
Coordinator and Doctoral Student
Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Manitoba

Mike Elliott
Photographer, Mike Elliott Photography
EB² (Imaging, Design & Research)
As an Indigenous student I have found the faculty and administrative staff at the University of Manitoba to be supportive and helpful; thus far attending university has been a good experience. My band, the Lac Seul First Nation, along with others that include the PSAS and the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation are currently providing me with sponsorship. It is through their generous assistance that I am able to enjoy the privilege and satisfaction of honoring both my parents’ teachings.
Boozhoo gidinin. Indizhinikaaz niin Helen (née Olsen) Agger, gaye dash, Namegosibiing indoonjii. Using the Anishinaabe (“Ojibwe”) of my mother’s people to introduce myself is not only a way of putting the language to practice and reminding us of the fact of its existence, it is an indication of what my priorities are as a student.

It does not seem that long ago when I was growing up in Namegosibiing Trout Lake with my five siblings and my mother was teaching us about the lifeways of her people at the same time my European-born father was instilling us with the importance of a Western education. As a result of my dual heritage I acquired an awareness of my mother’s narrative historical traditions and the meaning of an education.

After graduating from high school I took a hiatus from my academic pursuits to marry and raise our daughter. I then resumed my formal education by earning a bachelor’s degree in Human Ecology and a master’s in Public Administration, both at the University of Manitoba. I then worked for several years in the not-for-profit sector; it was during that time period I began the special venture with my mother to textualize the oral narratives she had taught us when we were children. Although the task took over a decade to complete, it was a moment of satisfaction—and celebration—when our work was finally completed and we were able to see the end product in the form of a book (titled Following Nimishoomis: The Trout Lake history of Dedibaayaanimanook, Sarah Keesick Olsen published by Theytus Publications, 2008).

With my daughter’s encouragement I recently decided to embark upon another academic journey, this time to pursue a PhD in Native Studies here at the University of Manitoba. My area of interest is the oral history of the Namegosibii Anishinaabe people, with the intent to document the narratives in a formal way that will be a permanent written record for the benefit of those who are interested in such matters. Using a methodological approach similar to that of J. Cruikshank (1990) and W.A. Wilson (2005) in that the elders are my mentors and they identify what is important for discussion, I intend to listen, record, transcribe, and translate into English their stories and narratives. Upon completing my program I want to write another book, this time basing my writings on my PhD thesis. This year past I began the process of interviewing some of the elders.

Having now completed the first year of my program I can say that the events and activities of the year have proven to be enlightening, challenging, and enjoyable. The assigned readings were particularly informative in that they present plausible explanations for such phenomena and processes as the various forms of colonialism and decolonization that we see around us. As an Indigenous student I have found the faculty and administrative staff at the University of Manitoba to be supportive and helpful; thus far attending university has been a good experience. My band, the Lac Seul First Nation, along with others that include the PSAS and the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation are currently providing me with sponsorship. It is through their generous assistance that I am able to enjoy the privilege and satisfaction of honoring both my parents’ teachings. Amii’iwe, baamaa miinawaa.
The mentorship, camaraderie among the students coupled with the funding assistance provided through the PSAS program and a doctoral award from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) has allowed me to focus on giving life to my educational dreams. The PSAS program has given me tangible tools that can help me change the world for the better, not just for myself, but for Aboriginal children, young people and families impacted by government systems!

Marlyn Bennett
A

niin, my name is Marlyn Bennett and I am embarking on the final stretch of my studies in the Interdisciplinary doctoral program (disciplines of focus include: Social Work, Community Health Sciences and Native Studies). My doctoral studies focus on the transition of First Nations youth from First Nations child welfare systems in southern Manitoba.

I am member of Sandy Bay Ojibway Nation in Manitoba. I reside in Winnipeg with my daughter, Nicole and my partner, Mike. On a personal note, my research is a very private journey for me. I grew up in government care from 12 until I reached the legal age of majority. I understand implicitly the experiences of having lived in poverty and have a strong understanding of the disadvantaged standing that many youth in care often find themselves in when they reach the legal age of majority. Despite having grown up in care and outside of my cultural origins, I have always been acutely aware of the strengths of the foundations of my early years. I recognize that the importance of these foundations are due to intimate connections formed through family, community, culture and language.

I have worked in the field of child welfare as a researcher for over 15 years. Ten of those years have been with First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada. As the Director of Research, I am also responsible for Coordinating and editing the First Peoples Child & Family Review, an interdisciplinary open access online journal. I hold a Bachelor of Arts and an Interdisciplinary Masters of Arts degree (involving the disciplines of Social Work, Law, Native Studies and Political Studies) and completed two years of a law degree. I have operated a research and consulting company and have been involved in a number of program evaluations for the federal, provincial and First Nations governments as well as non-profit organizations. I have authored and co-authored various articles on Aboriginal Child Welfare in Canada. I was a research associate with the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect in 2003 (CIS) and currently sit on the First Nations CIS Advisory Committee which oversees the First Nations component of this 5-year cyclical study.

I contribute back to the community through numerous voluntary involvements with the boards of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Sandy Bay Child & Family Services, and chair the boards of Amikik Child & Family Services and Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba. I have served as a First Nations advisor to the organizations of Beyond Borders and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, two organizations that advance the rights of children everywhere to be free from sexual abuse, exploitation and ensuring the personal safety of vulnerable children and young people. In addition to my studies and community contributions, My current professional interests include missing and sexually exploited children/youth, the evolution of Aboriginal child welfare in relation to self-government as well as an interest in ethics, research capacity building, Aboriginal mothers and the child welfare system including mother loss among children and youth of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

The experience of being in care and having worked as a researcher in the child welfare field are the driving purposes behind my dreams of attaining a doctoral degree. The mentorship, camaraderie among the students coupled with the funding assistance provided through the PSAS program and a doctoral award from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) has allowed me to focus on giving life to my educational dreams. The PSAS program, in particular, has given me with tangible tools that can help me change the world for the better, not just for myself, but for Aboriginal children, young people and families impacted by government systems!

Gi-miigiwemin Gi-gikinò’amaagoowininaan: Giving of Our Scholarly Learning
I am proposing a process for peace building research in Indigenous contexts founded on an Anishinabek / Aboriginal world view. I believe that peace building must begin with an internal journey for peace before beginning to have peaceful relations with others. My studies have provided me the opportunity to come to balance with traumatic events from my childhood. I hope my journey, aided by the PSAS program, can act as a catalyst towards peace for other people who face similar situations.

Paul Cormier
Hi, my name is Paul Cormier. I am a status Indian and a member of Lake Helen First Nations - Red Rock Indian Band from the North Shore of Lake Superior. When my reserve was relocated from the banks of the Nipigon river to its present location on Lake Helen, my Grandfather purchased land in town so my mother and her sister would not have to go to residential school. Consequently, I did not grow up on reserve but in the community of Nipigon.

During my youth as a trapper’s helper, my Uncle Dave taught me that we are from the Wolf Clan. I have been fortunate to have worked with many Aboriginal groups from across Canada including the Nuu-chah-Nulth people from the West Coast of Vancouver Island, The Siksika from Alberta, The Ojibway from Manitoba, The Mi’Kimaq from the East Coast, and my own community in Northern Ontario. I have also worked with people from the far north of Canada and spent substantial time in the Yukon. It is the teachings of family and Elders that I’ve met on this journey that guides my heart in making decisions and determines my life choices.

As a youth in Northern Ontario I did not have an interest in school and took an extra year to graduate from high school. After a short period in College, I quit and shortly after became a fire fighter with the Ministry of Natural Resources in Ontario before beginning a fifteen-year career with the Parks Canada Agency. My jobs included training design specialist and trainer, National Advisor for Diversity and Employment Equity, and manager of Aboriginal Affairs. I also worked with the Association of Native Child and Family Services for Ontario as Director of Education and Training before becoming Senior Project Leader for the Aboriginal Centre of Excellence in Winnipeg.

Once I decided to return to school, I received a Social Sciences diploma from Dawson College, a Bachelor of Education Degree from McGill University, and a Masters Degree in Conflict Analysis and Management from Royal Roads University specializing in organizational conflict. My research focussed on the organizational processes, factors, and conditions that enable government to effectively engage with Aboriginal groups on environmental / land based conflicts.

I am currently completing my PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies at the Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, University of Manitoba. My research interests include action research, Indigenous holistic peace building / conflict management, Aboriginal employment systems, and Indigenous peoples and protected areas. My thesis will be titled Kinoo’amaadawaad Megwaa Doodamawaad – They Are Learning With Each Other While They Are Doing: The Indigenous Living Peace Methodology. I will propose a process for peace building research in Indigenous contexts founded on an Anishinabek / Aboriginal world view.

I believe that peace building must begin with an internal journey for peace before beginning to have peaceful relations with others. My studies have provided me the opportunity to come to balance with traumatic events from my childhood. I feel so blessed to have such a supportive wife, family, and community. I hope my research will create a better world for my children Josie and Wil so they can be proud of their Aboriginal heritage and feel less lost than I did as a child and youth.
A mantra I adopted from my high school is to be a "Man for Others". I have taken these words with me over the course of my career and back into academia. Performing bench top research in the lab day-in, day-out does not allow for a lot of personal interactions to help others; however I do strive to develop wide ranging therapeutics that will make every person’s life better, either directly or indirectly. The PSAS program has allowed me to focus on my dream of becoming a cutting edge scientist with the goal of one day "being a man for others" by helping them lead healthier lives.

Ben Dionne
Hi, my name is Ben Dionne and I am a Métis descendant of explorer and surveyor Peter Fidler of the Hudson Bay Company. I was born in Winnipeg, raised in an English and French household and have grown to love the diversity that Winnipeg offers. Upon graduation from St. Paul’s High School I attained a Bachelor’s degree in Science, Major in Microbiology and then moved on to working in the local biotechnology industry. It was in this industrial setting that my life veered towards the research and development of therapeutic agents for the treatment of disease and illness.

After a few years with generic drug manufacturing I made the bold move of moving my wife and child to San Francisco, CA to accept a position with a novel biotech company in the R&D of humanized monoclonal antibodies. These antibodies were targeted primarily for cancer treatment, inflammatory bowel disease and auto-immune disorders. While living in California my appreciation for science grew larger and a seed was planted that in order to effect even more change I would eventually need to go back to school to get my PhD. And so after a cumulative 8 years of industrial experience and following the addition of another child and expecting a third, the decision was made to move back to Winnipeg.

I first enrolled at the University of Manitoba in the Microbiology Master’s program and then was able to transition to the PhD program. The focus of my research has evolved into examining the glycosylation patterns of recombinant proteins and the effect that redox potentials and disulfide bonds have on them; specifically monoclonal antibodies. I have been an outgoing presenter at conferences, both in industry and academia, as well as a couple of publications in peer reviewed journals.

I live with my wife and 4 children and have ambitions of returning to industry after graduation. A mantra I adopted from my high school is to be a “Man for Others”. I have taken these words with me over the course of my career and back into academia. Performing bench top research in the lab day-in, day-out does not allow for a lot of personal interactions to help others; however I do strive to develop wide ranging therapeutics that will make every person’s life better, either directly or indirectly. The PSAS program has allowed me to focus on my dream of becoming a cutting edge scientist with the goal of one day “being a man for others” by helping them lead healthier lives.
My research focuses on Indigenous people’s struggles to safeguard their lands and waters. Inherent in this inquiry is an interrogation of mainstream Canada’s social, political, and economic systems and values to evaluate whether a change of paradigm is in order. With this, I hope to contribute to a dialogue necessary to all sectors of society – non-Aboriginal, Aboriginal, new immigrants – to help each other determine an equitable path to positive community and true prosperity. Being a member of PSAS has reinforced for me the wealth that such community brings, and to my peers I am extremely grateful.

Ryan Duplassie
Hello, I’m Ryan Duplassie of Lake Superior Anishinaabe and mixed European lineage, raised in BC and in northwestern Ontario. I am entering my second year of study as a PhD candidate in Native Studies. About 15 years ago – after I bought my first book by David Suzuki, the first thing I read after I graduated from Trent University with an English Literature degree – I began to educate myself about environmental degradation, and the social, political, and economic factors that contribute to it. I recognized immediately that we are all complicit, and that the issue was extremely complex. For example, even though I planted trees for seven consecutive seasons [thereby participating in the grander system of clear-cutting boreal forests], living in a tent for months at a time and working outdoors reinforced my respect for the natural world.

Wishing to travel the world and gain some perspective, I taught ESL in East Asia for seven years – two in South Korea and five in Japan, the latter where I met my partner Mieko, with whom I have three wonderful daughters. In Japan, I began a History degree by Distance Ed. Living abroad gives one a unique perspective on one’s home country. Having been outside of Canada for so long, I believe I was able to see the history of Canada more objectively than was previously possible, because nothing about Canada was naturally taken for granted as ‘normal’ anymore. At that time, many of the systemic socio-political and economic trends that Canada and Canadians were part of became distilled in my mind. When I and my young family arrived back in Canada in 2006, the ‘way of life’ of ordinary Canadians seemed to me well worth some concentrated criticism. After I finished my Master’s degree in History, I became involved in a literary project with Cree writer/musician Tomson Highway, where I was exposed full-time to the stories and experiences of Aboriginal writers and thinkers. Though my eyes had been slowly opening for years, this work with Tomson Highway shot them wide open, and it literally changed the course of my life.

Here at the University of Manitoba, I am able to use my experience with literatures and history, and combine it with Indigenous theories to piece together the story of how it is we arrive at our current state as human beings: on the cusp of self-inflicted extinction. I am especially concerned with the pollution of our lands – most specifically our waters, watersheds, and wetlands – as extraction industries become ever more desperate to exploit ever-diminishing ‘resources’ for private profit. As I learn the stories tied to particular lands and waters, I respect that these spaces are sacred – they are essential for biological life as well as psychic and social health. Even we city-dwellers are not as disconnected from the land ‘out there’ as we are wont to believe. My research focuses on Indigenous people’s struggles to safeguard their lands and waters. Inherent in this inquiry is an interrogation of mainstream Canada’s social, political, and economic systems and values to evaluate whether a change of paradigm is in order. With this, I hope to contribute to a dialogue necessary to all sectors of society – non-Aboriginal, Aboriginal, new immigrants – to help each other determine a equitable path to positive community and true prosperity. Being a member of PSAS has reinforced for me the wealth that such community brings, and to my peers I am extremely grateful.
My dream is to see Canada’s Constitution recognize the right to educate Aboriginal children in their mother tongue. Part of my desire to see this happen stems from the realization that our languages could cease to exist in the next generation if something is not done to save them. A major reason our languages are in a state of endangerment is due to the residential school system. Therefore in addition to my PhD research, I have worked with a variety of Aboriginal organizations over the past eleven years as an advocate for former students of residential schools and their families. I believe that my educational journey has presented many opportunities for me to carry out my grandfather’s legacy.
Boozhoo! Tansi! My name is Lorena Sekwan Fontaine. I am Cree Anishnaabe from the Sagkeeng First Nation in Manitoba. My Anishnaabe name is Ma’iingan Giizhig-kwe (Wolf Sky Woman) and I am a member of the Wolf clan. Currently, I am a PhD student at the University of Manitoba researching Aboriginal language rights in Canada. I hold a master’s degree in law from the University of Arizona as well as a law degree from the University of Manitoba and Bachelor of Art degree in political science from the University of Winnipeg. Since 2008, I have been an assistant professor in the Indigenous Studies Department at the University of Winnipeg.

One of my biggest motivations to pursue a university education is my maternal grandfather, the late John Young. He strongly believed that young Aboriginal peoples require an education in order to secure a brighter future. He also valued our Cree culture and language immensely while ensuring that each of his 15 children became fluent Cree speakers. The legacy of my grandfather’s life has always encouraged me to obtain a university education and that speaking Cree will provide my family and community with a richer foundation in our cultural identity.

For the past two years I have been researching language issues in Canada as well as other countries where Indigenous peoples are struggling to have their language rights recognized. My dream is to see Canada’s Constitution recognize the right to educate Aboriginal children in their mother tongue. Part of my desire to see this happen stems from the realization that our languages could cease to exist in the next generation if something is not done to save them. A major reason our languages are in a state of endangerment is due to the residential school system. Therefore in addition to my PhD research, I have worked with a variety of Aboriginal organizations over the past eleven years as an advocate for former students of residential schools and their families. I believe that my educational journey has presented many opportunities for me to carry out my grandfather’s legacy. Now that I have a child of my own, my hope is to see her learn to speak our language and learn our culture in school so that my grandfather’s vision of education will become a reality in her generation.
Over the past twenty years, I have been involved in chairing, facilitating and contributing to numerous conferences and meetings on a wide range of issues including education, language, health, disabilities, special needs, self-government, Treaties, citizenship, consultation and accommodation, remote and isolated issues, and strategies for increasing Elder involvement and parental/community input in long-term visioning.

Shirley Fontaine
My name is Shirley (Malcolm) Fontaine and I am a fluent Anishinaabe woman from the Ebb and Flow First Nation in Manitoba with family connections to the Sandy Bay, Lake Manitoba, Crane River and Vogar communities. I grew up in the Ebb and Flow First Nation and graduated from high school in Ste. Rose du Lac, Manitoba. I have a Masters degree in education and I am currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Education at the University of Manitoba.

As the former Manager of Education for a regional political organization, I was involved in several exciting initiatives including the creation of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) and I contributed to the development of the new First Nations Control of First Nations Education policy paper endorsed by First Nations Chiefs in Canada and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). I was involved in reviewing the development of the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba’s (TRCM) new Grade 5 and 6 Treaty curriculum materials as part of the Treaty Education initiative and participated in planning the first Honouring First Nations Treaties Day at the Manitoba legislature.

Over the past twenty years, I have been involved in chairing, facilitating and contributing to numerous conferences and meetings on a wide range of issues including education, language, health, disabilities, special needs, self-government, Treaties, citizenship, consultation and accommodation, remote and isolated issues, and strategies for increasing Elder involvement and parental/community input in long-term visioning.

Since the age of twenty, I have been hired on a contractual basis by several universities. I have taught the Introductory Saulteaux/Ojibway language courses and was involved in teaching language methodology for Native Language teachers at Brandon University and the University of Manitoba’s Continuing Education program. I was a Program Coordinator for the University of Winnipeg’s off-campus program in the Peguis First Nation where I taught Introduction to University Skills and helped students to prepare for educational success at the post-secondary level.

I have travelled extensively and provided presentations on her research at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) in New Zealand, Australia and Peru. I have visited Israel as part of an educational tour hosted by B’Nai Brith to increase understanding between First Nations and Jewish peoples.

My husband Earl and I have five children – two sons and three daughters, and four grandchildren. My research interests are language, culture, decolonization, indigenous worldviews, and education.
My doctoral thesis is concerned with Canadian federalism, specifically as it relates to federal and provincial jurisdictional responsibilities in the realm of First Nations’ reserve communities. My research interests are ultimately aimed at how the legal and practical mechanics of the state can best be navigated and developed for the sake of social justice.

Emily Grafton
My name is Emily Grafton and I grew up in Winnipeg’s core, which has had an immense impact on how I view the world. I am Great Lakes Métis, a particular branch of the Métis Nation that I am quite passionate about and that is significant to my family, which is 4 generations strong in Manitoba. I have spent most of my adult life studying, working, and volunteering with causes that focus on issues regarding women, poverty, and Indigeneity.

I studied Political Science and Women’s Studies at the University of Winnipeg, receiving an Advanced Bachelor of Arts. Here my research focused on citizens’ interests and rights, and how these are exercised or circumvented in public spheres. I continued these studies at the University of Manitoba, completing a Masters in Public Administration, concentrating on public organizational management and how the state balances marketplace and civic-centered interests and needs. I am quite certain that Canada has the tools to be a better nation; while at times the nation lacks the motivation, we truly have the potential to equalize our society.

I am currently pursuing a PhD in Native Studies at the University of Manitoba. My doctoral thesis is concerned with Canadian federalism, specifically as it relates to federal and provincial jurisdictional responsibilities in the realm of First Nations’ reserve communities. My research interests are ultimately aimed at how the legal and practical mechanics of the state can best be navigated and developed for the sake of social justice.

I have worked as a researcher and consultant for a variety of organizations, including the Manitoba Provincial Government, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and in several academic capacities. Some particular highlights include working with Anishanaabe and Dene communities in Manitoba and Northwest Territories, respectively.

As an avid volunteer, I have been involved with many projects, international and local in scope, lending these causes my interests in citizen advocacy. I owe to these experiences a wide-range of skills in community capacity-building and social justice.

I have travelled extensively both within Canada and internationally. I spent 5 summers tree planting throughout Northern British Columbia, which rewarded me with both knowledge and passion for land issues in Canada. I also am a practicing yoga instructor. I provide free yoga classes to women recovering from domestic violence.
Advancing my education has always been about the next seven generations and learning from others. The PSAS program is a wonderful example of "community." Education is not about one person, rather a community of support.

April Krahn
My name is April Krahn. I am a proud Métis/Mohawk woman originally from Ontario. I live my life with integrity, balance, and optimism, guided by the sacred teachings. Over the years I have worked in a variety of disciplines including; communicable disease education in Winnipeg, Africa and The Pas Manitoba; child abuse education for teachers in Africa, human resource management, marketing, consultation and currently at Red River College for the past ten years as the Director of Aboriginal Student Support & Community Relations.

My commitment to enhancing the life of Aboriginal students at the college and my integrity add the personal dimensions of respect and honor. I work to continually develop partnerships and build relationships with students, staff, community members and stakeholders in the cooperative effort of supporting and encouraging Aboriginal students in fulfilling their goals, dreams and personal accomplishments. I have presented at international conferences, been invited as a keynote speaker, master of ceremonies, and approached to consult with over forty corporations to review their employment strategies. I have also mentored junior staff at numerous corporations in Winnipeg.

I continue to participate in the community through a variety of roles, primarily by facilitating change through positions such as: the executive of the Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Career Awareness Committee, advisory of College University Bound, organizing council of the North American Indigenous Games, co-chair of the organizing council of the NAIG, chair of the Aboriginal subcommittee for Manitoba Prospects, advisory council for Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, council member on the Manitoba Women’s Advisory Council and a recent appointment to the Manitoba Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission. Additionally, I have participated as a member of the following committees which affords relationship development and partnerships such as: the Interprovincial Association on Native Employment, Career Trek, National Aboriginal Student Service Association, Manitoba Aerospace GTRO, along with numerous educational committees focused on community capacity building for Aboriginal people.

I believe that we should all strive to be exemplary role models to all current and future students by demonstrating a commitment to improving one’s potential through post-secondary education. My commitment to lifelong learning started with a Bachelor of Arts Degree, a Human Resource Management Certificate, a Masters in Education, a Certificate in Management and Administration and now I am currently working on completing a PhD. My journey in the PSAS program has been exciting, challenging, joyful, overwhelming and scary at times but that is exactly what made it rewarding; facing fears and learning about oneself. Defining what you believe and why, while trying your best to practice the seven sacred teachings.

Advancing my education has always been about the next seven generations and learning from others. The PSAS program is a wonderful example of “community.” Education is not about one person, rather a community of support!
My life path is about teaching and scholarship, and through my current research and community work, I strive to help those who teach develop the kind of sensibilities that stir a compassionate love for children of all nations. In this exploring, I seek to help others know why principles of justice and equality are more than the legalese we see in the courtrooms and classrooms of our nation, and why researchers and educators advancing these principles need "storywork" that takes them beyond human rights discourses and testimonial references as they help their students "see."
As a child, I lived in the south grasslands of Saskatchewan. My mother showed me how joy in learning comes from people and nature. I smile a wide smile when I think about my mother as teacher. When I attended Billimun School in the middle of the prairies, I was one of her grade two students. Over the years I have lived, studied and worked in Mankota, the place of my birth, Val Marie, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Winnipeg and Denare Beach, the place of my re-birth and summer home. I have studied at SIAST and the Universities of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and I hold graduate and undergraduate degrees in Recreation Studies and Education. My studies have helped me advance the epistemologies of inclusive education, human rights law, ethics, critical disability theory, eco-literacy and Indigenous knowledge within teacher education programs.

I have held many instrumental employment roles including that of recreation director, community school coordinator, recreation therapist, and of course teacher for a variety of elementary, secondary and post-secondary students. As a sessional instructor for the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan and NORTEP (Northern Teacher Education Program) I have experienced the needs of beginner teachers and I have worked to hear all voices. My role as an advocate for and with disabled peoples and Aboriginal peoples has helped me develop a personal philosophy grounded by the Indigenous principle of relationality. Recently, I completed a review of special education services for the Prince Albert Grand Council and found and embraced the complexity of knowledges within teaching professionals and parents. The importance of listening and hearing all voices is a necessary and important component within the delivery of teacher education. I currently work as an Academic Advisor at SIAST in Human Services and Early Childhood Education and am looking forward to completing my comprehensive exams as I journey through my Ph.D. program.

My life as a teacher and a scholar has evolved in the past fifteen years. I am sure that even before that, “I was teacher”; the Elders at Shawane Dagosisin say “everything you know you are born with”. When I think of this, I rely on my relationships, those of my Métis, French, German and English ancestors and the “teachers” I have had. My life path is about teaching and scholarship, and through my current research and community work, I strive to help those who teach develop the kind of sensibilities that stir a compassionate love for children of all nations. In this exploring, I seek to help others know why principles of justice and equality are more than the legalese we see in the courtrooms and classrooms of our nation, and why researchers and educators advancing these principles need “storywork” that takes them beyond human rights discourses and testimonial references as they help their students “see.” I strive to embrace the lived experiences of peoples who have been marginalized and I have learned it is about “showing” rather than telling. It is about recognizing and learning from multiple perspectives and “ways of knowing” and it is about partnerships and learning to be “with.” It is about seeking peace while exposing injustice and it is about offering a safe space for “voice.” As I see many Indigenous women and children who continue to be shut down by hegemonic systems and colonized leadership, I believe my role as teacher, ally, and partner can make a difference. My quest to learn about and share the collective and healing knowledges of Indigenous women has been the focus of my current research. Guided by the foundation of Sāsīpihkēyihtamowin, the Cree word for resilience, I seek to explore correlations among environmental racism and quality of life determinates for Indigenous peoples and its antidote, Indigenous women’s knowledge. My research partnership will support Indigenous women leaders as they examine ecological justice, traditional healing, and peace education. I gratefully acknowledge the guidance and wisdom of Elder and Medicine Woman Stella Blackbird as I journey through this life path with my children, Andrew, Robin and Mackenzie. Marci!
The PSAS program is special, particularly for Aboriginal students, because it is composed of students and allies committed to advancing Indigenous worldviews and creating institutional change.

Heather McRae
Hello, my name is Heather McRae. I am a Métis-Anishinaabe woman with French/Scots ancestry and was raised in a small rural community in Manitoba. My university path began immediately following high school. I received a B.A. from the University of Winnipeg [sociology and criminology] and a M.A. from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto [Aboriginal education, community development].

For the past fifteen years, I have worked as a recreation leader volunteer, correctional officer, international development volunteer, community legal education coordinator, and management intern with the Province of Manitoba.

I have always sought out work and educational experiences that would broaden my understanding of the world and my responsibilities within it. I believe everyone can make a positive difference in the world. Whether graduate students choose to create small ripples or great waves of change, our work matters when we use our skills, strengths, and education in service of our community. For example, my doctoral research project builds upon my love of sport and physical activity and the recent sport-in-development (SID) movement that uses sport to achieve social development goals.

As a Métis scholar and critical social scientist, I can neither ignore the political nature of research nor the wholistic nature of the social world. The purpose of my research is to raise awareness of the need for culturally relevant sport programs for urban Aboriginal youth as an alternative to traditional sport models. According to SID research (SDP IWG, 2007), sport programs for ethnocultural youth are often steeped in race and class-based ideologies that focus on controlling potential youth delinquents as opposed to developing youth leaders.

In partnership with a highly-respected and successful Aboriginal sport organization, I conducted a doctoral research project designed to identify the key program planning and sport leadership practices attributed to the organization’s successful development of Aboriginal youth as community and sport leaders. Another component of my research included a photovoice project with Aboriginal youth that would capture their unique perceptions, feelings, and ideas about sport and culture. A shared goal of our research partnership was to increase the cultural relevance of sport policies, programs and leadership practices, and – hopefully - increase the participation rates and engagement of urban Aboriginal youth in sport.

In closing, I will share some of the lessons I learned during graduate school that may be useful to other students. First, find a research path that you are passionate about and that inspires you - your passion will enliven your work and strengthen your resolve when you need it most. Second, be sure to maintain relationships with family and friends as we know not what the future holds and we cannot relive lost time. Third, find a community of learners like the PSAS program. The PSAS program is special, particularly for Aboriginal students, because it is composed of students and allies committed to advancing Indigenous worldviews and creating institutional change. Fourth, find an advisor who cares about their students and takes their advising duties seriously (thanks Joannie!), and do not be afraid to change advisors if necessary. Fifth, apply for as many scholarships as possible. I have received amazing support from the PSAS program, as well as other funding agencies such as Aboriginal Capacity and Development Research Environment (ACADRE) / Network Environment for Aboriginal Health Research (NEAHR), Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and the Sport Participation Research Initiative (SPRI).
I have worked for First Nations education for the majority of my career and my heart lies with improving education for First Nations people. I remain committed to helping in any way I can for First Nations education and the band schools on the reserves.

Nora Murdock
Hello, my name is Nora Murdock and I am a member of the Ochekwi Sipi Cree Nation (Fisher River). I am originally from the Misipawistik Cree Nation (Grand Rapids) in Northern Manitoba. I currently work as a Director of Education for Fisher River Cree Nation and have worked as Director for seven years. I have worked in First Nations education administration for over twenty years as a vice principal, principal and education director. I spent two years overseas working in a teacher’s college in West Africa and I have also worked for Frontier School Division in northern Manitoba and Winnipeg School Division in inner city Winnipeg.

I enjoy travelling and have travelled extensively in Africa, Europe and Australia and most recently visited Peru to present at the World Indigenous Conference on Education.

I grew up in a large family with Cree as my first language and was raised in a traditional lifestyle as my father was a hunter, trapper and commercial fisherman. He had great respect for the land and taught me many traditional values that have remained instilled in me and guided my life journey. I have a passion for lifelong learning and having continuously taken courses and training to increase my knowledge which I am always willing to share. I have training in Teaching English as a Second Language, Elementary education, Community Development, a Bachelor of Arts (English Major), Bachelor of Education and Master’s Degree in Educational Administration from the University of Manitoba. I am currently completing my PhD in Educational Administration at the University of Manitoba. My graduate studies and research interests include women’s studies, critical pedagogy, policy studies and First Nations education.

I have worked for First Nations education for the majority of my career and my heart lies with improving education for First Nations people. I remain committed to helping in any way I can for First Nations education and the band schools on the reserves. Towards this end, I have been active nationally and provincially on several boards and advisory committees over the years. Currently, I am acting chairperson of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Center, a Board member of the University of Winnipeg Board and a member of several Advisory Committees and Working Groups related to First Nations education. I am a trained community development facilitator and have worked with the Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit on strengthening First Nations communities and my communities of Grand Rapids and Fisher River.

I have two wonderful children: twenty one year old Dustin, in fourth year university and eleven year old, Reanne in grade six.
The Ph.D. and PSAS programs have been instrumental in helping me to name, define and focus how my early teachings can be used to enhance both teacher education and principal professional development.

Sherry Peden*
I was raised in the bush, three miles northeast of the Tootinawazabiing Treaty Nation, where my mother had been raised but because of Indian Act statutes in the late 1950s, had to leave the reserve upon marriage to my father. As such, we lived a semi-traditional lifestyle that revolved around sustenance of life: hunting, gathering, growing our food, hauling water and wood, and the necessary food preservation practices that one does in the absence of electricity. I consider these early teachings to be perhaps the most important teachings of the various forms of education that I have been a part of, because of the values and ethics associated with learning how to be self-reliant yet live in a way that was respectful of the environment around us.

I received my grade school education at Grandview, MB then went on to complete the 4 year Bachelor of Education with the Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program. Following that, the real learning began when I taught for the Frontier School Division. I held various positions ranging from early years to a high school Language Arts teacher, school administration and guidance over a fifteen year period. I have also worked for Brandon University for fifteen years in the roles of centre coordinator in both a single community teacher education center and a regional center, was the academic program and field experience coordinator for all of the centres; and, for the past four years, have been an assistant professor in the on-campus Faculty of Education. Over the years, I also completed the 5 Year Bachelor of Education with a focus on school administration, the Master’s of Education with a focus on teacher education and most recently, have completed my PhD. Program and dissertation at the University of Manitoba with a focus on school administration and Aboriginal education. I continue to be interested in how teacher education and administrator professional development can be transformed such that the wholistic needs of Aboriginal students are better met. I am also interested in any kinds of place based, experiential education programs whereby education is connected to the land. The Ph.D. and PSAS programs have been instrumental in helping me to name, define and focus how my early teachings can be used to enhance both teacher education and principal professional development.

*Sherry is the first graduate of the PSAS cohort. She graduated in October 2011.*
One thing I have learned from my experiences is that when it comes to your hopes and dreams and the things that are important to you, tell anyone who will listen! Someone somewhere usually knows someone or something that will help you get that much closer to realizing your aspirations.
I grew up in Leaf Rapids, Manitoba. My biological family resides in Pukatawagan, Manitoba (Mathias Colomb Cree Nation). In 2006 I was admitted to the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Manitoba. I completed the M.A. portion of the program in 2009. My M.A. thesis examined the relationships between emotional and physical partner abuse and depression and posttraumatic stress disorder.

Following completion of my M.A. I took a one-year leave of absence from my studies to regroup and determine if returning for the Ph.D. portion of the program was the right decision for me. During this time, I was able to reaffirm my commitments and goals and make an effective plan for my return to the program. I returned in the fall of 2010 with a renewed drive to continue with my studies. For my Ph.D. research, I plan to explore factors that promote Aboriginal student success in post secondary education. As one of the social determinants of health, I believe it is imperative that we explore how we can support Aboriginal students to maximize the benefits a quality education can provide for them, their families, and their communities.

Since moving to Winnipeg I have had several opportunities to be involved in initiatives and health research for the benefit of Manitoba First Nations. I have previously worked for the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and more recently I have been working with the Dakota Ojibway Health Services. From these experiences, I have a strong interest in pursuing work that supports efforts directed at increasing accessibility and cultural sensitivity of mental health services for Aboriginal peoples. I also hope to pursue work that entails interdisciplinary collaboration to promote creative approaches to wholistic client care and will be looking into internship sites in Canada that offer such opportunities.

One thing I have learned from my experiences is that when it comes to your hopes and dreams and the things that are important to you, tell anyone who will listen! Someone somewhere usually knows someone or something that will help you get that much closer to realizing your aspirations. You may not know how to get where you want to go, but if you are clear about your intention, you will figure out the rest as you need to.
“My family’s beliefs and values enabled me to live in two worlds, the Native world and non-Native, they knew we had to in order to survive.”

Margaret Scott
nin/Boozhoo. I feel honoured to be amongst the Aboriginal scholars of the PSAS program. Currently I am working on my proposal for my dissertation. Along with working on the completion of the last requirements for my doctorate in Educational Administration, I work full time as the Program Manager for the Special Education Unit at the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC). My interests lie in research and writing about Aboriginal people. There is a lack of scholarly articles about us especially where Education Administration is concerned. This is my area of exploration.

I am a Dakota Ojibway and a member of the Birdtail Sioux Nation, a small beautiful community situated in the south western part of Manitoba. Over the past twelve years I have slowly regained the ability to speak Ojibway since I joined the team of educators in MFNERC in 1999. MFNERC truly believes in honouring First Nations languages and culture. As a young child I was bilingual in the Ojibway and English languages. My grandparents had separated before I was born so I did not have the opportunity to learn the Dakota language of my grandfather. Sadly my ability to speak Ojibway was eroded while attending two residential schools. However, my family never criticized the residential school system which they had attended as well. They probably didn’t want me to associate school with fear but it happened anyway. I learned how much it also eroded my self-esteem at a much later period in my life.

It was through my Ojibway grandmother that I attribute my love of learning. She knew Grimms’ fairy tales by heart and told them to me in Ojibway instead of reading them verbatim. This was before I entered school. How I loved to look in that old book that was bound in an orange hardcover. I can’t remember how it came to be in her possession but I remember it was the first book I was drawn to in my lifelong love of books. I also remember her telling me stories about Nanabush, the folklore trickster along with other stories of our culture and people. My mother never had time to indulge me but she would bring me a colouring book with crayons, a treat better than candy on one of her few trips home. My mother was always away working so it was my grandmother who raised me. Nonetheless both my mother and grandmother had high expectations of me from a very early age. They wanted me to finish school as neither of them had that opportunity so it was their dream that I complete it. In my studies it has often been said that Native or disadvantaged people had no books in their homes to read to their children. This was not my experience. Even though we were poor by mainstream standards both my mother and grandmother were ahead of their time in their influence of my lifelong love of learning. My family’s beliefs and values enabled me to live in two worlds, the Native world and non-Native, they knew we had to in order to survive. Looking far back to that time I was privileged with love from my family.

I have worked as an educator for over thirty years, first as a classroom teacher, then as a resource teacher and currently as a program manager for special education for MFNERC. The majority of my work in education has been with First Nations schools in Manitoba. I am also proud to have recently researched and co-authored a historical document for MFNERC which will be used in the establishment of a First Nations Education System sometime in the not too distant future.

I also have two grown children, a daughter Carol, who lives in Germany and a son Billy, who lives in Winnipeg. I am most fortunate to be a grandmother of beautiful teenage twins, Alexis and Taneisha.
I say to my brothers and sisters in this world, stand strong, hold your head high, you may think you are small and worthy but reality is, you all have much to contribute. A little goes a long way and one small idea can flourish into that which makes a difference.
My name is Kandy Sinclair. I am a mother, grandmother, sister, friend, counselor, advisor, employee, a learner, a listener and much more. I grew up in an Indian reservation known as the Peguis Indian Reservation better identified as the Peguis First Nation Community. I am of Aboriginal descent and proud of whom I am as a woman and as a First Nation person.

Life for me has been a struggle and I see the importance of continuing to educate myself so that I continue to reach and help those around me. Currently, I work for the Manitoba First Nation Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) as one of the Team Specialists. My duties are unlimited as I provide support to school staff in sixteen First Nation schools. Prior to working for the MFNERC organization as a Team Leader, I worked as a Principal/Director, a Center Coordinator and instructor for Brandon University, and as a teacher in my community. I gained valuable insight as I worked with both the higher academia and at the community level. I saw the intertwining of ideas and the complexities it often caused as First Nation people struggle to understand why certain things are the way they are. I feel as a First Nation people we have come a long way but our journey ahead continues as we learn how to work in unity with one another.

In my educational journey, I have often asked myself can I make a difference. As a woman, I hold my head high because I am a carrier of life. I hold strong to the morals and values I learned through the years. As an individual I want to contribute back to society what I carry with me. As I noted at the beginning of my biography, life for me was and is a struggle but I know those struggles are not without growth. I never went through high school and yet I hold three degrees with yet another soon to be completed. I still feel I do not know enough, yet I am able to voice my concerns and ideas. I see change where it matters most, within my own family unit. I have five children who are grown, married and all have an education. For an individual to come from a life of growing up in a home corroded by alcohol and many kinds of abuses I would say growth has occurred.

My contribution to communities/society would be to share the knowledge I have. Be supportive and do my part as a contributing member of society. As stated previously, life is not easy and if you allow society to destroy you, it will. I say to my brothers and sisters in this world, stand strong, hold your head high, you may think you are small and unworthy but reality is, you all have much to contribute. A little goes a long way and one small idea can flourish into that which makes a difference.
PhD Studies for Aboriginal Scholars (PSAS)

http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/graduate_studies/admissions/programs/doctoral/554.htm