

Bringing Research to LIFE

Upcoming Events

Women's World Congress 2011 Mobilization: Gender and Environmental Action Agenda in Winnipeg

Monday, Nov. 28, 2011
9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Room 108, St. John's College
University of Manitoba

Registration is required,
please email your RSVP to
gender.environment@gmail.com

For more information, visit:
<http://blogs.cc.umanitoba.ca/nri-ecohealth>

This workshop is sponsored by
the Riddell Endowment Fund
and
Graduate Student Association
at the University of Manitoba

Critical Conversations: The Idea of a Human Rights Museum presents

Listening to Community
Voices: The Case of
Falun Gong

Monday, Nov. 28, 2011
2:30 p.m.

Room 206, Robson Hall
Faculty of Law
University of Manitoba

For more information,
contact Jennifer Chlopecki
at: (204) 480-1452
or jennifer_chlopecki@umanitoba.ca

Treaty talk

How we might build better relationships in the future

BY MELNI GHATTORA

The University of Manitoba hosted the fourth in a series of six lectures travelling across Canada. Presented by the Royal Society of Canada (RSC), the Governor General's lecture titled: "We are all Treaty People: Accepting the Queen's Hand," came on the heels of the University's statement of apology and reconciliation on the subject of the Indian Residential School System.

During his welcome remarks, the university's President and Vice-Chancellor David Barnard spoke about the recent apology.

"I made a statement of apology on behalf of the university to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission pointing really to a failure, a very large failure in our relationship with Indigenous people," said Barnard. "We need to learn from our mistakes so we don't repeat them and we want to ensure that economic issues, social justice issues are addressed throughout our community, our province and our country."

Adding, "The University of Manitoba is a very appropriate location [for the lecture] because we are here in Treaty One territory, and on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe people and the homeland of the Métis Nation. This university and The Forks of the city are the crossroads of the Anishinaabe, Métis, Cree, Dakota, and Ojibwe Nation territories."

Before calling upon guest lecturer Jim Miller to take the stage, Jeremy McNeil, Foreign Secretary Royal Society of Canada, facetiously shared with the crowd, "I've also been told I should tell you he's a very good speaker, obviously that's why he's here, but he is also a Roughriders fan!"

Miller, a Canada Research Chair in Native-Newcomer Relations, and professor of history at the University of Saskatchewan, has broken new ground with a series of studies on government and church policies towards Aboriginal people.

Over the last four decades, there has been a tradition of treaty making



An audience member holding up Treaty 10 during the Q & A period.

between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown, both in pre and post-



Photos by Mike Latschilaw

Jim Miller, Canada Research Chair in Native-Newcomer Relations, presented the Royal Society of Canada (RSC) Governor General's lecture: "We are all Treaty People: Accepting the Queen's Hand," on November 10, 2011.

confederation Canada. This tradition began with early commercial compacts and peace and friendship treaties in eastern Canada that formed the foundation for these agreements.

During his hour long talk, Miller explored the different expectations and understandings that Aboriginal people and non-Natives had of the numbered treaties that were negotiated in the West between 1871 and 1877, and in northern Canada between 1899 and 1921.

"What was the meaning of the treaty? What do they represent? The problem here is we've got a case of cognitive dissonance or dialogue of the deaf depicted metaphorically because government and First Nations have had, until very recently, very different understandings of what the treaty represented," explains Miller. "For government, the treaties are just contracts about acquiring land and that's it."

According to Miller, that's not how First Nations see it and that's not how they saw it in the 19th century.

"First Nations, although they didn't use this language, thought no they're not contracts, they're covenants," says Miller.

What's the difference? "A covenant is an agreement between humans that evokes deity. God or the Great Spirit, or whatever the deity is in their system, is party to it. If you've been to a Christian marriage ceremony in church, you've been party to a covenant," he explains.

Miller also pointed out that if you look carefully at the treaty negotiations of the 1870s, you will find a lot of talk about God and the Great Spirit from both sides (the crown commissions and the First Nations).

"Contrasting perceptions of these important treaties have underlain

differences between Native peoples and the Canadian government concerning treaty commitments ever since," says Miller.



David Barnard giving welcome remarks on behalf of the University of Manitoba.

Miller feels there is still a lot of unfinished treaty business to conduct.

"There are 60 First Nations in negotiation in British Columbia treaty commission process. There are two concluded and announced treaty agreements that come from that, in almost 20 years now," says Miller. "I was told nine days ago by the Chief Federal Negotiator, Tom Molloy, that there are in fact four more that have been concluded but haven't been announced yet. So we're slowly beginning to see progress."

The lecture concluded with a question and answer period, allowing the audience to weigh in on the on-going conversations of Canadian treaties.

For Miller, receiving such a warm reception from the University of Manitoba was a great experience. "It's a pleasure to return to the University of Manitoba, which I think of as our sister institution given where I come from, and I know a number of people in administration and faculty here so it's a pleasure on a personal basis as well as a professional basis."