



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The Office for Aboriginal Peoples (OAP) is delighted to share our annual newsletter with you, which unlike previous editions, highlights Indigenous initiatives that have taken place over the past two years (2019-2021).

This past year has been a difficult time for many. It has been a time for reflection, perseverance, and resilience amidst the challenges and adversity we have experienced during a global pandemic, and through the difficult truths revealed this past year in the findings of the unmarked graves at residential schools across Canada. For many Indigenous peoples, these truths are well known through our oral histories and teachings, and well documented through various government reports such as the [Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#) (1996) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015).

Our Elders have taught us that we should always try to find positive teachings out of experiences that have challenged us, so that we are able to learn from the past as we move into the future. Keeping these teachings and sentiments in mind and close to our hearts, I would like to think they are reflected in this newsletter and in the [SFU Annual Reconciliation reports](#) that together help to showcase the good work that has happened at SFU during these challenging times. In closing, I would like to raise my hands in thanks to the many students, faculty, and staff who have contributed to this good work and to this special OAP Newsletter edition, congratulations on a job well done!



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First Peoples' Gathering House to open in 2023



Entry view from northeast approach on ceremonial walk



View from northwest of great hall, outdoor ceremony and maker space



View from south west of multi-generational lounge and outdoor gathering (great hall beyond)

A ceremonial space where the SFU community can celebrate Indigenous knowledge and culture will open on the Burnaby campus in 2023.

"I'm very excited this project is moving forward; the First Peoples' Gathering House will be 'our home away from home' and the heart and soul of Indigeneity at SFU," says Ron Johnston, director of the Office for Aboriginal Peoples. Johnston is an SFU alumnus, and a member of the former SFU Aboriginal Reconciliation Council (SFU-ARC) which was dissolved in 2017, once the ARC Report was handed off to former SFU President Andrew Petter, in Coast Salish protocol and ceremony.

"Longhouses are important gathering places in our communities where teaching, learning, ceremony and protocols are upheld and practiced and are at the centre of our Indigenous cultures," he says. "Now we will have such a place at SFU."

SFU's 2017 *Walk this Path With Us* report outlines 34 calls to action to create and support an improved environment for Indigenous community members. The longhouse represents both a step toward lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and SFU's continued reconciliation efforts.

During Orange Shirt Day on Sept. 30, 2020, the Office for Aboriginal Peoples and others held a special ground-awakening ceremony in front of the Strand Hall Annex at the eastern end of the Burnaby campus. The longhouse, which will replace the aging annex, is funded jointly by the provincial government and SFU at a projected cost of \$15 million. Construction will begin in 2022.

Eldon Yellowhorn, associate professor, Indigenous studies and member of the former SFU-ARC, has helped to champion the project and believes the First Peoples' Gathering House "will exceed our dreams, and be a very special place for all of us."

Gabriel George, from Tsleil-Waututh Nation, and Indigenous studies professor Rudy Reimer (Yumks) conducted the Kwis Ns7eyx

(Witness) ceremony in accordance with age-old Coast Salish protocol and practice. The Kwis Ns7eyx ceremony is at the heart of Coast Salish culture and protocol and has been practiced since time immemorial. It's the way in which Coast Salish People document and record their oral histories of important events and activities that take place on their lands.

Witnesses included Coast Salish artist Angela George, who is a graduate of SFU's Executive MBA in Indigenous Business Leadership; Deanna Reder, associate professor and chair of the Department of Indigenous studies; Marie Brunelle, human rights' office director; and Sobhana Jaya-Madhavan, associate vice-president, external relations. The project's three lead architects, Ouri Scott, Shelley Craig and Jake Chakasim from Urban Arts Architecture Inc., were blanketed to honour and inspire them and their work.

The First Peoples' Gathering House will include a large ceremonial hall for hosting special events of up to 300 attendees. It will include a dressing room, an Elders' room, a classroom, a wellness room, and a multi-generational Indigenous Peoples' lounge, as well as a food-service kitchen.



A ground-awakening ceremony for the First Peoples' Gathering House during Orange Shirt Day in September 2020.

Honouring Indigenous Leadership at SFU

DURING THE 2019 AND 2020 CONVOCATION CEREMONIES SFU RECOGNIZED FOUR PROMINENT INDIGENOUS LEADERS WITH HONORARY DEGREES:



Ruby Peter

Ruby Peter (Sti'tum'at), a Coast Salish Elder who for six decades infused her love of Hul'q'umi'num' cultural traditions into her language teaching and linguistic research. She received an honorary Doctor of Laws during the June 2019 convocation. Sadly, she passed away in February 2021.



Chief Robert Joseph

Chief Robert Joseph (Gayusdas) is a hereditary chief of the Gwawaenuk First Nation (Vancouver Island) and a peace-builder who has devoted his life to promoting reconciliation among Canada's Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. He received SFU's honorary Doctor of Laws, honoris causa in 2019 and also holds the Order of BC, the Order of Canada and SFU's Jack P. Blaney Award for Dialogue.



Dr. Nadine Caron

Nadine Caron, who is Anishnawbe from Sagamok First Nation (Lake Huron Region, Ontario), is a surgeon, associate professor, and internationally renowned health advocate who is passionate about improving health outcomes for Indigenous peoples. She is also a co-director and co-founder of the UBC Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Health. An SFU alumnus, she received an SFU honorary Doctor of Science during the 2019 convocation ceremony. In 2011, she received an SFU Outstanding Alumni Award.



Sophie Pierre

During the 2020 convocation ceremonies, SFU bestowed an honorary Doctor of Laws on Sophie Pierre, a recognized Indigenous leader who has championed Indigenous education and economic development. She is a former chief of ?Aqam, St. Mary's Indian Band, now known as the Ktunaxa Nation (Cranbrook, B.C. region), and a former chief commissioner of the British Columbia Treaty Commission.

IN 2021 SFU BESTOWED HONORARY DEGREES ON THREE EXCEPTIONAL INDIGENOUS INDIVIDUALS



Margo Kane

Margo Kane is a renowned Cree-Saulteaux performing artist and an advocate for advancing Indigenous performing arts in Canada. She has dedicated her life to mentoring Indigenous artists and creating opportunities to showcase their work and culture. She received an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts.



Siila (Sheila) Watt-Cloutier

Siila (Sheila) Watt-Cloutier, a respected Inuit leader, is one of the world's most recognized environmental, climate change and human rights advocates. She has helped raise public awareness about climate change and its impact on the Arctic and its peoples. She received an honorary Doctor of Laws. Watt-Cloutier is also a previous recipient of SFU's 2019 Jack P. Blaney Award for Dialogue.



Dr. John Borrows

Dr. John Borrows is a leading authority on Indigenous, constitutional and environmental law who helped establish the world's first Indigenous law degree, and whose scholarship is having a transformative impact on reconciliation efforts in Canada and around the world. He is Anishinabe/Ojibway and a member of the Chippewa of the Nawash First Nation in Ontario. A visiting professor in SFU's Beedie School of Business, Borrows received an honorary Doctor of Laws.

New employee training program to strengthen cultural awareness and safety

The topic of cross-cultural awareness preparation for all staff, faculty and administration at SFU was discussed extensively during the former Aboriginal Reconciliation Council's open forums in 2016-2017. As these discussions progressed, they broadened from an examination of cross-cultural awareness to a broader scope of cultural safety. A new RESPECT (Reconcili-action-Employee-SFU-Professional development-Education-Cultural-Teachings) project evolved out of these discussions and responds to SFU's 2017 *Walk this Path With Us* report by bringing these two important elements together. Specifically, the RESPECT project addresses call to action 7 for SFU to "develop mandatory intervention programs teaching cultural safety and anti-racism for all employees of SFU, in consultation with the Indigenous Cultural Resource Centre."

Led by professor Michelle Pidgeon, associate dean, Indigenity, Faculty of Education, the RESPECT project encompasses five key goals:

1. Create an understanding of how to build respectful and sustainable relationships with the host nations of SFU to ensure employees

honour First Nations knowledge, language, culture and protocols.

2. Build SFU employees' understanding of Indigenous Peoples' past, present and future.
3. Ensure all SFU employees take up their individual responsibility to reconciliation through the collective work of decolonization and Indigenization.
4. Foster and sustain a culture of lifelong (un) learning and respect among SFU employees.
5. 'Enhance' ongoing professional development in the areas of cultural safety, decolonization, and Indigenization for SFU employees at all three campuses.

Over the summer 2020 semester and into early fall 2021, the RESPECT project conducted a survey of staff and faculty to determine what information is most sought by SFU community members. The results of this survey will inform the content and format of the upcoming RESPECT course, with an anticipated pilot launch in spring 2022. For more information please visit the [RESPECT project website](#).

Bringing Indigenous knowledge into the classroom

In 2020, librarian Ashley Edwards, from Red River Métis, joined the SFU Library team with a mandate to create the Indigenous Curriculum Resource Centre (ICRC). Edwards aims to shape the ICRC into a space—both physical and online—that offers guidance to SFU instructors interested in indigenizing and decolonizing their curricula and pedagogy.

"We still prioritize Western ways of knowledge and knowing," says Edwards. "The ICRC is a resource to help faculty bring in Indigenous content. It's one step towards challenging the status quo."

The ICRC provides articles, studies and other resources to help university educators decolonize and indigenize their classrooms.

The ICRC defines indigenization as the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and ways, and decolonization as redressing historical and current practices that

have caused harm to Indigenous peoples.

Edwards says universities have historically held and uplifted Western European views and methodologies in higher education. Indigenizing curriculums incorporates multiple ways of learning about and understanding the world, and valuing Indigenous ways of doing so.

Edwards adds, "If we graduate students who are going out and teaching with an understanding of how to incorporate Indigenous knowledge, think of how these two-eyed seeing perspectives will help people to walk in two worlds and the impact that this will have on Indigenous—and non-Indigenous—students. I really want students of the future to have a better experience than I did."

A formal physical space for the ICRC will eventually be established on the fourth floor of the W.A.C. Bennett Library at the Burnaby Campus.

Coast Salish motifs at heart of new convocation regalia



SFU President Joy Johnson (right) wears the colour red, symbolizing medicine, is significant to Coast Salish people. SFU Chancellor Tamara Vrooman (left) wears colour blue signifying a transition for Coast Salish people, as a way of embracing the contemporary. Both motifs chosen are used to honour leaders in Coast Salish culture.

SFU's new chancellor Tamara Vrooman and new president, Joy Johnson, stepped onto the convocation platform in fall 2020 proudly wearing newly designed regalia featuring motifs created by Chief Janice George—Chepximiya Siyam—and Willard 'Buddy' Joseph—Skwetsimeltxw, both expert weavers and teachers from the Squamish Nation.

The inspiration for the motifs arose from designs used to honour leaders in Coast Salish culture and local artist Beverli Barnes helped to redesigned the regalia.

"The motifs we chose for the regalia are from the one we wove for our chief," says Chief George. "We are telling the stories of leaders. We thought it would be appropriate to have the president and chancellor wear the same motifs as well."

Says Joseph, "In our culture, they are called Siyam, who is someone held in high regard. We wanted to represent them both as leaders, but in their own way."

Red, which is SFU's signature colour, and the colour of the president's regalia, is also significant to Coast Salish people because it symbolizes medicine. The chancellor's regalia, in blue, is contemporary.

Embroidering the motifs was no small task, requiring 351,705 stitches on the president's robe and 359,595 on the chancellor's robe.

"I am honoured to wear this newly designed regalia, which appropriately reflects the territories where our campuses reside," says SFU president Joy Johnson.

"Participating in the brushing ceremony and donning the beautiful new robe with my family at my side reminded me of the importance of community, and is a moment I'll always remember."

New pathways to improve Indigenous learners' post-secondary experience

In 2018 SFU's Indigenous Pathways Planning Group (IPPG) was formed and set out to engage with Indigenous communities and SFU community members to better support Indigenous learners' post-secondary experience. Education professor Michelle Pidgeon co-chaired the IPPG with Tania Bubela, Dean of Health Sciences. The report takes up a central plank of the work of the SFU-Aboriginal Reconciliation Council (SFU-ARC) *Walk This Path With Us* report, specifically Call to Action 15, and builds a road map for implementation.

From 2018-2020, Dr. Pidgeon and her research team, under the guidance of the IPPG, conducted environmental scans of access, transition, and retention programs at other post-secondary institutions across Canada that support Indigenous students. In this work, the team also held multiple community consultations through interviews and sharing circles. The research culminates in the *Pathways Report* presented to SFU Senate and Board of Governors in early 2021, which provides several innovative recommendations for improving Indigenous students' access, transition and retention.

The report recognizes that Indigenous communities need universities to nurture an environment that better accommodates Indigenous students by addressing systemic racism and other barriers. One way to address such barriers is to create accessible

and in-community programs that are free or subsidized. Ensuring Indigenous youth can see themselves pursuing, and successfully achieving their education goals at university can begin while they are still in K-12 school. For example, programs such as math and science summer day-camps for K-12 students can create a space for Indigenous youth to experience and learn more about university life, along with potential career and education opportunities.

The report also acknowledged the importance of Indigenous spaces at SFU to foster cultural connections, and highlighted the need to increase Indigenous staff who can assist students throughout their post-secondary journey from admissions, registration, financial aid, academic advising, and career services and everything in-between. The report can help SFU redefine how to continue its decolonizing, reconciliation and Indigenous efforts.

The university has since begun implementing the recommendations from the Pathways Report including developing a new Indigenous leadership role, tentatively titled the AVP – Indigenous, investing new resources in bursaries and awards for Indigenous students and building a permanent home for the Indigenous University Preparation Program.

SFU welcomes Indigenous faculty and staff

SFU FACULTY



Lyana Patrick

Lyana Patrick joined the Faculty of Health Sciences in 2019 as a professor in Indigenous health. Patrick, who is Dakelh from the Stelat'en First Nation, and Acadian/Scottish, will co-develop an Indigenous health curriculum to serve as a foundation for students to learn about the history and contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples.



Sara Davidson

Education professor Sara Davidson, a Haida/settler scholar, joined SFU in December 2020. She wants to improve schooling experiences for Indigenous children by collaborating with, and learning from, Indigenous communities and Indigenous students.

SFU STAFF



Alexia McKinnon

In April 2021, SFU's Beedie School of Business appointed Alexia McKinnon as director of Indigenous business programs. An alumnus of SFU Beedie's Executive MBA in Indigenous Business Leadership (EMBA IBL) program, and a citizen of the Champagne and Aishihik nations, McKinnon has a wealth of experience in Indigenous education and governance.



Kaylena Ryan

Kaylena Ryan, from the Secwepemc, Gitksan and Tsimshian nations, joined the Indigenous Student Centre in October 2020 as an Indigenous student life coordinator. She has since become associate director, charged with fostering a culturally rich experience for Indigenous students' success.



Nicole Taylor-Sterritt

Nicole Taylor-Sterritt, of Gitksan and European heritage, joined SFU Ceremonies and Events in November 2020 as manager of Indigenous protocols. Taylor-Sterritt is integrating Indigenous protocols into university-wide events, a process that includes strengthening relationships with Indigenous elders and honouring their knowledge and experience.



Jessica La Rochelle

Jessica La Rochelle (Lhkwemiya), who is Stó:lō, Okanagan, and Trinidadian, joined SFU as director, Indigenous student recruitment and admissions in August 2020. She served as acting director of the Indigenous Student Centre from January to September 2021 and rejoining as director in Jan 2022.



Dorothy Cucw-la7 Christian

Dorothy Cucw-la7 Christian joined the Department of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in July 2021 as associate director, Indigenous policy and pedagogy. Christian is from the Secwepemc-Syilx Nations in B.C.'s interior. She was previously associate director of Indigenous initiatives with SFU's Centre for Educational Excellence. She brings a wealth of cultural, professional and academic experience to her new role.



Rebecca Sangwais

Rebecca Sangwais is of Cree and Saulteaux descent from the Ochapowace First Nation in the Treaty Four territory in Saskatchewan. She joined SFU in October 2019 as the Indigenous student recruitment coordinator. She assists Indigenous students with the application process and connects them with appropriate student support services.

In Memoriam: Ethel Gardner

SFU mourned the loss of Stó:lō member Ethel Gardner, a former SFU faculty member and SFU PhD alumnus who most recently served as an Elder-in-Residence.



Ethel Gardner

Gardner passed away on January 23, 2020 and is greatly missed by the many students, faculty, friends and colleagues whom she worked with and supported over many years. Her work in revitalizing Indigenous languages, Halq'eméylem in particular, contributed significantly to scholarship and touched the lives of many at SFU and at other post-secondary institutions where she was known and loved.

As an SFU faculty member, Gardner led work to design and develop Indigenous teacher-education programs across Canada, and was most proud of the many Indigenous language teachers she helped train who are now training others.

As Gardner once said, "through my PhD, I was able to establish how language tied us together with our identity, land, spirituality. It was an epiphany. I came to understand what it means to be Stó:lō."

Truth and Reconciliation Garden

Plans are underway for creating a Truth and Reconciliation Memorial Garden and Outdoor Classroom for place-based learning at the Burnaby campus. The initiative follows a sacred ground-awakening ceremony in early 2020 and is guided by Indigenous knowledge holders. Plans call for creating an Indigenous ethnobotany curriculum and incorporating Indigenous artwork in the garden's design. Led by the Faculty of Education, the learning space will be open to all students, faculty and staff, as well as local Indigenous communities.

First Indigenous Fellow appointed to Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue



Ginger Gosnell-Myers

In November 2019, Ginger Gosnell-Myers became the first Indigenous Fellow at SFU's Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue. A thought leader with a deep understanding of urban Indigenous issues, Gosnell-Myers has years of practice developing public policy and bridging Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Formerly the City of Vancouver's first Indigenous relations manager, Gosnell-Myers won numerous awards for her leadership in advancing reconciliation. She also developed a City of Vancouver reconciliation

framework, propelling systemic change in all departments to help honour the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples, on which the city is situated. As well, she served as the project manager and public engagement director for the Environics Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study—the largest research study of its kind in Canada. The study examined urban Aboriginal peoples' values, aspirations, experiences and identity, and challenged misconceptions underlying unjust assumptions and structures that further alienate this exceptional and fast-growing population.

In her role with the Centre for Dialogue, Gosnell-Myers, a member of the Nisga'a and Kwakwaka'wakw nations, is focusing on decolonization and urban Indigenous planning.

Coast Salish witnessing ceremony honours B.C.'s former lieutenant governor Steven Point



Steven Point

Tsleil-Waututh singing and drumming rang through Simon Fraser University's Saywell Hall Atrium fall 2019 celebrating B.C.'s former lieutenant governor, the Hon. Steven L.

Point (Xwě li qwěł tēl), and his work to improve Indigenous literacy in British Columbia.

In accordance with age-old Coast Salish protocol and practice, distinguished speakers at the witnessing ceremony honoured Point in Halkomelem and English for championing literacy while keeping his peoples' old ways alive. Oral histories and traditions are affirmed at such ceremonies where witnesses recognize and acknowledge the important "work" that is taking place.

Point, who is from the Skowkale First Nation (near Chilliwack, BC), became the province's first Indigenous Lieutenant Governor in 2007 after practicing law, serving as a provincial court judge, and holding influential positions in First Nations, provincial and federal governments.

Royal Society honours Marianne Ignace for language revitalization



Marianne Ignace

Preservation of Indigenous languages has long been at risk. However, thanks to Marianne Ignace, a distinguished professor in the SFU Departments of Linguistics and Indigenous

Studies, there have been significant efforts by her and her team to rejuvenate, revitalize and protect Indigenous languages.

As director of the Indigenous Languages Program at SFU, Ignace is renowned for building successful research partnerships with Indigenous communities as she collaborates with them to revitalize their languages, oral traditions and ecological knowledge. She has authored and co-authored papers in various journals and books on these topics, and has also carried out research in the field of Aboriginal language revitalization, some of which is published in the Handbook for Aboriginal Language Program Planning in B.C. In recent years, she has worked with First Nations communities and elders on various language revitalization projects, including Secwepemctsin, St'at'imcets, Heiltsuk, Nuxalk, Haida and Sm'algyax.

In 2020 Ignace was recognized and honoured when she was elected to the Royal Society of Canada, the nation's highest academic honour.

Honouring former SFU president Andrew Petter

The Office for Aboriginal Peoples (OAP) hosted a small witnessing (Kwis Ns7eyx) ceremony on August 31, 2020 to honour Andrew Petter on his last day as president and vice-chancellor.

The ceremony was conducted in accordance with Coast Salish tradition and protocol, in which the person to be honoured is "stood up" and blanketed as a mark of deep respect and gratitude.

"The OAP commissioned the blanket, which was designed in relation to Burnaby Mountain," says Indigenous studies

professor Rudy Reimer (Yumks), who led the ceremony.

"It was thought when Andrew Petter wore the special blanket, he would feel connected to the mountain and all the good work he has done over the years."

The ceremony began with two blankets laid out to define a sacred space, symbolizing the special significance of Earth in Indigenous culture, and concluded with singing and drumming.



Andrew Petter, past president and vice chancellor of SFU (centre), his partner Maureen Maloney, professor, School of Public Policy (left), and SFU Indigenous studies professor Rudy Reimer (right).

How Indigenous stone-fish traps inspired a mathematical project

SFU teaching professor Veselin Jungic has spent the past decade growing Indigenous students' enthusiasm for math with a unique program that connects mathematical concepts to Indigenous storytelling, history and tradition.

Jungic runs SFU's Math Catcher Outreach Program, an initiative to help Indigenous youth improve their math skills for the overall enjoyment of mathematics.

His latest project involves the mathematical and computer modelling of traditional stone-fish traps, a customary way of harvesting fish that Indigenous people use across the Pacific Northwest. This initiative is a continuation of a previous collaboration with the Tla'amin Nation on the Sunshine Coast that featured traditional designs woven into cedar baskets to create geometric patterns.

"The mathematical model displays the tidal changes, fish flow, and different shapes of the stone traps to allow for an easy change of their sizes and positions," says Jungic, recognized in 2015 as a 3M National Teaching Fellow.

"This free online learning resource is available to students, with a purpose to communicate cultural, engineering, environmental and mathematical ideas at the high school level on a global scale."

This learning resource is now part of the national [Callysto program](#), an online educational tool that helps students



A view of the Tla'amin Nation's fish traps, located on the Sunshine Coast. (The Tla'amin Nation)

in elementary and high school learn about and apply data science skills.

The initiative is supported by SFU, the Tla'amin Nation, Pacific Institute for Mathematical Sciences and the Callysto Program.

Jungic's collection of Indigenous *Small Number* math-learning stories, along with a series of 13 animated films, are available in Blackfoot, Cree, English, French, Gitksan, Halq'eméylem, Heiltsuk, Hul'qumi'num', Huu-ay-ah, Nisga'a, Spanish, Squamish, and Tla'amin/Sliammon languages

Celebrating Indigenous Graduate Entrance Scholarship Winners

In 2019 and 2020, SFU selected six Indigenous graduate students to receive the Indigenous Graduate Entrance Scholarship. The Office of the Vice-President, Academic established the scholarship in 2013 to encourage Indigenous students to consider graduate studies and, ultimately, a career in post-secondary education.

PHD STUDENT AND 2021 STERLING PRIZE RECIPIENT CHALLENGES ROLE OF MUSEUMS IN ERA OF RECONCILIATION



Sdahl K'awaas

Sdahl K'awaas (also known as Lucy Bell), of the Haida Nation, devoted more than half of her life to repatriating Haida belongings from museums before pursuing a PhD at SFU. In 2019, she was awarded the Indigenous Graduate Entrance Scholarship to finance her PhD research examining how museums can indigenize and decolonize

their practices. K'awaas is also the recipient of SFU's 2021 Nora and Ted Sterling Prize in Support of Controversy for her bravery in calling out racism in the heritage field and advocating for change.

She made headlines in 2020 when she resigned from her high-profile position as the first head of the Indigenous Collections and Repatriation Department at the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria.

In her resignation speech, which launched a B.C. Public Service Agency investigation, Sdahl K'awaas alleged a culture of personal and systemic institutional racism that she and other Indigenous and people of colour faced in the workplace. Her speech and allegations rocked the museum world.

The investigation substantiated numerous claims of racism and workplace bullying.

She sees the Sterling Prize as an opportunity to further the discussion on racism against Indigenous people and as another step

toward reconciliation so the next generation, like her daughter Amelia, doesn't have to face the same discrimination she has. "There are so many opportunities within the heritage field in Canada, we have to address discrimination in order to move forward," she says.

Sdahl K'awaas is a founding member of the Haida Repatriation Committee, which has repatriated more than 500 ancestral remains to Haida Gwaii. She continues to support the Haida Nation's repatriation efforts, while working towards her PhD in individualized interdisciplinary studies at SFU (focusing on Indigenous museology and Haida museum practice as an act of restitution and reconciliation).

"I grew up in an era when being an 'Indian' was shameful," recalls Bell. "My naanii, Grace Wilson-Dewitt, taught me to Haida dance and sing with an ice cream bucket for a drum and crochet blankets as regalia. It was just ridiculous that our little community had nothing, yet museums were bursting

at the seams with over 12,000 Haida belongings."

Bell's research will also incorporate Haida philosophies such as *Gin 'waadluwaan gudahl kwagiidang'*, the belief that everything is connected. All Haidas are connected to their mothers and to Haida Gwaii by an invisible cord called a *'liis'*. Bell says this philosophy connects her research to her heritage, her ancestors, and her home and identity as a Haida researcher.

"Having the financial support from the graduate entrance scholarship has strengthened my *liis*—my connection to my Haida ancestors and home," says Bell. "My research needs to be rooted in my Haidaness and it can be difficult to stay connected and grounded to Haida Gwaii. With the support of SFU, I have been able to go home often to do my research."

Bell's supervisor, professor Marianne Ignace, acknowledges Bell's passion for protecting and revitalizing.

CREE-MÉTIS SCHOLAR SAYS HEALTH KEY TO BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES



Sheryl Thompson

SFU master's student and Cree-Métis scholar Sheryl Thompson was awarded an Indigenous Graduate Entrance Scholarship in 2019 for her research in health.

"I focus on health research because everything relates to it—the legal system, education, culture and all aspects of life," says Thompson. "If we want to build and support strong communities, we need health."

Thompson also recognizes the need for Indigenous researchers in the health field. Supervised by professor Kelley Lee in the Faculty of Health Sciences, she aims to conduct a "culturally safe and

Indigenous-led process" in which Indigenous communities inform her study.

Working with the First Nations Health Authority, Thompson is examining commercial tobacco use in five Indigenous communities in B.C.: Witsset First Nation, Tla'amin First Nation, Adams Lake Indian Band, Katzie First Nation, and Cowichan Tribes. She travels to each of these communities, engaging members through town hall meetings, focus groups and interviews.

By the end of her research, she plans to make her findings accessible to these

communities through posters, film and other media. She is also creating a toolkit for researchers working with Indigenous communities, recommending steps for conducting culturally respectful research and reducing the risk of harm.

The scholarship will support Thompson as she networks with researchers from other disciplines and perspectives. She sees it as a platform for discussing the importance of support programs for Indigenous learners, many of whom are first-generation post-secondary students.

RESEARCHER EXPLORES SETTLER COLONIAL URBANISMS



Tsatia Adzich

Geography PhD student Tsatia Adzich, a Cree-Métis from Tri-River Métis Community in northern B.C., received the Indigenous Graduate Entrance Scholarship in 2020.

Adzich earned her BA (Hons) from SFU's Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology in 2016, and was the first Indigenous person to be selected as the faculty's convocation speaker. She also holds two master's degrees.

She is continuing work she started during one of her master's degrees to encourage urban Indigenous communities in Metro Vancouver and in the northeastern Russian city of Yakutsk to discuss strategies and

experiences of Indigenous community-building, governance, international Indigenous relations, and transnational futures.

Using Cree-Métis legal principles and teachings of *wahkohtowin* (kinship, or the practice of being in good relation), and coastal methodologies of witnessing, her research explores urban Indigenous peoples' valuable contributions to understandings and expansions of Indigenous self-determination, both as concept and practice.

Adzich critically investigates how Indigenous women in Canada and Russia build urban spaces of co-resistance and

liberation, and analyzes the cultural and geopolitical contributions these relationships make to global understandings of Indigenous self-determination.

"My research connects to Indigenous people in many aspects," says Adzich. "I approach this research as ceremony, as an honouring of the multitudes contained by my community and the resurgent power we hold to re-imagine and enact Indigenous futurities in the spaces we create together."

Adzich also received the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to fund her PhD research.

THE FOLLOWING GRADUATE STUDENTS WERE ALSO AWARDED THE INDIGENOUS GRADUATE ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIP IN 2020:

Victor Guerin

A PhD student in the Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies program at SFU, Victor Guerin is dedicated to revitalizing hənqəminəm, the downriver dialect of the Halkomelem language spoken by the Musqueam people. Guerin will be documenting the knowledge passed on to him by Musqueam elders over the decades. Compiling source information in one place will provide the First Nation's leadership with a basis to press forward with its battle to re-establish Indigenous rights and title.

Katie Kozak

An artist of Métis and Ukrainian descent, Katie Kozak is working toward a master's in fine arts at SFU's School for the Contemporary Arts. Her art, which blends visual art, science and wellness, evolved from a long-standing interest in biology, alternative medicine and therapeutic rituals. While her practice has always encompassed a deep connectivity to land, she has only recently begun to understand it as a way to process both the loss of her father and the loss of a piece of her cultural identity.

Deanna Smith

Deanna Smith is pursuing a master's degree in archaeology. She is interested in human rights violations and the role archaeology plays in human rights investigations. Her research explores the challenges in identifying the juvenile human remains that are common in investigations of mass graves involving human rights.

Website re-awakens thousands of years of Heiltsuk Nation voices

A new website that illuminates thousands of years of Heiltsuk Nation (formerly Bella Bella) voices and history is the result of more than eight years of collaboration between the Heiltsuk people, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, the Hakai Institute, and producers from Greencoast Media.

"Húyat: Our Voices our Land" (www.hauyat.ca) documents the history of the Heiltsuk People who have been living on B.C.'s Central Coast for millennia. The website integrates ethnoecological, archaeological, anthropological knowledge with audio-visual techniques.

From mountaintop to ocean floor, the website features many different kinds of knowledge, such as oral traditions, archaeology, and memories and language. Much of the



The archaeology and media team at work. Photo courtesy Nancy Turner.

site's information was collected by SFU and University of Victoria students during archaeological digs. Húyat is one of the oldest archaeological sites in B.C.

Researchers use 'two-eyed seeing' to improve Indigenous children's health

By combining the strengths of both Indigenous and Western scientific ways of knowing, a research project using the two-eyed seeing approach aims to help improve Indigenous children's health and development.

Researchers and students in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) have teamed up with the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council (NTC) (Vancouver Island) and the First Nations Health Authority to lead the new project. It is part of a global initiative to reduce the onset of chronic disease in adults and children, and to foster health and wellness. Called Hishuk-ish tsawalk (everything is one, everything

is connected): Using two-eyed seeing to optimize healthy early life trajectories for Indigenous Peoples, the project will evaluate early child health and parenting programs. Optimizing children's early environment can help reduce the risk of chronic illness, anxiety, depression, substance use and suicide, as well as cardio-metabolic diseases, such as heart disease.

The project is led by NTC Director of Health Lynnette Lucas and SFU FHS adjunct professor, and NTC Manager of Nursing Services, Jeannette Watts.

Wrestlers tackle adversity through a love of sport

For two Indigenous wrestlers at SFU, community support and their drive to excel keeps their passion alive as they wrap up and reflect on their athletic careers.

From the chance to compete on the national level and develop teaching skills, to honing a sense of team belonging, university athletics has given Rebekah Trudel and Justina Di Stasio an exciting range of opportunities and experiences.

Rebekah Trudel, of Métis background, never intended to become a wrestler. In high school, she was cut from volleyball try-outs and only after finishing the basketball season did she try wrestling. As the only female on her high school wrestling team, she says her first year was about surviving.

Now a history and French double major, she says the most challenging aspect of joining the university wrestling team was the intense schedule: two workouts every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. But the hard work paid off—she won the Canadian nationals during her first year.

Trudel says her Indigenous background provides an additional support system.

"Being Métis has given me another community, another outlet for support, and that has helped a lot," she says. "In my community, it's becoming more about showcasing our strong youth and our strong women."

After experiencing multiple injuries, Trudel stepped away from wrestling in 2020. She plans on staying connected with her wrestling community by refereeing as she works towards the remaining half of her degree.

Justina Di Stasio wasn't too keen on wrestling when she initially joined in Grade 6, but she grew to like it. And after graduating, with the help of her high school coach, she earned a place on SFU's wrestling team.

Di Stasio, a Cree student who is completing the Professional Development Program in the Faculty of Education, says that once her outlook on the sport changed, she "fell in love with the sport and decided to take it more seriously."

Her passion and dedication grew, culminating in a second-place finish in the 2020 Olympic Trials.

Hired as an SFU wrestling coach in 2017, Di Stasio says her culture and her coaching style complement each other.

"Both require me to be confident and proud in how I present myself," she says. "As a Cree female athlete, I look forward to sharing my story and where I come from. As a coach, I am always trying to take what I have learned in this sport to help someone else find success in wrestling too."

She now hopes to make the Canadian Olympic team in 2024 to compete in Paris and the university wishes her good luck in this endeavour!

Di Stasio remains most appreciative of the opportunities she has had as a wrestler at SFU.

"I have earned a university degree, traveled the world, met people who have helped me grow up and succeed, in wrestling and outside of it," she says. "I have come a long way in this sport."



Rebekah Trudel: a strong Métis wrestler



Justina Di Stasio: coach and Olympic hopeful

Forest garden study grows knowledge of traditional practices



Aerial view showing the location of the Datk Gylakyaw forest garden.

SFU's historical ecologists have found that Indigenous-managed forests—cared for as “forest gardens”—comprise more biologically and functionally diverse species than the surrounding conifer-dominated forests. They also create an important habitat for animals, and pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

The researchers have published their findings in *Ecology and Society*. The study, which is the first in North America to study Indigenous forest gardens, was led by SFU Indigenous studies professor Chelsey Geralda Armstrong.

Armstrong, who joined the Department of Indigenous Studies in early 2021, examined forest gardens that were once tended by Tsimshian and Coast Salish peoples living along the north and south Pacific coast. These forest gardens grow throughout remote archaeological villages on Canada's northwest coast. They're composed of native fruit and nut trees and shrubs, including crab apple, hazelnut, cranberry, wild plum, and wild cherries. Medicinal plants, wild ginger and wild rice root also grow in the understory layers.

“These plants never grow together in the wild,” says Armstrong. “It seemed obvious that people put them there to grow all in one spot—like a garden. Elders and knowledge holders talk about perennial management all the time.”

“Human activities are often considered detrimental to biodiversity, and indeed, conventional industrial land management can often have devastating consequences for biodiversity,” says Jesse Miller, study co-author, and a Stanford University ecologist and lecturer. “Our research, however, shows that human activities can also have substantial benefits for biodiversity and ecosystem function in the present and future.”

Entrepreneurs' dreams take flight with SFU support



The team at Animikii Indigenous Technology in 2019, when they received financing from the Raven Indigenous Capital Partners fund, supported by SFU.

SFU's \$1-million investment in fall 2020 in the Raven Indigenous Impact Fund (RRIF) is already supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs, the Indigenous economy and Indigenous social enterprise.

In a bid to further its commitment to reconciliation, SFU was the first university to invest in the fund. It supports Indigenous entrepreneurs with flexible capital to help them overcome the systemic inequalities created through colonization as they grow their operations.

To date, the fund has invested in seven Indigenous enterprises including PLATO Testing, Cheekbone Beauty, Virtual Gurus,

OneFeather, Satya, Social Awareness Group/Nisto Link and Animikii Indigenous Technology.

SFU Vice-President, Finance and Administration, Martin Pochurko, says, “We are counting on this investment to make a difference, both to the Indigenous community and to the SFU endowment fund, which supports researchers and students.”

All Indigenous businesses that apply to the RRIF are evaluated based on four criteria including: commercial viability, potential for scale, transformational impact benefits for Indigenous peoples, and Indigeneity in management/ownership and governance.

Supporting Surrey's urban Indigenous peoples

In a bid to promote the academic, research and community engagement needs and interests of Surrey's Indigenous Peoples, SFU and the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee (SUILC) signed an agreement in early 2019.

The Collaborative Relationship Agreement supports SFU's commitment to urban First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Surrey, and SUILC's goal to advocate on behalf of Surrey's urban Indigenous peoples.

In 2016, Surrey's Indigenous population was approximately 14,000. Today, the current Indigenous population in Surrey exceeds that of Vancouver.

“This agreement marks a significant milestone in the ongoing SFU-SUILC relationship, and will help to shape and inform the paths we travel together

in support of the region's Indigenous communities,” says Steve Dooley, executive director of the Surrey campus.

Over the past three years, SUILC has engaged the Surrey campus in a variety of initiatives, including commemorating Orange Shirt Day in the city. SFU has also contributed funding for Skookum Lab, a SUILC social innovation project that addresses and combats root causes of Indigenous child and youth poverty in Surrey and develops community-based solutions.

As SFU campuses gradually return to more in-person teaching and campus-wide events this fall, SFU and SUILC plan to continue their work to support Indigenous communities in Surrey and support Indigenous student recruitment to SFU.

Celebrating First Nations language graduates

SFU's new master's program in linguistics of a First Nations language, which offers professional development for language specialists, saw its first 24 students receive their degrees in June 2019.

The unique program featured two cohorts—one at the Burnaby campus with 12 students who spoke five different First Nations languages—Haida, Halkomelem, Kaska, Secwepemctsin and Tahltan—and a community-based cohort in Duncan, B.C. with 12 students who all spoke Hul'q'umi'num'.

Linguistics professor Donna Gerdts says the Duncan cohort may be the first in North America to focus solely on one Indigenous language. What's more, the cohort was inter-generational, with fathers and daughters, and brothers, sisters and cousins, all studying together.

Recognizing the urgent need for Indigenous language programs and materials, many of the graduands in both cohorts focused their MA projects on language education and revitalization.