



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE Tansi!

WILLIAM G. LINDSAY
(CREE-STONEY)
DIRECTOR, OFFICE FOR
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Welcome to the third annual edition of the Simon Fraser University News, Aboriginal Peoples Supplement. It has been a very exciting year at SFU regarding Aboriginal initiatives.

We continue to push on, regarding our university's Aboriginal Strategic Plan. The Office for Aboriginal Peoples (OAP) works with on- and off-campus partners in the implementation of this important document. In fact, we are just completing a revision of the current Aboriginal Strategic Plan that will update it and take its new implementation date to 2018. This new plan will soon be available for perusal on the OAP website.

We continue to get tremendous support from many areas of the university including from SFU's president, professor Andrew Petter, as well as VP-Academic Jon Driver, VP-External Philip Steenkamp and Associate VP-Students Tim Rahilly, to name a few. We wish to thank them and many others who have helped us to engage the university regarding Aboriginal initiatives.

During the past year we have had much success regarding the following:

- The First Nations Studies Program is now a department.
- The Indigenous Research Institute has been established, with more than 50 members so far.
- The Aboriginal Executive MBA program began its first year.
- SFU committed to a new and larger Indigenous Student Centre space in the AQ.
- The Elders Program has doubled in one year in the number of elders, "elder time" on campus and money dedicated to the program.

We are also happy to report that:

- Aboriginal greetings and recognition of traditional Coast Salish territories now occurs at convocation and other university events.
- SFU's new strategic vision identifies "respect for Aboriginal peoples and cultures" as one of its six underlying principles.

We had ceremonies involving Heiltsuk remains returning home and a gift of Haida argillite carvings, as well as a dedication of the Frog Constellation in the Saywell Hall atrium.

These are just some of the exciting things that have happened at SFU over the past year. Please read on and enjoy this third annual Aboriginal Peoples Supplement. Also, check out the Office for Aboriginal Peoples website, at www.sfu.ca/aboriginalpeoples, for a comprehensive listing of the Aboriginal programs, services and people at Simon Fraser University.

Megweeten!

Aboriginal greetings open SFU events

SFU has incorporated Aboriginal greetings and acknowledgements that it is situated on Coast Salish lands into its convocation and other ceremonies.

The move reflects the university's commitment to "respect for Aboriginal Peoples and cultures," which is an underlying principle of its new Strategic Vision.

"Given this country's sorry history with regard to Aboriginal relations, universities have a special role to play in showing respect for Aboriginal Peoples," says SFU President Andrew Petter. "We also have a duty to use our resources to assist them and their communities to overcome the consequences of past injustices and to realize their full potential."

All three SFU campuses are situated on Coast Salish territory, says Petter. "Recognizing this fact is an important

See *Aboriginal Greetings*, page 2.

Haida love story



Haida chief and master carver, James Hart, scatters eagle-down feathers during the blessing of his sculpture *Frog Constellation* this spring in SFU's Burnaby campus Saywell Hall atrium. The giant carving, which reflects an old Haida love story, has quickly become one the university's most popular landmarks.

It's impossible to venture into SFU's Burnaby campus Saywell Hall atrium, between the First Nations Student Centre and the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, and not be awestruck the first time you see *Frog Constellation*.

The massive, 5m-high x 2m-wide x 3.5m-long sculpture, by Haida master carver James Hart, has become one of the university's most recognizable focal points since it was installed last spring and blessed by the artist during a special Aboriginal ceremony.

Frog Constellation is Hart's tribute in cedar to a small shamanic piece depicting a man and woman straddling a huge frog that was carved in the late 19th century by an unnamed Haida artist.

He spent spent years on the work. He calls it his "PhD." "The frog is quite powerful in our thinking," he says. "It's one of the creatures that can go in two worlds, in the water and in the upper world, our world."

Hart, who apprenticed with the late Bill Reid, saw the original piece only once, in a photo. It depicts an old Haida love story in which the frog king takes a young man's lady, and he can't find her.

"An old gentleman told him where to look, so he dug in the ground there and frogs came out; millions of frogs came out," explains Hart. "The last one was the frog king, with the young lady on his back, and so he got her back."

Says SFU President Andrew Petter: "We are delighted to be the custodian of this beautiful work of art. Frog Constellation has already become a treasured symbol of SFU's commitment to honouring the history, culture and presence of Aboriginal peoples.

"Our sincere thanks to Ivanhoe Cambridge, Westminster Management Corporation and the Bill Reid Foundation for this important and invaluable gift."

SFU hosts Institute of Aboriginal People's Health



Malcolm King

Canada's Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health (IAPH) has moved from Alberta to SFU's Faculty of Health Sciences along with its scientific director, professor Malcolm King, a member of Ontario's Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

The institute is part of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and focuses on nationwide research that will fill gaps in the understanding of Aboriginal health.

King has directed the IAPH since 2009, leading the development of a health research agenda aimed at improving wellness and achieving health equity for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

He earned a PhD in polymer chemistry from McGill University in 1973 and after an initial faculty appointment there moved to the University of Alberta in 1985. He was promoted to professor in the department of medicine in 1990 and an adjunct professor in public health in 2007. During his career in pulmonary research, King has developed new approaches to treat mucus clearance dysfunction in chronic lung disease and is now working on addressing issues in airborne disease transmission. In addition to continuing his research at SFU, King is involved in teaching, mentoring students and advising on CIHR-related research issues.

One of the IAPH's missions is to encourage Aboriginal students to take up health research in Aboriginal communities and to make sure non-Aboriginal researchers work closely with the communities to ensure their wishes are respected.

"It's not a time to be complacent," writes King on the IAPH's website, which notes Aboriginal people on average live seven years less than other Canadians and have higher rates of hearing, sight and speech disabilities, diabetes and other diseases.

"There is still an ongoing, unacceptable gap in the health status of Aboriginal Canadians," says King.

"Dealing with this deficit requires addressing the complex determinants of health. It also requires valuing the strengths of indigenous peoples to deal with these complex issues."

Paying it Forward



Alissa Derrick (above) has a message for other Aboriginal students who arrive at SFU feeling alone and isolated: get involved and start volunteering.

"It's a great way to network and create more opportunities," says the third-year criminology and First Nations Studies student from the Wet'suwet'en First Nation village of Moricetown, near Smithers, who transferred to SFU from Langara College last year.

And Derrick should know. Her first weeks at SFU "were difficult," she says, because the campus population was larger and less intimate than Langara and many of her Aboriginal peers were considerably older. "But I dived in and got to know and engage with people."

In addition to her school work, she's now a devoted volunteer, serving on SFU's Aboriginal Steering Committee and First Nations Student Association as well as the Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Network's local development program action team.

She's also a peer mentor at the university's Indigenous Student Centre and sits on the provincial committee for the North American Indigenous Games for badminton, which she herself has played at an elite level across Canada.

After graduation next year, she plans to continue working as an Aboriginal Peoples advocate in the criminal justice system helping families, young people and especially Aboriginal mothers.

Derrick says she understands the fear some students have when they come to SFU, especially those from small, rural First Nations communities.

"It can be terrifying," she says. "There's so many people here and the place is so huge and foreign to them that they tend to retreat into their own shells."

"I was like that too. But I pushed myself to get involved and before long I felt like I was part of the university community."

"Now I love it."

ABORIGINAL GREETINGS, CON'T



SFU President Andrew Petter

means of demonstrating our respect for First Nations, their lands and their contributions to Canadian society."

The university previously included Aboriginal greetings and acknowledgements in some events, but not on a consistent basis.

Aboriginal elders who joined SFU as part of the elders program launched last year by the Office for Aboriginal Peoples have been involved in providing greetings, as have Aboriginal faculty, staff and students.

The program's elders, Margaret George (Tsleil-Waututh Nation), Evelyn Locker (Blackfoot Nation), Theresa Neel (Kwakiutl Nation) and Jim White (Heiltsuk Nation) also contribute in other ways, such as counseling Aboriginal students and educating the university community about Aboriginal life and culture.



Samahquam



Soowahlie



N'Quatqua



Sts'ailes

A cohort of 27 learners from four remote B.C. First Nations completed the 6-month Stepping Stones pilot and earned an SFU Certificate in Community Capacity Building.

Stepping stones to stronger communities

BY JUDY SMITH

Stepping Stones is a holistic, essential skills program designed in collaboration with First Nations to help Aboriginal people living in remote communities realize their personal and community capacity-building goals.

It's an exciting example of university-First Nations community engagement in which each learner lays down stepping stones toward realizing their own personal learning vision while also inspiring a ripple effect of change in their communities.

Sheilah Marsden, one of the program's Aboriginal community-based tutor-mentors, says it has given her the opportunity to be involved in a program that will help "enhance indigenous-settler relations in Canada."

The delivery model blends online and in-

person learning, offered through a wide-range of authentic, directly relevant and hands-on activities. It teaches people the theory and practice of doing community project work while seamlessly integrating literacy and essential skills into the curriculum.

We're excited by the program's success. A cohort of 27 learners from the N'Quatqua, Samahquam, Soowahlie and Sts'ailes First Nations completed the 6-month pilot and earned a SFU Certificate in Community Capacity Building.

Stepping Stones' creation was a two-year journey of learning and innovation during which the Community Education Program and 7th Floor Media traveled to the four communities to participate in a collaborative and iterative process of consultations.

The result is an accessible, culturally relevant

university essential skills program designed to resonate with Aboriginal people living in remote communities.

Learners are at the heart of a dynamic educational model that involves the SFU project team and online instructor, a community-based tutor-mentor, a community-based coordinator, elders, family and other community members.

"I see all the people in Stepping Stones as teachers and also everyone as learners, helping each other out," says one participant.

"We can change our dreams into actions," adds another graduate, "and we can become the solution."

For more, visit steppingstones.sfu.ca, and/or email judy_smith@sfu.ca.

Judy Smith is the Program Director of SFU's Lifelong Learning Community Education Program.

Research seeks student-retention answers

Why do some Aboriginal students stay in university while others leave before completing their studies?

That's the retention puzzle assistant education professor Michelle Pidgeon is trying to solve through a research project she's conducting with Thompson Rivers University associate professor, Patrick Walton.

The researchers are exploring retention issues through confidential interviews with Aboriginal participants over the next several semesters to identify the key factors that help and hinder Aboriginal students in finishing their university programs.

And Pidgeon, of Mi'kmaq ancestry, is inviting all Aboriginal community members to participate.

"We're looking to understand student experiences at SFU through one-to-one interviews and talking circles with current and former Aboriginal SFU students as well as Aboriginal support staff, faculty and community representatives," she says.

"We hope what we learn from the process can be used to improve the Aboriginal student experiences at university and support their success."

"According to Statistics Canada, approximately seven per cent of Aboriginal students complete some form of post-secondary education, compared to 20 per cent of the general population—and we want to change that."

"Understanding what institutional factors help and hinder Aboriginal student retention is a big piece to the puzzle."



Michelle Pidgeon

The anonymous hour-long interviews will include questions such as:

- What are the key factors related to the retention and attrition of SFU Aboriginal students?
- What teaching practices could be added that would have a positive impact?
- How can we create a place for reciprocity in the professor/student learning relationship, specifically from an indigenous perspective?
- What recommendations would you make to support indigenous student retention?

Participants will have the choice of an audiotaped or videotaped interview, which will be transcribed and sent to them to review, as will the final report. They will also receive a small, culturally relevant gift of appreciation.

Pidgeon and her student research assistants hope to ultimately share participants' stories during presentations and use their experiences to develop resources and materials to support indigenous student recruitment, retention and success.

For more, email michelle_pidgeon@sfu.ca or phone 778-782-8609.



Archeology professor Eldon Yellowhorn is the director of SFU's First Nations Studies department, which has been upgraded from an academic major.

FNST achieves department status



SFU's First Nations studies program has been elevated from academic major to a department within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

"I am thrilled," says William Lindsay, director of SFU's Office for Aboriginal Peoples. "It definitely shows the university's commitment to ongoing Aboriginal initiatives and will assist in making the new department the best of its kind in British Columbia."

"There is a tremendous focus on Aboriginal issues and initiatives at SFU as we speak. Having

department status will only add to Simon Fraser's stature in this area."

The department, directed by archeology professor Eldon Yellowhorn, offers sequential, comprehensive courses rooted in traditional and contemporary Aboriginal logic, methodology, practice, and theory.

Courses are designed for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students with a focus on the study of traditional cultures, languages, and histories of First Nations.

More: www.sfu.ca/fns/.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT Where are they now?

Are you one of SFU's almost 1,200 Aboriginal graduates? Email us at windsay@sfu.ca and tell us what you're doing now. We just might feature you in an upcoming Aboriginal Peoples supplement.

For this issue, we heard from alumni Shana Labatch and Karen Osachoff Denham, who are both working in First Nations communities.

Osachoff Denham, a Cree/Saulteux/Lakota from Treaty 4 territory in southern Saskatchewan, graduated from SFU in 2005 with a BA in criminology and First Nations studies. She then earned a law degree at UBC in 2009 and now practices Aboriginal law in Ontario with the firm Nahwegahbow Corbiere on the Rama Reserve in Anishinabek territory, about 140 km north of Toronto.

"The thing that helped me the most was being a member of the First Nations Student Association," says Osachoff Denham, and spending a lot of time at Vancouver's Aboriginal Friendship Centre. "I had so much fun and met so many friends at SFU," she says. I loved driving up the mountain, going to class, the department I was in... it was probably one of the best experiences of my life."

Labatch, a member of the Saik'uz Nation near Vanderhoof, graduated in 2011 from SFU's MEd in Arts Education program in Prince George. She also has a Dakelh language certificate and is looking for full-time teaching work while holding down two part-time jobs at the College of New Caledonia, as a staff community adult literacy program coordinator and contract arts teacher. Labatch says Aboriginal students need a strong support network, especially those affected by Canada's Indian residential schools. "You're coming out of very strong crab pot that maybe we were placed in," she says, "but it doesn't matter when you're trying to get out who put you there, you need support."

ISC, FNSA TO SHARE NEW SPACE

SFU's Indigenous Student Centre (ISC), First Nations Student Association (FNSA) and Aboriginal Elders program will be moving to a shared space next year in the Burnaby campus Academic Quadrangle, Rm. 2002-03, the current chemistry department offices off the AQ west concourse.

The indigenous community partners have agreed to a university proposal that will see the ISC vacate its current space in the Maggie Benson Centre and the FNSA move from its space in the Transportation Centre Rotunda, joining the elders program within the new, shared facilities.

"This is a great development for the SFU Aboriginal student community and enhances the learning environment for all SFU students," says ISC director Jenna LaFrance. Last year, an FNSA board approved the proposal.

ABORIGINAL GRADUATIONS ACCELERATING

SFU has graduated approximately 1,160 Aboriginal students since 1970, about 30 per cent of whom earned more than one credential. But the vast majority of Aboriginal SFU alumni—approximately 77 per cent—graduated within the last decade. And the number of Aboriginal graduates per year has increased to more than 90 in the last four years, compared to less than 70 prior to 2003. Of the 6,272 SFU graduates in 2012, 92 or 1.5 per cent were Aboriginal students, reflecting the percentage of Aboriginal people in southwest B.C., the region from which SFU recruits most of its undergraduate students.

INDIGENOUS RESEARCH INSTITUTE THRIVING

SFU's Indigenous Research Institute, launched last summer on National Aboriginal Day, now has 52 members including faculty, students and alumni involved in research about or connected to indigenous subjects, groups and issues. The institute fulfills a key component of SFU's Aboriginal Strategic Plan, which is to "establish a comprehensive framework for the promotion, encouragement and support of aboriginal research." The Office for Aboriginal Peoples will publish a list of institute members and their research interests on its website in January 2013. IRI initiatives in 2013 include a possible residential school education week in February, an IRI logo contest, a speaker series, research presentation days and ongoing work to develop research relations with the off-campus Aboriginal community.

SFU appoints indigenous initiatives librarian



Jenna Walsh

Jenna Walsh is excited.

"It's very rare that you get to build a new position," says SFU's new indigenous initiatives librarian, who began her newly created job Dec. 1.

"And the timing is perfect because we have so many exciting indigenous initiatives underway at SFU that I'm really looking forward to helping with."

Walsh will provide liaison librarian services for the First Nations Studies, archaeology and political science departments along with indigenous units and initiatives university-wide, including the Indigenous Student Centre, Indigenous Research Institute and Office for Aboriginal Peoples.

She will be working closely with liaison librarians and others to focus and enhance the library's support for indigenous initiatives throughout the university.

"At the beginning it's going to involve a lot of relationship building," she says, "and partnering with the Aboriginal community to learn the best ways the library can support and enhance the SFU experience for Aboriginal students and researchers."

Walsh graduated with a master of library science degree from UBC in 2009. She gained liaison librarian experience at the University of Alberta and, most recently, at SFU Surrey's Fraser Library where she was responsible for reference, instruction and collections for campus-based applied science, business and science programs.

At the U of A, she spearheaded initiatives to assess and develop library services for Aboriginal students and faculty, and instigated library involvement in university transitions programs for indigenous high school students.

During her master's program, Walsh undertook a practicum with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, researching indigenous artists.

Her self-designed UBC undergraduate program focused on an interdisciplinary approach to global indigeneity and interculturalism.

"This position is an opportunity to work with Aboriginal researchers at all levels, from undergrads to professors, across almost all faculties and disciplines," says Walsh.

"And I'm really looking forward to working with all of those and figuring out how the library can engage with both traditional and Aboriginal research methodologies in a culturally appropriate way."

EMBA Aboriginal cohort starts classes

SFU's Beedie School of Business launched its unique Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) in Aboriginal Business and Leadership program this fall to provide senior-level management education for Aboriginal leaders and entrepreneurs and others working with Aboriginal communities.

The first 27-member cohort includes Squamish Nation Chief Ian Campbell, Soowahlie First Nation Chief Otis Jasper, Musqueam First Nation assistant treaty director, Dianne Sparrow, Squiala First Nation Chief David Jimmie and Nupqu Development Corporation business manager Norm Fraser. It also includes two non-Aboriginal students who collaborate with First Nations communities.

"We're talking about 25 Aboriginal individuals in a graduate business course. That's something that would have far exceeded anyone's dreams 20 years ago," says Jasper.

"It's going to fundamentally affect the relationships we have between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and has the potential to create a whole lot of synergies."

The 2 ½-year program explores contemporary business issues and knowledge while recognizing that traditional protocols and ways of understanding the world are also growing and changing as new generations assume responsibility for moving forward.

It includes the core concepts and knowledge found in most MBA programs, but recognizes that other forms of knowledge and ways of knowing are equally valid.

The students gather together in Vancouver for three-week sessions in September, February and March and work on their own the rest of the time, collaborating with their teachers and fellow cohort members online and by phone.

Sparrow is confident her cohort and future program graduates "will give our people greater ability and capacity to take on business opportunities ourselves rather than always hiring outside consultants or big companies to do a lot of the work for us.

"We can now look within our own nations for those people and I think this program fills that gap. But we also bring a lot of our knowledge to that world and we make it more holistic."



Marie Clements

Writer in residence Marie Clements

Marie Clements, a Vancouver-born award-winning Métis/Dene playwright, screenwriter, performer, director, and producer, is the Ellen and Warren Tallman Writer-in-Residence in SFU's English department for fall-winter 2012-13. During her eight-month residency, Clements is both focusing on her own writing and engaging in a series of activities and events. Clements' 12 plays, including *Copper Thunderbird*, *Burning Vision* and *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, have been presented on stages internationally and across Canada, including the Festival de théâtre des Amériques in Montreal and the National Arts Centre and Magnetic North Festival in Ottawa. The writer-in-residence program provides an opportunity for interested creative writers to confer with a professional writer for manuscript consultation and advice. To book a consultation with Clements, e-mail elt@sfu.ca.



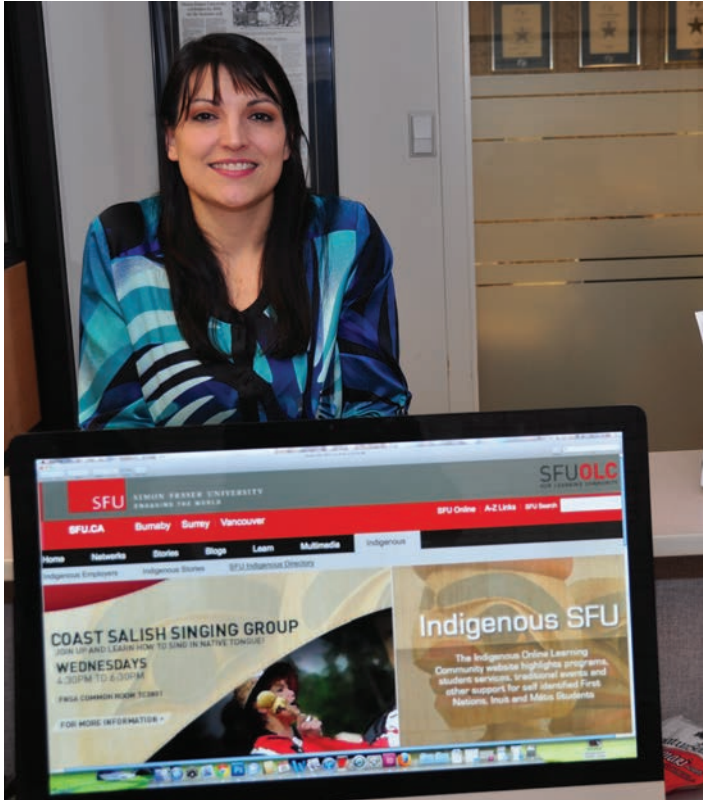
Cherry Smiley

Aboriginal entrance scholars

Natalie Knight and Cherry Smiley are the respective winners of SFU's first graduate Aboriginal entrance scholarships for PhD and masters students. Knight is using her three-year, \$54,000 scholarship to pursue a PhD in English, while Smiley is using her two-year \$30,000 award to complete a master's degree in the School for the Contemporary Arts. Smiley, a member of Nlaka'pamux (Thompson) and Dine' (Navajo) First Nations, earned a BA in sociology from UBC Okanagan and a BFA from Emily Carr University. A self-described radical feminist activist

and co-founder of the newly formed group Indigenous Women Against the Sex Industry (IWASI), she says she's using her award "to really push my art-making process into new areas and my projects into new outcomes." Knight holds an MA in English from the State University of New York at Albany and a BA in literary arts from Washington's Evergreen State College. She views her scholarship "as an invitation to participate in the First Nations community" at SFU "but to also provide mentorship and leadership." For scholarship info, visit: at.sfu.ca/TsyBUK.

MÉTIS DYNAMO FUELS INDIGENOUS WEBSITE



Laura Forsythe

If you look up enthusiastic in the dictionary you'll see a picture of Laura Forsythe.

Or at least you should. The Manitoba-born Métis second-year First Nations Studies student and driving force behind Indigenous SFU, the new Aboriginal student section of SFU's Online Learning Community (OLC) website, seems to never rest.

"Her energy is remarkable," says SFU Career Services advisor Jo-Anne Nadort. "She has so much passion."

Nadort's team was so impressed with Forsythe's work organizing an Indigenous Peoples career event last spring they asked her to join them as an indigenous program volunteer researcher.

"One of their goals was starting an OLC indigenous page that incorporated news and information links from the Indigenous Student Centre, Office for Aboriginal Peoples, First Nations Student Association (FNSEA) and Career Services employment opportunities all in one place," recalls Forsythe.

"I thought that was pretty important."

Within months, working with Work Integrated Learning and an all-student team of designers and content managers, she launched Indigenous SFU.

The result, at www.sfu.ca/olc/indigenous, is an eye-catching, student-maintained and operated one-stop Aboriginal community website highlighting programs, services, traditional events and news pertaining to First Nations, Inuit and Métis students.

"They can pretty much link up to all the supports available on campus as well as community events and other information," says Forsythe. "One of the most popular sections features links to employers that want to hire indigenous students, she says, while another features inspiring journey stories by successful Aboriginal community members from across Canada."

In addition to her Career Services and academic work, Forsythe is an FNSEA board member and a student orientation leader, not to mention a mother and wife.

She's also passionate about educating the non-indigenous community on campus about First Nations perspectives, something she also hopes to do as an educator down the road.

There's little doubt she will get there.

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY



Argillite sculptures capture Haida spirit



Curator Barbara Winter goes eye-to-eye with a killer whale sculpted by Haida Artist Reg Davidson, one of 81 argillite pieces in the exhibit "Haida Stories in Stone".

BY BARBARA WINTER

The exhibit "Haida Stories in Stone" continues in SFU's Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology until January. Take a break from studying and refresh yourself in the quiet museum gallery surrounded by the beauty of First Nations stone carving.

"Haida Stories in Stone," was created by a group of archaeology students and made possible by the McLean Family's generous donation of argillite carvings to SFU in June 2011. The collection includes 81 pieces created by some of the most renowned Haida artists.

Raven Brings the Light, Volcano Woman and Bear Mother and other stories represented here are powerful images that speak to the vibrant Haida art tradition. Haida argillite is a signature medium; it has become symbolic of Canada and British Columbia, recognizing the Haida and other First Nations as an integral part of Canada.

When Captain George Dixon met the Haida off the northwest tip of Haida Gwaii in 1774, they had a strong artistic tradition, but little argillite was carved. Throughout the 1800s and into the 1920s, argillite carving expanded,

becoming one of the few legal media for artists working in the time of the potlatch ban. Argillite, in one sense, helped keep the art traditions strong.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many young Haida artists embraced argillite and produced a growing corpus of works that illustrated Haida mythology and symbols, refining the conversation between the Haida and those who visit Haida Gwaii.

The McLean collection documents this important period in the art, when Haida artists were confidently building contemporary art styles and forms. Building a collection of contemporary art is often a passion, a labour of love, created over time as opportunities present themselves.

Each piece of argillite on exhibit here was purchased individually, one at a time over a period of several decades. It represents part of the ongoing story of complex relationships within Canada, with entrepreneurs, men of vision, interacting with First Nations to build a stronger nation for everyone.

Barbara Winter is the curator of SFU's Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Department of Archaeology, Faculty of the Environment.

Another 200k for bridge programs

Lifelong Learning has received a second year of university priority fund support for 2012-13 in the amount of \$200,000 for SFU's two Aboriginal pre-university bridge programs to help recruit and retain Aboriginal students. Fifteen bridge

program graduates received offers of admission to SFU for the summer/fall 2012 term and 14 of them are now enrolled in first-year undergraduate studies in the health sciences, and arts and social sciences faculties.

Teaching alum instructs 'First Peoples' course

Gladstone Secondary English teacher and SFU alumna, Shirley Burdon, is instructing a high school course in Vancouver that introduces a new generation of students to the rich tradition of First Nations literature.

The course, English 12—First Peoples, offers an alternative to the traditional English 12 course," says Burdon.

"I often tell interested students that if they're tired of the old, dead British authors and themes historically offered, they should step into this world and see what they find."

Focused on contemporary Native Canadian authors, English 12—First Peoples examines social justice themes and explores local, national and global issues. It draws material from first-year university reading lists, helping students prepare for post-secondary education.

Above all, the course puts First Peoples' literature and worldviews at the centre of a learning experience that incorporates choice and collaboration in the classroom.

"The subject matter of the course is edgy and mature," explains Burdon, a graduate of SFU's MATE (Master of

Arts for Teachers of English) program. "Students explore universal themes such as identity and conflict—topics that resonate with teenagers regardless of their family background, cultural or religious beliefs or future goals."

Just halfway through her first year of teaching the course, Burdon is already witnessing the engaging power First Nations literature is having on her students. She hopes their experience will encourage others to take the course so it can be offered in coming years.

The course is the result of a provincial government-sponsored pilot program created by a committee that included high school teachers and SFU educators. The program ran in several B.C. schools five years ago. Similar English 10 and 11 courses have since been developed.

"Right now this course is offered at only a handful of high schools in the Lower Mainland," says Burdon.

"Interested students should tell their teachers and administrators. It is student interest that drives learning; they have the power to choose their curriculum."