I am pleased that, thanks to the efforts of many, SFU has made significant progress during the past year to advance Indigenous education, knowledge, and understanding.

Last fall, we responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action by establishing an SFU Aboriginal Reconciliation Council (SFU-ARC). The SFU-ARC is consulting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples within the University and broader communities in order to develop a set of recommendations to guide SFU's reconciliation activities. The University has allocated $9 million over the next four years to support initiatives resulting from this process.

Also last fall, SFU mounted a remarkable President's Dream Colloquium entitled “Returning to the Teachings: Justice, Identity and Belonging.” Using ceremony, lectures and dialogue, the colloquium provided a program of education and reconciliation in partnership with elders and knowledge-keepers from the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, Awatsimg, Katzie and Kwakw’temet First Nations. The featured speakers were Chief Robert Joseph, Wab Kinew, John Borrows, Wade Davis, Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, Rupert Ross, Jennifer Llewellyn, Stephen Reicher and Manulani Akili-Meyer.

As you will see in this special edition of SFU News, there have been many other positive developments over the past year. Some highlights include:

- The First Nations Student Association hosted its third annual Indigenous Day.
- Research and revitalization
- A welcome pole has been carved and will be located on the Burnaby Campus.
- The new SFU mesh mobile app showcasing Indigenous art pieces on the Burnaby Campus
- An Aboriginal Gathering Place opened in the Faculty of Education
- The University further committed $9 million to support the council's recommendations for a project, or series of projects, that will promote reconciliation at SFU.
- The council will make its recommendations this February.

One of the outcomes, says organizer Katy Ellsworth, was learning how important it is for Indigenous students to have their own cultural spaces. Another was the realization that Indigenous students still experience racism on campus. There was also a surprising discovery: Canadian hero and former SFU student Terry Fox was part Native American—his grandmother was from a tribal nation in North Dakota, U.S.A.

All of this information, says Ellsworth, is helping the council and the University identify priorities that will make the biggest difference for reconciliation at SFU.

“Last fall, SFU responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action by establishing an Aboriginal Reconciliation Council tasked with discovering the best way to promote reconciliation within the SFU community,” says Ellsworth. “The University further committed $9 million to support the council’s recommendations for a project, or series of projects, that will promote a renewed and respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people connected with the University.”

The council, co-chaired by SFU board member Chris Lewis, councillor of the Squamish Nation, and Kris Magnusson, dean of the Faculty of Education, held four open forums last year, which each attracted about 50 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal attendees. The council also met with the Métis Nation of B.C. and has reached out to the five local First Nations on whose land SFU sits.

At each public forum, the key activity was learning— and making new discoveries.
Evelyn Locker, right, with Jessica Humchitt, an alumna of the instruction programs, in cooperation with First Nations communities and two semesters. 

language modules running in concentrated periods a few days at a time over the language. And in Dease Lake, B.C. a Tahltan language cohort began intensive classes two days a week over two years to learn the Nsyilxcn (Okanagan). The goal is to produce 15 fluent speakers each year to reach 157 by the language, for example, began last fall at SFU’s downtown campus. It is a 

Ignace. 

strengthen languages,” says Marianne Ignace, director of SFU’s First Nations Language Centre (FNLC). 

“The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s call to action features the importance of language and culture and what universities can do to strengthen languages,” says Marianne Ignace, director of SFU’s First Nations Language Centre (FNLC). “SFU has been working in this area since the ‘90s, and we’re continuing to establish new language learning partnerships with First Nations language groups.” 

Last fall, the FNLC began offering more intensive language-learning programs than it has in the past, all leading to a First Nations Language Proficiency Certificate. 

“aroused the largest and most diverse audiences of any colloquium, and the accompanying graduate credit course attracted an unprecedented number of students. 

Kelly says one of the colloquium’s most important contributions was inviting Indigenous communities and their knowledge holders and elders to stand with SFU to host acknowledged visionary in the areas of justice, education, restorative justice, health, and the environment. The roster of speakers included Chief Robert Joseph, OBC, hereditary chief of the Gwaenusk First Nation, and ambassador for Reconciliation Canada; Wab Kinew, Manitoba MLA; professor Manulani Aluli-Meyer, world Indigenous expert, and John Borrows, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Law. “It was an important moment for SFU in the history of the Lower Mainland—that SFU community members and First Nations community members stood together as a family to host the President’s Dream Colloquium,” says Kelly, who is Anishinaabe and Metis. “Inviting the public to witness these ceremonies hasn’t happened before, and we had no understanding of how powerful and meaningful it would be.” She says many audience members told her the lectures were life-changing. Teacher/librarian Sophia Hunter, who is completing an SFU Master of Education, signed up for the five-credit colloquium course, which explored justice, identity and belonging in the context of education for reconciliation. “One thing that surprised me was how little I knew about the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada,” says Hunter, who graduated from both high school and university without learning about local First Nations history and perspectives. “All Canadians need to be aware of the cultural genocide that took place in Canada and its lasting effects,” she says. “They need to be aware of the role of education in oppressing Indigenous peoples across the country. This awareness is a foundational component of reconciliation.” Brenda Morrison, professor of criminology and director of SFU’s Centre for Restorative Justice, co-organized the colloquium with Kelly. She says: “Reconciliation requires us to work across institutional silos—not only those that uphold the state: justice, education, health—but also disciplinary silos: education, criminology, psychology. This colloquium opened up new institutional spaces to work across silos with a vision for reconciliation. It has been a privilege to work with the Nations and the students towards this vision.

Evelyn Locker, right, with Jessica Humchitt, an alumna of the Aboriginal University Transition Program.

Fondly remembering Elder Evelyn Locker

Elder Evelyn ‘Eagle Speaker’ Locker, who for many years mentored students in the Aboriginal Transition/Bridge Program at SFU’s Surrey campus, passed away on Oct. 5, 2016. 

Born in Cardston, Alberta in 1935, she was given the traditional name Kastasipisikokimiski (Two Owls Calling Woman). Later in life she received the name Meahkammonisaki (Red Otter Woman). A residential school attendee and survivor, she was the first and only First Nations woman selected as a Calgary Stampedes Queen, an honour bestowed in 1954. A champion traditional dancer in the powwow community, she was also a member of the drum group, The Blood Travellers. Her husband of 55 years, Robert Locker, predeceased her. “Elder Evelyn lived a good and long life, was loved, and will be missed,” says William Lindsay, director of the Office for Aboriginal Peoples. “A gracious thank you and good-bye to her.”

SFU races to preserve B.C. First Nations languages

The Squamish language, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh sníchm, is on the brink of extinction, with fewer than 30 fluent speakers remaining. All B.C. First Nations face a similar reality, which is creating an urgent and growing interest among First Nations adults to learn, or relearn, their languages. “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s call to action features the importance of language and culture and what universities can do to strengthen languages,” says Marianne Ignace, director of SFU’s First Nations Language Centre (FNLC). “SFU has been working in this area since the ‘90s, and we’re continuing to establish new language learning partnerships with First Nations language groups.” Last fall, the FNLC began offering more intensive language-learning programs than it has in the past, all leading to a First Nations Language Proficiency Certificate. “If we want to create fluent speakers before all the elders have disappeared, we must try out different and more intensive language-learning models,” says Ignace. A new two-semester, full-time adult immersion program in the Squamish language, for example, began last fall at SFU’s downtown campus. It is a partnership between Kwi Aet Stel’em, a not-for-profit organization from the Squamish Nation community, the FNLC and SFU’s Department of Linguistics. The goal is to produce 15 fluent speakers each year to reach 157 by the year 2027. Also last fall, in Penticton, the FNLC began offering intensive, full-time classes two days a week over two years to learn the Nsilyxcn (Okanagan) language. And in Dease Lake, B.C. a Tahltan language cohort began intensive language modules running in concentrated periods a few days at a time over two semesters. As well, says Ignace, SFU continues to offer a variety of other language instruction programs, in cooperation with First Nations communities and language authorities, for many First Nations languages throughout B.C.

President’s Dream Colloquium touches hearts and minds, opens eyes

Last fall’s President’s Dream Colloquium on Returning to the Teachings: Justice, Identity and Belonging was about healing and heart,” says co-organizer Vicki Kelly, an SFU professor of education. “It was conceived as an important contribution to the vision of what reconciliation means and what education reconciliation is all about.” The 10-part public lecture series—the eighth since the colloquium’s inception in 2012—aroused the largest and most diverse audiences of any colloquium, and the accompanying graduate credit course attracted an unprecedented number of students. Kelly says one of the colloquium’s most important contributions was inviting Indigenous communities and their knowledge holders and elders to stand with SFU to host acknowledged visionary in the areas of justice, education, restorative justice, health, and the environment. The roster of speakers included Chief Robert Joseph, OBC, hereditary chief of the Gwaenusk First Nation, and ambassador for Reconciliation Canada; Wab Kinew, Manitoba MLA; professor Manulani Aluli-Meyer, world Indigenous expert, and John Borrows, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Law. “It was an important moment for SFU in the history of the Lower Mainland—that SFU community members and First Nations community members stood together as a family to host the President’s Dream Colloquium,” says Kelly, who is Anishinaabe and Metis. “Inviting the public to witness these ceremonies hasn’t happened before, and we had no understanding of how powerful and meaningful it would be.” She says many audience members told her the lectures were life-changing. Teacher/librarian Sophia Hunter, who is completing an SFU Master of Education, signed up for the five-credit colloquium course, which explored justice, identity and belonging in the context of education for reconciliation. “One thing that surprised me was how little I knew about the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada,” says Hunter, who graduated from both high school and university without learning about local First Nations history and perspectives. “All Canadians need to be aware of the cultural genocide that took place in Canada and its lasting effects,” she says. “They need to be aware of the role of education in oppressing Indigenous peoples across the country. This awareness is a foundational component of reconciliation.” Brenda Morrison, professor of criminology and director of SFU’s Centre for Restorative Justice, co-organized the colloquium with Kelly. She says: “Reconciliation requires us to work across institutional silos—not only those that uphold the state: justice, education, health—but also disciplinary silos: education, criminology, psychology. This colloquium opened up new institutional spaces to work across silos with a vision for reconciliation. It has been a privilege to work with the Nations and the students towards this vision.

DFU hosts World Indigenous basketball tournament

SFU hosted some of the world’s top Indigenous basketball teams at the inaugural Indigenous Basketball Tournament—a four-day event of sport, culture and learning last August. “Sport has the power to bring people from various cultures together,” says William Lindsay, director of the Office for Aboriginal Peoples. “This event interwove sports, culture and learning.” The South Sudan National team won the tournament, defeating U.S. team Lords of the Plains 98 to 91 in the finals.

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Skye Augustine and Elena Pennell

Collaborative Eco-Cultural Restoration Project

Skye Augustine and Elena Pennell, garden project coordinator in the Gulf Islands, examine how they impact intertidal systems. In a collaborative eco-cultural restoration project involving coastal First Nations and various partners across Metro Vancouver, they are working to revive ancient clam gardens, built as long as 1,000 years ago in Vancouver Island.

The project's goal is to use traditional clam gardening practices to improve the health of beaches and reconnect with important places and increase the accessibility of clams and other traditional foods. The project aims to reconnect with ancient cultures that are static or dead. I like that you can look at modern issues.

Elena Pennell is pursuing a master’s degree in anthropology, a field she enjoys because she says, “It is very self-critical—it’s very aware of its history as a tool of colonialism, but it has certainly developed since then—it’s not just the study of ancient cultures that are static or dead. I like that you can look at modern issues.”

So Pennell is combining her passion for First Nations cultures, and her $30,000 Aboriginal graduate scholarship, to study how Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) affects family life for the thousands of Mexican temporary foreign workers who arrive in Canada each year to work on B.C.’s farms and vineyards.

Mexicans, she says, represent 70 per cent of all SAWP migrants. Their temporary immigration status is tied to their labour contract, with no avenue to permanent residency. And because they are not Canadian citizens, they do not enjoy the same labour rights as Canadians. However, traditions and transnationalism are growing phenomena, with many more people moving across borders and cultures, Pennell wants to shed light on how programs like the SAWP are affecting family life for temporary foreign workers.

She says, “What is it like to be separated for eight months at a time? How are they communicating and maintaining relationships, and how are those relationships changing?”

Elena Pennell’s own hereditary background is Anishinaabe from central Ontario, but she grew up in Victoria and says it wasn’t until high school that she began to learn more about, and really connect with, her own Indigenous identity. “It’s been a process of getting in touch,” she says, “and I feel privileged to have pursued an education to help with that.”

During high school she also developed a strong interest in Mexican and Latin American cultures after meeting exchange students from Mexico and learning about the country’s colonial history. She went on to earn a BA with a double major in Latin American studies and anthropology from the University of Victoria in 2015. She says her work on the SAWP is inherently political, and hopes it may improve the seasonal workers’ situation. “I hope my thesis can help to support advocacy and change,” she says, “so that we don’t have this treatment of ‘others.’”

2016 Graduate Aboriginal Entrance Scholarship winners: Skye Augustine and Elena Pennell

Master’s student examines lifestyle of Mexican migrant agricultural workers

Elena Pennell

PhD student working to revive ancient Aboriginal clam gardening practices

Skye Augustine

SFU debuts new programs for Indigenous high school students

SFU is reaching out to Indigenous high school students with a growing range of programs that demonstrate why Aboriginal youth should consider a university education. The newest programs, Indigenous Preview Day and ScienceFIRST!, debuted last year. Other programs include the month-long Academic Summer Camp for Aboriginal Students, and the annual Aboriginal Math and Sciences Workshop.

Last March, students from 22 schools toured the Burnaby campus during annual Indigenous Preview Day, meeting SFU’s Indigenous faculty and staff members and learning about the University’s diverse course offerings and Indigenous services. The message is resonating. Between 2010 and 2015 Indigenous student registrations at SFU increased 17 per cent, which includes growth in both undergraduate and graduate students.

Last fall, SFU added ScienceFIRST! Twenty-three Aboriginal students from six high schools across Metro Vancouver visited SFU’s science departments, trying hands-on lab activities and field work, and listening to faculty members discuss their research.

“We included Indigenous faculty and students, and encouraged role modeling and networking so that they could see the possibilities of science as a post-secondary program and as a career,” says Cynthia Henson, coordinator of outreach and engagement for the Faculty of Science. “It’s all part of our community engagement initiatives.”

The 2017 SFU Academic Summer Camp for Aboriginal Students, to be held July 3-28, will accommodate 25 Aboriginal students. The camp features lessons in mathematics and English, along with opportunities to make robots, learn about real-life crime scene investigation (CSI), and even play quidditch. Watch for the call for applications in mid-March 2017: http://matcatcher.irmacs.sfu.ca/matcamp.

To find out about more 2017 programs for Aboriginal high school students visit: http://at.sfu.ca/WpYnEf. For inquiries/registration: sfusciencoutreach@sfu.ca.
A new SFU app showcasing Indigenous art pieces on the Burnaby campus gives users a glimpse of the unique worldviews represented by Indigenous art. It also creates a stronger awareness of the Coast Salish territories on which SFU is situated.

The app is just one example of how SFU is working to indigenize various aspects of its campuses and curriculums.

Bryan Myles, director of the Bill Reid Centre for Northwest Coast Studies (BRC) in the Department of First Nations Studies, was charged with developing the app, called ímesh—“to walk” in Skwxwú7mesh snichim (Squamish language).

Designed for Apple iOS mobile devices, the SFU Indigenous Art Walk app is a self-guided walking tour that describes the Indigenous art pieces on the Burnaby campus and at adjacent Burnaby Mountain Park.

Users can select and visit art works from a list of available venues, or take a tour using geo-location, which notifies them when they are near one of the artworks. At each venue the user is presented with information regarding the artist, the work and the Indigenous worldview that informs each piece.

“The app serves double duty,” says Myles. “Visitors to campus can learn about Indigenous people and their art, and Aboriginal people can learn about their impact on SFU.”

A Coast Salish Lands Tour is also in production. This tour gives place names in local Coast Salish languages and describes culturally significant landmarks seen from campus. For example, someone viewing the north base of Burnaby Mountain from a specified location would learn that what we today call Barnet Marine Park is “where the bark gets peeled in spring.”

That’s because she first completed SFU’s Aboriginal Pre-Health Program, now called the Aboriginal University Transition Program, which prepares students who are planning to pursue a degree in health or health sciences.

The program introduced her to a variety of Indigenous campus resources, familiarized her with science lab equipment and experiments, taught her how to read academic articles, and to study for university.

Now in the third year of her honours degree program, Thompson is also working as a research assistant for professor Kelley Lee’s Global Tobacco-Control Project, which analyzes globalization and the tobacco industry.

“I don’t think I could have done this without the Aboriginal University Transition Program,” says Thompson. “It offers support in a very culturally sensitive environment.

“The professors have a keen insight into the difficulties facing Aboriginal students—the disadvantages, poverty, abuse and other circumstances a lot of us face. They bring either an incredible kindness or an understanding that makes it possible to work to overcome these issues.”

Beyond her studies and family life, Thompson is also the camp coordinator for SFU’s Academic Summer Camp for Aboriginal Students, which prepares long-day camp filled with classes in math, science and English, as well as recreational activities.

After completing her bachelor’s degree, Thompson plans to complete a Master of Public Health by the time her youngest child graduates from high school.

When SFU student Sheryl Thompson was growing up, encountering an Indigenous woman with a university degree was a rarity.

But that didn’t stop the Cree/Métis mother of seven from enrolling as a mature undergraduate in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

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University prep program paves way to success

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New figure symbolizes SFU’s commitment to Aboriginal peoples

Acclaimed carver and artist Jody Broomfield (left) has just completed an SFU-Squamish Nation Welcoming Figure symbolizing SFU’s commitment to Aboriginal peoples and Indigenous education. The welcome figure was commissioned with assistance from the Squamish Nation, Squamish Forestry LP, SFU’s Dean’s Council, the Office of Indigenous Education in the Faculty of Education, and the Office for Aboriginal Peoples. Originally proposed as part of SFU’s 50th Anniversary projects, the figure will be inaugurated early this year.

Alumnus reaches out to troubled Indigenous youth

SFU alumnus Kelvin Redvers, a First Nations filmmaker, is the force behind WE MATTER, a national video campaign reaching out with messages of hope and love for troubled Indigenous youth.

He started the campaign last fall with his sister, Tunchai. Their idea: to encourage Indigenous role models and other Canadians to submit short video messages of hope to help break through the cycle of depression and suicide among Indigenous youth.

Redvers launched the campaign on Oct. 18 with 20 videos featuring role models such as author Joseph Boyden, and First Nations comedian Don Burnstick, along with some powerful videos featuring Indigenous youth from Attawapiskat, Ont., and other remote communities.

In its first four weeks, the campaign reaped outstanding results, says Redvers, attracting hundreds of thousands of views, reaching more than one million people on social media, and generating thousands of overwhelmingly positive comments.

Within those first few weeks the campaign also attracted a further 30 video submissions from people such as Carolyn Bennett, minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Chief Perry Bellegarde, national chief, Assembly of First Nations, as well as other chiefs, fishermen, business men, elders and Indigenous youth.

Redvers and his sister based their campaign on a U.S. video-messaging project called “It Gets Better,” which targeted LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer) teens.

“My sister and I grew up in the Northwest Territories, we’re First Nations, and we’re well aware of issues like suicide and depression in First Nations communities,” he says.

“We thought of the “It Gets Better” model working in the U.S., we would try it with Indigenous people here, since there’s so much strength and positivity that does exist across our country. We felt those messages could be used to reach out to youth who are alone, or lonely.”

To view the videos: www.wemattercampaign.org.

Kelvin Redvers, pictured here in a screen shot from his own video message to indigenous youth, is trying to help break the cycle of depression and suicide prevalent among Indigenous youth today.

SFU Prep Program

“Indigenous youth can do anything if they want to,” he says.

Sheryl Thompson says she couldn’t have accomplished so much at university without completing the Aboriginal University Transition program.

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Think Before You Appropriate: new guide advises on ethical use of Indigenous cultural heritage

BY DIANE LUCKOW

In the lead-up to the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, the Hudson’s Bay Company announced it would sell knock-offs of traditional hand-knit Cowichan sweaters as official 2010 Olympics merchandise. Not surprisingly, the First Nations Cowichan people who still knit these sweaters using their traditional designs, protested. They had not been consulted, and weren’t offered any recompense.

This is just one example of Indigenous cultural appropriation—taking an Indigenous cultural element and using it for profit without consultation or permission.

Now, there is a new guidebook for designers and merchandisers. Think Before You Appropriate can help avoid the pitfalls of cultural appropriation, and reap the benefits of collaboration.

The guidebook was created by members of the IPinCH Project—Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage—directed by SFU professor George Nicholas. A PDF is available online (http://at.sfu.ca/IPinCH).

The international IPinCH Project team has spent the past eight years exploring the rights, values and responsibilities of material culture, cultural knowledge and the practice of heritage research. Now, the group has applied what it has learned to help both non-Indigenous and Indigenous designers, product developers and policy-makers make more informed decisions about their own, and others’, heritage.

The new guidebook defines cultural appropriation and explains the risks of not asking permission and not working directly with Indigenous owners.

The stakes are high, says Nicholas.

“Some product developers who have used Indigenous heritage elements without permission have faced serious social media backlash, unwanted negative press, and have been forced to pull products from the market at great expense.”

For Indigenous peoples, there are significant damages when others appropriate their heritage. These include losing access to their ancestral knowledge and property, losing control over the proper care of their heritage, losing their livelihood in some cases, and losing their cultural distinctiveness and authenticity.

“There’s a broad perception that Indigenous heritage is in the public domain—that so-called “real Indians” don’t exist anymore so their stories, designs and culture are free for the taking,” says Nicholas, adding “these issues have a real impact on Indigenous peoples’ lives.”

The IPinCH guide is intended not only to protect Indigenous peoples but also to help businesses thrive through collaboration. Nicholas points out that creating more responsible and culturally aware products benefits developers while fostering innovative and mutually beneficial collaborations with Indigenous artists and communities.

“Such progressive efforts counter stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and contribute respectful and inspirational uses and interpretations of Indigenous heritage.”

The unconventional job hunt: creating your own co-op opportunities

BY TAYLOR MCKINNEY

In five years at SFU, engineering physics undergrad Scott Beaupré landed three co-op job positions and four research projects without ever dropping off a résumé.

By reaching out to professors, SFU researchers and acquaintances, Beaupré found unique positions that aligned with his specific interests in bio-nanotechnology and solar energy.

This tactic also helped him join several research teams, one of which gave him his first accreditation as a published author in the journal American Chemical Society.

Now a few courses shy of graduation, he has worked with SFU’s 4D Labs, a research institute focused on accelerating the design and development of advanced functional materials and nanotechnology products, and for Canadian Integrated Optics. He also joined a micro-fluidics research project that used Lab-on-a-Chip devices to screen for malaria cells.

He says these positions gave him valuable industrial clean-room experience, professional presenting skills and even some practice in programming.

And although he is an undergraduate, he also worked as a tutorial assistant for two electronics courses, receiving enthusiastic reviews from students.

His advice to students: get out and talk to people about the kind of work you want.

“If they don’t have what you are looking for, they will know someone who will,” he says.

Beaupré will finish his honours thesis in June 2017 before starting a Master of Applied Sciences in engineering at SFU this fall. After, he is considering a career in renewable energy.

“I’m interested in solar and electric cars, the alternative energies,” he says. “Anything that’s not oil.”

Beaupré’s Indigenous heritage played a big role in his interest in alternative energy. In high school he started researching the Cree lineage on his father’s side and found that the Cree’s environmental stewardship resonated with him.

“They lived with the land. The respect they had for the earth is what I want.”

He says developing an understanding of Indigenous beliefs and culture made the decision to pursue a career in alternative energies a natural choice.

“It was important to look at my heritage, to know how they lived before.”

Indigenous students interested in co-op can contact SFU’s Aboriginal co-op coordinator, Trina Setah, for support navigating the co-op program, and to learn about available opportunities. Email: trina_setah@sfu.ca.

Aboriginal co-op coordinator creates new connections for co-op students

BY TAYLOR MCKINNEY

Trina Setah, who became SFU’s first Aboriginal co-op coordinator in October 2014, is approached weekly by employers seeking to hire Indigenous students.

Her position, created out of a collaboration between SFU’s Co-operative Education (co-op), Work Integrated Learning, Indigenous Student Centre (ISC), and Career Services, aims to connect Indigenous students to the employers wishing to recruit them.

Setah, a member of the Xeni Gwet’in First Nation, has years of experience in First Nation government, sustainable resource management, education and youth mentorship. In her own career, she has noted the benefits of accumulating diverse experiences and creating connections—goals she encourages in the students she works with.

In her role as Aboriginal co-op coordinator, she focuses on championing her students and supporting them as they search for co-op positions that will reap meaningful experiences and valuable post-grad contacts.

Students interested in co-op can visit Setah for help with enrollment, information on opportunities, and assistance in discussing co-op with their education coordinators. trina_setah@sfu.ca.

Let’s talk

This spring SFU’s popular Semester in Dialogue tackles the topic of Decolonizing Dialogues, Solidarities and Activism. Across Canada, governments, organizations, individuals and universities are mobilizing around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94Calls to Action to change Canadians’ relationship with Indigenous peoples.

The one-semester, full-time dialogue program will explore what ‘reconciliation’ actually entails, as well as what it means to live on Indigenous lands.

Students from different backgrounds will engage in deep discussions with Indigenous peoples as well as activists, allies, academics and others who support Indigenous resurgence.

Overall, the program aims to inspire students with a sense of civic responsibility and encourage their passion for improving society.

Co-op provides students at SFU the opportunity to transfer knowledge gained in the classroom to the workplace setting. Make valuable industry connections, graduate with experience in your field and gain a competitive advantage.

Co-op options include 10 different streams, including: Arts & Social Sciences; Biomedical; Engineering; Environmental; and Business.

Start your co-op journey, contact:

Trina Setah
Aboriginal Co-op Coordinator
778.782.2512
trina_setah@sfu.ca

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The Faculty of Education opened its own Aboriginal Gathering Space last year—a spacious light-filled room featuring comfortable seating and a small kitchen, with cultural photos and teachings adorning the walls. Now, Ron Johnston, director of the faculty’s Office of Indigenous Education, has ambitious plans for a Truth and Reconciliation memorial garden and outdoor classroom adjacent to the gathering place.

William Lindsay, director of the Office for Aboriginal Peoples, has committed some initial funding and he and Johnston are hoping to find more funding to establish a memorial art wall. It would depict B.C.’s Indian residential schools, along with niches for seven candles representing Truth and Reconciliation’s seven sacred fires and teachings. These are: truth, humility, honesty, wisdom, respect, courage and love. The garden would also feature traditional plants, medicines and herbs, and a reconciliation memorial pole.

Johnston sees the garden as an extension of the faculty’s commitment to recognize and honour the traditional and un-ordained lands of the Coast Salish People, as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action, and our inherent connection to land. His vision includes students acting as stewards of the garden while learning about Indigenous plants, traditions and protocols as they use these ‘teachings’ in their educational practice.

“The garden will be a place for all people to enjoy, socialize and learn together,” says Johnston, “as we all move forward on our Truth and Reconciliation journey.”
First Nations scholar to focus on resource, governance issues

Professor Cliff Atleo, who is Tsimshian (Kitsumkalum/Kitselas) and Nuu-chah-nulth (Ahousaht), researches Indigenous governance, community development and political economy.

BY MARIANNE MEADAH

Cliff Atleo, former treaty process manager of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, has joined SFU’s School of Resource and Environmental Management (REM) as a professor of Indigenous environmental management and governance.

Atleo brings a fresh perspective on First Nations resource and governance issues and will help to prepare students who plan on working with First Nations communities.

“It’s interesting to bring more traditional ways of looking at the environment into the discussions and the learning process and, in terms of policy, more specifics related to Indigenous culture,” says Atleo. “I’m encouraged to see that need recognized, and I’m honoured to bring that voice as someone from the West Coast.”

SFU professor Ken Lertzman says the long-awaited position is an important one for REM.

“An increasing number of REM graduates are being hired by First Nations and it’s critical that we grow the Indigenous perspective in post-secondary education, and it is interesting to see that universities are responding,” he says. “My goal is to see our approaches to big resource issues like climate change, which is about more than rising ocean temperatures or the impact of toxins, take further account of the Indigenous community perspective,” he says.

“The Truth and Reconciliation Commission talked of strengthening this area.”

Atleo, a Tsimshian and Nuu-chah-nulth scholar who grew up in Vancouver, completed his undergraduate and master’s degrees at the University of Victoria, focusing on political science and Indigenous governance. He is currently completing a PhD at the University of Alberta.

In 2014 he won a prestigious fellowship from Yale University. The Henry Roe Cloud Dissertation Writing Fellowship in American Indian and Indigenous Studies supports scholars who are completing doctorates that address pressing issues related to the American Indigenous experience.

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The Indigenous community at SFU is growing and we’d love you to be a part of it.

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CONTACT JENNIE BLANKINSHIP
Telephone 778.782.6891
jennie_blankinship@sfu.ca

areousfu.ca