**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 one of its six underlying principles.

“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 step.”

**Aboriginal Peoples**

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**SFU hosts Institute of Aboriginal People’s Health**

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 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.”

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Pay it Forward

Aboriginal students and educating the university

2

Blackfoot Nation), Theresa Neel (Kwakiutl (Tsleil-Waututh Nation), Evelyn Locker

SFU President Andrew Petter

Aboriginal students who arrive at SFU feeling Canadian society.”

community about Aboriginal life and culture.

continue working as an Aboriginal Peoples devoted volunteer, serving on SFU’s Aboriginal Steering Committee 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 are 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 - cont’d

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students with a focus on the study of traditional cultures, languages, practice, and theory.

The department, directed by archaeology 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/ths/.

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

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’kmq 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. 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 retention and success.

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

Steam stones to stronger communities

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.

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.

Sheliah 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.

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

Good news stories. A number of studies show the success of programs that foster a sense of belonging at university, such as the Indigenous Students Centre.

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

Judy Smith is the Program Director of SFU’s Lifting Learning Community Education Program.

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 retention and success.

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

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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 archaeology 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/ths/.

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Stepping stones to stronger communities

Writer in residence

Aboriginal Friendship Centre. “I had so much fun and met
And the number of Aboriginal graduates per year has increased
Aboriginal Peoples supplement.

Are you one of SFU’s almost 1,200 Aboriginal
Where are they now?

SFU has graduated approximately 1,160 Aboriginal students
graduated in 2011 from SFU’s MEd in Arts Education
certificate and is looking for full-time teaching work while
coming out of very strong crab pot that maybe we were
affected by Canada’s Indian residential schools. “You’re
of aboriginal research.” The Office for Aboriginal Peoples
space in the Maggie Benson Centre and the FNSA move
since 1970, about 30 per cent of whom earned more than one
student community and enhances the learning environment
for all SFU students,” says ISC director Jenna LaFrance.

“This is a great development for the SFU Aboriginal
students to sustain and enhance the learning environment for all SFU students,” says ISC director Jena LaFrance.

Last year, an FNSA board approved the proposal.

ISC, FNSA to share new space

SFU’s Indigenous Student Centre (ISC), First Nations Student Association (FNSA) and Aboriginal Elders program will
will publish a list of institute members and their research

ABORIGINAL GRADUATIONS ACCELERATING

SFU has graduated approximately 1,160 Aboriginal students since 1970, about 30 per cent of whom earned more than one credential in the vast majority of original 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 0.5 per cent were Aboriginal students, reflecting the percentage of Aboriginal people in southwest BC, the region from which SFU recruits most of its undergraduate students.

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, Snowy River First Nation Chief Otis Jaspor, Musqueam First Nation assistant treaty director, Dianne Sparrow, Squala First Nation Chief David Jimmie and Nupac 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.

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 awareness and 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 weeks in September, February and March and work on their own for the rest of the time, collaborating with their teachers and fellow cohort members online and by phone.

Sparrow is confident her cohort and future programs 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.”

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 librarians 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.

EMBA Aboriginal cohort starts classes

SFU appoints indigenous initiatives librarian

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.”

Mariana 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 Talkin 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 Alphabet, Backyard, Burning Vision and The Inuitural 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 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 e8th@sfu.ca.

Aboriginal entrance scholars

Natalie Knight and Cherry Smiley are the respective winners of SFU’s first graduate Aboriginal entrance scholarship for PhD and masters students. Knight, 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 his master’s degree in the School for the Contemporary Arts. Smiley, a member of Nakai/Thompson (Chinook), 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 literature arts from Washington’s Evergreen State College. She views her scholarship “as an invitation to participate in the First Nations community” at SFU “but also to provide mentorship and leadership.” For scholarship info, visit: ab.sfu.ca/TryBUK.

Cherry Smiley

Toy story
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 Nadert. “She has so much passion.”

Nadert’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 (FNSA) 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 FNSA 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 employers that want to hire indigenous students, she says, while 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

Teaching alum instructs ‘First Peoples’ course

Gladsborough 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 viewpoints at the centre of a learning experience that incorporates class and collaboration in the classroom. “The subject matter of the course is edgy and mature,” explains Burdon. “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 Nadert. “She has so much passion.”

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