

# GREEN&WHITE

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**USask's Vaccine and Infectious Disease  
Organization has spent the better part of two  
years on a journey to find a COVID-19 vaccine.**

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UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN



**While the rest of the world was in lockdown, members of USask's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization emerged as leaders in Canada's journey to secure a vaccine.**

**Take an inside look into their sacrifice, preparedness, and hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic on page 19.**



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Pivot.  
Unprecedented times.  
Alone together.  
Flatten the curve.  
Social distancing.

Words and phrases that really didn't exist in our nomenclature before 2020. Today, we can't escape them.

I've never had to put an issue of the *Green & White* magazine together at home. I'm removed from the scenic USask campus and displaced to my makeshift office – with mounds of laundry in my current eyeline and unwashed dishes piling up in the kitchen sink upstairs. When writer's block inevitably hits, I can't simply go for my signature walk around the Bowl to spark my inspiration. The walk around my backyard picking up my toddler's strewn sandbox toys just doesn't hit the same.

It's a reality that I know many of our USask alumni faced this year. The line between home and work has been blurred, as has many other everyday subtleties. We have uprooted our lives in so many different and monumental ways.

It's fitting that this issue's theme is "Be What the World Needs," because over the course of nearly two years, we've really seen our USask community stand out as leaders, influencers, and innovators. When USask launched its intention to "Be What the World Needs," who could have predicted that a pandemic would shift the course of so many things? Yet, here we are, leading in this fight against COVID-19, and helping save those affected and afflicted by this pandemic.

Dr. Volker Gerdt's fight to save the world from this virus started the second he heard about it. As the director and CEO of USask's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization

(VIDO), he and his team have spent the majority of the past two years trying to get us back to some simulation of normal.

As have the dedicated frontline workers – nurses, doctors and health-care professionals – working hard to provide their communities with the care they need in these dire times. Faced with rising ICU numbers, always changing restrictions, and inevitable burnout, these alumni have proved their selflessness in honoring their professional oaths and keeping us safe.

These are just some of the stories you will read in this issue of the *Green & White*. We also hear from other members of our USask community coping with the pandemic; our Huskie athletes who lost their seasons, an inspiring alumna who spent her first few months as a judge on Zoom, and professionals trying to work exclusively from home seemingly overnight.

I know that it's been a long, oftentimes dark, pandemic but as I sit and write this at my kitchen table, vaccination rates across Saskatchewan and the world continue to rise, providing a glimmer of hope. Hopefully by the time you're reading this there might be some semblance of hope still on the horizon.

If anything, we've proven to ourselves that we're resilient, and that we can do hard things.

We can be what the world needs.

**Leslie-Ann Schlosser**  
Editor

In every issue

**1 From the president**  
**2 Remember when**  
**4 Alumni mover and shaker**

**5 On campus news**  
**14 Alumni advice**  
**34 Alumni highlight**

**47 From the Alumni Advisory Board**  
**50 Class Notes**  
**53 In memoriam**

Features

9 —

**Be what the world needs**

We take an inside look into the photos that showcase USask's quest to Be What the World Needs.

11 —

**Timeout**

*Green & White* spoke with four Huskie athletes to get their thoughts on the pandemic, the effects on their sports, and what the future holds.



Photography: Carey Shaw

15 —

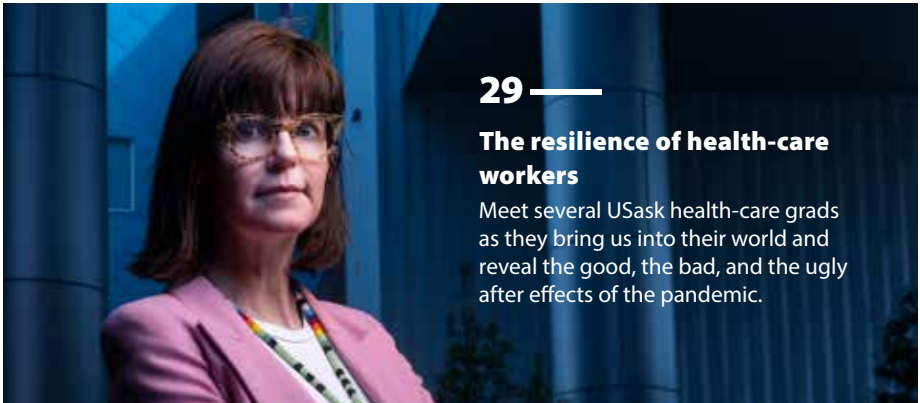
**Working at a distance,  
innovating together**

In March 2020, millions of people had to pack up their lives and move online to work, learn, and socialize. Despite the drastic shift in everyday life, USask faculty, staff, students, and alumni persevered in this new world of work and learning.

19 —

**The quest for a solution**

USask's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) emerges as Canada's leader in vaccine development.



Photography: David Stobbe

29 —

**The resilience of health-care  
workers**

Meet several USask health-care grads as they bring us into their world and reveal the good, the bad, and the ugly after effects of the pandemic.

25 —

**Changing the narrative**

At the age of four, Lua Gibb (LLB'05) set out to become a lawyer. Today, grounded in her lived experience as an Indigenous woman, she has accomplished that and a whole lot more.



Photography: sweetmoon photography

28 —

**CLS combats COVID-19**

USask's Canadian Light Source (CLS) is being used to discover COVID-related treatments, vaccines, or improve conditions for frontline workers. Read about five ways world-leading researchers are working to make the world a safer place.

35 —

**Taking over the airwaves**

With the world cooped up in their homes this past year, many people turned to podcasts to curb the negative impacts of isolation. We check in with three podcasts hosted and produced by USask alumni.

37 —

**2021 Alumni Achievement  
Award winners**

This year's diverse group of Alumni Achievement Award winners embody what it means to be dedicated to one's profession and community.

45 —

**USask research is for the birds**

The legacy of renowned USask alumna and conservationist Mary Houston (BA'47, BEd'50, S.V.M.) lives on through her \$2.3 million gift.



It was not clear in March 2020 how we would fare during the uncertain time ahead.

Since then, signs of the pandemic's toll have been apparent and have been experienced by every member of our university community, including our 164,000 alumni around the world. Our lives have been disrupted as they have never been before.

Many assumptions were made at the beginning of the pandemic about its likely negative effects on the province, the world, and this university. And although the past year and a half has been difficult for so many, much has been achieved.

As Saskatchewan's research-intensive medical-doctoral university, we have been a strategic and critical partner in the province's response and recovery efforts, supporting the health-care system, finding solutions, and working to help the province emerge stronger from the pandemic.

This includes advising government, supporting students in need, transforming Merlis Belsher Place into a field hospital and then a vaccination centre, and predicting community COVID-19 rates based on wastewater analysis. We have accomplished all this while continuing to excel in water research, sustainability initiatives, and our commitment to Reconciliation.

USask's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) has emerged as a leader in the country's efforts to secure a vaccine.

Researchers have been recognized nationally and around the world for being the first in the country to isolate the virus, for developing an animal model for it, and for developing Canada's first vaccine candidate. There is no doubt, then, why this remarkable story of resilience is the cover story for this issue of *Green & White*.

There is much to look forward to, and although the last year and a half has been challenging, we are now fortunate enough to ask ourselves, "What will the post-pandemic world look like for USask?"

Our Post-Pandemic Shift Project aims to inform future decisions ensuring the university emerges from the pandemic stronger and with renewed vigour and vision.

While we are preparing to have many programs, classes, and labs return to in-person delivery in September, and much more than we had in this past term, the Fall Term should be considered "transitional" as we will continue to offer some classes remotely.

Encouraged by our USask community's confident and positive response to the pandemic, I have reason to believe we will emerge united, deliberate, and creative in our commitment to being the university the post-pandemic world will need.

Many stories of resilience are told in

these pages of the *Green & White*. When the world needed help, you stepped up in unprecedented ways. Our alumni teachers moved online. Our alumni health-care workers went to work every day to fight COVID-19. Our alumni engineers invented innovative new ways to help their colleagues. Our alumni researchers found solutions to combat the virus.

Throughout this pandemic one thing remains certain: USask alumni are what the world needs.

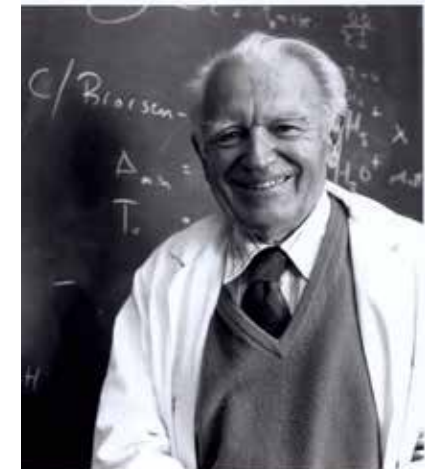
COVID-19 is not over, but I am thankful we are now beginning to see beyond the difficulties and challenges, and that a better time awaits us on the horizon. And I thank all members of the USask community, including our USask alumni, for upholding the vision, mission, and values of this great university over this intensely challenging period in our history.

**Peter Stoicheff**  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
uofs.president@usask.ca

## Celebrating USask's Nobel Laureate Gerhard Herzberg: A legacy in unravelling the mysteries of the microscopic world

 KATHRYN WARDEN

When Gerhard Herzberg was awarded the Nobel Prize in chemistry 50 years ago for ground-breaking discoveries in a lifelong exploration of the structure of matter, he publicly thanked the University of Saskatchewan.



Photography: National Research Council

"It is obvious that the work that has earned me the Nobel Prize was not done without a great deal of help," Herzberg said in his acceptance speech, acknowledging "the full and understanding support" of successive USask presidents and faculty who "did their utmost to make it possible for me to proceed with my scientific work."

Herzberg's brilliance in studying the spectra of atoms and molecules to understand their physical properties significantly advanced astronomy, chemistry and physics—enhancing knowledge of the atmospheres of stars and planets and determining the existence of some molecules never before imagined.

"He was certainly a pioneer," said USask PhD student Natasha Vetter, winner of both the 2014 Herzberg Scholarship and the 2018 Herzberg Fellowship. "Without his work, the fundamental tools we use as chemists and biochemists wouldn't exist. I feel pretty honoured to be part of that legacy and to have received those awards."

While at USask from 1935 to 1945, Herzberg made discoveries that laid the groundwork for his work at Chicago's Yerkes Observatory and then at the National Research Council (NRC), culminating in his celebrated work on free radicals—highly unstable, short-lived molecules that are everywhere: in our bodies, in materials and in space. They help important reactions take place but an imbalance can

cause damage such as cancer or age-related illness. Knowledge of their structure is now used to make pharmaceuticals, medical radiation tests, light sensors, and a wide range of innovative materials.

"This was the beginning of molecular spectroscopy, and it was an exciting time because it was all so new," said Alexander Moewes, Canada Research Chair in Materials Science with Synchrotron Radiation.

"Herzberg was unravelling the structure of molecules, specifically free radicals. Many of today's drugs and human biochemistry processes are governed by these molecules. So much that we have developed today would not have been discovered if Herzberg hadn't done this fundamental research. This can't be overstated."

But Herzberg's story is not one of the "lone genius." In a 1984 speech, he singled out 11 Canadians who had been critical to his success. Half had connections to USask.

Two were former USask presidents: Walter Murray and John Spinks whom Herzberg credited with providing him "a haven and safety from the Nazis." Two were USask alumni who were NRC presidents during Herzberg's 46 years there—C.J. Mackenzie and Bill Schneider. Another was Herzberg's master's student—Alex Douglas—who went on to work closely with Herzberg for many years at the NRC. Also cited was Herzberg's long-time NRC research colleague Boris Stoicheff (father

of President Peter Stoicheff) who became Herzberg's biographer.

And this list scarcely captures the disproportionate role that USask leaders, researchers and alumni played in Herzberg's story—one that has had a lasting impact on science globally, on Canadian science policy, and even on the building of Canada's only synchrotron at USask where today scientists from across Canada and around the world continue to unravel the mysteries of atomic and molecular structure.

"It's a story of courageous curiosity and collaboration that brought Canadian science to international prominence and has a continuing legacy today," said President Stoicheff.

How did a renowned German scientist on track before he was 30 to become a world leader in mapping the structure of molecules end up at a far-flung Canadian prairie university?

The story begins with the confluence of two widely separated historical events—desperate financial straits at USask during the Great Depression and the rise of the Nazis in 1930s Germany.

When the crops were so bad that many students couldn't pay tuition, USask gave unmarried faculty a year off in 1933. John Spinks found a position at Herzberg's already renowned lab in Germany. Spinks lived in the



same Darmstadt rooming house as Herzberg and his wife Luise, also a spectroscopy scientist. They became fast friends.

But after Spinks returned to Saskatoon, the young couple found it impossible to live under the Hitler regime. As part of the Nazi purge of universities, Herzberg was denied the right to teach because his wife Luise was Jewish.

Herzberg appealed to universities in Europe and Canada, but none were able or willing to assist. Spinks raised the issue with then USask President Murray who saw an opportunity to help a refugee couple and build Canadian research. He eventually arranged a Carnegie Foundation guest professorship at USask—despite the lack of suitable research equipment and advanced graduate students (master’s was the highest degree).

The Herzbergs arrived in Saskatoon with \$2.50 and some optical equipment, including special infrared plates, to build a prism spectrograph, “If the Nazis had known that, they probably would have smashed the plates,” Herzberg later remarked. Herzberg became a lifelong friend of physics department head Ertle Harrington whose expert glass blowing skills were enlisted, along with staffer Bert Cox’s instrument-making expertise, to help build the specialized equipment.

With fewer than 3,000 students and about 100 faculty, Herzberg described USask as “a nice small university” with “remarkably high” standards, a place where you “soon learned to know every one of the faculty members, whether it was in science or the humanities.”

Herzberg taught two classes and published 20 papers in his first four years. With Luise’s help, he wrote three of his six books that have become standard texts in the field. One, translated into English by Spinks, was dedicated to President Murray.

Luise paused her research while their two children were very young, but continued soon after, in Herzberg’s words, to do “a large part of the work.” Later, their son Paul wrote that Herzberg could not have achieved Nobel Prize success “without her devotion and support.” (Luise died five months prior to the 1971 Nobel announcement.)

In 1941, Herzberg and student Douglas identified the presence of the methylene ion CH<sub>2</sub><sup>+</sup> in space, a discovery covered by the *New York Times*. Though they didn’t accurately identify the spectra of free methylene radical CH<sub>2</sub> until 1959 at the NRC, the quest for it

began with a USask experiment to confirm the molecule’s existence in a comet spectrum.

Herzberg also worked on the spectra of explosives using a small earthen detonation hut behind the Physics Building, often creating loud explosions. “It was a feature of day-to-day life in Saskatoon,” recalls former student Bill Cameron. “You’d be walking downtown and hear a whoomp! from the university campus and you knew it was Herzberg.”

Herzberg described his time at USask as “the 10 best years” of his life, according to his daughter Agnes, a renowned statistician, USask alumna, and honorary degree recipient.

Luise’s friend Hildred Rawson, wife of biology professor Donald Rawson after whom Rawson Lake in the Rockies is named, wrote that the Herzbergs “very much loved in Saskatoon” and that “their wish to know us and to be one with us in our ambition to make something of our little community was heartwarming.”

The Herzbergs joined artist Ernest Lindner’s Saturday night discussion gatherings of local journalists, teachers, artists and professors. Businessman and art lover Fred Mendel was also a friend. Herzberg, who had a strong bass-baritone voice and loved opera and lieder, took singing lessons in Saskatoon.

Known for his humanity, humility, and humour, Herzberg made visits back to Saskatoon including a post-Nobel Prize visit where, to his great delight, the Intensely Vigorous College Nine band serenaded him with “Oh You Doll, You Great Big Beautiful Doll.”

USask alumnus Benoit Simard (PhD’87), whose career at the NRC overlapped for many years with Herzberg’s, remembers the day Herzberg came to class.

“It was amazing,” recalls Simard. “We knew about him through the courses we were taking. We had a little time to talk to him briefly and he signed my copies of his books. He was a great person. He found interest in what you were doing and paid attention to it.”

USask Herzberg student Cec Costain, who later joined Herzberg’s NRC lab, remarked that Herzberg “made scientists of us farm boys” Herzberg’s students ended up in laboratories and observatories in many countries.

Among them were Henry Taube (1983 Nobel Prize winner) and Bill Schneider who were from neighbouring farms and roomed

together. Schneider became a pioneer in nuclear magnetic resonance, paving the way for MRI scans today. As NRC president, Schneider oversaw creation of the NRC Plant Biotechnology Institute on campus. Student Lorne Gray, who drafted illustrative figures for Herzberg, later became Atomic Energy of Canada president.

Professor Emeritus Ron Steer says Herzberg’s decade at USask boosted the importance of scientific research on campus.

“He brought a level of excellence in basic fundamental physical science to this university that this university had not seen previously,” said Steer. “His longstanding influence has been that USask has in many respects blossomed in many different disciplines—and also from the linear accelerator leading to the CLS—that otherwise might not have happened at all.”

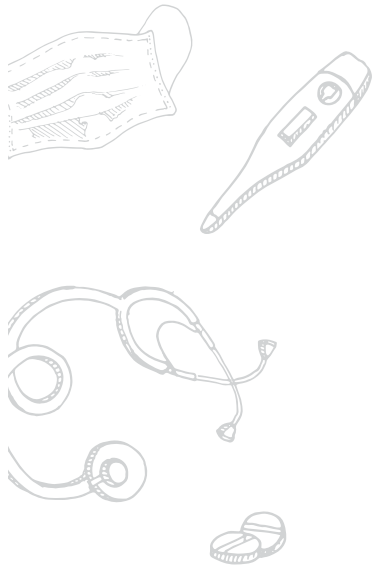
The serendipitous Spinks-Herzberg meeting and Herzberg’s subsequent hiring were arguably the “most important events in eventually landing the CLS over 60 years later,” wrote former CLS director Michael Bancroft in a 2020 history of Canada’s synchrotron. Herzberg’s spectroscopic work, along with the first electron accelerator in Canada—the betatron used for cancer therapy and nuclear physics, paved the way for the CLS. “Everybody who uses the Canadian Light Source today is leaning on Herzberg,” said Moewes.

Awarded 37 honorary degrees, Herzberg used his Nobel Prize celebrity to protest Soviet oppression of intellectuals (twice he demonstrated outside the Soviet embassy in Ottawa) and to press for support for basic science, stressing no one can foresee the practical applications of pure research.

“Nobody would have ever discovered or invented the laser if it had been directed science,” he said. “It was not because somebody had the idea and told the scientists ‘You invent the laser.’”

At his 1999 memorial, Agnes recalled that her father “always listened and weighed the evidence”, highlighting this with a humorous story about his response when asked why he did not believe in God : “G.H. (as he was known to friends and family) said that he had not seen enough data.”

“G.H. spent his life in the pursuit of science and the arts. He searched for openness, honesty and objectivity,” she said. “We and the world should and will never forget G.H.”



✍️ JOHN GRAINGER

Dr. Ashley Tshala (BSc’16, MD’20) still feels the sharp sting of racism she felt as a youngster growing up in a predominately white Saskatoon neighbourhood.

It’s a feeling she likely will never forget, and for her, those memories don’t simply wash away or fade over time.

“Having grown up in Saskatchewan, I was often one of the only, if not the only, person of colour in my class,” said Tshala. “So a lot of times, the stereotypes fell on me to fulfil where people saw me in a stereotypical way.”

She cites examples where classmates would want to touch or play with her hair or expected her to play basketball or ask her if she loved to eat watermelon.

“I dealt with a lot of what we would call now, microaggressions,” she said.

Despite these microaggressions, this isn’t to suggest Tshala’s formative years left an indelible scar.

“Overall, growing up in Saskatchewan, it was a pretty good life,” she recalled.

## WITH DR. ASHLEY TSHALA

**Strengthened by her past, Tshala builds a solid foundation for the future.**



Photo: submitted

But those memories are part of what drives Tshala now as she pursues a career in medicine. She wasn’t going to let skin colour dictate otherwise.

“I think as far as I can remember I have always wanted medicine as a career choice,” she said.

When Tshala arrived at USask, she recalls being just one of two persons of colour in her year and didn’t think there were that many Black medical students across Canada.

She was alerted about a proposed conference for Black medical students in Canada and knew she needed to participate and get involved.

“When I found out there was a lot of us and we are going to have a conference, I was blown away. I never imagined this level of representation. I thought I was the only one,” she said.

Her participation in the conference filled her with encouragement and enthusiasm when she returned to USask.

“Going [to Toronto] and seeing what they have been able to affect on their own local level ... and feeling that encouragement, I feel like I actually have a voice now.

“There’s a new generation of young Black medical students who are here and I want

to make sure that any student of colour has a voice.”

Tshala, who is now living and working in a Montreal hospital as an obstetrics-gynaecological resident, says she already has observed a shift in how people of colour are treated. Indeed, she has witnessed a higher level of acceptance within the medical community across Canada.

“The face of medicine is changing. I see it right in front of me,” she said.

Tshala says there is still much work to do in educating the medical community, as well as the general public, especially during the difficult COVID-19 landscape.

“If we want people to understand us and to understand the power of our word and the power of our actions, we need to go out there and be vocal, visual parts of the community.”

Tshala is now using those difficult childhood memories as motivation to create a positive world for herself and other Black people in the province, a place she expects to return.

“Honestly, at some point, I will probably end up back in Saskatchewan. There’s a peacefulness, a calmness to Saskatchewan that you don’t get out here.”



Shannon Chinn, chief athletics officer

USask announces next chief athletics officer to lead Huskie Athletics

This spring, USask and Huskie Athletics announced Shannon Chinn as the incoming chief athletics officer.

“It is an incredible honour to come home and join such a historic and successful athletics program,” said Chinn, who earned a bachelor’s degree in human kinetics from the University of Ottawa, where she played varsity basketball and also completed a post-graduate program in sports business management. “I believe we have the ability to inspire greatness, create unforgettable moments and connect with people through unparalleled student-athlete experiences.”

“Born and raised in Saskatchewan with strong connections to the province, Shannon’s skills and experience—especially related to the senior leadership roles she has held with a number of professional and amateur Canadian sport organizations—will help guide Huskie Athletics to being the premier university program in Canada,” said Chad London, dean of USask’s College of Kinesiology and vice-chair of the Huskie Board of Trustees. 🍷



New first-year engineering program is 'RE-ENGINEERED' for student success

USask’s College of Engineering is seeking to create the most effective first-year engineering program in Canada. Dubbed "RE-ENGINEERED," it will welcome its first students in fall 2021.

Today’s engineering grads need a more robust and diverse skill set than ever before. But for the most part, engineering education hasn’t fundamentally changed in 100 years or longer, according to Associate Prof. Dr. Sean Maw (PhD), one of the leaders of the team transforming USask Engineering’s first-year program.

The team looked at curriculum and also focused on better supporting students’ mental and physical health, while keeping them excited about engineering and giving them a solid foundation for upper-years courses.

The RE-ENGINEERED curriculum was made possible by USask alumni Ron and Jane Graham, whose generous donation allowed the hiring of a new team of engineering education specialists to develop the curriculum. As the program is implemented, many alumni continue to support equipment and software costs through gifts to the Engineering Advancement Trust. 🍷

Nunavut Law Program sees first graduates

This spring, more than 20 Nunavummiut graduated with a USask Juris Doctor degree.

The final year of the Nunavut Law Program (NLP) has not been without its challenges, but as students prepared to graduate, those involved with the program are confident the initiative can be called a huge success—not only for USask, but also for the territory of Nunavut and Canada’s North.

“Everyone has demonstrated a lot of flexibility and adaptability,” noted program director Lana Walker. “Everybody is managing to get through and stay positive.”

Dean Dr. Martin Phillipson (PhD) said the NLP has naturally fit into the overall goals and direction of USask and the College of Law.

“It’s a reminder of the national reach our college has,” said Phillipson. “These students will be a wonderful addition to our alumni family and we look forward to closely following their achievements in the years to come.” 🍷



Lana Walker, NLP director

Belonging to the alumni family gets you some pretty sweet benefits and perks.



Protect your family’s health with life insurance from IA Financial Group



Save yearly on home and car insurance with TD Insurance



Earn travel rewards or cash back with a BMO MasterCard



Keep your career on track at the Student Employment and Career Centre



Get special alumni discounts from our perks partners



[alumni.usask.ca/perks](https://alumni.usask.ca/perks)



## USask's CDC celebrates a half-century of crop innovation

Much of Saskatchewan's agricultural growth can be attributed to the Crop Development Centre (CDC) at USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources.

Launched in 1971 to help producers diversify and farm more productively and profitably, the CDC celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

Today, the CDC has released more than 500 new crop varieties—an average of 100 for each decade—which CDC director Dr. Curtis Pozniak (BSA'99, PhD'08) calls "remarkable." It's the work of dedicated people in a research centre that today includes over 200 staff and graduate students, with expertise not only in plant breeding but also research into crop diseases and end-use quality.

One thing in crop breeding remains unchanged—it still takes 10 to 12 years to develop a new variety. Pozniak embraces that challenge: peering into the future to figure out what will be next in demand is, he says, "what makes it so fun." ♥



Dr. Curtis Pozniak, CDC director



## Celebrating 100 years of horticulture at USask

In 1921, Dr. Cecil F. Patterson (PhD) arrived in Saskatoon to become the first head of the Department of Horticulture at USask.

One of his main focuses was fruit development, particularly apples, plums and pears. He envisioned fruit as an essential part of every prairie farm, with small commercial orchards supplying fruit to urban populations much as U-picks do today.

Research technician Rick Sawatzky and assistant professor Dr. Bob Bors (PhD) of the Department of Plant Sciences have continued Patterson's legacy, breeding sour cherries, apples, hazelnuts and haskap berries.

USask now has the largest and best haskap breeding program in the world and Sawatzky and Bors received the Stevenson Award in 2019 for their work in fruit breeding. ♥



## USask adopts first Sustainability Strategy

USask has adopted its first Sustainability Strategy as a key pillar of guiding what President Peter Stoicheff describes as "unapologetically ambitious and appropriately impatient actions" to become the university the world needs.

The inaugural sustainability plan commits USask to action on achieving the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030, among them zero hunger, good health and well-being, clean water and sanitation, and strong peace and justice institutions. Many of the SDGs align closely with USask's signature areas of research, including food security, water security, and One Health.

"If I were to boil down the spirit of this whole plan, I would say that it moves the sustainability agenda across every aspect of the university," said Stoicheff.

"If sustainability is to be a pillar of the university, ongoing governance and operational sustainability efforts have to be connected with the whole academic and research side as well, because we are more than a collection of facilities." ♥

  
**USask Journeys**  
 Travel in good company

We look forward to travelling the world with you again.  
 Visit [alumni.usask.ca/travel](https://alumni.usask.ca/travel) to see the possibilities.





BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS



# USASK HAS BEEN A WORLD-LEADING UNIVERSITY FOR YEARS. IT'S TIME TO LET THE WORLD KNOW ABOUT IT.

✍ JOHN GRAINGER

As one of Canada's leading universities, the University of Saskatchewan is bringing people and ideas together to confront the world's greatest challenges through creativity and collaboration, and to achieve meaningful change with and for our communities. We pursue bold, creative solutions to these great challenges, from a uniquely Saskatchewan perspective.

USask's Brand Campaign is a reflection of the University Plan, and our mission, vision and values of creativity, sustainability, connectivity, reconciliation and diversity. We are committed to communicating, amplifying and celebrating our successes, reinforcing who we are and who we must be — the university the world needs.

Here are a few examples of USask images you may have seen online, on campus, and in social media over the past year or two, and the story behind them.

**1** The USask field research site on the Athabasca Glacier in the Canadian Rockies helps the world understand the profound impact of climate change.

Here, researchers set up camp on the Peyto Glacier with the goal to measure the glacier's thickness. Knowing how much ice is under their feet could determine how much meltwater it could produce in the upcoming decades. That critical research will unveil the impacts on more than just water supplies, but also the effects on cold water fish and ecosystems.

These are issues that need to be addressed now and USask researchers are at the forefront of these studies globally.

**2** Teaching and learning at USask's Sylvia Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation is placing Saskatchewan among global leaders in nuclear research.

USask has a time-honoured tradition of developing ground-breaking technologies, which can be dated back to the 1950s with the innovative cobalt-60 cancer treatment and diagnostic research led by physicist and former USask Chancellor Sylvia Fedoruk. This major technical development paved the way for future facilities like the Canadian Light Source.

The centre encourages an ongoing and respectful dialogue on the benefits and risks of nuclear technology as reliable supply of energy. As Canada shifts away from fossil fuels, more research and understanding into renewable energies is inevitable.

**3** Agriculture is the foundation of Saskatchewan's economy and USask is one of the world's top agriculture schools. USask's agriculture and food security research are unlocking new ideas and practices that will enhance crop production here in Saskatchewan, and across the globe.

Imagine a drone loaded with software flying over the endless prairie that can keep an eye on livestock and their health, or a drone flying over a golden field of canola sending critical data back for the advancement in seed and fertilizer usage and efficiency.

Advanced ag-tech and smart farming has arrived, and USask researchers are leading the way so producers everywhere can make better informed decisions, helping feed the world, sustainably.

**4** USask is seen as a leader amongst Canadian universities in its commitments and actions to Reconciliation and Indigenous, a critical role within the province and the country.

For nearly 30 years, USask has hosted a Graduation Powwow on the Saskatoon campus, situated on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. Indigenous dancers are seen here at the inaugural convocation ceremonies held at Merlis Belsher Place in 2019.

USask will continue to build partnerships and relationships with Indigenous peoples not only in Saskatchewan, but across the country. ♥



**YOL PIOK**  
Huskie football.  
Arts and Science, 4th year.  
Age 25. Regina, Sask.

The absence of a competitive season left a giant hole for Huskie athletes and Huskie supporters across campus and the community in 2020.

**BAILEE BOURASSA**  
Huskie women's hockey.  
Nursing, graduated BN'20 –  
currently enrolled in master's program  
Age: 23. Weyburn, Sask.

**JENNA MCFAYDEN**  
Huskie women's cross-country.  
Edwards School of Business, 2nd year.  
Age: 18. Waseca, Sask.

**JANAYA BROWN**  
Huskie women's basketball.  
Education: BSA'21.  
Age: 24. Warman, Sask.

## JOHN GRAINGER

USask's Huskie Athletics saw its 2020-21 season cut short and then evaporate in the COVID-19 aftermath. The lights at the PAC went out. No cheering crowds at Griffiths Stadium could be heard. The ice was taken out of Merlis Belsher Place and then eventually outfitted as a potential field hospital and vaccination hub.

University competition was put on the backburner. Many athletes could not play a game, let alone practice with teammates. This hiatus added another layer of stress beyond their online academic studies.

We spoke with four Huskie athletes to get their thoughts on the pandemic, the effects on their sports, and what the future holds.

## Yol Piok

At one point last year, Yol Piok thought his Huskie football career had ended thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic and a ruling from the body that oversees university sports in Canada.

Then U Sport walked back on its decision to allow athletes 25 years and older to participate in university football, a decision Piok welcomed with open arms.

"It went from, OK, my career is over to all right, I'm being grandfathered (back onto the roster)," said Piok.

Piok said the uncertainty around COVID, including the many changing federal and provincial restrictions, made training hard to wrap his head around. He said it felt from day to day, guidelines changed how and when his team could train.

"You kind of wake up every day and you're not sure if they'll say everything is now shut down and everybody goes back to their cocoons at home and we can't work out together anymore."

It's that mental health aspect of the pandemic that concerned Piok. He wanted to make sure he and his teammates are able to handle the swings that come with changes to COVID guidelines.

It's up to each of his teammates, Piok said, to still appreciate the opportunities they have to train and to be together. These are times to

be respected and cherished, Piok said.

"You can tell with a lot of guys when they came in, (the pandemic weighs) heavy on them. But as soon as you start lifting (weights) and being together, you realize the specialness of being with each other"

Piok said in some strange way, the pandemic may have actually had a beneficial effect on him and his teammates by bringing them together even tighter. Adversity is something that always brings teams together and times can't be any tougher than they have been for the Huskies.

## Janaya Brown

It wasn't the way Janaya Brown wanted to end her Huskie athletic career, but she's leaving with wonderful memories and friends for life.

The 2020-21 season, washed out by COVID-19, would have been Brown's fifth and final year on the team. She has since graduated from the College of Agriculture's Environmental Science program.

"It's been a hard year. I think, initially, there was still hope that we'd still have something. But as the year transpired, nothing happened," said Brown.

Brown does feel very lucky that her Huskie team was able to play in, and win, the U Sport national championship in Ottawa at the beginning of 2020 as many other U Sport sports were shut down and never had a

chance to play for the national title.

"Part of me wishes that last year would have been my fifth year. But for me, that was my last experience and my last big shining memory," said Brown, who has been a part of two national and four conference titles in her time as a Huskie.

A year ago, despite having their season cancelled, the team did have a handful of workouts and practices and was able to spend time together.

"I think going through COVID alone is terrible. I think loneliness is one of the hardest things that everyone is going through and having those workouts from September to November was a huge positive in my life that kind of kept me going and pushing me through when a lot of people didn't have that."

As time marched on, Brown, named a winner of the Huskie Leadership award, is able to look back and cherish those memories as a Huskie.

"The person I am today is very much different than who I was when I came in. I'm more resilient, more confident and I'm more sure of myself as a person and I know that comes from my coaches, my trainers and my teammates.

"There was just something so special about this team. Everyone there was there for the right reasons. We all wanted to win and every person on the team was willing to put in the work to achieve that."



## Jenna McFayden

Not being able to train together as a member of the Huskie cross-country team has not slowed Jenna McFadyen down.

It's her love of running that has helped McFadyen make it through the COVID-19 crisis.

"I think this year has shown how much I actually enjoy and love the sport. The days you do take off or rest, you go a little bit crazy and you realize you really do like the training part and not just the competing part," said McFadyen, who was named a winner of the Huskie Leadership Award in the spring after being nominated by her teammates.

As a student athlete entering her first year in 2020, McFadyen said she wasn't sure how the team could stay together. She said her teammates have been very supportive and she's witnessed how strong the team camaraderie was despite the COVID restrictions.

Team members often used the team's Facebook page in which they could connect and post their training times for each other to see.

"We all can see it and we would all celebrate it together," she said. "Being a rookie, you'd expect to be a nobody this year, really. But people went out of their way to meet you, even through COVID. It's been just amazing."

McFadyen said it's been easy to keep a positive attitude because the team's bonds are strong, a legacy she said runs deep.

"I just joined in with what everyone else has already been doing and support the culture that is there."

Indeed, McFadyen, named the 2018 Bob Adams youth female track athlete of the year, already realizes supporting this culture will be part of her future once her academic life concludes.

"The people who did that for me that make me want to keep doing that for the sport. I don't know who started it, but it's just continuing to pass it along."

## Bailee Bourassa

Nothing like a pandemic to throw a wrench into Bailee Bourassa's Huskie hockey career.

"It really messed up my year," said Bourassa, the 2017 Huskie rookie of the year. "I was very excited to finish my fifth year as a Huskie."

While waiting for the world to return to normal again, Bourassa kept herself busy. She graduated with her nursing degree in 2020 and she's continuing her education in the master's program.

If that's not enough, she is also working full-time as a registered nurse in the acute care pediatrics ward at the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon.

But Bourassa, a Canada West second-team all-star in 2020, is like every other Huskie athlete in having their careers put on hold during a time of uncertainty.

"We didn't even see COVID coming and it kind of really messed everything up for us," she said. "It's just been quite a different and unorthodox year for us."

**"I think this year has shown how much I actually enjoy and love the sport. The days you do take off or rest, you go a little bit crazy and you realize you really do like the training part and not just the competing part."**

JENNA MCFAYDEN

The 2021 CIS hockey U Sport season was cancelled because of COVID-19. As the pandemic grew, so did the restrictions placed on the team in terms of even practising and getting together.

"If we're following the restrictions, we couldn't even get together as a team."

Keeping the team camaraderie was very difficult also. Welcoming new team members was quite a challenge, she says.

"We did little things here and there that we tried to do to keep those connections going, but it's so hard."

Merlis Belsher Place (MBP), her home away from home as a Huskie hockey player, was off-limits since it was set up as a possible field hospital and then an immunization site.

Strangely enough, Bourassa even did a nursing orientation at MBP for immunizations.

Bourassa looks forward to getting back on the ice with her team when it's safe, even with a heavy workload academically.

"I'm always used to being busy. If I wasn't busy, I don't know what I'd do. I'm more than excited if we can have a season and get back at it." ♥



## Darren Burke's three tips for sustainable and earth-friendly living:

- 1. Eat more plant based.**  
Our food choices impact the environment.
- 2. Shop local and buy smaller amounts of groceries more often to reduce the likelihood of food spoiling at home.**
- 3. Embrace the smoothie life.**  
Use late-in-life fruits and vegetables blended with seeds and nuts for a delicious and nutritious meal replacement.

# ALUMNI ADVICE

## WITH DARREN BURKE



✍ LESLIE-ANN SCHLOSSER

Have you ever combed through the produce aisle at the grocery store to find that perfect apple?

Selecting unblemished fruits and veggies during our weekly grocery runs may seem innocent enough, but our quest for that perfect peach is becoming a big problem given the enormous increase of food waste across the globe.

"Food waste is one of those dirty little secrets that you don't realize until you actually go to a landfill site and see these giant trucks dumping out huge amounts of food that never make it to people homes for them to eat. It's quite appalling," said USask alumnus Dr. Darren Burke (PhD'01).

As the CEO of Outcast Foods, Burke is rewriting the rules when it comes to how we consume produce, all in the hopes of combating the intensifying problem of food waste.

The Halifax native credits his time as a PhD student at USask's College of Kinesiology for the insight into the issue. He researched dietary supplements and exercise interventions which paved the way for his future passions.

After his time at USask, he moved back to the East Coast to become a university professor and was heralded as a top scientific expert in the development and testing of supplements and sports nutrition.

However, it wasn't until Burke moved to Vancouver and dove headfirst into the vegan West-Coast lifestyle that he became keenly aware of the global impact food waste had on the environment. He decided

to marry his two worlds of academia and entrepreneurship together to mitigate the problem, one that was becoming abundantly more urgent.

According to Burke, grocery distribution centres around the world reject food based on the smallest impurities. This means that even if a small section of a shipment is damaged, distributors will discard the entire load.

But Burke says he's 100 per cent confident there is always value to be found in products often destined for the landfill.

That's where Outcast Foods steps in. They take the discarded produce, soak it a vinegar solution and put it through their own processing system. This unique upcycling process results in dehydrated supplements and powders that can add a nutritional kick to smoothies, baking, and everyday cooking.

While once laughed at by an industry devoted to providing unsustainable perfection, the uptick of mindful consumer behaviours from millennials and generation Z has helped him push his goal forward.

Burke is taking small steps to create a sustainable way to produce and eat food. With added investors and expansion opportunities, he says the future looks bright for Outcast Foods, which is hopeful considering rotting food in landfills continues to produce greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

"As a population we have to tackle food waste in every way possible. Reeducating people around what can be done with potential food waste is really a key piece at this point in time." ♥

## DID YOU HEAR?

**All 15 Huskie Athletics teams are planning to return to action for the 2021-22 season. For updated rosters, schedules, and COVID-19 protocols, make sure to visit [huskies.usask.ca](https://huskies.usask.ca).**



# Working at a distance, innovating together

✍️ HENRY-TYE GLAZE BROOK

**As many companies and organizations closed their doors in March 2020, a large portion of the population headed from the boardroom to their home offices, including faculty and staff at USask.**

**But how do you replicate organic small talk that no longer happens because people aren't passing each other in the kitchen or the hallway? How do you get new team members who've just been hired to feel connected and part of a team?**

**Despite the drastic shift in everyday life, USask faculty, staff, students and alumni have persevered in this new world of work and learning.**



Like many alumni, working from a home office has given Mckenize Hunter (BCOMM'15) more quality time with her furry family members.

Photography: Carey Shaw

If you take a straw poll of your friends and family, you'll likely hear a lot of similar answers for when the COVID-19 pandemic truly started to feel real.

They might think about it for a moment, but eventually a good number will furrow their brow or run a hand through their hair and recall a day in mid-March 2020, when they left the office or school at the end of the day and simply, exhaustingly, didn't go back.

But for Nancy Turner, director of Teaching and Learning at the University of Saskatchewan, reality had already started to set in as far back as 2019 — when news reports of a novel coronavirus strain were first carried across the Pacific, and USask leaders started meeting to discuss what would need to happen if and when that virus landed on their doorstep.

"I don't think anyone would have ever predicted that we would end up where we've ended up, but certainly those conversations were happening," Turner said. "I think it was in February that I was asked for the first time if I felt we could transition quickly, if needed, to remote delivery.

"I immediately said yes, we could. I believed we could do it if we had to," said Turner.

These exact discussions became a mainstay of work culture worldwide, as offices of all sizes and scopes found it suddenly critical that team members immediately shift to a remote working model. The alternative — going against health and safety regulations, sure, but also risking the spread of COVID-19 among staff, their families, and the larger community — was too dire to consider.

Those first few weeks for Turner were a whirlwind of high priorities and shifting stressors for the university community — not just getting people safely off campus, but also ensuring faculty and students had the technology necessary to succeed remotely, helping those same folks navigate new means of teaching and learning, and doing all of this in the midst of a campus season normally reserved for exams and other academic year-end send-offs.

"We were about a week and a half, two weeks at the most, from the end of the term when we made that change," Turner said. "Really, we were just trying to get to the finish line, ensuring students were taught what was essential, and then think about how we were going to do our assessments in a remote context."

When exams were over, and the public became more accustomed to life at home, masks in public and other new mainstays of life, USask leadership shifted their focus towards the 2020 fall semester.

Part of this process involved developing frameworks to determine which classes — those that required hands-on clinical training, for example — would necessitate limited on-campus instruction. Another was to enhance available technology to ensure cohesive learning.

One key focus, Turner said, was working with faculty to make sure people weren't just comfortable but emboldened to leave behind, indefinitely, classrooms that often felt like home to enrich minds through webcams and keyboards.

"Many of them had never taught in this way before, and that meant they invested a lot in preparation of resources that could be accessed in an online format — really rethinking the way in which teaching and learning was approached in this new context," Turner said.

"You can't just take what would have happened in a face-to-face context and expect it's going to work in an online environment. It's a very different teaching and learning practice."

Instrumental to ensuring a successful remote-work adaptation was understanding how that switch would affect the larger campus infrastructure — buildings emptied of their usual flow of people, sourcing new networking tools, and assuring crucial



pillars like human resources supports and administrative financing flowed smoothly from one working model to the next.

At the centre of this transformation was Cheryl Carver, associate vice-president People and Resources and one of about 50 people making up the university's cross-organization Pandemic Response Team.

As part of the Pandemic Response Team and in collaboration with senior leadership, Carver helped develop a priority framework to pursue a fast, but also steady, pivot to remote work: securing the institution's financial safety during a global pandemic, procuring essential items such as facemasks to bolster safety for on-site workers and making sure that faculty and staff leaving their campus life behind had the resources they needed.

Mental health support is just one way USask has aided off-campus staff in successfully managing remote work, Carver explained, drawing their own boundaries between where work ends and life begins and helping management understand those distinctions within their teams.

"We've done a lot of work with our people leaders providing tools and guidance on what they can do to manage in a remote work environment," Carver said. "I think empathy and understanding to manage in this more complex environment is going to be a much more important factor that's looked at in our leaders going forward."

With vaccinations providing hope for an eventual return to normal, Carver is proud of the way this global pandemic has highlighted just how adaptable even organizations as large as a university can be when push comes to shove.

"Having worked in our organization for many years and seeing the pace of change that we normally experience, given our size and complex governance structure, I think one important lesson is knowing just what's possible when people come together," Carver said.

Driving innovation in an institution as large as a university can indeed require great collaboration, but for some smaller groups that change felt as if it arrived nearly as a matter of course.

Working from home

As a business built around the use of web and mobile-based tools to simplify staff scheduling and communication, 7shifts entered the



Adaptability is key. Hunter transformed her home's storage room to accommodate her workspace.

pandemic with many of the strategies necessary for remote work already in-place. As working from home stretched from days into months, Senior Director of People and Culture McKenzie Hunter (BCOMM'15) found herself pleasantly surprised by just how smooth their business continued to operate.

"We had never experienced working remotely on that scale, and it was truthfully the push that we needed to start really adopting it more openly," Hunter said. "It almost enabled us to have a distributed workforce because, throughout this time, we've realized that we never had all that much to worry about. Remote work works."

More difficult, Hunter said, has been fostering and maintaining an office culture that revolves around the interactions of day-to-day office life.

How do you replicate culture-building small talk that no longer happens when team members no longer see each other in the kitchen or the hallway? How do you get new team members to feel connected.

**"It feels like you're trying to run a race with absolutely no idea of what the terrain is or exactly where you're headed."**

NANCY TURNER,  
DIRECTOR OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The answer to these questions and others just like them, involved finding new channels through which their digital-first strengths might lead to stronger interpersonal connection.

"When people are onboarding, sometimes teams will have a window open where they mute and they all silently work away — but then when that new member has a question they just unmute and ask it," Hunter said. "They can get an answer in real time. That's been really helpful."

Even as vaccine rollout has gained momentum and people have started

considering what a return to normal might look like, Jean Parchewsky (BA'99) still remembers the desolate feeling that washed over her when she walked into her office for the first time in a post-COVID world.

What would normally be a bustling space — teams corralling their chairs to work together, computer monitors buzzing blue, markers squeaking ideas onto whiteboards — had been hollowed out in only a few short months.

"When I went back and it had gone from an office of about 450 at the time to only a handful of people, it was very eerie," said Parchewsky, VP of People Operations for Vendasta Technologies, Inc. "There were even decorations on the wall from Christmas still and things left from employees that were now on empty desks.

"It felt like the light of the office was gone."

Similar to 7shifts, Vendasta was already well prepared when stay-at-home orders became mandatory — staff were already working off laptops, meeting virtually and fluent with Slack, Google Hangouts and other

e-communications platforms.

What complicated things was juggling a global pandemic with one of the most critical moments in company history.

"We had just received an investment of \$40 million — it was the largest investment for a tech company in the Prairie provinces — and so we were about to accelerate our growth," she said.

"It was a challenging and exciting time. We were trying to onboard and bring people into the company when we were also learning how to be fully remote and to train people who were fully remote."

The balance came in finding solutions that suited each staff member individually. For some that meant fully remote, for others a balance between working at home and coming back to their desk among a small crew that could share the space while adhering to Saskatchewan Health Authority guidelines.

In one instance, it even meant recruiting eight new employees from the other side of the globe, during a worldwide pandemic,

and who would be leaving behind a country among those most devastated by COVID-19.

"We had hired eight people from Brazil, and we were able to still bring them through Saskatchewan Nomination Program.

"They flew in, they quarantined, and they were able to still move to Canada and bring their families with them."

The COVID-19 pandemic is the boulder in the stream that's diverted nearly every aspect of life, requiring time, energy, and resources to embrace the inevitable change rippling outward from its arrival.

But if you ask Turner, it's taken resilience more than anything else.

"Don't get me wrong, there have been times in this pandemic when I — like anyone — have felt overwhelmed by all this," she said. "It feels like you're trying to run a race with absolutely no idea of what the terrain is or exactly where you're headed. You're just taking it one step at a time, going as fast as you possibly can and hoping that the next step doesn't trip you up.

"I know that we weren't alone in that feeling." 🍀

USask return to campus

In May 2021, President Peter Stoicheff provided an update to the university community on the planning for Fall 2021 program delivery.

The Fall Term will be considered "transitional" as the university continues to offer some courses remotely with a full transition out of pandemic operations anticipated in January 2022.

For the latest updated information on USask's post-pandemic strategy, visit [alumni.usask.ca](https://alumni.usask.ca)





# THE QUEST FOR A SOLUTION:

**USask's VIDO emerges as Canada's  
leader in vaccine development**

Dr. Volker Gerdts and his team of researchers were the first in Canada to isolate the SARS-CoV2 virus, and the first to develop an animal model of COVID-19. The team has been working nonstop to create a vaccine to fight COVID-19.

*Photography: David Stobbe*

 **JOANNE PAULSON**

On Dec. 31, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was alerted to a mysterious case of pneumonia with an unknown cause on the other side of the world.

Dr. Volker Gerdts, director and CEO of USask's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO), had been in his role for just under a year when the news broke. As a scientist with a veterinary degree and doctorate in virology and immunology from his home country of Germany, he was not surprised.

But he was alarmed.

"We were all following it and the news showed more and more cases," Gerdts said in an interview. "The first weeks of January is when I thought this is not good. This could be another SARS."

It was, and then some. Shortly after the genome of the virus, originally called 2019-nCoV, was quickly mapped by a Chinese scientist, Gerdts and his team at VIDO initiated a response.

"The day the sequence was released, I met with Darryl [Falzarano, lead scientist] and that afternoon we decided to get going on developing a vaccine," Gerdts said. "I allocated some internal resources for the project and told Darryl to go for it."

And so began the controlled chaos, the sacrifices and the victories at VIDO, all in the pursuit to help end a pandemic that would ultimately change the course of history.



Finding the virus

Dr. Darryl Falzarano admits he was already sporting a few grey hairs before the pandemic.

He'd already had an intense career since graduating with his PhD in medical microbiology from the University of Manitoba, which included an Ebola project at the National Microbiology Laboratory of Canada in Winnipeg. (Go Jets, he interjects.)

His post-doctoral work came at Rocky Mountain Labs in Montana — initially on Ebola and later on Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), which emerged in 2012.

“I ended up deployed in West Africa, to Liberia during the Ebola outbreak of 2014, to do diagnostics work and shortly thereafter I returned to Canada to work at VIDO,” Falzarano said.

Once at VIDO, known for its groundbreaking work with animal diseases, he started working on MERS coronavirus, the virus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome. Because MERS likely arises from camels, “and camels are kind of hard to find in Saskatoon,” Falzarano used alpacas for testing vaccines.

Like Gerdt, he also saw the report on New Year’s Eve, 2019. The vaccine conversation with Gerdt soon followed, and eventually they located a virus sample.

Falzarano, responsible for leading VIDO’s coronavirus lab “big-picture wise,” instantly pivoted from MERS to this new coronavirus. He was the first scientist in Canada to isolate SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), essentially making it available for vaccine development.

“From the first identified Canadian case we were able to isolate the virus at VIDO,” Falzarano said. “We were the first Canadian lab to be able to grow SARS-CoV-2. That kickstarted everything we did.”

They received 100 microlitres of a clinical sample obtained from Sunnybrook Health Sciences and the National Microbiology Laboratory. This small amount which left them questioning: would they use it at all at once to try and isolate the virus?

“We used half the first time and didn’t get the virus to grow, so we had half left. I was hemming and hawing over what to do. Do I try the same thing again, do I try something a little different? And so I tried something a little bit different that no one else had tried . . . and that worked.”

From there, the preclinical work began. All day. Weekends. Late nights. Falzarano described those months as chaos; controlled chaos.

Despite the responsibility, he says he sleeps well, often falling into bed exhausted. But there are more grey hairs.

“In the early days, there was one point where my daughter, who was in Grade One at the time, asked my wife if I was away on a trip somewhere. My wife said, what do you mean? And my daughter said, well, I haven’t seen dad in five or six days.

“I sort of thought it through and thought I’d better have breakfast with the kids in the morning.”



The word spreads

As Falzarano and his colleagues continued their vaccine crusade, word of VIDO’s influential work began to spread. Funding announcements came in March and April as Canadians realized the dire need to be able to develop and manufacture vaccines in Canada.

The busiest months were June through November 2020, Gerdt said. Making the vaccine was the easiest part. Much more challenging was planning to manufacture it to the standards necessary for clinical trials.

“The regulator [Health Canada] has a number of requirements to ensure that a vaccine that goes into humans is safe,” he said.

Speed, as well as safety, was crucial. VIDO ordered the necessary components to make the clinical grade vaccine, while also doing pre-clinical research and responding to outside research requests.

“That’s what created the pressure on all of us. Instead of doing things sequentially, we did them in parallel to speed up the development . . . and also partnering with groups outside VIDO because our own manufacturing facility isn’t up and running yet,” said Gerdt.

On top of it, VIDO was inundated with requests from companies from around the world wanting to use their animal models and high containment facility, among few in Canada that can work with the virus, to test their vaccines, antivirals and therapeutics in established animal models of disease.

“Suddenly we had people involved in contract research and at the same time were running our own trials. That’s where the weekends and long nights came in,” said Gerdt.



Animal models

Dr. Alyson Kelvin is an expert in emerging viruses.

After attaining her Bachelor of Science from Western University, she was on the front lines of the SARS outbreak in 2003, helping screen employees at Toronto General Hospital and testing for immune responses. She also was involved in an influenza project in Sardinia, Italy, studying migrating birds and their potential for the next pandemic source. She completed her PhD in immune responses to infection and cancer at Queen’s University in the U.K.

Toronto-born, she had recently opened her own influenza research group at Dalhousie University in Halifax when COVID-19 hit. Then, she saw an alert that would forever change her life.

After hosting her family for Christmas, she had a quiet evening, her first alone for some time.

“I got into bed, checked my email one last time and at the top of the inbox was an email from what I call the social network for infectious disease geeks.

“The subject was, ‘undiagnosed pneumonia out of Wuhan China.’ Because I work on respiratory viruses and emerging respiratory viruses, immediately I wanted to know what was causing pneumonia in people leading to their hospitalization,” said Kelvin.

The WHO’s announcement on the virus came the next day. The following week, she contacted VIDO.

“VIDO always seemed like this wonderful place in my mind. I had

**“We were the first Canadian lab to be able to grow SARS-CoV-2. That kickstarted everything we did.”**

DR. DARRYL FALZARANO

never been here. But they had all these capacities . . . to work with a higher containment level than what I had at my institution and the capabilities for working with many animal models. To me this was amazing.

“I spoke to them about how we could get the virus into VIDO, how I could (use) my ferret model and when I could come to do some training and to work in their facility.”


By the end of February, Kelvin was on her way to VIDO with two colleagues for what she thought was going to be a two-and-a-half-week stint.

“I think we underestimated how large the problem was,” she said, with a rueful laugh. “At the same time, we were ahead of the curve. The pandemic wasn’t declared until mid-March. Nobody was taking this disease seriously.”

But VIDO was. Kelvin chokes up as she remembers deciding she had to stay at VIDO and leave her family behind.

“By the time I was supposed to leave (Saskatoon), I knew I didn’t





# What type of vaccine is VIDO developing?

VIDO is developing subunit vaccines. Subunit vaccines contain purified viral proteins (an antigen) that are not infectious, and often also contain an adjuvant. An adjuvant is a compound that helps your body produce a better immune response against the antigen, so the vaccine works better.

There are currently two COVID-19 vaccines in development—they contain the same antigen, but different adjuvants:

COVAC-1 (coronavirus vaccine-1) is formulated with an adjuvant originally developed by VIDO and collaborators as part of the original Grand Challenges in Global Health Initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

COVAC-2 is formulated with Sepivac SWE™, an adjuvant developed by Seppic and the Vaccine Formulation Institute (VFI).

want to. I got on a plane, went back to Halifax, saw my family and came back (to Saskatoon) a week later. I've been here ever since."

She was separated from her husband and children for six months, but they have since moved to Saskatoon.

"They came in August and we decided to make this permanent. We started as a secondment where I was supposed to be here for a year to help with the pandemic efforts, but I love working here and the incredible opportunities at VIDO, so I applied for a scientific position at VIDO and am happy to report I am staying.

"I really can't imagine doing anything else. I couldn't have been at home not doing what I was trained to do. It just seemed absolutely wrong."

Canada’s Centre for Pandemic Research

In April 2021, Canada’s federal government released its annual budget. The government announced \$59.2 million in funding for VIDO, but this time it was not for vaccine development — it was to create a National Centre for Pandemic Research.

VIDO had already received \$11 million from the Canada Foundation for Innovation - Major Science Initiatives Fund for operating InterVac, Canada’s largest high-containment lab, and an additional \$12 million to help fund VIDO’s biomanufacturing facility.

Of the new funding, a large portion was tagged for the construction of a new animal facility and to upgrade VIDO’s containment space to Level 4 — the highest biosafety level. The federal funds were in addition to the \$15 million commitment from the Province of Saskatchewan and \$250,000 from the City of Saskatoon. All three levels of government supported the National Centre.

"Having containment Level 4 will allow us to work with any new pathogen, whether it’s human or animal. We essentially will have the capacity to respond to any new disease immediately," said Gerdts.

**“We’re aggressively fundraising and recruiting right now, looking for the best people we can get. That is the most exciting part in all of this. We’re taking VIDO to the next level from a scientific, expertise, and reputational point of view. It’s really playing in another league.”**

DR. VOLKER GERDTS

The funding confirms the vision of VIDO becoming Canada’s Centre for Pandemic Research, and it’s what Gerdts is the most excited about.

"This is really the fulfilment of VIDO’s and the university’s vision, in that area. It’s taking human and animal health to the next step, and now we have a centre on campus that becomes one of Canada’s key players in responding to emerging infectious diseases and is globally connected to all these international efforts. That’s the vision I always had for VIDO and that’s what I’m seeing becoming a reality now.

"We’re aggressively fundraising and recruiting right now, looking for the best people we can get. That is the most exciting part in all of this. We’re taking VIDO to the next level from a scientific, expertise and reputational point of view. It’s really playing in another league," said Gerdts.

Clinical trials

The vaccine was shipped to Halifax in February, 2021 and Phase 1 clinical trials began shortly after. Samples from the vaccinated people came to VIDO shortly before the federal funding announcement. It was a big month.



Jill Van Kessel

Fully ensconced in what she calls her “space suit,” the personal protective equipment (PPE) used in Level 3 containment, Jill Van Kessel (BSc’92, Sc’97, MSc’06) enters the lab daily to evaluate the immune responses of the those vaccinated with VIDO’s COVAC-2 (Coronavirus Vaccine 2).

Van Kessel, a USask graduate with a microbiology and immunology degree, joined VIDO on a six-month term shortly after her daughter was born and returned nine months later to join the virology group, while also taking her master’s in veterinary microbiology.

"I started working with Volker in the immunology group and was there until last January. That’s when I volunteered to help with the COVID research," she said.

"At the time it was kind of surreal. You’re watching the news and it started to get more serious and you’re watching things evolve in Europe and how bad it was getting in Italy, but the virus hadn’t really arrived in Canada yet. It was there, but not real.

"But then when WHO declared it a global pandemic and governments shut everything down, that was very, very strange. We were still coming to work, but the campus was empty, the roads were empty, there’s nobody in the parking lots. It was kind of apocalyptic."

The high level of PPE has also taken a bit of adjustment, since she is in it every day. But the importance of the work has overridden all concerns, despite the incredibly long hours.

"This last year has been very stressful for all of us in the lab. The work came so fast and so heavy. But it’s important so you have to get it done.

"It’s really exciting. It means something . . . people are dying and you have the potential to make a difference. It was very exhilarating but also very draining because there’s a lot of pressure that goes along with that.

"It’s amazing that we have our vaccines in clinical trials. Getting those samples in and being able to analyze them and see how it’s working, that’s really exciting too."

Vaccine benefits

VIDO’s COVID-19 vaccines are expected to have several benefits, Gerdts says.

This could include efficacy against variants and are based on a proven technology, “which historically has an excellent safety profile, so some of the safety concerns including blood clots shouldn’t be an issue with our vaccine... Lastly, the cost may also play a role; it will be probably more affordable than some of the other candidates.

"We envision our vaccine to be something that can be used annually in a booster. We’re also looking at this vaccine as a potential candidate for low- and middle-income countries. Our vaccine would have several advantages like storage and transportation for (places) like Africa."

MERS advances COVID-19

It’s likely that none of this would have happened so quickly if it hadn’t been for VIDO’s expertise in other coronaviruses including MERS, says Falzarano. VIDO has also developed vaccines for bovine and porcine coronaviruses and played a role in the SARS Accelerated Vaccine Initiative.

VIDO could pivot to COVID-19 quickly because it had spent years working on coronaviruses including MERS, despite some quarters wondering why. MERS was a Middle Eastern problem; why was a Canadian institute working so hard on it?

"For two reasons: in case MERS does arrive in Canada, as happened in South Korea, we know how to respond; but secondly, we know new coronaviruses continue to emerge so what we learn and technologies we build that apply to other ones help us respond to a new one," Falzarano said.

"Other places that had not been working on highly pathogenic coronaviruses . . . some of them took months to get to the spot where they were allowed to work on SARS. It’s not because their facility wasn’t capable of handling this virus; it was because they didn’t have the experience, the documentation, the training to do that immediately.

"When we asked for permission from our regulatory agencies to work on SARS-CoV-2 , given our experience with MERS, the answer was given one day later.

"Yes."🍀

The latest news

On June 23, 2021, VIDO announced positive interim results from their Phase 1 clinical trial for COVAC-2.

Much can change between the time this article was printed and the next phase of VIDO’s vaccine journey.

**Make sure to stay up to date with all the latest information by visiting VIDO.org – including how you can donate to our Friends of VIDO initiative and contribute to Canada’s Centre for Pandemic Research.**





# CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

**The racism Lua Gibb (LLB'05) endured as a young girl set a fire in her belly. She vowed to stand up for Indigenous people so no other little girls would face the same prejudice she did.**

**At the age of four, she set out to become a lawyer. Today, grounded in her lived experience as an Indigenous woman, she has accomplished that and a whole lot more.**

✍️ **LESLIE-ANN SCHLOSSER**

On the scenic South Saskatchewan River, just 90 kilometres north of Saskatoon, a peaceful and idyllic natural space acts as a journey through time.

The space, known as the Batoche National Historic Site, has been preserved to pay tribute to the historical conflict between the Canadian government and the Métis provisional government in 1885. It also commemorates the history, culture, and heritage of the Métis community.

The site welcomes thousands of visitors a year, including many school field trips that embark up the highway from Saskatoon to learn more about Métis history. One day in the early '90s, while speaking to a group of Grade 4 students in the site's Amphitheater, a park staff member continually referred to conflicts on the settlement as The Riel Rebellion.

From the back of the theatre, a small nine-year-old hand shot up amongst the crowd. The owner of the hand politely reminded the guide that the Métis people preferred the term Riel Resistance because resistance suggests the conflict resulted as an assertion of their rights against European authority.

The staff member instantly admitted the mistake and thanked the little nine-year-old voice for her insight and advanced wisdom. That young hand belonged to Lua Gibb. Even at that tender age, correcting and educating people about Indigenous culture was not new for her. In fact, it was part of her identity, engrained at a young age by her parents who were merciless in educating their children on Indigenous culture, prejudices, and misconceptions.

"That is a credit to my parents that we were not sheltered from the realities of the challenges faced by Indigenous people," said Gibb. "I think the important lesson that my parents gave to my brothers and my sisters when we were growing up was the importance of standing up for justice."

Gibb describes her childhood as nomadic. Her family moved constantly across Western Canada; from Saskatchewan, to British Columbia and even to the Yukon. Her mother is Indigenous and a member of the Onion Lake

Cree Nation. Her father is non-Indigenous. Growing up in a mixed-race family came with its challenges. She saw and experienced many things in this transient lifestyle, but the one constant was the prejudices people held against her as an Indigenous person.

"Experiencing that racism over and over again really impacted me at a young age and it highlighted the importance that we need to build relationships and start breaking down the barriers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities," said Gibb.

Her parents constantly acknowledged that their family would experience prejudices but always instilled the importance of advocacy and standing up for others. They even went so far as to name the family dog Oka as a way of acknowledging the 1990 Oka Crisis; a three-month standoff between Mohawk protesters, Quebec police, the RCMP and the Canadian military over traditional lands.

"Those were the kind of things, this incredible quiet resistance, that my mom and my dad endeavored to show our solidarity and to show the importance of always supporting and advocating for our people," said Gibb.

Standing up for justice indeed runs deep in Gibb's blood – so much so that while other four-year-olds were watching Sesame Street, Gibb was dreaming of a future in the courtroom. By the time she had learned to tie her shoes, she knew she wanted to be a lawyer so she could fight for social justice.

"The adversity I faced as a child in dealing with racism ... helped shape me and my desire to go into justice at a very young age," said Gibb.

That passion for justice never did fade away. It followed her throughout her childhood and eventually to the steps of the University of Saskatchewan when she was just 18 years old.

The young advocate who had a knack for arguing fit right into the College of Law. Gibb recalls immediately feeling connected

**"We have to keep working towards healing this path and healing the trauma so that we can improve our community."**

**LUA GIBB (LLB'05)**

with her classmates, many of whom were Indigenous.

"Being surrounded by other Indigenous students who had similar lived experiences to my own and building those relationships and friendships was great," she said. "I've always had such a positive experience at the university."

As a student, Gibb was never keen on criminal law. After graduating she was dead set on practicing Indigenous law, but a new passion was ignited while she was articling.

"I went to the Court of Queen's Bench and I observed a trial that was occurring and just the same way I knew as a child and a young person I was going to be a lawyer, I had a similar stance. This is where I am meant to be," she said.

She was called to the bar in 2006 and became a Crown prosecutor in Saskatoon. This move didn't come without its uncertainty for Gibb, because being a Crown prosecutor often meant being responsible for incarcerating Indigenous people. But she maintains that consequences are fundamental for building respect and is necessary for communities to grow and heal. She was also able to focus on serving the victims of crimes, many of whom were often Indigenous as well.

"The over-representation of Indigenous people in the court as accused persons and as





victims was a significant factor that I wanted to work at addressing and understanding how that number could be improved upon," she said.

In 2013, she was hired by the office of the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth as an investigator and advocate for the North. Because of her time working as a Crown prosecutor in youth court, it was a cause near and dear to her heart. Gibb saw the way Indigenous youth looked at her when they entered the courtroom. Having an Indigenous figure represented in such a formal setting was monumental and she was dedicated to being a strong Indigenous role model.

"There was a significance for youth coming to court and seeing an Indigenous lawyer and understanding that I got where they were coming from," said Gibb. "That was something that was so rewarding to me. To work with young people and to let them know I see you and I hear you."

Although she loved her work, the call to law remained strong. In 2015, she accepted a position as senior counsel with the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. As a prosecutor, she continued her efforts towards reconciliation through her focus on the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

Through her many roles, Gibb had quickly grown a reputation as an influential advocate, confident litigator and extremely knowledgeable changemaker. After more than a decade of practicing law, several people began encouraging her to become a judge. However, her current work was extremely rewarding to her, to the point where she wasn't ready to give it up.

Then came the death of Colten Boushie, the 22-year-old Indigenous man who was fatally shot on a rural Saskatchewan farm.

"After the death of Colten Boushie, I could not ignore the call for representation and the call for Indigenous people to be on the court. That is what shifted things for me," said Gibb.

She took the leap, thinking it would take a few years of expressing her interest to eventually become a judge. To her surprise, she was appointed in January 2020 as a provincial court judge, becoming the current youngest judge and just one of five Indigenous judges in the province.

Six weeks after she was appointed, a global pandemic effectively shut down courtrooms across Saskatchewan. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, Gibb's experience in trial court is limited, but she notes that the slower pace has helped her comfort level in becoming a

decision maker. She says being the decision maker versus being an advocate has been the hardest transition, but she knows she can still continue to make an impact because of the lens she has as an Indigenous person and judge.

"Whether it's the judiciary or the court or the police force, diversity is such a fundamental aspect ... because bringing that lens allows us to grow in our understanding and it creates space for learning and it creates opportunity to have the representative," she said. "I'm just so grateful that I have the opportunity and that I am in this position now because I see the incredible work that we're doing every day in provincial court trying to respond to the needs of our community, trying to create safer communities."

Just one conversation with Gibb reveals that she is so much more than the robes she wears as a provincial court judge. She carries a profound wisdom well beyond her years in every facet of her life.

Beyond her role as a judge, she is a mother, an avid baker, a lover of nature, and a devoted sister and daughter. She maintains that most Indigenous people are just like her: Raising children and balancing life during a pandemic. Oftentimes what is highlighted or depicted in the media is predominately negative stories from Indigenous communities. To her, it is just as important to celebrate and raise the visibility of Indigenous success.

Take her family, for instance. She remains close to her parents to this day. Having just celebrated their 39th wedding anniversary this past year, they too, continue their crusade for justice as prominent teachers and leaders in their community. When things get tough, she uses them as a source of strength and inspiration to continue to achieve that four-year-old's hopes and dreams.

"When I take off my robe, it's not obvious that I'm a judge and I still experience racism and I still experience discrimination. I find that really humbling, because it reminds me of the importance of being compassionate and the importance of understanding and pausing, and considering that you know the challenges that people face when they come to court," says Gibb.

"We have to keep working towards healing this path and healing the trauma so that we can improve our community." ▀

# CLS COMBATS COVID-19

The Canadian Light Source (CLS), which sits on the eastern edge of the campus at the University of Saskatchewan, is a highly sought-after advanced research tool used by groundbreaking scientists and top academics from across Canada and around the world.

The only light source of its kind in Canada, the CLS produces a brilliant light to help scientists look at and learn about the molecular structures and chemical properties of a substance. The discovered new information can be used in a myriad of ways: to help design new drugs, examine the structure of surfaces to develop more effective motor oils, build smaller and more powerful computer chips, develop new materials for safer medical

implants, and help with the clean-up of mining wastes, to name just a few applications.

About the size of a football field, the CLS opened in 2004 and is one of the jewels on the USask campus.

Most recently, in an effort to help fight COVID-19, the CLS team made a special call out for research proposals for any work that will actively contribute to finding COVID-related treatments or vaccines, or improve conditions for frontline workers.

Here are five examples how world-leading researchers are working to make us safer. For more information about these stories and others, visit [www.lightsource.ca](http://www.lightsource.ca)



## Investigating the long-term impacts of COVID-19

Researchers are using the CLS and containment Level 3 facilities at USask's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization to study the virus that causes COVID-19 and its effects on blood vessels. They want to find out if individuals who have been exposed to the SARS-CoV-2 virus may be at risk for other health complications later on.

"You may be 'fine' now, but you may be at risk of other things later in life," said USask team member Dr. Jake Pushie. "We want to forearm ourselves with some knowledge about what else this virus is doing within our bodies that may be putting us at risk for things like stroke, heart disease, and other major complications that we may not see the repercussions of for another 20 to 30 years as people start aging and those risk factors start piling up."



## Helping remove SARS-COV-2 from the air we breathe

Scientists have designed an air sanitizing device that could help protect us from airborne pathogens like the ones that cause COVID-19 and the common flu. The USask team is testing the effectiveness of their device and the feasibility of integrating it into current air conditioning systems. The researchers are using the CLS to gain a deeper knowledge of the sanitation process and optimize its performance. If successful, their affordable technology could help us breathe a cleaner, safer sigh of relief.



## Developing more effective drugs

Developing new drugs to treat viruses such as COVID-19 is how University of Alberta researcher Joanne Lemieux spends much of her time. Structural biologists like Lemieux can use CLS data to develop treatments for COVID-19, a pivotal area of research given the increasing numbers of emerging variants. Her research focuses on creating an anti-viral medication to treat a viral infection as opposed to a vaccine which is a preventative type of drug.



## Finding new therapies

From his lab at the University of Alberta, Dr. Jiang Yin is using the CLS to find new therapies that will help treat COVID-19. With the help of the CMCF beamline, Yin will analyze the papain-like protease — a protein that the SARS-CoV-2 virus needs to establish a COVID-19 infection. This research can lead to new therapeutics for the disease and help in the global fight against COVID-19.



## Stopping infection in its tracks

Dr. Ken Ng, professor at the Department of Biological Sciences at University of Calgary, is working with colleague Dr. Chang-Chun Ling to develop therapeutics for COVID-19. With his structural biology background, Ng and his lab partners are studying the polymerase of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the virus that causes COVID-19. This essential enzyme copies the genetic material of the virus and is crucial to the creation of new viruses. The goal is to design new drugs that will inhibit the polymerase which will prevent the virus from making new viruses and stop the infection in its tracks. ▀





# THE resilience OF HEALTH-CARE WORKERS

**When everyone was told to stay home,  
they were putting on their masks.**

Dr. Susan Shaw, SHA's chief medical officer, stands outside Saskatoon's Royal University Hospital. The early months of 2021 saw a spike in COVID-19 positive patients admitted into the hospital's intensive care unit.

Photography: David Stobbe

Deemed essential and tasked with the daunting responsibility of keeping their community safe, USask alumni health-care workers have proven their resiliency throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several members of USask's alumni health-care family gave us an inside look into their world during the pandemic. While some found unlikely positives with the increase of technology, others noted the impact burnout can have on essential frontline workers.

## ASHLEIGH MATTERN

The Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) had a plan in place for a pandemic before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, says Dr. Susan Shaw (MD'95), the SHA chief medical officer. It's part of the ongoing work of the health authority to have plans for medical emergencies. But in January 2020, that plan became very real.

Shaw provides leadership and direction to physicians and staff who work in the health authority and is responsible for the portfolio of quality, safety, and strategy. Once the pandemic hit, her focus narrowed.

"We now had a single focus," she said. "Everyone was aligned."

Along with her leadership role, she's also a frontline worker — a critical care physician who practices medicine in the intensive care unit (ICU) at St. Paul's Hospital and Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon.

In the ICU, the core of her work is very much the same — working in a team looking after people who are facing life-threatening illnesses. But the pandemic brought about more infection prevention control steps.

"[COVID] added extra layers of action and thinking to everything we do," Shaw said.

Because of the increased hours, safety measures, and precautions, she's worried about the long-term impacts on health-care workers of working under such stress and the additional workload.

"We go into health care because we want to do work that makes a difference in the lives of others," she said. "That drives almost all of us, and allows us to maintain some resilience... I've seen many people grow and do remarkably well as health-care workers because the work they're doing has clear value."

Workers are saving lives, helping people recover from the illness, and trying to prevent infections by testing, tracing, isolating and vaccinating, but she says it's still "draining, never-ending work."

Some surveys have shown that three out of 10 health-care workers are thinking of leaving their profession when the pandemic is over, she said.

Shaw said she has anxiety dreams related to the stress and the worry and the planning, and she knows some of her colleagues are having nightmares as well.

There has been a focus on physician and health-care worker wellness throughout the pandemic, though. She said mental health supports are built into the workplace through coaching, resources, and reminders built into daily huddles.

"Physician wellness is part of our physician town hall. We have a working group that's thinking about this all the way through."

Another challenge of the pandemic has been providing relevant, meaningful, and timely information to the public. That's difficult to do in the best of times, let alone when the SHA is dealing with a novel coronavirus.

"That's really been amplified within the pandemic, trying to get the public the information they need and supporting decision makers in the public," she said. "We were trying to make sure people had the right information they needed but not being overloaded with updates and reminders and news."

## **'The toothpaste is out of the tube'**

While everyone was trying to make sense of the often changing information about the COVID-19 virus, there was also a push to learn new technologies like video conferencing and accessing online health records because of the rising need to maintain social distancing.

Dr. Tracie Risling (BA'98, BSN'03, MN'07, PhD'14), interim associate dean research and grad studies in the College of Nursing, says electronic health records became "hugely important" during the pandemic as a way to access COVID-19 test results.

Risling has a long history with eHealth Saskatchewan as a nurse peer, and with Canada Health Infoway, which is the national support to the pan-Canadian electronic health record. MySaskHealthRecord is the portal into that electronic health record in Saskatchewan.

Risling had been working for many years to help people sign up and access their electronic health records but pre-pandemic, there were still barriers for many people to do so.

"Barriers we thought would take us three to five years to overcome, some of those barriers came down in three to five weeks once it had to be done that way," she said.

There was a strong collaborative focus on access from the



government, health care, researchers, and patients to make it happen, and she feels when it comes to patient electronic health record use, “the toothpaste is out of the tube now,” which is a positive to her as a digital health advocate.

Unfortunately, the pandemic and the shift to more digital technologies has also revealed inequalities.

“We’re not all online. Even if we were all online, our individual capabilities and capacities differ,” she said. “The stark representation of that has been on display in the pandemic.”

She had these inequalities in mind when working on a mental health tool that uses texting to deliver resources — the texting tool includes lower-tech options for people who have limited data.

The tool, called Be SaskWell, asks a series of questions to determine if your mental health is languishing or flourishing, then delivers 10 weeks of digital mental health support, including check-ins and wellness tips.

“People all over the world are starting to hit the languishing portion of this pandemic,” Risling said. “There are so many really amazing digital mental health and wellness resources out there that people aren’t aware of.”

The opportunity to develop these types of tools was only possible due to funding available for pandemic-related projects, but the concept can have a life beyond the pandemic.

## Business model forever changed

Like Risling, Bruce and Karen Craven also found opportunities in the pandemic, at least once they got over the initial shock.

The Cravens are co-owners of Craven SPORT services, a multidisciplinary sport physiotherapy organization that offers strength and conditioning guidance as well as an integrated health network that includes massage therapists, occupational therapists, dieticians and even psychologists.

Bruce (BSPT’88, BSPE’88, MSc’91) said when the pandemic hit, they took care of their staff first, and then their clients, and then the community.

“If we don’t have a community, we don’t have clients, and if we have no clients, we have no staff,” Bruce said. “We made a lot of decisions based on those three caring things and that still exists today.”

Karen (BSc’94, BSPT’96) said they pivoted right away to develop their own online platform called Craven Connect @Home to start delivering service virtually. The impact of the new tool on their business was remarkable.

“It’ll forever be a part of our business,” Karen said.

It’s a good tool not only for promoting physical distancing but also during unexpected events like a snowstorm, or if one of the clients needs to go out of town for work. Saskatchewan also has long distances between communities, so the online system allows their clients to do some of their work without having to travel to Saskatoon.

It likely won’t replace hands-on therapy completely, because Karen says a big part of their profession is putting their hands on people, but it’s another option. It encourages hybrid models where people can choose between a virtual or in-person session when it’s convenient for them.

One of the challenges with a virtual platform was the legalities —



they had to ensure they were in compliance with privacy laws, USask's School of Rehabilitation Science, and basic human rights issues. As Karen put it, they had to make sure they were “dotting all the Is and crossing all the Ts.”

Then there was the general challenge of getting people to adopt a new technology.

“Everyone has had that challenge,” Karen said. “Depending on the generation, it was challenging for people.”

Today, though, there aren’t many grandparents who haven’t communicated with grandchildren through video.

“That’s a COVID gift,” Bruce said.

## Re-evaluating care for cancer patients

Unfortunately, cancer doesn’t stop just because of a worldwide pandemic.

Lynn Dwernychuk (BSN’98, MN’13), director of clinical research at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, said it’s monumental moments, like working and providing patient care in a pandemic, that allowed her team to shine.

“With the pandemic, we’ve seen a lot of teamwork across the disciplines at the cancer agency and in our health region and at a national level, too as well,” she said.

“It was all hands on deck when COVID hit here, and the team here at Saskatchewan Cancer Agency have been excellent in collaborating with each other and putting processes in place that make it safer for patients and staff.”

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency operates prevention and early detection programs, conducts research, and provides patient-centred care. The organization operates outside the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

Patients of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency have also seen some benefits come out of the pandemic, in part because of the increase in online digital appointments, says Dwernychuk.

“It helped us take a step back and look at the work we’re doing and reevaluate it,” she said.

People now have the option of virtual appointments using video software called Pexip, a secure web-based program. Previously, they used Telehealth, which allowed patients around the province to connect with their health-care providers in Saskatoon, but still required the patients to go into one of the outreach centres.

Now, patients can stay at home, and Pexip allows patients to include their family or significant others in meetings.

“[It] has been really great for our patients,” Dwernychuk said. “It helps us continue the cancer journey when it’s best for them to remain at home.”

They’re also allowing patients to have bloodwork done closer to their home rather than having it done at the cancer centres, and there was also work done to allow patients to pick up oral chemotherapy medication closer to home, whether at a community or outreach pharmacy, or having it shipped to a home address.

## ‘Building a plane as you fly it’

An unlikely outlier in the COVID-19 pandemic has been the rise of technological advances within health care settings, a positive bonus

in an otherwise bleak situation.

Despite these advances, the common picture inside hospitals around Saskatchewan and the world has been one of exhaustion, resilience, and burnout. Nurses and doctors on the front lines are face-to-face with people infected with the disease, trying every day to manage patient care while keeping themselves safe.

Prior to the pandemic, one of Sherilyn Bray’s (BSN’12) focuses was in harm reduction, working on plans for how to support intravenous drug users, or reviewing plans for a Code Orange — a code called when there are mass casualties.

When the pandemic hit, her role shifted to working with the emergency preparedness team and supporting visitor restrictions.

“It has to be done but it doesn’t fall with anybody,” she said. “Who has the time to roll that out to the broader team?”

Bray is the director and site lead at Regina’s Pasqua Hospital. It’s a new position at Pasqua Hospital, created when SHA amalgamated. The site lead was pivotal to supporting the Code Orange in Saskatoon when the Humboldt Broncos bus crash happened.

These are the problem solvers, supporting all of the services offered at the hospital.

“We run a 24-hour business, and we need support in those off hours,” she said. “We fill in all the gaps between clinical and non clinical.”

Infrastructure problems, like floods or fires, can affect the clinical side, and the site leads along with their site manager team, help manage any issues that come up.

Bray wasn’t the only person whose role needed to shift to meet the new demands of the pandemic. Like Shaw, Bray said many of her colleagues are facing burnout as they continue to combat COVID-19.

“We’re all being stretched,” she said. “Lots of us are being asked to kind of diversify. ... It changed my work immensely, and changed the entire organization’s work.”

Nurses, physicians, support service workers, security teams, care aides, lab technicians — all are being asked to work differently.

“We’re learning to diversify and let go of things and take on other things, stand there with our team and be there with them,” she said. “It’s challenging. I’m tired, we’re all tired, and they don’t get to be tired, I don’t get to be tired. We don’t bring our best selves to work. How do you face being stretched thin?”

Bray said guidelines and protocols were constantly shifting and changing. The adjusting and readjusting is a mental strain.

“It’s like building a plane as you fly it. You feel crazy sometimes.”

But she says everyone is working as a team to provide the care people need.

“Everyone has risen to the occasion.”

It’s a sentiment adopted by Shaw as well. She said she feels fortunate to be in Saskatchewan because of the partners across the health-care system, including USask colleagues.

“Coming together around a common issue where everyone has wanted to help is really important to the ongoing response,” Shaw said. “It’s been a team effort.” ■



## Nominations open for University Senate members

Senators connect the university to the community and have authority over matters such as selection of the chancellor, awarding of honorary degrees and making regulations concerning non-academic student discipline.

Nominations are open for four member-at-large and eight district positions. Elected senators will serve a three-year term beginning July 1 and are eligible for re-election after three years for a maximum of two terms.

### Election procedures

Only members of convocation<sup>1</sup> can be nominated. Nominees for district positions must reside in that district; there are no restrictions on where members-at-large reside.

Nomination forms and more information are available at [governance.usask.ca](https://governance.usask.ca). Nominations must include a 200-word biography, be nominated by at least three members of convocation and be endorsed by the candidate.

Send your nomination by March 1, 2022 to:  
Office of the University Secretary  
University of Saskatchewan  
E290 Administration Building, 107 Administration Place  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A2  
Or by email: [nominations@usask.ca](mailto:nominations@usask.ca)

[usask.ca/secretariat](https://usask.ca/secretariat)

<sup>1</sup> Convocation includes the chancellor, members of Senate and all graduates of the USask.



### SEAN CONROY

At 13 years old, Lindsay Knight (ARTS'10, MA'13) discovered the lyricism and storytelling of hip-hop music.

"I have always been a storyteller through the written word," the USask graduate student recalled. "When I discovered that you could create a poetic flow over a smooth beat, I was hooked. And I still am to this day."

In addition to the sound and swagger of the genre, Knight identified with the sadly familiar characteristics of the racial inequalities chronicled by hip-hop's Black and Hispanic founding storytellers.

"There are so many parallels to Indigenous experience when considering colonial violence in the forms of racism, poverty, police violence," said Knight. "Through identifying with the similar realities of struggle and survival, hip-hop culture was adopted by Indigenous people."

Nine albums and several accolades later under the moniker Eekwol, Knight has harnessed her passion for connecting with audiences and sharing her personal experiences.

The latest outlet for Knight's creativity has been her term as the University Library's first Indigenous Storyteller-in-Residence at USask.

In December 2020, the library announced the pilot project introducing the position. The program, the first of its kind at USask and in the province, is a natural evolution of the library's commitment to sharing and supporting Indigenous worldviews.

"It is important that we never lose sight that we're on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis," said Charlene Sorensen, acting dean of the University Library. "Our sense of place is essential to USask's identity. Welcoming Lindsay to the library in this capacity to uplift Indigenous voices and lead important discussions with students is vital to the university's Indigenization efforts."

Knight is not only an artist, but also an academic. She earned a master's degree in Indigenous Studies at USask and is currently a PhD student in the Department of Indigenous Studies. She recently completed a Canada Council for the Arts-granted project titled, *For Women by Women*, which examines Indigenous women in hip-hop. Knight is also a recipient of the University of Saskatchewan Aboriginal Graduate Scholarship.

"Much of my work reflects my identity as a half-nehilaw (Cree) woman born and raised in the city," said Knight. "Yet, I'm still very connected to my land-based practices through my family and community of Muskoday First Nation. As with any Indigenous person today, there is no avoiding

## ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT

### WITH LINDSAY KNIGHT



Photography: *sweetmoon photography*

intergenerational trauma from colonial institutions like residential schools and reserve systems, so these personal struggles also come out in my work."

One of the signature components of the Indigenous Storyteller-in-Residence pilot program is creating and promoting intercultural understanding and story-sharing between and among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Knight's residency facilitated this conversation through virtual coffee talk events with USask students via Zoom. She also participated in conversations within the library and these have also sparked some intercultural understandings within a University Library context.

The conclusion of her six-week residency was marked by a performance during USask's Indigenous Achievement Week in which she performed original songs, detailing the story and inspiration behind them, highlighting the theme of cultural identity.

Although her term as the Indigenous Storyteller-in-Residence has concluded, Knight is encouraged by the storytelling sessions she has led and hopes they will be a catalyst for advancing conversations surrounding Indigenization.

"This experience has reminded me that we are all storytellers in our own way because we all have something interesting to share," she said. ♥

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**With the world cooped up in their homes this past year, many people turned to podcasts to curb the quiet loneliness and negative impacts of isolation.**

**Here are three alumni-hosted and produced podcasts to add to your playlist.**



**Dr. Jessica McDonald (BA'11, PhD'20)**  
**🎧 Teachin' Books**

What started as a fun project to fill some of the silence brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has flourished into a creative podcast centered around McDonald's commitments to social justice, anti-racism, and anti-colonialism.

"I listen to podcasts every day, all day, whenever I need anything but silence. And I've been doing that for probably five or so years now. I knew I would eventually host (one)," laughs McDonald.

The USask alumna has a PhD in English literature and is currently completing her post-doctoral work at Simon Fraser University. The isolation McDonald experienced during COVID-19 was the catalyst she needed to kickstart her podcast; she realized conversation and dialogue were necessary to stay connected to the outside world.

"Every time I have an interview, it's just like a nice little boost across the social distance," she said.

Her podcast, *Teachin' Books*, consists of interviews with educators, scholars, book club members, students, and activists. The topics extend beyond the physical pages of books and tackle big issue items like activism, racial justice, ethics, and empathy.

"Teachin' Books is all about the ways people teach, learn and work with literature. It doesn't always have to be books; it can be films, music, video games," explained McDonald. "I really try to only approach and address topics that I think fall within essentially a social justice mandate."

To McDonald, her podcast is a way to make literature more accessible to people who might not see how literature applies to their lives.

"I don't just want to be some academic sitting in the ivory tower like that cliché where none of my work actually is in dialogue with other communities. My main long-term goal is just to keep on building the communities that listen to the podcast."



**Jade Roberts (BEd'18)**  
**🎧 Still Here Still Healing**

Jade Roberts was just 16 years old when her father passed away. His death ignited a spark in her to find the truth about his past as a residential school survivor.

"Entering university, I definitely learned a lot more about our history as Indigenous people and our history here in Canada about residential schools specifically. I was angry and I was also curious. I didn't really have that family member that I could turn to and ask questions. I guess that kind of sparked the podcast, that curiosity," she said.

*Still Here, Still Healing* is her answer to this personal quest for the truth. The podcast dives into the real-life experiences of residential school survivors.

"Canada is in this stage where we want reconciliation and before we have that we need the truth," she said.

Originally from La Ronge, Sask., Roberts is a USask ITEP graduate and a current teacher at Pleasant Hill in Saskatoon. In 2019, she put out a call on her Facebook page asking members of her community to share their stories. Several people reached out saying they were interested in being interviewed, including one of her dad's friends. Others weren't ready to share. Roberts acknowledges that the subject matter is oftentimes very difficult for her guests to relive.

"We know that residential schools happen, and we know there's still survivors living. But a lot of times we don't hear those stories, and so I really wanted to give a platform for those people that were open to sharing."

Roberts uses the platform to educate her listeners and bring the dark history of residential school to the forefront. She has interviewed intergenerational survivors and says that her focus going forward will be to continue to educate her listeners and celebrate Indigenous voices.

"I really wanted to like uplift and share the voices of people that are doing really good work."



**Eric Anderson (BEd'06)**  
**🎧 YXE Underground**

Former CBC reporter Eric Anderson doesn't mince words about the strains that come with being a modern-day journalist.

"I was a victim to the daily news grind. When I moved into communications in 2016, I had work-life balance for the first time ever in my working career," said Anderson.

But while Anderson finally found some temporary relief from the hustle and bustle of the news bullpen, he couldn't ignore his longing to tell stories.

"I missed meeting new people and interviewing them. So I thought, 'Why can't I do that? I could make it my own!' There was a great freedom in realizing that."

Thus *YXE Underground* was born – a podcast that focuses on the everyday, often overlooked community members helping make Saskatoon a better place.

It was an easy transition for Anderson to move from journalist to podcaster as he already had a myriad of technical radio skills in his repertoire. The subject matter also came naturally; he knew he wanted to tell the untold and undercelebrated stories of local influencers and changemakers.

After three seasons, a slick website and dozens of interviews, *YXE Underground* has most definitely achieved its initial goals, and then some. Centralizing around current events and topics including Black Lives Matter, housing security and the COVID-19 pandemic, Anderson has unearthed many untold stories.

"What I'm trying to do is show the broader community. Maybe they've never been in the news before, but they're doing awesome things and you might find their story really interesting." 🎧



# 2021 USASK ALUMNI Achievement Awards

**Their legacies are incomparable, their stories impactful and their influence unwavering. From an influential Indigenous artist to a Rhodes Scholar, a tech mogul to a Paralympian, this year's diverse group of Alumni Achievement Award winners embody what it means to be dedicated to one's profession and community.**

**Nominated by their peers from a group of more than 164,000 alumni, recipients of the USask Alumni Achievement Awards represent alumni who are changing the world one idea or action at a time.**

**Nominations for our 2022 Alumni Achievement Awards are now open. Visit [alumni.usask.ca/achieve](https://alumni.usask.ca/achieve) to learn more.**

## Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award Wayne Brownlee

 **LESLIE-ANN SCHLOSSER**

You can feel the natural spirit of generosity that shines in Wayne Brownlee (BSc'75, MBA'77) the moment you meet the remarkable USask alumnus.

This trait is even more prevalent when he starts describing the charitable organizations he helps and the projects his foundation supports.

Brownlee loves to give back and has done so in many facets throughout his life. The philanthropist and businessman has made a reputation throughout Saskatchewan as being a sought-after leader, volunteer, and changemaker. He credits curiosity as the driving factor in his wildly successful life.

"I'm sure other people are more successful, but it's hard to train people to be curious, and I feel that's what I am," said Brownlee. Brownlee, who was born in Biggar Sask., said his innate curiosity and critical thinking skills bloomed while a student at the University of Saskatchewan.

After completing his Bachelor of Science degree, Brownlee knew he wanted to explore more education options and entered USask's MBA program to continue his studies. He describes himself as competitive by nature and the MBA program fed his knack for problem solving and his competitive spirit.

"The MBA program was kind of an eye opener for me. I actually had more of a natural aptitude towards that. I enjoyed the casework. I enjoyed the business game competition that the university put on at that time.

"Problem solving has been an earmark of my career. I considered myself, and still do, a problem solver."

After university, Brownlee dove headfirst into his career. He worked in the Saskatchewan government for 12 years, which served as a base for his extensive knowledge in public policy.

Eventually, he found his way to PotashCorp as head of business development, Brownlee led transformational changes within the company, including its privatization and transition from a provincial Crown corporation into a publicly traded company.

"I love business development because trying to create value in your company and create value for shareholders was so interesting," said Brownlee.

Brownlee was a key player in building relationships and negotiating with other global potash companies. It was during this time in his career he said he could really flex his negotiation muscles.

"Negotiation is a bit of a learned skill, but I really learned to love that process where you're trying to get a good deal," he said. "I'm just so fortunate to have been in this place to have done that."

He retired in 2018 as executive vice-president and chief financial officer of Nutrien after an illustrious career.

What's impressive is the fact that his philanthropic efforts have been equally, if not more so, impactful than his business career.

Throughout his career at PotashCorp, Brownlee committed himself to volunteering with various charities and devoted his time to

helping his community by serving on many boards and organizations. This included being a member of the USask Edwards School of Business Dean's Advisory Council.

Recently, the Brownlee Family Foundation gifted \$10 million to the Saskatoon Public Schools Foundation's literacy program, Early Learning Equal Start. The gift is one of the largest donations in Saskatchewan history towards education and will help young students receive better access to education, earlier on in their lives.

The cause is near and dear to Brownlee, who is extremely passionate about creating equal access to learning and making a better tomorrow for Saskatchewan youth.

"In our inner-city schools, 60 per cent of the kids do not attain Grade 3 literacy by the completion of Grade 3. Literature says if you don't have Grade 3 by the end of Grade 3, 80 per cent will not graduate from high school," said Brownlee.

"This is my biggest passion; to fix this problem and to make society aware of this." Full-day kindergarten, access to tutoring services and summer reading programs are just a few of the ways the program hopes to address this problem.

Brownlee has travelled the globe, negotiated with world leaders and mastered the geopolitical landscape all while retaining his subtle Saskatchewan humbleness and charm.

In retirement, he is shifting his focus to giving back to the province that allowed him the opportunity to explore, create and grow his curiosity; a curiosity that got its start at the University of Saskatchewan. ♥







## Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award Ruth Cuthand

✍ JOHN GRAINGER

It's unlikely that Ruth Cuthand (BFA'83, MFA'92) realized the impact USask would have on her when she first set foot on campus as an undergrad.

It's also unlikely she would realize the eventual impact she would have on the institution itself.

The acclaimed Indigenous artist and teacher always knew a post-secondary education was in the cards for her.

"In my family, it was kind of expected that I go to university," recalled Cuthand, who was born in Prince Albert, Sask., with Plains Cree and Scottish heritage.

Her father was an Anglican minister and she and her family travelled around to what were called "Indian missions" in various communities across the Prairies.

She recalled her father saying how much he enjoyed working with younger people and she found herself echoing him years later.

"I love being around young people. I love their energy. They have this whole life ahead of them and they're all excited about learning," she said.

Growing up in southern Alberta on the Blood Reserve near Lethbridge, Cuthand met renowned Indigenous artist Gerald Tailfeathers, who inspired her to become an artist herself. It's that inspiration that fueled her passion and led her to pursue a degree in fine arts.

Cuthand entered USask's fine arts department as a mature student. When she graduated, she took a one-year job teaching art at the now defunct Saskatoon Survival School. When the term was over, she considered getting an education degree, but instead found another job, this time teaching art history at the Saskatoon campus of First Nations University of Canada.

With that experience, and a healthy bit of life experience under her belt, she returned to USask to work on her master's.

She knew USask would afford her the ability to teach while providing time to create art.

This is when Cuthand realized her true calling and has maintained a pivotal role in teaching ever since.

"What I really liked the best was watching the students and then suddenly, you'd see a shift in them and their brain would start. That's what I really like, was when knowledge hit them," she said.

**"When I heard I was a little taken aback. I kind of feel I'm just starting my life."**

She was named artist-in-residence for the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre in 2018 and enjoyed regular contact with students. There, Cuthand was able to teach students that blending art with education was possible.

A year later, Cuthand took up a residency position at USask's Health Sciences Building. She was able to use her beading to highlight how the arrival of European traders decimated Indigenous populations in the Americas.

Cuthand's work highlights societal issues for Indigenous peoples in Canada. Some of her most famous work comes from her Trading series in 2009, which featured bead-work images of viruses as a commentary on colonization.

"I really like doing the beading circles at the university because I meet all kinds of people," she said.

A talented and multi-dimensional artist, Cuthand was honoured with a Saskatchewan Government's Lieutenant-Governor's Arts Award in 2013 and was recognized by the College of Arts and Science as an Alumni of Influence in 2016. Her art can be found in galleries across Canada, including the Remail Modern in Saskatoon. ♥

## Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award Heather Kuttai

✍ JOHN GRAINGER

As an undergrad at the University of Saskatchewan, Heather Kuttai (BA'94, MSc'09) found a nice, quiet space on campus where she would often spend her lunch hours with Darrell Seib, whom she would one day marry.

"It was a little spot on the second floor of Arts and Science where you could sit and look at this big, huge tree that would change with the seasons," said Kuttai. "I would sit there and read and Darrell and I would have our lunch there a lot."

But the path she took to find that idyllic spot on USask's campus was not easy for her. Kuttai has been a paraplegic since suffering a devastating injury from a car crash as a six-year-old.

The place she would learn to get around in a wheelchair turned out to be the very same place she would learn to find passion later in life.

"When I was injured with my spinal cord injury, I did my hospitalization at (Royal University Hospital). I learned to push and use the wheelchair right on campus and I never imagined I'd be a student there," she recalled.

Talking about the ties she has forged with USask is an emotional topic for Kuttai.

"Who would I be without my university education? There's no aspect of my life it hasn't touched."

After her accident, it would have been easy to go back home to the farm with her parents and then do nothing but simply exist with

little hope and few expectations for a future.

"There was just no imagination for me to accomplish much of anything after I was hurt. It wasn't even taken for granted that I would go home with my mom and dad."

However, her dad, George, had other ideas. He introduced Kuttai to sport and pushed her to try, to work, and persevere. His dedication and belief in his daughter opened doors for her around the world where she would become an accomplished athlete and Paralympian medal winner who would participate in shooting events in the 1988 and 1992 Paralympics in Seoul, South Korea and Barcelona, Spain. He also pushed her to enrol in university.

Her achievements in sports fuelled her desires to accomplish more and she always found herself back on the USask campus.

"When I started university, I also started travelling internationally with wheelchair sport and the intersection of those two just unveiled a new identity to me."

It was then that Kuttai realized that living with a disability was something not to be overlooked or dismissed. All of a sudden, she found other people with disabilities who were living fulfilling lives and people she could look up to.

"Wheelchair sport brought in a whole community for me of people who saw disability in an entirely different way than I did."

Back on campus, Kuttai's classes provided something new as well.

"My classes introduced people to me, introduced women writers, women writers with disabilities and it changed the trajectory of my life."

Finally, her life's puzzle fit together. The



USask campus community and the curriculum she was studying made sense to her. She knew she was in the right place.

Kuttai's drive for inclusion for people with disabilities led her to get a job on campus where she would eventually spearhead the creation for the Disability Service for Students unit (now called Access and Equity Services) and the Student Central services. Those two areas champion students with disabilities throughout the academic career at USask by ensuring they have the same opportunities as other students.

She also put her life out there for all to see when she wrote *Maternity Rolls*, a book about her life as a disabled woman and mother.

Another pivotal event for Kuttai was during a meeting with Irwin Cotler, a former Quebec Member of Parliament and founder of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights. That visit had a profound impact on how she would live her life.

"He said, 'It matters not if you are alive to see the efforts you make to change the world. You still have a duty and a responsibility to try.'"

"That motivates me all the time, that feeling that I have a duty and a responsibility to try, even though I can't work in a traditional office setting anymore because of disability reasons."

Kuttai has come a long way from that view of the tree outside the Arts and Science building. Her drive is now to continue to provide a view for the future for people with disabilities. ♥





**"I'm very glad, looking back, that I took the dirt road a lot of times. I think those detours away from the obvious thing lead to really interesting people and really interesting opportunities that would not have happened."**

## Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award Dr. Steven Woods

✍️ **LESLIE-ANN SCHLOSSER**

Dr. Steven Woods (BSc'87, PhD) can still remember what it was like studying on the roof of University of Saskatchewan residence buildings in the late '80s, when the balmy Saskatchewan spring weather felt like a tropical vacation.

"When finals came all the time, we would go up on the roof for residents and study up there. It was probably 10 degrees and we thought it was summer," he laughed.

The hockey-loving kid from Melfort, Sask., knew he never really had a choice when it came to attending USask; it was a family tradition and his parents highly encouraged education. Today, he's grateful for their wisdom. His first introduction to learning sparked a lifelong itch to question, ponder, and figure out the unknown. He majored in computer science, a relatively new discipline in the '80s, where he devoured the chance to learn about software.

Since those days studying with the prairie horizon in the background, Woods has gone on to build a life of success and adventure.

In his early days, he traveled the world, jumping between academia and work,

even playing a stint in Australian semi-pro hockey. He completed his master's and PhD in Computer Science (Mathematics) from the University of Waterloo and earned a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, where the opportunity to catch waves in between classes was too tempting for Woods to pass up.

He eventually found his way back to North America, where he spent time as a consultant at Carnegie Mellon University's Software Engineering Institute. At the time, the tech world was starting to light up in Silicon Valley. Woods knew he and his friends could make a difference with a revolutionary new idea and they eventually went all in producing and manufacturing it.

In 2000, just one year after their initial idea, Woods and his partners sold Quack.com, the world's first interactive voice portal, to America Online/Time Warner.

"When we demonstrated it, think about hearing Siri 20 years ago," he explained. "They thought it was magic. It was magic!"

After the success of Quack.com, Woods lead several successful startups and had grown his reputation in the community as a go-to leader and changemaker. It's these qualities that made Google come knocking, coaxing him with the opportunity to move home to Canada and play a lead role at the relatively new Google Canada offices in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont.

He remains in the role today as the senior engineering director at Google Canada.

In his role, Woods is responsible for managing overall engineering operations. He's also responsible for representing Google in Canada's tech community and for recruiting some of the country's best and brightest.

"I'm very glad, looking back, that I took the dirt road a lot of times. I think those detours away from the obvious thing lead to really interesting people and really interesting opportunities that would not have happened," said Woods.

When asked what his proudest accomplishment is, Woods is quick to mention his family, which is continuing the Woods' USask tradition. The oldest of his three children is currently enrolled as a USask student in the College of Arts and Science.

From those chilly April prairie study sessions, to living in California and being a part of the Silicon Valley, Woods remains humble in all his pursuits. While his USask days fed his initial curiosity for software design, it also ignited lifelong friendships with people who he remains close with to this day.

"That sense of community and friends and home has lasted my entire life. It lasted for my mother and dad and siblings lives as well. I value that enormously. It's been an anchor point for me many times," said Woods. ■



## Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award Dr. Jennifer Welsh

✍️ **JOHN GRAINGER**

The province's first female Rhodes Scholar almost wasn't one.

Dr. Jennifer Welsh (BA'87, PhD) had made it through a provincial interview process and was scheduled to be an interviewee next by the prairie panel which would then declare its selection for the prestigious global competition, which provides a spot at the venerated Oxford University in England. Established in 1903, the Rhodes Trust funds 88 scholars each year from 32 different countries, with 11 Canadian students selected annually.

The issue was Welsh was involved in a political convention in Ottawa at the same time as the regional interviews were scheduled.

"I said, 'Well, thank you very much, but I'm actually not going to be here for that weekend and I can't come to the interview.'"

"And I remember the secretary, who became a very good friend and mentor, said to me, 'You know Jennifer, I think maybe you should call your parents and then call me back.'"

Welsh then called her parents, who encouraged her to attend the interview.

"But I was slightly clueless. I really laugh when I think back on that. What would have happened if I hadn't gone?"

Welsh was successful in obtaining the Rhodes Scholarship and did go to England.

The girl from the Canadian prairie recalls

heading to those hallowed halls of Oxford academia and soon realizing she could hold her own with any other student attending there.

"I was really struck in retrospect how a young woman from a public university from Western Canada could hold her own with her classmates who had been to Yale, Harvard and Princeton.

"I don't think it's about me being special. I think it's about the quality of education I got and if I had to do it all over again I would still go the University of Saskatchewan ... because it prepared me superbly well for graduate school."

Once she completed her master's, she stayed at Oxford to obtain her PhD. From there, Welsh's keen interest into developing global policy for the protection of people carved out her reputation as a resource not only for institutes of higher learning, but for governments and organizations such as the United Nations.

In 2013, Welsh was appointed by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to serve as his special adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, a position dedicated to providing advice on who and where in the world requires attention to the plight of those people being persecuted or targeted for a variety of reasons including genocide.

Welsh highlights two pieces of her career that have helped shape who she is. She is proud of the way she is able to translate her ideas into

particular policy doctrines or statements and her 2016 Massey Lectures, where she travelled the country to deliver lectures on international public policy.

"I'm proud of the way that I seem to be catching a moment in which we in western societies were realizing that a lot of the optimism about the way the world was headed after the Cold War needed to be re-thought."

Welsh was proud to make the lectures accessible for her audiences across the country, including a stop at the Broadway Theatre in Saskatoon.

Welsh, now the Canada 150 research chair in global governance and security at McGill University in Montreal, is able to point to a number of people throughout her career who have provided guidance including a number of USask professors who could see something special in a young student from Regina.

Welsh also credits the strength of her family ties.

"I could also say, and this gets a little bit emotional, my siblings are also my mentors. They have been my best mentors. They've always known how to ask good questions when I have faced forks in the road. You can't underestimate how important that is."

Welsh has always trusted guidance from her siblings and parents, just like the time when she almost didn't attend the Rhodes Scholar interview. She's glad she listened. ■





## BUZ Volunteer Leadership Award winner Dr. Tony Harras

### JOHN GRAINGER

Growing up as the Dirty Thirties were ending wasn't an easy time for Dr. Tony Harras (BE'61, MSc'62, PhD'68) and his family in rural east-central Saskatchewan.

Harras' parents were recent Ukrainian immigrants and worked hard to provide for the family which included 12 children.

The spirit of volunteerism was something Harras witnessed from the people around him in his rural community, many of whom had fled Ukraine and the Iron Curtain of the then-Soviet Union with little more than the clothes they were wearing after the Second World War.

"A lot of these people were extremely passionate about what they believed in and as a result they did an exorbitant amount of work supporting their communities. So, these were role models for me that I was exposed to," said the long-time Regina resident.

His parents wanted a better life for their children and that included the chance to

obtain a post-secondary education. Harras had enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force and was given the chance to enrol at USask through the Regular Officer Training program in the College of Engineering. By doing so, Harras had to commit at least three years post-graduation with the RCAF.

At USask, Harras won the esteemed award offered by the Engineering Institute of Canada to the deserving third-year engineering student. Later he received a generous scholarship from SaskPower which allowed him to pursue his doctorate of engineering studies. He finished his undergraduate program with a Bachelor of Engineering with great distinction in electrical engineering, followed by a Master of Science and PhD in electrical engineering.

Little did he know at that time, he would spend a 30-year career with SaskPower ending as vice-president and general manager of systems operations and decision support where he was responsible for long range generation, transmission, and control planning.

Once retired in 1999, his commitment to volunteerism took off. Much of his effort focused on preserving his Ukrainian

**This award recognizes a graduate who best exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism through community service.**

heritage, something he carried over from the community leaders of his youth.

One of the biggest accomplishments, and one he is proud of working on, is the founding and establishment of the Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages. Harras was very passionate about the protection and enhancement of Ukrainian culture, not only in Saskatchewan, but across Canada. He has a long history of volunteering his support for the Ukrainian National Congress.

Harras' many efforts have not gone unnoticed as he has received many awards, including the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal, the Queen's Jubilee Medal, and the City of Regina Community Volunteer Award.

The BUZ volunteer leadership award he is receiving from USask holds a special place for him.

"This award is probably more holistic. It sort of encompasses your university involvement, your university accomplishments, but it also looks at the broad spectrum of your life and where you have been involved," Harras said. "This particular award is most encompassing for me." ■

**This award recognizes a young graduate who is making significant contributions in society at large, setting an example for future alumni to follow.**



## "One to Watch" Alumni Achievement Award winner Amy Lamb

### LESLIE-ANN SCHLOSSER

While it's true that this year's "One to Watch" Alumni Achievement Award winner is somewhat new to her practice, Amy Lamb (BSP'12) has already achieved a lifetime worth of accolades and success.

And she's just getting started.

"Just being accepted into the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition was an astounding achievement, something that I dreamed of since being a kid. To be recognized in a profession that I can utilize and leverage to make meaningful change, it's just sort of icing on the cake," said Lamb.

Despite being a member of a competitive class, Lamb was driven to stand out. She was a member of several student councils and says she found great benefits in being involved in campus life. She set her sights high after graduation.

"I knew when I graduated, I could make a difference. That was entirely fostered by, I

think, the environment that exists at USask," said Lamb.

Lamb went on to practice throughout Saskatchewan in community pharmacies, primarily focusing on compounding work. During this time, she sat on several pharmacy boards.

As a Métis woman, Lamb says she's always had a connection to nature. She credits this connection to her way of approaching medicine and health.

"I really, truly believe in traditional and culture medicines and land-based living. Those are the things that have been healing in my life," said Lamb.

Traditional western medicine often limits patients to a one-size-fits-all approach, says Lamb. As a practicing pharmacist, she witnessed how difficult it was for some of her patients to find a root cause of their problems.

Helping a patient find the root of her health issues, combined with her own health journey, pushed Lamb to further explore preventive, functional medicine.

Today, Lamb owns and operates Lamb and Sage Personalized Health Solutions, which

is a consulting-based business for patients looking for evidence-based medicine and personalized health plans. It's the integration of these two methods that is essential for a well-rounded, healthy life, says Lamb.

"At some point we might all just be pressing our symptoms into a computer and getting a little blood finger spot and pills will pop out the bottom. But there are literally evidenced-based outcomes from the empathy and the care that somebody receives from an empathetic practitioner. This is still important," said Lamb.

So, what's next for the up-and-comer? Along with her business and her practice, the ambitious new mother recently accepted work with health groups serving northern and Indigenous communities. She says it will continue to be her life mission to fill the gap between affordable, accessible health care for all.

"I do believe there is a very big gaping hole in the middle where I recognize that I can't continue to provide something that is only available to those with privilege. I'm going to spend the rest of my life changing that." ■



# USask research is for the birds

**The legacy of a conservationist lives on through her \$2.3 million gift and allows USask researchers and students to soar**

 **JOHN GRAINGER**

It would be hard to count the number of birds that Mary Houston (BA'47, BEd'50, S.V.M.) banded during her lifetime.

All sorts of birds. Thousands of birds. Bohemian Waxwings. Mountain Bluebirds. Sparrows. Redpolls. Purple Martins. You name it and Mary had probably put a band on it somewhere. It might have been in a field. Perhaps in a forest. Always in her backyard.

But there were two birds Mary never touched, recounts her husband, Dr. Stuart Houston (DL'87).

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Dr. Stuart Houston not long after being interviewed for this story. Dr. Houston was much loved at USask, not just for his generous contributions, but for his genuine affection and enthusiasm for the institution for so many years. The USask Alumni community sends their deepest condolences to the Houston family. Dr. Houston will be missed.

"She drew the line at golden eagles," said Stuart. "She never repelled down a rope to a golden eagle nest. And she never climbed a tree to a Great Horned Owl nest."

No matter the location, Mary always wanted to band birds, which helps identify and track them. Her husband was always happy to work alongside her.

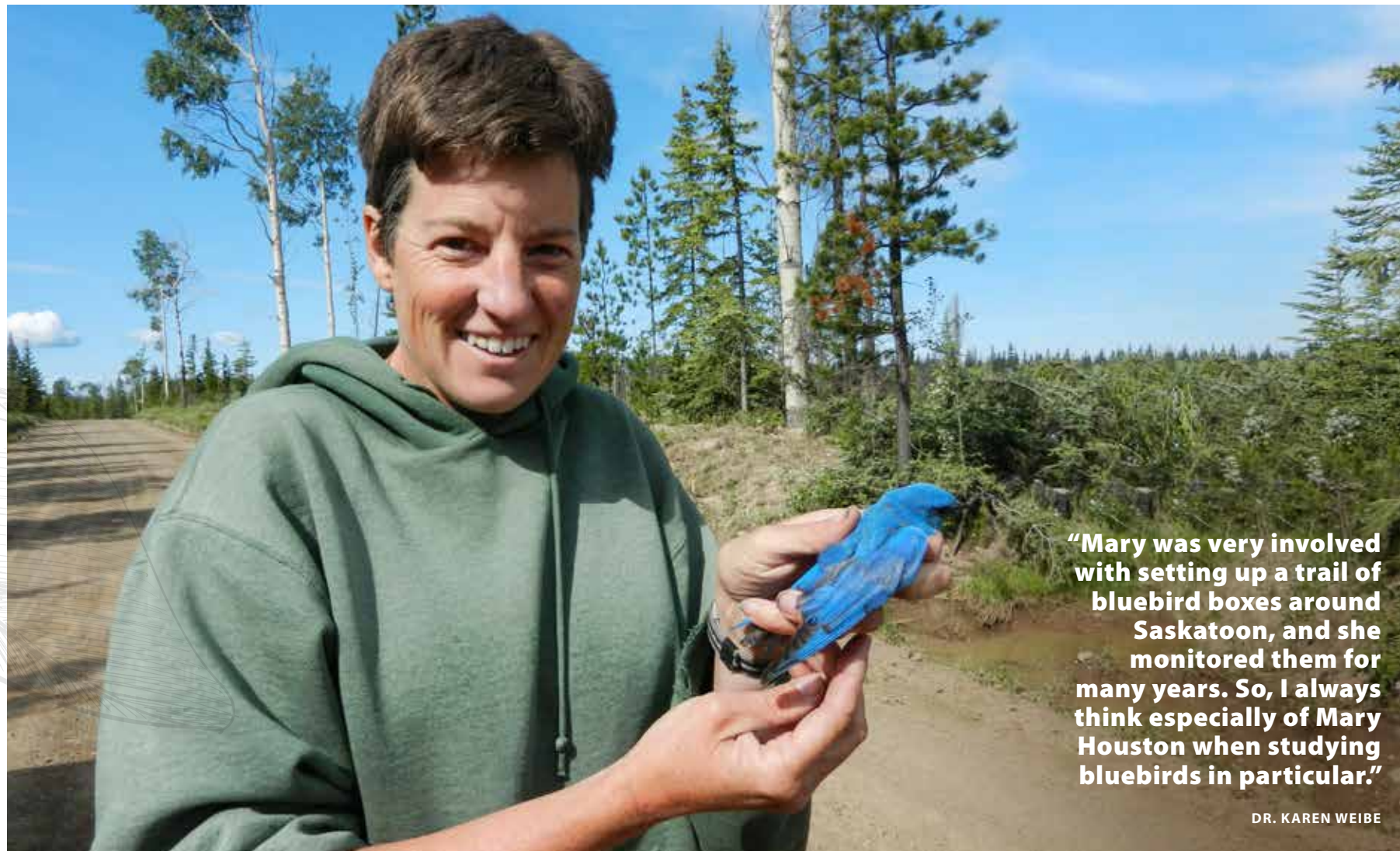
It's that passion the Houstons wanted to see continued when in 2002 they created the Stuart and Mary Professorship in Ornithology at USask's Department of Biology. After Mary passed away in 2019, her legacy gift of nearly \$2.3 million has amplified the research impact of the professorship.

To be selected, the professor is expected to be a prominent and active participant in ornithological research and to contribute to graduate and undergraduate teaching.

Dr. Karen Weibe (PhD) has been the recipient of the professorship and has been able to advance her work exponentially because of Mary's generosity.

"The financial support from the Houstons has been invaluable to my research program by allowing me to focus on 'basic' or curiosity-driven questions of bird behaviour," said the USask biologist, in an emailed statement from the mountains in British Columbia where she is conducting research.

"In other words, research grants in animal ecology are increasingly tied to industry and focused on applied questions of interest to industrial partners, but these funds have allowed me the freedom to support graduate students who wish to study theoretical aspects of behaviour, and to learn about avian



**"Mary was very involved with setting up a trail of bluebird boxes around Saskatoon, and she monitored them for many years. So, I always think especially of Mary Houston when studying bluebirds in particular."**

DR. KAREN WEIBE



Stuart and Mary Houston  
Photography: Submitted

biology for its own sake."

Weibe says she feels a special connection with Mary even to this day.

"Mary was very involved with setting up a trail of bluebird boxes around Saskatoon, and she monitored them for many years. So, I always think especially of Mary Houston when studying bluebirds in particular."

Others around the world also had a special connection with Mary. Her banding effort wasn't just a local pursuit. Her work became legendary and was known throughout the world by researchers, academics, and birding enthusiasts alike.

Stuart says Mary's interest in birding started years ago while she was a teacher for the Yorkton school board. Incidentally, Stuart's father, who was chair of the local school board, thought Stuart should meet Mary Belcher. It turned out to be sage advice as the pair would have celebrated their 70th anniversary in August 2020. They also

raised four children: Stanley, Margaret, David and Donald.

Stuart's career in medicine blossomed and he joined the department of diagnostic radiology at USask in 1964 before becoming a professor five years later. Working alongside luminaries like Sylvia Fedoruk, Stuart retired as professor emeritus in 1996 after a distinguished academic career in which he was a renowned authority in that discipline.

"Just about everything that I succeeded in, Mary was the strength behind me. We made a good team," said Stuart.

Together, however, their mutual passion for birds took flight early in their relationship. When they heard the bluebird population in the Yorkton area was dropping, they wanted to do something to help restore the numbers. They started building birdhouses. Many birdhouses. Birdhouses for all types of birds.

As their passion for birds grew, Mary left her teaching career so she could devote more time to banding birds and protecting their habitats.

Over her banding career, Mary received many awards and accolades including being one of the first elected fellows of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society in 1987. Mary also received the Douglas H. Pimlott Conservation Award from the Canadian Nature Federation in 1988. Mary was added to the USask College of Education's Alumni Wall of Honour in 2010 and named an Alumni of Influence from the College of Arts and Science in 2013.

Mary's banding exploits are legendary for the sheer volume and commitment she displayed. In fact, she has banded more Bohemian Waxwings personally than every other North American bander combined.

The immense knowledge she obtained in her pursuits put her on a different level, Stuart maintains.

"Mary was just heads and shoulders above everybody else because she had a very bright mind. But above all, she was a very modest woman. And, of course, everybody loved her.

"As you can see, I'm very proud of her," said Stuart.

**Thanks to your support, the University of Saskatchewan can dream big. Together, we will make transformative and positive changes by addressing issues that impact our world now and the world that future generations will inherit.**

**Your gift, no matter the size, helps to lift us all up. To donate, please visit [donate.usask.ca](https://donate.usask.ca)**





“Be What the World Needs” is a hefty goal and one not taken lightly at the University of Saskatchewan. As your Alumni Advisory Board Chair, I am confident in saying that throughout this challenging year I have seen so many instances where USask alumni stepped in and stepped up to be what this world needs.

I’ve seen our alumni nurses, doctors and medical professionals working hard on the frontlines during the worst of the pandemic, like Dr. Susan Shaw who you’ll read about in the feature on page 29. Our alumni businesses and entrepreneurs have worked tirelessly to move online and keep their businesses afloat, like McKenzie Hunter who is featured on page 15. Our alumni leaders continued to create influential change in their communities despite COVID-19 restrictions, like Lua Gibb who you’ll read about on page 25.

I admire your tenacity and courage to keep going during this trying time. USask alumni are strong and we are fighters; and I think we’ve proven this throughout the pandemic.

Throughout this challenging year, we were able to pivot and offer new ways to connect with you. This included offering a digital Alumni Week, online virtual events, and increasing the news we share with you through our social media and web channels.

We celebrated seven extraordinary alumni through our annual University of Saskatchewan Alumni Achievement Awards earlier this year. Nominated by their alumni peers, recipients of these awards represent alumni who are changing the world one idea or action at a time. Our week-long online celebration was able to capture the essence and impact these individuals had on their communities. If you haven’t checked out the stories, videos, and messages from the community, I encourage you to visit our website when you get the chance. While you’re there, make sure to nominate a fellow alumnus for our 2022 Alumni Achievement Awards.

Our most recent USask graduates experienced convocation like no other graduates in history. While they didn’t get the chance to walk across the stage to receive their degrees and certificates, they experienced an online celebration full of messages of encouragement, hope, and inspiration – many

from USask alumni like yourself. With the addition of these ambitious new graduates, the total number of USask alumni has grown to 164,000 individuals living around the world.

It’s vital to keep our connection to USask strong. We continue to work hard for you; our goal continues to be connecting alumni back to the university. We remain committed to engaging our community of graduates and celebrating alumni success throughout the world.

Keep your eyes open in the next few months for even more events, benefits, and offerings for USask alumni and make sure to update your contact information with us to get the latest news.

The resiliency we’ve all shown this past year has been uplifting and each of you inspire me every day to continue to be what the world needs.

**Chris Unsworth (DIPAGB’12)**  
Chair, Alumni Advisory Board

**The USask Alumni Advisory Board is a volunteer group of graduates whose unique perspectives help the university engage prospective students, current students, and alumni in Saskatchewan, Canada, and around the world. Our 12 members represent a diverse range of USask degrees, professional fields and personal accomplishments. Together, the board shares the common goal to support to the university’s vision and institutional priorities. Interested in learning more? Please visit [alumni.usask.ca](https://alumni.usask.ca)**

## A REWARD IN ITSELF

Ronald and Mary Dyck Memorial Award allows student to reach full potential



Being awarded the Ronald and Mary Dyck Memorial Award emboldened Logan Thienes’ decision to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in English degree.

 **SHEENA GREER**

A university education can help set the course for your life – and can also help you decide which way to go. For current USask Arts and Science student Logan Thienes, being awarded the Ronald and Mary Dyck Memorial Award emboldened his decision to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in English degree.

But English wasn’t his first choice. Although Thienes started his degree pursuing computer sciences, which he chose based on what he thought would give him the best financial prospects after graduation, he said he felt something was missing. Those courses weren’t holding his attention, but his English courses were. “I have always been interested in reading and writing,” he explained.

Midway through his second year, he decided to make the switch and follow his heart, despite wondering if it was the right decision.

“I felt like, I started down this one path and I’m going to feel like a failure if I don’t carry it all the way through,” he said. “But my family was quite supportive.”

With support of his family and professors, Thienes made the switch. After his first full year of English, he learned about the Ronald and Mary Dyck Memorial Award and decided to apply. This \$1,000 award is given annually to two students from small-town Saskatchewan who are pursuing an undergraduate degree in English. Candidates write an essay about the

value of a liberal arts education – something Thienes was beginning to understand deeply as he switched his major.

“Since the Ronald and Mary Dyck Memorial Award aims for people from hometowns of less than 100,000 people, I decided to focus my essay on the importance of the liberal arts in relation to my hometown of 2,000 people,” said Thienes. “There is a lot of good that can come from growing up in a small town, but one’s worldview also tends to be limited. Liberal arts education is something that can circumvent this.”

Being chosen for the award was encouraging and uplifting, further helping Thienes feel like he made the right decision to pursue his interests. The financial help was an added boost.

“It felt great to find out I was chosen for the award, especially when it is based on an essay that you write,” he said. “It means a lot to have that extra bit of financial burden removed. It just lifts everything. That creates a ripple effect, improving your mental health.”

The financial support of donors through scholarships and bursaries help students like Thienes thrive in their studies. These supports give them the encouragement they need as they unlock the knowledge and skills required to take on the world.

“I’m grateful,” said Thienes, “not just for the award itself, but for the opportunity to

**“It means a lot to have that extra bit of financial burden removed. It just lifts everything. That creates a ripple effect, improving your mental health.”**

**LOGAN THIENES**

express my thoughts and know that they were appreciated by the award sponsors.”

Knowing there are donors and community supporters out there who believe in the importance of the humanities helps Logan feel confident as he enters his final year of his undergrad.

“Studying what you are interested in is a reward in itself.”

**Your gift today creates a ripple effect of support. Make your gift online at [give.usask.ca/students](https://give.usask.ca/students) or call us at 306-966-5186 (toll-free 1-800-699-1907). Visit our website and read more about how your support helps students succeed.**



Share your story. Tell us about the recent highlights of your career.

Your story will be shared online and may be published in the next issue of *Green & White*.

Please note that the 2020 issue of the *Green & White* was not printed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All Class Notes submitted before Jan. 1, 2021 are available online for our alumni and friends to read at their leisure. All Class Notes are published online every month and are sent out with via *Green & White* Monthly enewsletter.

Visit [alumni.usask.ca/classnotes](https://alumni.usask.ca/classnotes) more information.

The following Class Notes were submitted to the USask Advancement office Jan. 1 – May 31, 2021.



Photography: Jennifer Thoma

# A PIECE OF USASK FOR CALGARY ALUMNI

The University of Saskatchewan Calgary Hub is designed to be an innovative gathering space for Calgary alumni and community members.

## LESLIE-ANN SCHLOSSER

Return to your roots, without leaving home.

That’s the intention of the new University of Saskatchewan Calgary office space, named the USask Calgary Hub, which will provide a space unlike any other for alumni based in Calgary to reconnect, reminisce, and reignite their love of the university.

The Calgary region has for decades been a hub of activity for USask alumni who have forged careers and raised their families here. The region is home to the largest number of USask alumni outside of Saskatchewan, with roughly 10,000 alumni living in the Calgary area.

“Calgary alumni are leaders in business and industry. They are in the nonprofit sector. They are in government. They are in social services. They are leaders in their communities. We really wanted to ensure that we are present for those alumni,” said Dr. Debra Pozega Osburn (PhD), vice-president University Relations, who has led the project since its inception.

The USask Calgary Hub, located in the heart of downtown, is intended to provide that essential connection with USask alumni who live in Calgary, whether they have stayed in touch ever since graduation

or want to reconnect with their USask community. The physical space has meeting rooms, gathering areas and professional offices, which will be used to deliver a variety of event and educational opportunities.

“The way the space is used is rooted in how creative we can be. There’s a lot we can do and accomplish here,” said Pozega Osburn.

While the Hub’s official public opening was postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions, Calgary alumni will have ample opportunities to visit and use the space when it is safe to do so. All alumni will be able to stop by if they are looking to conduct business or simply want to sit down and get some work done. It will also be used as a gathering space for alumni to host events and for USask staff to conduct business with alumni and community stakeholders, corporations and agencies. ▼

We look forward to welcoming you to the USask Calgary Hub! For more information about the USask Calgary Hub, including location, hours of operation, and a date for our grand opening, please contact [universityrelations.calgary@usask.ca](mailto:universityrelations.calgary@usask.ca)

## 1950s

Mr. James L. (Lindsay) Milne, BE’59, of Calgary, Alta., received the Engineering Advancement Trust Services Award in December 2020.

Dr. Carey R. Molberg F.R.C.P.C., BA’59, MD’63, of St. Albert, Alta., retired December 31, 2020, after 45 years as partner with Pediatric Consultants Associated in Red Deer, Alta. Prior to training in pediatrics, he was in general practice in Churchill, Man., for two years and after pediatric training he worked as a staff pediatrician in the Under Five Hospital in Freetown Sierra Leone under CUSO for two years. He now enjoys cycling, hiking and time with his family including his wife of 57 years, three children and nine grandchildren. ▼



## 1960s

Dr. Ronald L. Ailsby, MD’69, MSc’77, PhD, of Regina, Sask., has been appointed chief occupational medical officer for the Saskatchewan Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety.

Dr. Archie W. (Wayne) Clifton F.C.A.E., BE’63, MSc’66, DSc’96, of Regina, Sask., received the Engineering Advancement Trust Services Award in December 2020. ▼



Mr. Leslie W. (Wayne) Collins, BE’60, of Dubuque, Iowa, retired 2001 after 40 years with John Deere in Saskatchewan and Dubuque.

Dr. Heinz B. Heese, MD’62, of Winnipeg, Man., worked until he was 78 and is now retired from medicine.

Dr. Duane G Mayhew, MD’66, of East Lansing, Mich., and his wife, Maureen, have wonderful memories of the four years (1962 - 1966) they spent on campus and continue to keep in touch with classmates. Maureen is a volunteer at Michigan State University College of Medicine and Duane is volunteers by giving COVID-19 vaccinations.

Mr. John A. Niedermaier, BE’63, of Calgary, AB, received the Engineering Advancement Trust Services Award in December 2020.

Dr. Charles H. Pierce, MD’68, PhD’74, was elected president elect of the Association of Clinical Pharmacology Units. ▼



LCol. (Retd) William T. (Bud) Reusch, BA’67, of Gould City, Mich., joined the USAF after graduation and went to Vietnam. Reusch graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1977 and went to Alaska to teach. He was called back into USAF in 1980 and retired in 1992 to return to school to become a public school administrator. Reusch retired after approximately 10 years to farm. Reusch is now fully retired and has moved to Michigan to be closer to family.



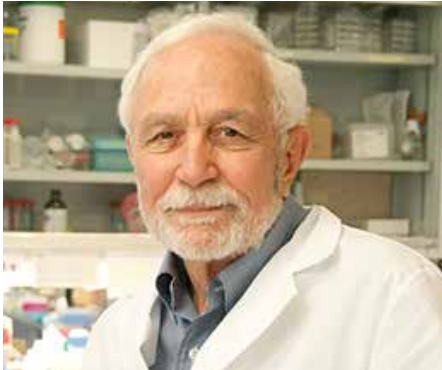
1970s

**Ms. Audrey P. Gauthier, BSN'77, BA'79, HosAdm'82, Arts'96**, of Red Deer, Alta., was recently elected as a director of the Central Alberta Humane Society, for a two-year term.

**Ms. Clare E. Isman, BComm'79**, of Regina, Sask., retired after 41 years in the public sector. After 16 years in financial and human resource management positions with the City of Regina, Clare joined the Government of Saskatchewan. Over the last 16 years of her career, Clare served in many senior positions, most recently the president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority. In 2015, Clare was awarded the Lieutenant Governor's IPAC Gold Medal for distinctive leadership and exceptional achievement in public administration in Saskatchewan. Clare has served on a number of boards, including the United Way of Regina, Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation, Saskatchewan Pension Annuity Fund, Camp BB-Riback, and is currently a member of CPA Canada's Accounting Standards Oversight Council.

**Mr. Sylvan P. (Van) Isman, BA'76, MBA'78**, of Regina, Sask., retired after 42 years in the private and public sectors. After 14 years in his family's business, Van began his public sector career in 1992 at SIAST. He went on to serve the Government of Saskatchewan as executive director responsible for the small business and regional economic development. In 2004, Van was selected to be CEO of Wascana Centre Authority, a position he held until late 2007, when he was recruited to re-join government as a deputy minister. Van spent the last seven years of his career as president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation (Innovation Place). He has served on a number of boards, including the Canadian Tourism Commission, Saskatchewan Economic Developers Association, Canadian Institute of Small Business Counsellors, Beth Jacob Synagogue, and the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

**Dr. Bruce D. Murphy, PhD'73**, of Saint-Hyacinthe, Que., professor in the Department of Veterinary Biomedicine at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Montreal, has been named distinguished fellow by the Society for the Study of Reproduction.



**Ms. Marion R. Mutala, BEd'79, PGD'94, MEd'95**, of Saskatoon, Sask., is an author of 15 books. Her latest is a collection of four stories which includes the *Baba's Babushka Trilogy*, along with a brand-new story *Baba's Babushka: A Magical Ukrainian Journey*.

1980s

**Mr. Murdo A. (Sandy) Bain, BSc'80**, of Lyalta, Alta., worked for the Alberta Provincial Parks department as a park interpreter until fall 1986. He then completed an education degree at the University of Calgary and began a teaching career in 1988. He met and married Ann Cheek of Elnora, Alta., and they married in 1994. Sandy is currently a substitute teacher working for both the Golden Hills School Division and the Rocky View School Division and looks forward to full retirement when his wife retires from teaching in the near future.

**Dr. Sandor J. Demeter, MD'89**, of Winnipeg, Man., completed a Master of Health Physics in 2016 from the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago which been instrumental for his radiation protection work as a member of the International Commission on Radiological Protection and as a commission member of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. Demeter has also joined the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) as a member of their Health Technology Expert Review Panel. He is slowly segueing from his day job in nuclear medicine to spend more time in Public Health, his true passion, via the Department of Community Health Sciences, U of M.



**Mr. Kang P. (Laurence) Fung, BSc'88, ARTS'88, MA'90**, of Hong Kong, SAR, has achieved his 20 years of services at the Hong Kong Monetary Authority in Jan. 2021. Fung joined the Hong Kong Monetary Authority in Jan. 2001 as a research officer. He is currently the associate director of the Exchange Fund Investment Office, Hong Kong Monetary Authority.

**Mr. Edward P. (Paul) Heselwood, BEd'82, BA'09, MEd'15**, of Saskatoon, Sask., recently retired from a teaching career spent in several communities throughout Saskatchewan. He has now begun a new stage of his educational journey as the principal of Sivuniit Middle School in Igloodik, Nunavut. He was also recently elected to the Board of Directors for Wrestling, Nunavut.

**Ms. Karen M. Janke-Curliss, BComm'84, JD'85**, of Saskatoon, Sask., was appointed a senior justice of the peace for the Province of Saskatchewan in June of 2019, having retired as a senior counsel with the Department of Justice Canada in 2017, after 31 years.

**Mr. Michael C Maguire, BE'87, MSc'92**, of Saskatoon, Sask., has relocated back to Saskatoon following a 25-year aerospace engineering career in the United States. Michael worked for Digitalglobe, Rockwell Collins, ITT Gilfillan, SpaceX, and Northrop Grumman developing radio frequency (RF) telemetry, telecommand, and tracking systems for spacecraft and launch vehicles. Michael is now volunteering with a variety of organizations including the Engineering Space Design Team, Alumni Association, Engineering Advancement Trust, and serving as an alternate warden for Kipling Camp 4.

**Mr. Barry G Munro, BComm'84**, received a Distinguished Service Award from CPA Alberta in March 2021, for his volunteer leadership roles on two complex community projects benefiting Calgary: the creation and chairmanship of the Opportunity Calgary Investment Fund (a \$100 million economic development fund in Calgary); and serving as the lead negotiator of the \$550 million Calgary Event Centre project, involving the City of Calgary, Calgary Sports and Entertainment (the Calgary Flames); the Calgary Stampede and Calgary Municipal Land Corp. This recognition complements the FCA/FCPA designation that Mr. Munro was previously awarded in 2017. Mr. Munro is a senior partner at EY and is the national leader of its corporate finance business.

**Ms. Carol A. Parchewsky, BE'89**, of Calgary, Alta., was appointed president of the Board of Directors of the Writers' Guild of Alberta on Dec. 16, 2020.



**Mr. David A. (Dave) Rodney, BA'87, BEd'88**, of Canmore, Alta., has been appointed Alberta's senior representative for tourism investment and parks liaison.

**Dr. Michael W Thomas, PhD'85**, of Stourport-on-Severn, U.K., has a new poetry collection, *Under Smoky Light*, that has just been published by Offa's Press. A recent 'Transatlantic Zoom' launch for the collection, with Philadelphia poet Barry George, attracted audience members from Ontario, British Columbia, U.K., U.S., China and Japan.

1990s

**Hon. Dato Noraini B Ahmad, BComm'91**, completed her PhD in 2016 and will be completing her DBA this coming Oct. 2021. She has been serving as the Minister of Higher Education of Malaysia since 2020.



**Mr. Jan-Maarten H. Bloemraad, BSPE'98**, of Calgary, Alta., is currently CEO of The Glencoe Club and The Glencoe Golf and Country Club, Calgary.

**Rev. Dr. Michael J Fast, BA'92**, of Maple Ridge, B.C., graduated from the University of the Philippines in July 2020 with a PhD in Philippine Studies. His dissertation was entitled *Pagkalalaki at maka-Diyos: A dialogic look a masculinity and religiosity among Filipino males*. He currently serves as the vice-president for academic affairs and dean at the South East Asian Theological Schools, Inc.

**Ms. Brandy L. Mackintosh, BComm'97**, of Saskatoon, Sask., was awarded the University of Saskatchewan's Provost's College Award for Outstanding Teaching in April 2021.

**Ms. Paije A. McGrath, BE'99**, of Calgary, Alta., published her first book, *Dream Home Confessions: Lessons from Planning, Designing and Creating our Custom Home* which is her story of the journey from land purchase to move-in day. It is a cheat sheet for other homeowners on decision-making and project management to create a custom home.

**Ms. Alexandra G Popoff, MA'98**, of Saskatoon, Sask., wrote *Vasily Grossman and the Soviet Century* which won the 2019 Canadian Jewish Literary award for Biography; University of Saskatchewan Nonfiction Award (2020); became a finalist in the 2019 National Jewish Book Awards, biography category, and was long-listed for the 2019 Cundill History Prize.

**Ms. Melanie A. Reid, BEd'95, BSA'19**, of Saskatoon, Sask., was awarded the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission Graduate Scholarships. This award recognizes academic excellence of graduate students at the College of Agriculture and Bioresources conducting research of scientific relevance to a sustainable and profitable western Canadian flax sector.

**Ms. Jo-Anne (Jodie) E Stark, BComm'91, JD'92**, published the book *Mastering the Art of Legal Coaching*, after establishing the first all-virtual legal coaching practice, called Stark Solutions Legal Coaching & Consulting. Mrs. Stark is a frequent presenter and regular contributor in provincial and national legal publications. She resides in Vancouver, B.C., where she recently founded the national Legal Coaches Association, a non-profit organization that certifies legal coaches to help self-represented

litigants across Canada. Mrs. Stark is also the Director of Advocacy at the Canadian Bar Association in B.C.



**Ms. Glorie B Tebbutt, MA'91**, of Saskatoon, Sask., established an online academic coaching business - Summit Academic Coaching - after seeing the needs of students last spring when classes went online.

2000s

**Dr. Elizabeth A Scott, BA'03, MA'06, PhD'14**, of Saskatoon, Sask., has been awarded the 2020 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Museums for their innovative multi-media project focusing on Saskatchewan's Doukhobor community.

**An honorary degree is the highest honour the university can bestow. Honorary degrees are awarded to outstanding individuals who have made a worthy and unique contribution.**

Nominations for honorary degree recipients are accepted year-round and are reviewed bi-annually by the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees.

The guidelines and form for nominations can be found on the Governance Office website at: <https://governance.usask.ca/senate/honorary-degrees.php>

2010s

**Dr. Anirban Banerjee, MSc'12, (PhD)**, of Waterloo, Ont., has been offered a post-doctoral fellow position at the Department of Chemical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University of Waterloo.

**Ms. Nicole M Haldoupis, MA'16**, of St. John's, N.L., had her first book published. It is a short novel made up of linked flash fiction called *Tiny Ruins* and was released with Radiant Press (Regina) in October 2020. *Tiny Ruins* was her MFA thesis project, which was supervised by the incredible Dr. Jeanette Lynes. Haldoupis also worked with a mentor in the program, local writer Dave Margoshes.

**Mrs. Joelynn R Radbourne, BSN'13, MN'19**, recently received an award for nursing excellence as a nurse practitioner from the international association of nurses. Radbourne received recognition as a 2021 worldwide leader in health care. She is currently the nurse practitioner representative on the Saskatchewan cervical screening task force and biography publication in the international journal of medicine for worldwide leaders in health care and today's nurse.

**Ms. Phoenix A Rider, BSc'14**, of Montmartre, Sask., and from Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation, represented the Indigenous Student Council on the University of Saskatchewan Student Union. After graduation, she joined the Canadian Armed Forces as an armoured crewman and has since been posted to CFB Edmonton with the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) and has travelled to the U.S., U.K. and France for training and engagement. In 2018, she was appointed to the position of Alberta regional military co-chair for the Defense Aboriginal Advisory Group and continues to work with other regions to ensure Aboriginal culture and identity is respected within the Armed Forces.

**Dr. David A Smith, PhD '16**, of Saskatoon, Sask., has written *Cowboy Presidents: The Frontier Myth and U.S. Politics Since 1900*, published by the University of Oklahoma Press.



**Ms. Christine K Young, BA'14**, of Saskatoon, Sask., completed her master's degree in international law at the United Nations University for Peace in Costa Rica. She then worked as a fellow with the Middlebury Institute for International Studies and the Warren Buffet Foundation to conduct research on water conflict in Honduras and El Salvador. Young currently lives in Beijing and works in the international business department for a green energy contracting company that focuses on solar and wind energy projects.



# IN MEMORIAM

The Alumni Association has noted, with sorrow, the passing of the following graduates.

Please note that the 2020 issue of the *Green & White* was not printed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All In Memoriams during this time period can be found on our website [alumni.usask.ca](http://alumni.usask.ca). The following In Memoriam includes those who have passed January 2021- May 2021. Names are listed by decade of receipt of their first USask degree.

## 1930s

MacLean, Gwendolyn (Gwen), BHSC'38

## 1940s

Calanchie, James, BSA'49  
Emmerson, Mary, BA'46  
Given, Alexander, BE'49  
Hartz, Theodore (Ted), BA'45, BED'46, MA'48  
Pourbaix, John, BA'47, EDUC'48  
Seaman, Byron, BE'45, DSC'92  
Smith, Thomas (Tom), BE'45  
Talarico, Elizabeth (Betty), BHSC'48  
Zubko, Victor, BE'49

## 1950s

Campbell, John, BE'54  
Champion, Norma, BA'51  
Graham, William, BA'51, MA'53, DSC'00  
Krochak, Michael, BA'53, MD'57  
Learmonth, Robert (Bob), BCOMM'55  
MacHardy, Fenton, BE'50  
McMillan, Douglas, BE'54  
Montbriand, Leslie (Ted), BE'59, MSC'61, PHD'69  
Neufeld, Bernard, BA'51  
Riopel, Marie-Lou (Marie-Lou), BA'53  
Swan, Peter, BA'51, MA'57, BED'59  
Townsend, Clifford, BA'58, EDUC'62, BED'64  
Vinge, Lorne, MD'58  
Warden, Alan, BA'54  
Wilbraham, John, AGRIC'54

## 1960s

Craig, Allan, BCOMM'62  
Doerksen, James, BA'65, BSP'67  
Dumba, Andrew, BED'64  
Edwards, Enid, BA'66, MD'81  
Gibson, William (Bill), BA'68, BCOMM'70  
Latham, Dennis, BE'61  
Lock, William, BED'68  
Lubyk, Larry, BSA'65  
Reynolds, Garry, BSP'62  
Smith, Colin, MD'62

## 1970s

Anthony, William, BA'76  
Brecht, Raymond, BUSCER'73  
Brentnell, Nancy, BA'78, BCOMM'83  
Dove, Elmer, BCOMM'72  
Henderson, Kenneth, BSP'70  
Kyle, Keith, AGRIC'71  
Leier, Elizabeth, BA'70  
Lowndes, Reginald, BE'71  
Mitzel, Melvin (Mel), BCOMM'79  
Peardon, Murray, AGRIC'73  
Robertson, Susan, BA'78, ARTS'83, MA'89, PHD'02  
Robinson, Shelley, BA'78, BSN'79, ARTS'87  
Shewchuk, John, BSC'71, MD'76  
Slatnik, John, BA'73, BCOMM'76  
Sullivan, Sheila, BED'74  
Sutherland, Lynn, BADMIN'74  
Wieler, Arley, BED'71, BA'74, MEDUC'78

## 1980s

Aulie, Karen, BCOMM'85  
Bell, Darrell, BA'81  
Hryn, David, BE'83  
Murison, Laurie, BSC'81

## 1990s

Bertolo, Susan, BUSADM'96  
Hockley, Robert (Blair), BE'96  
Hope, Shaun, BE'91, BSC'91  
McNiven, Marnie, MBA'99  
Repetski, Mark, AGRIC'97  
Thunderchild, Victor, BED'91

## 2000s

Farkas, Lori, BA'02

## 2010s

Garang, Athiann, BE'14  
Tomiyama, Patrick, BE'15

## FACULTY AND STAFF

Bishopp, William D  
Friesen, Douglas J  
Sargent, Colin M

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