

# Degrees

volume 31, no. 1 | spring/summer 2019

The University of Regina Magazine



**Carol LaFayette-Boyd's run at greatness**



University  
of Regina







Before the snow left us, University photographer Trevor Hopkin took a stroll over to First Nations University of Canada (FNU) to capture the scene of the colourful teepees that adorned the front yard of the federated college. The photo was taken around the time of an historic signing agreement between Star Blanket Cree Nation, FNU, University of Regina, Government of Saskatchewan, Government of Canada and City of Regina. The partnership officially grants urban reserve status to FNU and creates Canada's first urban reserve specifically for the advancement of education. The new reserve is called *atim kâ-mihkosit*, which translates to Red Dog. The buffalo sculpture is the work of former University art instructor Joe Fafard, who passed away March 19. (See story on page 32).

Photo by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina Photography Department.

Welcome to the spring/summer issue of *Degrees* magazine. We have done our very best to once again bring you engaging stories about some of the interesting people associated with the University of Regina.

I first heard from Denis Carignan when he reached out to me to consider telling the story of PLATO Testing, a Maritime-based company that trains and employs Indigenous Canadians across the country as professional software testers. Carignan, a graduate of First Nations University of Canada and a member of the Pasqua First Nation near Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan is the company's president and COO. The company's goal is to train and provide meaningful and sustainable jobs for 1,000 Indigenous Canadians. You can read about Carignan and PLATO Testing's expansion into Saskatchewan on page 32.

I first ran into Yvonne Harrison at a University Christmas get-together last year. Harrison told me about the program she started at Luther College, one of the University's federated colleges. Harrison is the director of the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Studies Network, a five-course

certificate program that's helping to improve the skill set of individuals working in Saskatchewan's volunteer and non-profit sectors. That story begins on page 8.

Emilia Becker is a dynamic young woman who is taking one last class to fulfil the requirements of her Bachelor of Arts degree, which she will receive at the fall convocation. Becker's journey towards her degree has been arduous at times because of the effects of a brain injury she suffered in a school bus accident when she was 11 years old. Becker deserves the lion's share of the credit for her accomplishments but her mom, family, fiancée, and members of the University community were there to boost her when she needed it. Becker's story begins on page 20.

You can read about this spring's deserving honorary degree recipients starting on page 11. Barb Ryan and son Jon, Renu Kapoor, Eric Peterson and Gordon and Jill Rawlinson all enter the exclusive rolls of U of R honorary degree recipients.

I met Carol LaFayette-Boyd on a mid-April morning when we got together to take some photos for her story, which begins on page 24. Last year,

after several gold medals and world records, LaFayette-Boyd was named Female Athlete of the Year by World Masters Athletics. After earning a certificate and degree in social work at the University of Regina, LaFayette-Boyd enjoyed a long career in social services. She took up track and field at age 50. Some 25 years later, she's still going strong, as our cover attests.

I would like to remind you that *Degrees* magazine is now online. You'll find some features on our website that don't make it into the printed magazine. For instance, Lives Well Lived, our tribute to seven remarkable members of the University of Regina family who recently passed, starts on page 28. The full text on each of these outstanding role models can only be found online.

Please take some time to consider how you would prefer to receive *Degrees*. Let us know by going to the *Degrees* website at [www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca). At the top of the page, you will find "Subscribe". Click the link and you will be taken to a preference centre where you will find the following options:

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I trust you will enjoy this issue of *Degrees* magazine. Thank you for reading.

Greg Campbell BFA'85, BJ'95  
Editor

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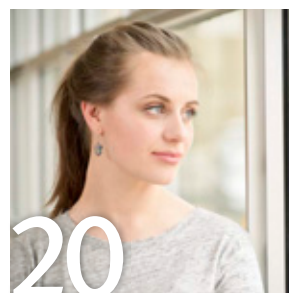
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# Degrees

## The University of Regina Magazine

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**On the cover:** Demonstrating the form that won her five gold medals at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Malaga, Spain, Carol LaFayette-Boyd CSW'77, BSW'85 explodes around the bend. Photo by Arthur Ward.



## Features

**Educating leaders for the non-profit sectors** 8  
 Luther College and the University of Regina's Centre for Continuing Education are delivering a unique certificate program that is better preparing those engaged in Saskatchewan's volunteer and non-profit sectors.

**Spring 2019 honorary degree recipients** 11  
 Meet the newest members of the University's most exclusive club.

**True grit** 20  
 Emilia Becker suffered a brain injury in a school bus accident when she was 11 years old. Battling through the effects of the injury has never been easy. Now, after years of hard work and determination, she is celebrating graduation at the University's fall convocation.

**Running down a dream** 24  
 Carol LaFayette-Boyd has made a name for herself at track and field competitions around the world. Last year, she was named Female Athlete of the Year by World Masters Athletics. What will the 76-year-old do for an encore?

**Lives well lived** 28  
 The University family lost seven truly remarkable individuals in the past few months who had strong ties to the institution. We enlisted the help of some of those who knew them best and asked them to reflect on the lives they lived and the gifts they left.

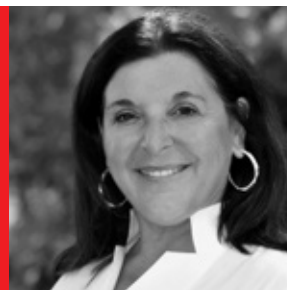
**Answering the call** 32  
 Taking a cue from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, a graduate of First Nations University of Canada is leading a firm that is building capacity for employment of Indigenous Canadians in Saskatchewan and across the country.

## departments

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## President's Note



Members of the University community,

I recently came across a Muslim proverb that is powerfully symbolic of the inclusivity that we strive for at the University of Regina.

"A lot of different flowers make a bouquet."

The beauty of the mixed bouquet is its diversity. One needs only walk our halls to understand the tremendous diversity that constitutes the students, faculty and staff at our University. It's not enough to simply admit and hire diverse students, faculty and staff members – we must take ongoing action to ensure that diversity and equality are continually sought after. I'm proud to say that at the University of Regina, we are taking a leadership role in the pursuit of diversity and equity in several ways.

For instance, on March 21, we launched the anti-discrimination campaign: "You Belong Here. Racism Doesn't." This campaign reinforces our fundamental tenet that the University is a welcoming institution, open to all, and also raises awareness about behaviours and attitudes – such as harassment, discrimination, bullying and abuse – that are not acceptable on the University's campuses and should not be acceptable in our world. A complementary initiative, UR Respect is an

interactive eLearning tool for faculty and staff that was launched last fall. This online training program helps reinforce what constitutes unacceptable behaviours in the workplace.

Our long-time commitment to Indigenization is another way we endeavour to ensure that diversity flourishes. In November 2016, we established the Working Group for the University of Regina's Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Report. This group consists of faculty members and staff from across campus with important guidance from our Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

This group developed a Statement of Commitment that defines five key actions designed to provide the University community with the tools necessary for reconciliation and advances in decolonization. These actions are:

- knowledge of treaties, specifically of treaties 4 and 6;
- an understanding of Canada's history with and the continuance of colonialism, including of the Indian residential schools and the *Indian Act*;
- an awareness of indigenous ways of knowing and how these relate to programs of study;
- knowledge of the key elements of the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* and its *Calls to Action*, the Royal Commission

on Aboriginal Peoples, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and

- an understanding of the role they can play in reconciliation based on the knowledge and skills they will have acquired at the University of Regina.

To support these actions and our commitment to reconciliation, I am pleased to share that all faculty and staff members will have access to an online certificate program entitled "4 Seasons of Reconciliation." This program is a multimedia educational resource that provides a grounding in the history and contemporary realities of Indigenous people in Canada – a grounding that we should all have so that reconciliation can meaningfully take place in Canada.

The University's commitment to a diverse and inclusive learning community also extends to students with disabilities. In the past ten years, the number of students accessing services through the Centre for Student Accessibility has grown by nearly 300 per cent (from 270 students to 740 students). To better serve these students, we are opening the University's Central Testing Facility. The Central Testing Facility is a new unit on campus that will meet the needs of students that require special accommodations during exam

time. Construction of the testing center continues and work is underway to hire and train staff and purchase and install specialized equipment. This initiative will help support students with accessibility needs to achieve academic success in an equal and effective manner.

Another distinct flower in the University of Regina bouquet is the French-language community on our campus. Earlier this year, the University renamed the Language Institute building to La Cité. This renaming affirms the University's commitment to French-language education and our partnerships with the Assemblée communautaire francophone and the Francophone community. As La Cité director, Emmanuel Aito writes in his website message, "La Cité is not simply a symbol of linguistic and cultural diversity ... La Cité is the beating heart of French-language education."

As I have stated many times, I believe that the University of Regina should not reflect the world in which we live, but rather, the world in which we want to live. With initiatives such as these, I am confident we are moving toward creating the world in which we will all want to live.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons  
President and Vice-Chancellor

**Left: David Malloy**  
**Centre: Kathleen McNutt**  
**Right: Harold Riemer**



### Accolades

**President Vianne Timmons** has received a trio of prestigious honours since the last issue of *Degrees*. On November 20, 2018, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, Governor General of Canada, invested Timmons as an Officer of the Order of Canada. One of Canada's highest civilian honours, the Order of Canada recognizes outstanding achievement, dedication to the community, and service to the nation. Timmons has been appointed for, among other things, her longstanding work in the areas of inclusive education for persons with disabilities, family literacy, and women's leadership. In March Timmons received notice that she was the recipient of the 2019 YWCA's Nutrien Women of Distinction Award for lifetime achievement for her influence, endurance and exceptional accomplishments. The gala was held on May 2. On June 4, Timmons received an honorary degree from the University of Calgary.

**Harley Weston**, University of Regina mathematics and statistics professor emeritus, was one of 49 Canadian mathematicians inducted into the Canadian Mathematical Society's Inaugural Class of Fellows at the CMS Winter Meeting banquet in Vancouver in December 2018. The Fellows Program recognizes Canadian

mathematicians who have made significant contributions to mathematical research, teaching and exposition. Weston is the first CMS Fellow from Saskatchewan. Weston spent almost 40 years in the classroom, sharing his passion for mathematics with thousands of students. During his career, he has received several honours recognizing his outstanding teaching and community service. He was a key figure in the development of the University of Regina's Math Central website, an undertaking that introduced web-based internet services designed for teachers and students of mathematics at the K-12 level. Created in 1995, it was one of the first mathematics education websites in existence – receiving upwards of 120,000 visits per day. It has been maintained by University faculty and students ever since, earning many awards along the way.

### Coming and goings

**David Malloy**, vice-president (Research), has been appointed principal of King's University College at his alma mater, Western University in London, Ont. His appointment is effective July 1, 2019. Over the course of his 30 years as a faculty member and administrator, Malloy has taught and led with great passion. He has held such

positions as assistant dean of the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies, associate dean in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, and associate vice-president (Research), and has served as vice-president (Research) since 2013.

**Kathleen McNutt** has been appointed the interim vice-president (Research). She formerly served as executive director of the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy.

**Nick Jones** has been appointed the interim associate vice-president (Research) and dean, of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. Jones previously served as the associate dean (Research and Graduate Studies) for the Faculty of Arts.

**Harold Riemer** has been appointed to a second five-year term as dean of Kinesiology and Health Studies, effective July 1, 2020. Originally from Edmonton, Riemer is an alumnus of the University of Alberta and Eastern Washington University. He earned his PhD from Ohio State University in 1995. Riemer spent time as a faculty member at Bowling Green State University in Ohio and the University of Texas (Austin) prior to accepting a faculty position at the University of Regina in 1999.

**Amr Henni** has been appointed acting dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science for the period of July 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019. Henni is currently professor and program chair of Industrial Systems Engineering, and the associate dean of Graduate Studies and Research. He graduated from l'Institut Algérien du Pétrole with a Diplôme d'Ingénieur d'État in gas engineering. He has earned two master's degrees – one in mechanical engineering (Stevens Institute in Hoboken, New Jersey) and a second in chemical engineering (University of Alberta). Henni earned his PhD in industrial systems engineering from the University of Regina.

**Neil Paskewitz** has been appointed associate vice-president (Facilities Management) effective May 1, 2019. The associate vice-president works with the University of Regina's leadership team and staff of Facilities Management to provide overall strategic direction to maintain and improve the University's physical environment. Paskewitz has been a member of the University community since 2004, first in the role of manager, Mechanical and Electrical Projects, and later as director, Planning, Design and Construction.

**Bradyn Parisian BBA'08, MBA'12, ICD.D'18** is the inaugural Rawlinson Executive in Residence in Indigenous Entrepreneurship with the Hill and Levene Schools of Business. In his role, Parisian helps indigenous students develop the necessary skills to become successful entrepreneurs. He also aims to increase interest in Indigenous entrepreneurship and help create a network of mentors to support students in their entrepreneurial ventures. Parisian is a University of Regina alumnus from both the Hill and Levene Schools of Business. He has also completed a professional certificate in corporate innovation and entrepreneurship from Stanford University, in addition to executive education programs at Rotman School of Management, Queen's University, the Disney Institute and the Schulich School of Business. Parisian currently serves as a corporate director on the boards of Cowessess Ventures Ltd., Black Lake Ventures LP, Gabriel Housing Corporation, and the First Nations Power Authority. Parisian is currently a sessional instructor at the Paul J. Hill School of Business and First Nations University of Canada, and has helped establish post-secondary scholarships for students in business and health care. Parisian is also a mentor and supporter of the Mother Theresa Middle School, which is a cause that is very important to him. This position has been funded by philanthropists Gordon and Jill Rawlinson. (See story page 15.)

#### Giving

Kenneth Levene LLD'17 donated \$100,000 to equip one of the Kenneth Levene

Graduate School of Business classrooms with state of the art streaming technology. Part of the donation will also be used to launch a program to offer tailored support to Indigenous students who wish to pursue a graduate-level education. In 2005, Levene made a \$4 million donation to help create the University's graduate school of business – the Kenneth Levene Graduate School of Business. The most recent donation creates the Kenneth Levene Streaming Studio – a classroom outfitted with cameras, microphones and software that enables broadcasts to students with internet access anywhere in the world. Indigenous Pathways is a graduate-level program offering support to Indigenous graduate students with scholarships and tailored programming. The initiative also creates networking and community building opportunities. The University is matching Levene's donation.

**Nevan Krogan BSc'97, MSc'99** has created the Jack and June Krogan Women in Science Scholarship to honour his parents. Their encouragement of Krogan and his three older sisters allowed them to go after their dreams. Born and raised in Regina, Krogan attended the University of Regina from 1993 to 1999, receiving his undergraduate degree in biochemistry and his master's degree in biology. Since that time, Krogan has obtained a PhD in medical genetics from the University of Toronto, authored more than 200 papers, and started the Krogan Lab at the University of California, San Francisco. As a researcher, molecular biologist, and professor, Krogan is regarded for his research in

areas including HIV and cancer. Throughout his accomplished career, Krogan has noticed a lack of female representation in the sciences. Recipients of the scholarship receive a \$3,000 bursary, as well as a two-month, fully funded summer research experience at the Krogan Lab in San Francisco.

On April 25, the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Public Service and Procurement and Accessibility, was on hand to announce a \$1 million grant to ensure Darke Hall is fully accessible. The monies are from the **Enabling Accessibility Fund**, an annual federal fund that supports community-based projects across Canada aimed at improving accessibility and safety in public spaces and workplaces. As part of its restoration, Darke Hall will be retrofitted with a fully accessible entrance, extra-wide aisles, elevators and stair lifts, accessible seating and washrooms. Work on Darke Hall – the final stage of the College Avenue Renewal Project – is expected to wrap up in the next year, with a grand opening expected in the fall of 2020. In attendance for the announcement was Frank Darke, grandson of Francis Darke, whose donation in 1929 was the catalyst for the building of Darke Hall.

#### Research

Psychology professor **Heather Hadjistavropoulos** and **Tarun Katapally**, associate professor at the University's Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, have received \$500,000 in funding for their patient-oriented research. The Patient-Oriented Research Leadership Grant is awarded by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation and

the Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research. Hadjistavropoulos received the funding for the University's Online Therapy Unit. She says that internet-delivered cognitive behaviour therapy is valuable because it can overcome barriers to face-to-face therapy by delivering patient-friendly treatment materials over the internet. Katapally is spearheading innovations in digital population health data collection. Katapally and his research team have developed the SMART Platform, a smartphone app that uses built-in features including GPS, accelerometer, camera, Wi-Fi, bluetooth and gyroscope to measure activity levels in a population.

**Michelle Coupal** and **Jennifer Gordon** are the University's newest Canada Research Chairs (CRC) and bring more than \$1 million in federal funding to their research enterprise. Coupal, whose CRC is in Truth and Reconciliation Education, will help respond to the educative Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada by providing educators with both the theories and practical strategies for bringing Indigenous materials into the classroom. Gordon, the new CRC in Biopsychosocial Determinants of Women's Mental Health, will inform the prediction, prevention, and treatment of reproductive mood disorders. She will focus on depression in the menopause transition – which affects one in three women and costs the Canadian health-care system approximately \$45 million annually. Coupal and Gordon join seven other Canada Research Chairs at the University of Regina.



The Canada Research Chairs Program is part of a national strategy to make Canada one of the world's top countries in research and development.

### Briefly

After a lengthy and difficult illness, **Nelson Wagner**, the long-time associate vice-president (Facilities Management), passed away peacefully, surrounded by family on Wednesday, April 3, 2019 at the age of 66 years. At all times throughout his ordeal, his grace and dignity remained intact, as did his wit and sense of humour.

In late March, **Emily Grafton**, the University's executive lead, Indigenization, led 18 scholars from across campus through the Enhancing Academic Indigenization Certificate program. The training is designed to deepen the knowledge and practice of Indigenization for faculty and graduate students. Indigenization is one of the University's overarching priorities identified in its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan: *peyak aski kikawinaw – Together we are Stronger*.

**"You Belong Here. Racism Doesn't."** is the University's new anti-discrimination campaign launched earlier this year. The campaign reinforces the message that the University is a welcoming institution that is open to all. It also raises awareness of the behaviours and attitudes – such as bullying, abuse, harassment and discrimination – that are not acceptable on the University's campuses. The campaign's launch on March 21 coincided with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The initiative

complements UR Respect, an interactive eLearning tool launched last fall that was developed by Respect Group Inc. and co-founded by child advocate Sheldon Kennedy. The program delivers online training programs aimed at preventing unacceptable behaviours in sports, education and the workplace.

Already the veteran of three Special Olympics Summer World Games, University of Regina student **Michael Qing** brought home four medals in swimming – three gold and one bronze from the Games in March in Abu Dhabi. Qing won gold in the 800 metres and 1500 metres freestyle, and the 4 X 100 metres medley relay butterfly, and a bronze in the 400 metres freestyle events. The 26-year-old is part of Campus For All (CFA), an inclusive post-secondary education initiative for adults with an intellectual disability. Academics, social connections and employment are the three pillars of the CFA student experience. CFA students engage in participatory auditing of one class per semester, submitting modified assignments. At the end of at least six full semesters (to a maximum of eight semesters), CFA students receive a certificate and participate with their peers in Convocation. CFA students also receive alumni status within the University of Regina Alumni Association.

Early in February, the Government of Canada announced a \$2.95 million commitment to support 22 one-year research projects through the **Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Post-Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI) Catalyst Grants** competition. The University's Gordon Asmundson, Ronald Camp,

Nick Carleton, Alec Couros, Amber Fletcher, and David Malloy will undertake research in varying capacities on 12 of the CIHR-PTSI Catalyst projects. The federal government, having identified PTSIs among our nation's public safety personnel as a priority in Budget 2018, also invested \$20 million over five years to support the CIHR-CIPSRT National Research Consortium for Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries among Public Safety Personnel. For its part, CIPSRT serves as the Consortium's Knowledge Exchange Hub, a storehouse of vital evidence-based research that will be at the fingertips of Canadians. Researchers, policy-makers, public safety personnel, leadership and their families, as well as the public, will have one place to find and share key evidence-based research, improving Canadians' ability to create the policies, program and treatments that will improve the mental well-being and resilience of our nation's public safety personnel, as well their families and those in leadership.

In mid-February, the atrium of **First Nations University of Canada (FNUiv)** was the site of an historic signing agreement. The partnership between Star Blanket Cree Nation, FNUiv, University of Regina, Government of Saskatchewan, Government of Canada, City of Regina and CIBC officially grants urban reserve status to FNUiv and, in the process, creates Canada's first urban reserve specifically for the advancement of education. The new reserve is called *atim kâ-mihkosit*, which translates to Red Dog from Cree.

**Mark Wihak**, associate professor in the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance, has written and is now directing

and producing, *Resting Potential*, his new feature film that will be released online in nine chapters starting this fall. While Wihak won't divulge much about the plot, he does reveal that the focus is on Lucy, who experiences profound changes because of her beliefs. *Resting Potential* is created by a team of actors, cinematographers, lighting designers, a sound and design team, a composer, and an editor. Many of the creative contributors behind the film are alumni of the University of Regina's film department.

Two established U of R professors have taken on new roles with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR). **Lisa Watson** and **Fanhua (Bill) Zeng** will work with the FGSR team to advance the graduate studies and student experience at the University of Regina. Watson has been with the University since 2005, and serves as an associate professor of marketing in the Hill and Levene Schools of Business. For the past 10 years, Zeng has been an assistant professor in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Sciences and is the program chair of the Petroleum Systems Engineering program.

Late in 2018, *The New Yorker* magazine published University of Regina graduate **Dakota McFadzean's BFA'05 (Hons)** comic "The Revolution Will Also Be Vegan" in the *Daily Shouts* section of their website. The comic features two characters as they literally eat the rich after a proletarian revolution. Typical of 21st century uprisings, one of the characters in the cartoon is vegan and unable to truly enjoy cannibalizing his aristocratic elite dinner. Lucky for him, a vegan-friendly substitute is provided, compliments of his friend.

# Educating **leaders** in the non-profit sector



**A recently introduced certificate program, delivered by Luther College and the University of Regina's Centre for Continuing Education, is building important leadership capacity in Saskatchewan's volunteer and non-profit sectors.**

**By Iryn Tushabe BJ'14**

Photos by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina  
Photography Department.

**M**aria Fernanda Martinez CNSLI'18 sits in her office at the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina where she works as the donor services coordinator for the Archbishop's Appeal.

"It's an excellent position for me because one of my favourite areas in the non-profit sector is fundraising," she says of her job, which includes a fundraising campaign whose proceeds support ministries, programs and Catholic charities in Southern Saskatchewan. "I'm also really happy because I never thought I'd secure a satisfying job so soon."

Martinez moved to Canada at the end of 2017 in search of professional advancement. Her non-profit work experience in her native Colombia was extensive, including, at one point, managing corporate contributions for a private company. Just before leaving, she was the funding lead in a non-profit organization. She had the experience but lacked academic credentials.

"I was researching different programs that matched my non-profit interest," she says, adding that she was drawn to shorter courses and ones that complement her existing experience in the non-profit sector. That's how she happened upon Luther College and the Centre for Continuing Education's Certificate in Nonprofit Sector Leadership and Innovation (NSLI).

"It fulfilled all my criteria," she says. "It was short so I could do it in one year and I could work part-time or full-time while I completed it. So I applied and was accepted."

Under the directorship of Yvonne Harrison, the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Studies Network (NVSSN), located at Luther College at the University of Regina, oversees delivery of the five-course NSLI Certificate. It's the first formal program of study on the non-profit and voluntary sector in Saskatchewan.

Harrison draws from her extensive non-profit and voluntary sector background, rich in scholarship and innovative research. As a faculty member at the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy at the State University of New York at Albany (University of Albany, SUNY), she was awarded the President's Award for Exemplary Public Engagement and received grants to increase access to non-profit leadership education and research by proposing a series of massive open online courses on improving leadership and governance in non-profit organizations. Those courses currently enrol about 19,000 people in 162 countries.

"And they are working on critical social justice and economic issues, often in countries without functioning governments," she says, explaining that students are encouraged to use the course and open source materials she and co-instructor, Professor Vic Murray of the University of Victoria, developed to teach, conduct research and provide a service to help boards reach higher levels of performance. This includes Board Checkup, a free online tool students and boards use to conduct confidential assessments of board performance, and *Guidelines for Improving the Effectiveness of Boards of Directors of Nonprofit Organizations*, the SUNY Open Textbook, which has been downloaded over 11,200 times.

She says that even in more stable economies where there have been a growing number of governance failures, there's a movement for boards within the non-profit and voluntary sector to beef up governance processes to be more efficient, effective and accountable.

"So, universities are giving back to the communities, not only by sharing the knowledge and resources they have, but also by shaping education and research to generate real, usable, practical knowledge to help them respond to real world problems," Harrison says.

To that end, the NSLI certificate program follows a largely applied experiential learning model, intentionally connecting students to organizations in the community through academic courses in one way or another. This is what, in part, appealed to alumna Hannah Sackville BA'18, CNSLI'18.

"While you're learning about cost analysis and mission drift as issues within an organization, for example, you're also consulting with a local non-profit that's struggling with those issues," says Sackville, who currently works for the Alzheimer

Society of Saskatchewan. "You're doing research that can inform their future decisions, depending on how well you've done your job, of course," she adds.

Sackville was among the first cohort to graduate from the program and currently sits on the NVSSN Advisory Committee. During the program, she remembers working in various capacities with local non-profits, including the Regina Bridge Club, the Indian Head Grand Theatre, the Joshua Mutafya Foundation and the Mennonite Central Committee.

"We were always learning from each other and working together to innovate," she says of projects that she and her classmates undertook. Sackville says these varied from boosting revenue development streams, to strategies for recruiting volunteers, to deciding — in the case of one particular charity — what to do with an unused space.

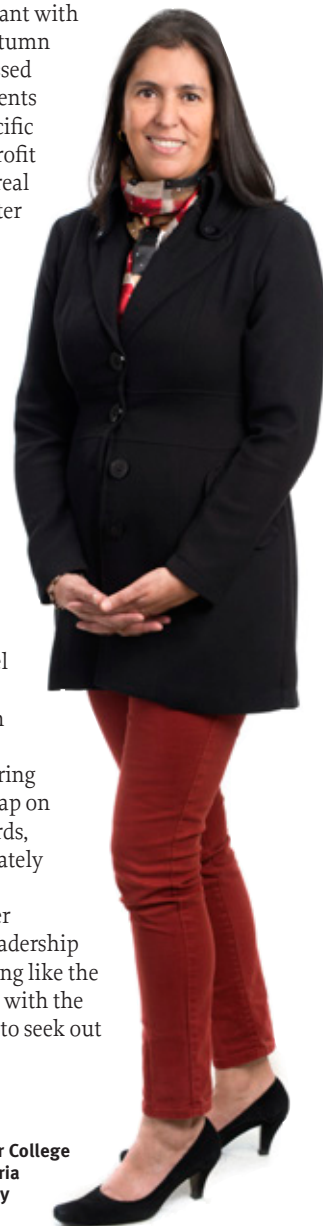
The experiential learning aspect of the curriculum is a highlight of the program that resonated with Martinez.

"There's no playing around," says Martinez, who worked as a research assistant with NVSSN before graduating in autumn 2018. She was especially impressed by all the projects that had students design proposals to address specific challenges faced by local non-profit organizations. "You get to help real non-profit organizations do better by offering valuable proposals that can be developed further."

For Sackville, being included on the NVSSN Advisory Committee — first as a student and now as an alumna — has served as a professional development opportunity.

"I get to work with a lot of people who are executive directors of organizations or who are practitioners in the community and who are supportive and conscious that, while I may not have their level of experience as a practitioner, my input on matters to do with NVSSN is valuable," she says.

According to Sackville, recurring statistics have revealed an age gap on important committees and boards, with younger people not adequately represented. People her age, she supposes, may not even consider themselves suitable for those leadership opportunities, but formal training like the NSLI certificate can equip them with the necessary skills and confidence to seek out those opportunities.



**Opposite page:** Yvonne Harrison, director of the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Studies Network located at Luther College at the University of Regina, has extensive experience in the non-profit and voluntary sectors. **Right:** Although Maria Fernanda Martinez had a lot of non-profit experience in her native Columbia, the NSLI Certificate program fit nicely with her availability and the skills she wished to acquire.



Harrison agrees. She says that formal academic programs on the non-profit and voluntary sectors not only foster the development of knowledge and leadership capability, they generate knowledge and resources that non-profit and voluntary organizations can use to further develop and grow.

Canada has the second largest non-profit sector in the world with an estimated 170,000 registered charities and non-profit organizations. According to Imagine Canada, an umbrella organization that represents the charitable sector, more than two million people are employed by non-profits. These institutions contribute \$176 billion in income and account for more than eight per cent of Canada's GDP.

But Harrison says those statistics are based on data collected from incorporated charitable and non-profit organizations of a certain size, which Canada Revenue Agency tracks. These data don't include the unincorporated voluntary associations or the contributions from volunteerism. "So, the sector's actually much larger than we know," she explains, "and what those social contributions add up to economically? It's a whole lot."

This is why Harrison sees it fitting that the province with the highest rate of volunteerism in the country (58 per cent) has an academic program like NVSSN to play a supporting role in enhancing contributions and building sector capacity in Saskatchewan.

One way NVSSN does this is by organizing gatherings like the Common Threads Conference, which brings people together to discuss emerging issues and trends within the sector. "That's where the seeds of innovation begin," Harrison says. "And that can inform education, it can inform research and it can inform service."

Last year's conference addressed the question: How do we become more representative of the communities we serve? The conference featured a panel of local experts, talking circles and a keynote by Patricia Bradshaw, dean of the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University and a professor

of Management. Bradshaw's keynote drew from research she had conducted and published on diversity and inclusion in the governance of non-profit organizations in Canada.

Participants, including students and local practitioners, left the conference with protocols, practices and evidence that diversity is a powerful tool that has transformed non-profit boards and organizations. The conference also planted the seed for a new NSLI course – Managing Diversity in Nonprofit Organizations – which launched in the winter 2019 semester.

"We see our program as an academic pathway," Harrison says. "Our community and students are now saying, 'We would like to see a course on this or that, more accessible, affordable and flexible courses, and a degree or a minor or a major because this is what we need to succeed or want to study and do.'"

"Absolutely," says Martinez about the idea of a degree option. She says graduating from the program has sharpened her interest in areas of the non-profit sector not tackled deeply by the certificate.

Sackville, too, says a degree program or more robust formalized education in the non-profit and voluntary sectors will open doors for early career workers. "I think that charitable and non-profit organizations in Canada are moving in that direction," she says. "They want to mitigate talent gaps down the road, and hiring and retaining qualified staff is the way to do that." **D**

*For more information on the program, visit: [www.luthercollege.edu/university/academics/luther-programs/voluntary-sector-studies-network](http://www.luthercollege.edu/university/academics/luther-programs/voluntary-sector-studies-network)*

*Iryn Tushabe is a Ugandan independent journalist and writer living in Saskatchewan. Her literary journalism has appeared in Canadian publications, including Prairies North magazine, and in Uganda's New Vision newspaper.*



Above: Hannah Sackville (left) was one of the first students to complete the NSLI certificate. She's seen here with the program's administrative assistant Vivya Natana.

# Spring 2019

## honorary degree recipients

Profiles by Bill Armstrong

Photo by Trevor Hopkin.



**Barb Ryan**  
Honorary Doctor of Laws

When honorary degree recipient Barb Ryan was contacted to provide a few comments about being recognized by the University of Regina, she was involved in the signature activity of her life: being “Mom” to her extended family of refugees, immigrant families and international students. In this case, she had just helped place a young refugee into the motor mechanics program at Saskatchewan Polytechnic.

“I have four kids, and I will mother anyone who will let me,” she says.

Mothering her four active, growing kids – Erica, Jill, Steve, and Jon – gave her good connections with a lot of people in the community. Now, she puts these connections into action whenever one of her other “kids” needs help.

After her husband Bob died at age 54, Ryan joined the Regina Wascana branch of the Canadian Progress Club (CPC), which had provided the down payment for a settlement house for refugees. Through the club, she was introduced to the Regina Open Door Society (RODS) and the work that it does for newcomers. Ryan was deeply moved. “The stories of what these people had endured hit

me hard,” she says. “Their resilience is inspiring. I have such respect for these people.”

Since then, Ryan has hosted two families from Africa and a refugee family of eight from Syria, showing them the city, helping them with everyday issues and in learning English. Through them, she has met many other families in the immigrant community and been inspired to help them connect with each other. Working with CPC Regina Wascana and RODS, she started a support group called Women to Women, where members teach newcomer women a skill or craft while visiting over coffee. Through the World University Service of Canada program at the U of R, Ryan has become “mom” to students from other countries who are away from their families.

“The Syrian kids regularly come to my place to cook their traditional food. We always have a nice time eating and visiting,” she says.

Ryan has also been involved with fundraising for charities, including the Progress Club’s Festival of Trees and the Champagne Classic women’s golf tournament in support of the children’s ward at the Regina General Hospital. She is a consummate networker, using her contacts to scrounge furniture and other household necessities, arrange educational placements and find jobs for members of her extended family.

For her tireless efforts in the community, Ryan has been recognized with the 2012 Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Award, the 2016 Red Cross Humanitarian Award, the Senate 150th anniversary medal and, earlier this year, the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal. She was delighted when University of Regina President Vianne Timmons informed her over lunch that she was to receive an honorary degree. “It’s an honour, and it’s lovely to have your labour of love recognized in the community,” Ryan says. “I tell my grandkids we are really lucky to live here and I try to show them we have to share; we have to give back.”

Ryan receives her honorary degree on June 5, 2019.

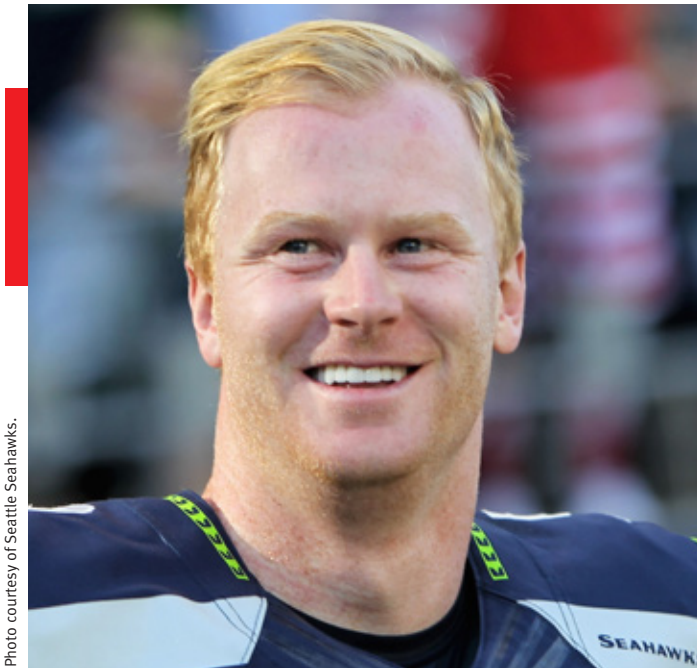


Photo courtesy of Seattle Seahawks.

## Jon Ryan

Honorary Doctor of Laws

He then spent two seasons as a punter with the CFL's Winnipeg Blue Bombers. He continued his career in the NFL, playing two seasons with the Green Bay Packers, followed by ten years with the Seattle Seahawks, including a Super Bowl championship in 2013. He was released by the Seahawks in August 2018. Ryan is proud of his longevity, being a member of a select group of just over 300 players who have appeared in more than 200 NFL games.

He is an outspoken supporter of the LGBTQ+ community, known for his strong response to online homophobic comments made after the Pulse nightclub shootings in 2016. "I'm a believer in equality," he says, "and that people should not be discriminated against on the basis of their race, sexuality or any other characteristic."

Ryan also believes in giving back to his community. In Saskatchewan, he founded the Gear Up with Jon Ryan Foundation to fill a gap that he identified in minor football programming in Regina. The foundation initially provided proper equipment for younger players playing tackle football and more training for coaches to improve player safety. It has since expanded to other communities across Saskatchewan, including support for a start-up team in the northern part of the province.

Ryan credits the behind-the-scenes work of his wife – actress and comedian Sarah Colonna – members of his family, and some local business people for the foundation's success in making football more accessible to young people. "There are about 25 people who put in unbelievable hours to make it go," he says.

As for receiving an honorary degree from his alma mater, Ryan says it was a complete surprise when he received the call from University President Vianne Timmons. "It's a great honour, and to receive an honorary degree at the same convocation that my mother (Barb Ryan) is getting one is pretty cool."

On May 14, Ryan signed a one-year contract to play for the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Ryan receives his honorary degree on June 5, 2019.

Jon Ryan will be forever immortalized – certainly on the Internet – for his touchdown pass that sparked a comeback playoff victory to ensure the Seattle Seahawks a berth in the 2014 NFL Super Bowl. The scoring toss – part of a fake field goal play – also earned Ryan a place in the NFL record book as the first punter to throw a touchdown pass in an NFL playoff game.

While that may be his signature play, he says one of his greatest accomplishments, was to be named a team captain by his fellow players for four consecutive years. "I always try to lead by example on and off the field," Ryan says. "That means never cutting corners, and treating all of the people you meet during a workday – and there are hundreds – the same way."

Ryan was born and raised in Regina, playing running back, place kicker, and punter for the Sheldon-Williams Spartans, and then wide receiver and punter for four seasons with the University of Regina Rams. At the end of his university career, Ryan was recognized with three team awards from the Rams and named a first-team Canada West All-Star and CIS All-Star.





Photo courtesy of Eric Peterson.

## Eric Peterson

Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts

After his second year he dropped out, working for a while with a semi-professional drama company before moving to England to work as an apprentice stage manager and stage carpenter, picking up acting roles when he could. When his work permit ran out, he returned to Western Canada, eventually settling in Vancouver where he met many people involved in the arts, including John Gray, who would become his long-time creative collaborator.

Later, in Toronto, Peterson's experience with emerging groups such as Theatre Passe Muraille, which aimed to create a home-grown theatre telling Canadian stories, profoundly affected his thinking about theatre and his ambitions as an actor. "I realized that theatre – and cultural expression in general – is as important as any other activity in the life of a nation and its people; providing glimpses of what living in Canada and being Canadian is like."

Peterson's long list of acting credits include *The Farm Show*, a collective creation based on conversations with people living in Ontario's farm country, and *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, a collaboration by Gray and Peterson that dramatizes the life of Canadian World War I fighter pilot Billy Bishop. The often-revived two-man musical has been a staple for Gray and Peterson throughout their careers. "Billy Bishop established us and made us famous, both in the theatre and on film," Peterson observes.

As for *Corner Gas* and his role as the irascible Oscar Leroy, Peterson describes what a huge thrill it was to step out and see his own landscape when he prepared for a day on the set. "I had to pinch myself, but it proved what I believed: that my country can produce successful cultural productions based on who we are."

Peterson also appeared in *Corner Gas: The Movie*, and continues to portray Oscar Leroy in the animated TV series.

Peterson receives his honorary degree on June 6, 2019.

"It's difficult for me to put into words," says stage, screen, and voice actor Eric Peterson about receiving an honorary degree from the University of Regina. "It's a big deal for me," he continues. "And it affirms to young people the possibility that they don't have to leave home to achieve success, that being a cultural worker is not just something done by other people in other places."

Peterson – who was born and raised in Indian Head, Saskatchewan – has fashioned a distinguished 50-year acting career that includes the enduring stage play *Billy Bishop Goes to War* and lead roles in the TV series *Street Legal*, *This is Wonderland* and Saskatchewan's own *Corner Gas*. He has performed on stage in countless theatres across Canada, at international festivals, at London's West End and on Broadway.

Peterson's pathway to success did require him to travel to establish his career. Along the way, he met other Canadians who were determined to discover and tell Canadian stories. After graduating high school, he attended the University of Saskatchewan, "with no idea of what I wanted to do," he says. While there, he was persuaded to take a part in a drama production and "took to it like a duck to water."



Photo by Trevor Hopkin.

## Renu Kapoor

Honorary Doctor of Laws honoris

As a child growing up in India, Renu Kapoor recalls her mother helping young women further their education, while her father was a founding member of the Rotary service club in the country. She also remembers that students coming from other countries to attend school in their community were welcomed into their home. She absorbed those childhood lessons and has applied them as a volunteer and fundraiser and in her professional work as a counsellor.

"I tend to volunteer with activities that relate to community needs that I've identified as important," she says. "My criteria for volunteering is: 'Will it help people and make our community better?'"

Kapoor has a Master of Social Work from the University of Lucknow, India, and a Master of Science-Social Work from the University of Wisconsin. She and her husband Don settled in Regina in 1965, when there was what she describes as a small but vibrant ethnic community in the city. "We faced challenges but felt welcomed," she says. "In many ways the Regina of today is built on cultural diversity and richness; it is part of our city's identity."

Kapoor's 35-year career focused on mental health and addictions counselling with the former Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Commission and the Regina Health District. Over her career, she witnessed a shift in public attitudes regarding addictions and mental health.

"There was a stigma attached to people with addictions or mental health issues, but in my work I counselled people from all walks of life," Kapoor notes. "Attitudes are quite different now; there is an understanding that these things can happen to anyone."

Her volunteer activities outside work encompass organizations such as Cultural Connections Regina, Community Foundations of Canada, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction, South Saskatchewan Community Foundation, SaskCulture, Regina Public Library, YWCA Regina, Saskatchewan Health Care Excellence Awards, United Way Regina, North Central Family Centre and Regina Airport Authority.

Kapoor has also taken leading roles in various fundraising galas, including India Night, Champions for Mental Health, Moving Forward Together and the RCMP Charity Ball. She has been recognized for her volunteer work with the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers and Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal, University of Regina President's Community Award, YWCA Volunteer of the Year Award and the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal, among many others.

Kapoor says she was in shock for days when she received the call from University of Regina President Vianne Timmons that she was to receive an honorary degree. "It is the biggest surprise of my life, and I feel deeply humbled by this honour," Kapoor says. Her parents raised her to believe in the spirit of sharing, she adds, and that people should volunteer because of their values, not for recognition.

"Regina has enriched my and my family's life so much, and I believe in giving back to this community. I feel so fortunate to have met many beautiful people and to have built long-lasting friendships along the way," she says.

Kapoor receives her honorary degree on June 6, 2019.



Photo courtesy of Gordon and Jill Rawlinson.



## Gordon and Jill Rawlinson

Honorary Doctor of Laws

For their benevolent spirits and philanthropic generosity, Gordon and Jill Rawlinson will receive honorary degrees from the University of Regina. Both are honoured to be jointly recognized.

Gordon and Jill were both born and raised in Saskatchewan; Gordon in Prince Albert and Jill on a farm near Redvers. Jill received the Governor General's Academic Medal in high school, and then graduated from the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Gordon graduated with distinction with a Bachelor of Commerce degree (Honours, Administration) from the University of Saskatchewan.

Gordon grew up around CKBI radio in Prince Albert, the broadcasting company that his father E. A. Rawlinson founded in 1946. Gordon took over managing the company in 1969, and became the owner and CEO in 1974. He has developed and expanded the company – now Rawlco Radio – to include radio stations in Regina, Saskatoon and Calgary, all of which have been recognized for their emphasis on community service.

"My father's mantra was, 'The better you serve the community, the better your business will do,'" Gordon recalls. "It has proven to be very successful."

That same emphasis on community is evident in the lengthy list of philanthropic activities supported by the couple in the areas of health care, education, the arts, and support for Aboriginal entrepreneurs and business leaders, primarily through the Lily Street Foundation, which Jill chairs.

"Growing up on a farm in Saskatchewan made me realize and appreciate the importance of a strong family and a strong community," Jill says. "There was a huge interdependence; supporting one another is just what you did. That's where our philanthropic commitment to Saskatchewan came from."

The donations Jill and Gordon have made reflect their shared belief that they owe most of their success to spending their formative years in the province. Some examples include: \$1.5 million to furnish and equip the Rawlco Centre for Mother Baby Care at the Regina General Hospital; \$1.5 million to promote business education to Indigenous students at the University of Saskatchewan; \$230,000 to the University of Regina to support aspiring journalists and Indigenous entrepreneurs; \$1 million to the Children's Discovery Museum (now Nutrien Wonderhub) in Saskatoon; \$1.45 million to the E. A. Rawlinson Centre for the Arts in Prince Albert; and \$300,000 to the Victoria Hospital Foundation, also in Prince Albert.

Other donations include \$1 million to the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford and \$500,000 to help develop a multiplex in North Battleford. Jill and Gordon also provided \$875,000 to a fund assisting Saskatchewan musical artists to each produce a CD, giving the artists full ownership of their work. The couple are also major annual supporters of the Canadian Red Cross, and the United Way in Regina and Saskatoon, always focusing their donations on the programming these organizations deliver in Saskatchewan.

Gordon is a Member of the Order of Canada and the Saskatchewan Order of Merit. He also serves on the Dean's Advisory Council at the Edwards School of Business, University of Saskatchewan.

The couple receives their honorary degree on June 7, 2019.



**FLUID** is a photographic portrait series by Los Angeles-based photographer Blake Little that began in 2017 as a casting call for gender fluid subjects. In March, Little was on the University of Regina campus to create more portraits of subjects from southern Saskatchewan. The FLUID exhibition will tour throughout North America, including a stop in Regina in 2020.

The exhibition and an accompanying publication has been developed in close collaboration with Aaron Devor, founder and academic director of the world's largest transgender archives and a professor of Sociology at the University of Victoria.

Wayne Baerwaldt, a MAP (Faculty of Media, Art and Performance) Michele Sereda Artist in Residence for Socially Engaged Practice at the University of Regina, curates the exhibition.

More information can be found at [www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca).

Visit Blake Little's website at [www.blakelittle.com](http://www.blakelittle.com)



Evie Ruddy MA'o8



Asher Chen, BAPS'18



Madi Schenk





Apple Fluid



# True grit

When she was only 11 years old, the school bus Emilia Becker was riding in was involved in a crash and rollover. What her family first thought was a concussion turned out to be much worse. At times, her courageous comeback from brain trauma has been slow and arduous. While she will forever live with the effects of the injury, now, after years of hard work and with the help of friends, family and University of Regina faculty and staff, Becker is celebrating her graduation at the University's spring convocation.

**By Sabrina Cataldo, BA'97, BJ'99, CPR'04**

Photos by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina Photography Department.



**E**milia Becker doesn't remember the moment of impact. One instant, she was riding in the school bus, and the next, she was being driven to the hospital. Everything looked white. Later she was told that when the bus collided with another vehicle and flipped over, she hit her head on the roof. She was originally diagnosed with a concussion, but after several weeks of no improvement, it became clear that she had suffered a moderate brain injury. She was only 11 years old.

Physically, the injury left her dizzy and in pain, making walking difficult. "I knew in my head how to walk, but my right leg didn't listen to me very well. It would drag and my toes would turn in and curl up," she says.

Then there were the changes in her personality. Her mother, Heather Getz, noticed it right away. "She was very literal. She behaved quite childlike; she was like a three-year-old. One of the biggest things was that she lost her sense of humour," she says.

Getz took a year off work to get Becker to physio appointments and do whatever she could to help her daughter heal physically and mentally. Cross-country skiing and swimming assisted with mobility, and tricks such as drawing pictures and making up stories helped with memory. "I used to rub her feet, because the right side was impacted. Her right foot was always colder and didn't have as much sensation. I would try to remind her brain that it was there. I thought if I could remind the brain that those parts are there, maybe they will work better," Getz says.

Particularly concerning was when the pediatric neurologist told Getz to be prepared for the possibility that Becker may never be able to live independently. "That was really shocking, because I kept thinking she was getting better. It hadn't occurred to me that I wouldn't get my old girl back," Getz says. "It was hard to accept that we had to let go of the girl she had been, grieve who she was and accept who she is. What I've learned is that you grieve the change when a child is injured, particularly with brain injury, but it's the same with any child as they grow up. Who they are may not be what you anticipated, but you have to love them and not push them back into something you thought they would be, because who they're turning into is remarkable."

Returning to school was a struggle for Becker. Before the injury, she had straight As and was involved in Girl Guides, tap, jazz, ballet, Spanish lessons and more. Afterward, she couldn't even remember how to read or do math. "I'd read a sentence and would forget the beginning of it by the end of the sentence. I went back to reading kids' [picture] books," Becker says.

Getz made flash cards to help Becker learn simple math again. "She cried because she knew how to do things like multiplication but had to relearn it the second time," Getz says.

All of that hard work paid off. By the end of Grade 8, Becker had one of the highest average in her class. "It wasn't an option for me to not be the best I could be. I was always a really determined kid. It didn't occur to me to just accept it. My family really believed in me and sacrificed a lot to get me back to where I was. Without their support, I wouldn't have been able to do all the rehab that I did," she says.

Brain injuries are permanent, however. Becker still suffers effects from her injury, including exhaustion and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Despite these challenges, Becker enrolled at the University of Victoria in 2013, where she studied sociology for two years.

When she came home to Regina for the summer in 2015, she contracted a virus that left her bedridden for months. That time off made her realize how much her mental health had been taxed during her time away at university. "Up until then, I'd been coping, but with the added stress of accommodations, living away from home, school and my mental health, I decided it would be the healthiest decision to stay home, near family and friends, and take a break from the stress of school," she says.

She kept busy working a few different jobs, including with the federal government, Laser Quest, a gym and the Regina Bypass. She also volunteered with CC RezQs, a local dog rescue, by fostering dogs in her home, and she started painting as a hobby. She soon became dissatisfied with the entry-level positions she could find without a university degree. Her mother and boyfriend (now fiancé) started nudging her to go back to school. "I've always been ambitious academically, and they knew that the future I wanted had to be achieved by going back to university," she says. "They believed in me, helped me figure out my finances and really inspired me to take the plunge. I may have gone back eventually on my own, but they were a huge factor."



Opposite page: Emilia Becker is all smiles knowing she will receive Bachelor of Arts degree at the 2019 spring convocation ceremony. Above left: Becker and one of her strongest supports, her mother Heather Getz. Above right: Becker and her fiancé, Sebastian Wolfmueller, take a break from studying.



She picked up her studies at the University of Regina in fall 2017. The University was a natural choice for Becker, as she wanted to be close to her family and support systems. She also appreciated the diversity of classes available. She majored in sociology and minored in psychology, filling her electives with classes such as women and gender studies, biology, Cree, and interdisciplinary studies.

The University works hard to accommodate students with disabilities. The main accommodation Becker received was extra time to write exams, as well as a private room to write them in. “The extra time lets me take rests when my brain gets tired, without sacrificing the entire exam,” she says. Becker finds that after about half an hour on a multiple choice exam, she may be unable to comprehend what she’s reading. “It feels like I hit a wall.”

She has learned that the best way to continue writing is to close her eyes and rest for at least five minutes. Then she can usually continue for another small stretch. “The extra time helps me take my time and truly show what I know, without my disability getting in the way,” she says. “I may take longer to write a test, but when I put my mind to it, I can still get 90s. I believe that disabilities just change the way we do things but don’t limit us.”

One professor who has supported Becker in her academic journey is Laura Ambrose, who teaches biology at Luther College. Ambrose has a lot of experience accommodating students with disabilities. “When I meet with students about their accommodations, I am careful to be respectful of them as people, not just thinking of them as students that require more time from me. I like to have them tell me how they see their accommodations being met, as a starting point for the discussion, working together from there to determine the best strategies for the semester,” she says. “It is important to me that students feel comfortable coming to me during the semester if there is a problem with the accommodations in the lectures or labs. I let them know that I think they are the experts for their situation, and I am more than willing to learn new ways to create an equitable learning environment.”

Ambrose has some advice for other professors who may be new to accommodating students with disabilities. “I

encourage my colleagues to see accommodations as an opportunity to get to know more about students and the way they learn, rather than more tasks for the to-do list. Meeting accommodations sometimes requires creativity and allows development of interesting strategies for teaching and assessing that will benefit all students. Classes with high enrolments are not great for getting to know students or hear their narratives, so meeting with students about accommodation is a great connection.”

Becker was in the Luther College library when she received an email telling her she had won the David Ryson Accessibility and Inclusion Award. She was so happy, she immediately started crying. After she had calmed herself down, a second email came in to inform her that she was the recipient of the Dr. Douglas and Patricia Vandenberghe Scholarship. “I burst into tears again. Then I went home. I didn’t get any homework done that day.”

Both the award and the scholarship are for U of R students with disabilities. “I want people to know how helpful that was for me and hopefully get more scholarships for people with disabilities. Paying for school is hard enough, but if you have a disability, it’s even harder,” she says. “A scholarship that is specific to people with disabilities gives them a better fighting chance to overcome their situation and achieve their greatest potential.”

With the award and scholarship, Becker only had to find \$400 to pay her tuition that semester. She was able to do that by selling some of the paintings she had created. “I was able to say, ‘I paid for a whole semester of school with just my grades and my art.’ I didn’t have to dig more into my savings and my parents’ savings because of that.”

Becker is a self-taught artist. She has always been artistic but was inspired to start painting seriously in 2017, when she went to a Luther University Student Association Paint Nite fundraiser to support Astonished!, a non-profit on-campus organization that addresses the barriers young adults with complex physical disabilities face.

“I ended up going on my own and painting something, and it was really cool,” she says. What started as a hobby became a small business, with a realtor commissioning her to paint



Left: Glenda James, executive director of the Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association. Right: Laura Ambrose, Biology instructor, Luther College.



Becker, a self-taught artist, has been seriously painting for a couple years. Her artwork not only helps in her recovery but she sells much of her output.

pictures of houses for clients, and others hiring her to do portraits of their pets. She is busy enough selling her art that she hasn't had to work a typical part-time job for the past year.

The art has helped in her recovery as well, by engaging her fine motor skills and giving her another way to communicate. "Art is good at explaining what you're going through. You can express yourself and occupy your mind and play and discover things. It's separate from your disability, mental health issues, school stressors and life in general. You can escape everything for a while, and there's no expectations, there's no good or bad," she says. "I think art is something everyone can do. It's fun to get messy; we don't get to do that very much once we grow up."

Becker likes to focus on optimism and positivity in her art. "I think a lot of art comes from understanding struggles and hardship, but I want to focus on how to grow from it and what comes out of that."

One of her favourite things is being commissioned to do a painting because she gets to work closely with people to figure out their interests and what they want in their home. "You have to really understand them and what they're passionate about. I don't have a specific style that I can apply to everything. I find out their reason why they want it painted and make a whole new creative process," she says.

Becker has also been a spokesperson for the Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association. They made a video about her story,

featured her on a poster with the theme, "You can't see a brain injury," and sent her on a summer speaking tour of service clubs. Glenda James, executive director of the Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association, notes that a speech Emilia gave at a fundraising gala was even more popular than the one given by the keynote speaker that year. "She can articulate her story very well," says James. "One of the things I remember most is she said she wished she had a cast on her head, because the hardest thing about being a brain injury survivor is the invisibility. You can't see a brain injury, but that doesn't mean you're not affected."

James believes society should look at people with disabilities from a "strength-based approach." This involves understanding what they're going through and accepting them for who they are, so their strengths can be supported. "Let's not discount people because of how they appear to us. Let's dig a little deeper before making judgements. Let's focus on strengths. Emilia is brilliant, artistic and creative. She is a very capable person, and she has all the things she needs to succeed. The only thing she needs from the rest of us is some understanding and a bit of accommodation. If we can give them supports and focus on their strengths, people can succeed as Emilia is doing," she says. **D**

*Sabrina Cataldo is an award-winning writer and communications strategist in Regina.*



# Running down a dream

**Carol LaFayette-Boyd has enjoyed the heights of individual accomplishment. She has also known the depths of personal tragedy. She takes both in stride. In fact, it's her strides that have made her a global track and field legend. Last year, for instance, after several gold medals and world records, the 76-year-old was named Female Athlete of the Year by World Masters Athletics.**

**By Kendall Latimer BJ'14**

Photos by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina  
Photography Department unless otherwise noted.



Photo by Arthur Ward.

**S**itting in her cozy living room, Carol LaFayette-Boyd CSW'77, BSW'85 recounts her life story with animated delight. She's more modest about her staggering sporting achievements. Although her competitive track and field career didn't start until age 50, more than 25 years later she is still making headlines and smashing world athletic records.

LaFayette-Boyd takes a swig of water – something she always has on hand – gestures out a window toward Ruth Buck Park in Regina's Normanview West neighbourhood and recalls how it all began. She and her husband Lem were trying to keep fit. They'd head out to the park and try to run a mile. In those days, she could never have imagined she'd be a world class sprinter.

In 1992, she heard the Canadian Masters Games were coming to Regina.

"Old people running track and field – I couldn't believe it," she says.

With nothing to lose, she signed up for two races. It was raining the first day but she ran like mad in lane two, passing two contenders on the curve to win the 200 metres.

"I grew up on a farm and knew how to run in the rain," she smirks.

Her family's cheering from the stands helped propel her to the finish line. The next day she returned for her second race with swollen ankles. During the race she could feel the Canadian record holder on her arm as they neared the finish but LaFayette-Boyd prevailed and clinched the Canadian 100-metre title.

It marked the beginning of a victory-filled career.

She holds the world record in the indoor 200 metres, three Canadian outdoor age-group records in the 4x100 metres, 4x400 metres and 4x800 metres relays, and two in the indoor 4x200 metres relay. In 2018, she broke world indoor records in



the 60 metres, long jump and triple jump, and also set a world outdoor mark in the 100m. Last year at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Malaga, Spain, she won five gold medals and set world records in her age group in the 200 metres and high jump. As a result she was named the 2018 Female Athlete of the Year by World Masters Athletics.

"She takes everything in stride and she smiles through it," says Selina Coward BED'77, LaFayette-Boyd's long-time training partner.

At first, Coward doubted the grey-haired LaFayette-Boyd and the decision of the coach who put the tandem together. She didn't want to be teamed with an old lady. Coward had grey hair too, but she was 12 years younger and, by her own regard, a whippersnapper compared to LaFayette-Boyd. Besides, Coward was one of the few Masters athletes in the Regina area. She had few rivals and boasted her own list of records.

LaFayette-Boyd didn't waste any time crushing Coward's assumptions. Since then, the two have run side by side.

"It's rare to have a training partner like that. It's exceptional," Coward says.

It wasn't long before heartaches and triumphs on and off the track blossomed into a strong comradeship.

"We're joined at the hip now," says Coward.

They spend at least three days each week together, 10 months of the year. Coward still marvels at LaFayette-Boyd's character – never hesitating to loan her shotput shoes to a stranger or lend a shoulder to Coward, whose husband is suffering complications from a stroke.

"We're fierce competitors on the track, but if I beat her tomorrow she would hug me the same as if she beat me today," says Coward.

LaFayette-Boyd grew up on a farm near McGee, Saskatchewan with seven siblings. Her job was to pick weeds and gather eggs. There was no running water. She attended a one-room schoolhouse named Oskaloosa, like her grandad's hometown in Iowa. He came to Saskatchewan in 1906.

The LaFayettes were the only African-Canadian family in the area. She says that's just how it was, and doesn't recall overt experiences of racism. However, there are moments that linger in her mind, like being the only one not invited to a birthday party. She learned early to ignore cruel words.

"You can't harass me because I'll just dismiss you," she says.

The family lived in Rosetown for a short time, then moved to Regina in 1956 after LaFayette-Boyd's mother died of cancer. Unbeknownst to her at the time, her new Grade 9 teacher warned classmates to be nice to her – she was the only black girl at school. LaFayette-Boyd experienced more overt racism in the U.S. when she lived there with her first husband Lester Dodd, who served in the Air Force. Even the African-Americans treated her like an "other."

"I looked like them; I didn't speak like them," she says.

LaFayette-Boyd is constantly on the move but she's never been too busy for others. That was always evident throughout her decades-long social work career. Her unconventional approach made her unforgettable and as much of a star in the social work realm as she is today on the track or in the field.

She served hundreds of children during her 33 years as a social worker, supervisor and trainer; some 200 families as a financial worker; 40 as a family services worker; and 12 in the Special Foster Home Program.

Unfortunately, in her line of work, she saw countless broken families caught up in cycles of abuse, neglect and addiction. Forever the optimist, LaFayette-Boyd felt it was most important to keep families together.

"There were always alternatives to splitting families," she says. "You have to believe that people can change and you have to believe people want to do the right thing."

LaFayette-Boyd not only visited families in their homes, but also spent time working in institutions. She worked as a psychiatric nurse at the Weyburn Hospital. As a social worker, she covered for striking workers at Saskatoon's youth detention facility. The youth at the facility loved her, but it was an unimaginable experience with boys peeing from the rafters and girls cutting themselves. They'd plead for her: "Kokom LaFayette-Boyd, come. We're dying, we're dying."

Starting in 1996 she began working at Regina's Paul Dojack Youth Centre, a facility that serves at-risk young people. LaFayette-Boyd left her mark on Dojack as it did on her. While at Dojack, she preached dignity and respect, bragged about doing more pushups than the youth, and found little need for the "WRAP", a control device with a shoulder harness, ankle bindings and leg restraints used to subdue residents.

LaFayette-Boyd is competitive. And while she doesn't like to lose, she's not defeated by loss. After all, she's seen more than her share of it in her life.



Opposite page: Carol LaFayette-Boyd poses with her World Masters Athletics award for Female Athlete of the Year. Above: LaFayette-Boyd on the gold medal podium after her world record in the 200 metres at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Malaga, Spain.

Photo courtesy of Carol LaFayette-Boyd.



**Left:** Last year in Malaga, Spain, LaFayette-Boyd set a new world record in the high jump of 1.24 metres. **Right:** LaFayette-Boyd and her training partner Selina Coward.

Cruel twists of fate decimated LaFayette-Boyd's immediate family. Her daughter Jackie died of cancer in 2013. LaFayette-Boyd believed her daughter was in the clear but her husband's words haunt her to this day: "She's gone."

Then it got worse.

The next year LaFayette-Boyd lost her son.

She dealt with the anguish of losing two children with the help of God and her husband Lem. She didn't know she was about to lose him, too.

Lem was also a social worker. They were comfortable together and married in 1984. He fell ill in 2015. A first doctor gave him iron pills. A second doctor gave him the truth: the growths on his lungs could be treated; the pancreatic cancer was terminal.

"Okay doc, how many years have I got?" Lem asked.

"Weeks to months," was the response.

Thirty-three days later he died.

LaFayette-Boyd was able to move on and today, in her typical optimistic way, finds a cheery viewpoint.

"They're [her passed family members] up there, cheering me on," she says.

LaFayette-Boyd starts her day in bed reading Psalm 91 – a psalm of protection from her King James Bible. In a curious ironic turn, she also flips through her husband Lem's *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*, an Alcoholics Anonymous book that guided her late husband's day-to-day life. She leaves bed for a stationary bike in the basement where she reads another chapter or two in the Bible.

After biking, she flips on CNN and hops on the elliptical. Sometimes she bounces on her trampoline. Back upstairs,

she turns on a televangelist while she stretches. She says his message is about walking in love. That's how she practised psychiatric nursing and social work. It's how she moves through life now as a widow, a friend and an avid athlete.

LaFayette-Boyd loves her family – she revels in the company of her grandchildren and other relatives. She's devoted much of her free time to genealogy. Beaming, she says she's a descendant of James Armistead LaFayette, a slave famous for infiltrating British intelligence during the American Revolutionary War.

Her resolve has helped her through all aspects of her life, including athletics. When asked about being named 2018 World Masters Athletics Female Athlete of the Year, she pauses. A melancholic shadow passes over her thin face as she considers the question.

"I don't know how to explain it," she says softly. "I'm pleased, but it doesn't mean as much because my family ...," she drifts off.

Her glasses reflect the warm lamp-glow as she uncrosses her arms and turns toward a photo of her daughter, son and husband. She breathes deeply and the corners of her mouth rise.

"I've reached the top and now I can just relax."

But for LaFayette-Boyd, relaxation doesn't mean throwing in the towel.

"I'm in it until 100," she says. **D**

*Kendall P. Latimer is a curious and creative freelance writer, photographer and filmmaker. She has been storytelling with CBC Saskatchewan since 2016, after previously writing and photographing for Saskatoon StarPhoenix and Bangkok Post.*

The University of Regina has been the second home of Chancellor **Jim Tomkins** for more than 50 years. While a student in 1963, he worked for a local concrete company that poured the foundations for the Laboratory and Classroom Buildings. As Tomkins likes to say, “My roots go deep at the U of R.” In the intervening years, his roles have included professor, department head, vice-president, senator, president and now Chancellor. As chancellor, he has conferred degrees, diplomas and certificates on some 15,000 graduates. He presided over his last ceremony in early June.

**D** What is it about the University of Regina that prompted you to devote almost your entire working life to the institution?

*Regina is my hometown and the U of R made an attractive job offer in 1969. At the time, I didn't foresee spending my whole career in Regina, but Lynn (Tomkins' wife) established a family medical practice and the University offered me a succession of interesting opportunities as the years went by.*

**D** You spent your time teaching and in University administration. What did you enjoy most about those roles?

*When I first started teaching, I discovered great satisfaction in teaching first-year calculus and statistics. I enjoyed helping students gain some confidence in their math and stats abilities. It was similar on the administrative side: it's all about the people – the ones I worked closely with and those I was able to help in some way.*

**D** What about your role as chancellor brought you the most joy?

*There is real joy and happiness on the Convocation stage for the graduates and also for their friends and relatives in the audience. The ceremony reminds us what a university is all about. I will cherish my interactions with the members of the Board of Governors and Senate, but the place to find joy is at Convocation.*

**D** What are you and Lynn's plans now?

*We enjoy travelling and I expect that we will do more now. We both are completing non-renewable terms on non-profit boards and, without those commitments, we hope to take some longer trips and some cruises that we've been postponing.*

**D** Describe your perfect day.

*There's no one perfect day. Spending a cold winter day by the fireplace reading, watching movies and checking the markets can be perfect. Playing a round of golf or working in the yard in the morning on a nice summer day, then sitting on the deck with a book in the afternoon is a lovely day. And it's always a perfect day when I spend it with Lynn.*

**D** Your retirement celebration was in 2008 yet you never left the service of the University. Are you really going to retire this time?

*It seems that every time I think I'm done, the University has always found something new for me to do. I plan to stay involved with the pension committees for a time and I will be a member of Senate for the rest of my life but I think that being chancellor will essentially be my swansong. And my time as chancellor will end exactly 50 years to the day from the beginning of my appointment as an assistant professor of Mathematics. As a mathematician, I like that kind of coincidence!*





# Lives well lived

It's been a sad few months for the University of Regina family. We have endured a string of passings of several people who had strong ties to the University. Jack Boan, professor emeritus of Economics, passed away on October 31, 2018 at the age of 100. Myrtle Surjik, the first woman member of the University of Regina Board of Governors, passed on December 16, 2018. On December 19, 2018, long-time *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* columnist and U of R journalism school graduate Cam Fuller passed away. Glen Nelson, a star of the men's Cougars basketball teams of the 1980s, passed peacefully on January 29, 2019. On March 3, Dominic Gregorio, the much-loved choral director at the U of R, passed away. Internationally renowned visual artist Joe Fafard, a former instructor at the University, succumbed to cancer on March 19. On April 15, Noel Starblanket, a University of Regina Life Speaker and Elder-in-Residence, journeyed back to the Creator. *Degrees* reached out to seven individuals who knew these remarkable personalities best and asked them to share some memories with our readers.



## Dr. Jack Boan

Professor Emeritus, Department of Economics

I first met Jack when I was a young teenager. As a speed swimmer from Saskatoon competing against his son Dave, I was billeted at the Boan household. It was there that I first learned about the life of a professor. In 1974, I moved with my parents to Regina. After a year of work and travel, I began studying history at the newly independent University of Regina. Since Jack was the only person I knew, I took a stroll over to his office the first week of school. He took me under his wing and gave me the guidance that would change my life.

Greg Marchildon BA'80, MA'84  
Ontario Research Chair in Health Policy and System Design  
with the Institute of Health Policy, Management and  
Evaluation at the University of Toronto

To read all of Greg Marchildon's tribute to Jack Boan, visit the  
*Degrees* website at [www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca).



## Myrtle Surjik BSW'77

University of Regina Distinguished Alumnus, 1996

Myrtle (Bainbridge) Surjik was born and raised in Regina. She attended Central Collegiate and later Balfour Technical School. After a brief career as a beauty queen (Miss Grey Cup, 1951), model and flight attendant, Myrtle married David Surjik, and together they raised four children in Regina.

Myrtle's life was characterized by excellence in all she did. She was an anchor for her husband and children, a caring and wonderful friend, a passionate professional and advocate for the causes she believed in. Everything she did, she did with kindness and empathy. She will be remembered as a woman of great beauty, both inner and outer, and a woman of great warmth.

Bonnie DuPont BSW'76

Honorary Doctor of Laws, University of Regina 2008

To read all of Bonnie DuPont's tribute to Myrtle Surjik, visit the Degrees website at [www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca).



## Cam Fuller BAJ&C'89

Saskatoon StarPhoenix columnist

As the editor of the paper, and a fellow journalist, I want to honour the gift of 30 years of his columns and reporting on the arts community. It is a stunning body of work. And because of his long career, Cam was a little famous in Saskatoon. All the perks and praise that come with having a public persona did not turn his head, however. His clever commentary never came at the expense of the dignity of those he was reviewing. To be honest and kind at the same time takes a singular kind of faculty, and he had it.

Heather Persson

Editor, Saskatoon StarPhoenix

To read all of Heather Persson's tribute to Cam Fuller, visit the Degrees website at [www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca).



## Glen Nelson BEd'89

Cougars basketball star

We talked about that [his time on the men's Cougars basketball team] during a visit in December 2018. Glen had just proudly shown me an ultrasound image of his grandchild. He was nibbling puffed-wheat cake and drinking his double-double. We were reminiscing about the good old days, about his prowess as a baseline-to-baseline player long before he was paralyzed from back surgery and dispatched to a wheelchair, only to start fending off cancer that kept causing his weakening bones to break, but never broke his spirit.

"I've still got the record for rebounds," he reminded me, before adding with a chuckle, "probably for turnovers, too."

Darrell Davis BA'82

Author of six sports books, journalism instructor, Canadian Football Hall of Fame member

*To read all of Darrell Davis' tribute to Glen Nelson, visit the Degrees website at [www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca).*



## Dominic Gregorio

Director of Choral Activities, MAP

How does one speak about "the light" that was Dominic? How does one speak of this inexplicable tragedy that has shut off that light?

I am being neither flippant nor poetic in my use of the word "light". I have heard it so many times from different people who either knew Dominic well or had only heard of him. I have heard students speak of him as "radiant light", as "luminous." He cast a certain light in the way he perceived the world, in the way he wanted people to be with one another, in the way he saw the place of music in our lives, in the way he saw his role in our midst.

Samira McCarthy

Former professor of English at Campion College

*To read all of Samira McCarthy's tribute to Dominic Gregorio, visit the Degrees website at [www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca).*





## Joe Fafard Hon Deg'89

Internationally acclaimed artist  
Officer of the Order of Canada

Joe's achievements are numerous and familiar to all of us who have been touched and inspired by his work. Joe is not just any Joe. He's Joe intensified: intensified by his passion to make expressive and powerful sculptures and intensified by his gift to excite a wide audience of art lovers with his sculptures of people, cows, horses, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, dogs and more.

Many of the ideas that Joe developed for decades are summarized in his landscape sculpture on the south shore of Wascana Lake. This sculpture is in the University of Regina President's art collection and visited by walkers in the park. We are all richer for experiencing the power of Joe's work in our midst.

Victor Cicansky BA'67  
Saskatchewan artist  
Member of the Order of Canada

*To read all of Victor Cicansky's tribute to Joe Fafard, visit the Degrees website at [www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca).*



## Noel Starblanket

Life Speaker

Like many other students, I met Noel through the Aboriginal Student Centre (ASC), as he was the male Elder-in-Residence. The ASC was my home away from home at the university and I began to witness him lead and speak at many cultural activities and events. As I studied him, I could not help but be drawn by his charisma: his articulate way of weaving together and conveying powerful ideas, his ease and warmth and his ability to connect with others, especially through humour.

Erin Goodpipe  
Fourth-year Education student  
Proud Dakota woman of the Oceti Sakowin or "Seven Council Fires" nation (also known as the Sioux Nation)  
Former co-host of the TV show RezX

*To read all of Erin Goodpipe's tribute to Noel Starblanket, visit the Degrees website at [www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca).*



**Taking a cue from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, a graduate of First Nations University of Canada is leading a firm that is building capacity for employment of Indigenous Canadians in Saskatchewan and across the country.**

**By Kerry Benjoe BA'oo**

Photos by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina Photography Department

# Answering the **call**

It's been 26 years since Denis Carignan BA'93 walked across the stage to receive his Bachelor of English Literature from the Saskatchewan Federated Indian College (now First Nations University of Canada) at the University of Regina.

He is the first to admit being president of a company was not something he would have predicted back then, but that's exactly what happened.

Sitting in a coffee shop armed with a laptop and a smartphone he has everything he needs to start his day as president of PLATO Testing – a software testing company. Established in 2015 in New Brunswick, it employs 60 Indigenous testers and has offices on or near Indigenous communities in Fredericton, Miramichi, Sault Ste. Marie, Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and most recently Regina.

The goal of the company is to create and leverage a pool of 1,000 Indigenous software testers across Canada by 2022. Carignan joined PLATO Testing as its president in September 2016, but his connection to the company began long before then.

It is a tale of being the right person in the right place at the right time. He readily shares his story of how he became the leader of a cutting-edge IT company with anyone who asks. In fact, PLATO Testing serves as a concrete example of what true reconciliation can be.

Carignan, a member of Pasqua First Nation near Fort Qu'Appelle, believes his education and work experience helped lay the foundation for him to transition into the role he enjoys today. Shortly after receiving his first degree in 1993, he landed a job with what is now known as Indigenous and Northern Affairs

Canada (INAC). As a requirement of his job, he returned to the University of Regina where he received a degree in French.

"It was one of my lifetime goals to learn another language," says Carignan, who was happy that he was able to learn French without leaving Regina.

He married, had children and worked at INAC for more than two decades. Things likely would have remained status quo had it not been for some changes within his department that required him to move from the Prairies to the Maritimes.

In 2015, while he was living in New Brunswick, he applied to be part of the Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference (GGCLC). The conference brings together 250 emerging leaders from across Canada to participate in the two-week program. Attendees come from the private sector, government, unions and non-profit organizations and are divided into 16 study groups and sent to a specific region within the country.

At the end of the two weeks, each group presents a report to the Governor General.

Carignan's group was sent to south eastern Quebec, which included Montreal and a number of eastern townships.

What made this event different from others was the timing.

"The conference took place just prior to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) final report," says Carignan. "During our study group tour there were a number releases coming out related to it."

Having spent the majority of his career working on the Indigenous file for the federal government and also being an



Opposite page: Saskatchewan Federated Indian College (now First Nations University of Canada) graduate Denis Carignan, the president of PLATO Testing, a software testing company that's employing Indigenous workers across Canada. Above: Keith McIntosh, founder of PLATO Testing and president and CEO of PQA Testing, one of Canada's leading independent IT testing firms.



Indigenous, he began fielding a lot of questions about the TRC report and the 94 Calls to Action.

Among the group asking questions was Keith McIntosh, president and CEO of PQA Testing, one of Canada's leading independent IT testing firms located in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

"It was June 8, 2015, Keith and I had a conversation just about what could be done to make a difference to create sustainable employment for Indigenous Canadians," recalls Carignan.

McIntosh wanted to know if there were programs within government that could help train people to pursue careers in the knowledge economy such as IT. Little did Carignan realize, how significant that conversation would be, not only in his life, but in the lives of Indigenous people across Canada. The seeds for PLATO Testing were planted during that conversation.

Like Carignan, McIntosh can recollect details of the conversation almost verbatim. What motivated McIntosh to start PLATO was his desire to make a difference. He says the decision to create an IT company that employs Indigenous people seemed viable based on some simple statistics. McIntosh says there are currently 190,000 IT jobs in Canada that need to be filled and, at the same time, there are pools of untapped labour available on any First Nation.

Such a business is sustainable because the only thing a person needs to become a software tester is training and a strong Wi-Fi signal.

McIntosh recalls how during the GGCLC, his study group, which included Carignan, visited Montreal.

"We had dinner on fine china and drank out of coffee cups that were so fine that you could see the person sitting opposite of you," he says.

The next day the group visited a K-6 school located on the Kahnawake First Nation.

"It wasn't a mainline school, but they were teaching the children the Mohawk language," says McIntosh. "The little kids came running out to see all these important people and as the doors of the school opened, you could smell the water. It was a bad water smell."

He couldn't believe the stark contrast in basic living conditions that existed in Canada.

"From the schoolyard you could see the skyline of one of the most beautiful cities in North America and the water in this K-6 school was not drinkable," says McIntosh. "That was not right. That was embarrassing."

It is a realization that has stuck with him.

When the TRC released its 94 Calls to Action, McIntosh looked at what he could do in terms of reconciliation. He found his answer.

Action 92.1 states: Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

Although McIntosh knew what he could do, he needed a bridge between his company and First Nations – that's where Carignan came in.

McIntosh needed someone with knowledge about potential funding sources for training and education opportunities. He also needed someone with a clear understanding of Indigenous culture, as well as someone who was well versed in the historical and contemporary issues facing Indigenous people.

McIntosh laid out his idea of creating a network of Indigenous software testers across Canada that could compete for lucrative contracts from any company in the world, while never having to leave their home communities.

Carignan knows the realities many face while living on-reserve and trying to earn income. Jobs are almost non-existent on most First Nations and many have to leave their own communities to find work or to pursue education or training opportunities. If jobs come to reserves, the spinoffs are immeasurable.

A smile immediately comes to Carignan's face when he recalls the last words he spoke to McIntosh after their conversation about building a business that will not only train, but employ 1,000 Indigenous software testers.

"I said you build it and I will come work for you," he says with a laugh.

Three months after he uttered those words, McIntosh called him and asked when he was going to come work for him. Carignan, accustomed to moving at the pace of government, underestimated the speed at which McIntosh moved. When he received the call he had to make a serious decision to move from something stable to something with no guarantees. Although he knew he wanted to be part of what McIntosh was building, he had his family's future to consider.

After some juggling, he said goodbye to his 9-to-5 routine, his office space and coworkers. Carignan says changing jobs has invigorated him and although he admits much of his work has



Left: (left to right) President of FHQ Developments Thomas Benjoe, FHQC Tribal Chief Edmund Bellegarde and Keith McIntosh, president and CEO of PQA Testing. The three were on hand for an April 2 partnership announcement that officially launched PLATO Sask Testing, the only dedicated software testing company in Saskatchewan. Right: President of FHQ Developments Thomas Benjoe, a First Nations University of Canada graduate and a 2017 University of Regina Alumni Crowning Achievement Award recipient for outstanding young alumnus.



Above: (left to right) Keith McIntosh, Denis Carignan and Thomas Benjoe on the occasion of the April 2 launch of PLATO Sask Testing.

been conducted in coffee shops and his meetings are conducted via Skype, email or phone, it's been worth it.

"Sometimes it was like, 'I have to go to work,' and you drag yourself to work," says Carignan. "Now, I'm excited about the day."

Witnessing first-hand the impact PLATO has had on individuals and communities has been extremely rewarding. Carignan says it's great to see Indigenous testers being a positive influence in their communities, in their work placements, and within their own families.

When Carignan moved back to Saskatchewan he immediately went to work at expanding PLATO in Saskatchewan. Once again he relied on his knowledge about Indigenous governments and securing training dollars.

Being a member of Pasqua First Nation, he approached the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council (FHQTC) to talk about a potential partnership. He says FHQ Developments already had a proven track record when it came to business and, although it has a diverse portfolio, it did not possess any IT businesses.

Carignan set up a meeting with the president of FHQ Developments Thomas Benjoe CA'09, CHTGEM'09, DAdmin'09, BBA'11 (FNUniv). Benjoe says each year his company reviews an average of 25 business proposals. It took a few follow-up meetings with Carignan and McIntosh before the ball started rolling on the new partnership between PQA Testing and FHQ Developments to create PLATO Sask Testing.

"I really want us to be seen as leaders, leading in economic development and being able to lead in new sectors and establish new ways of doing business," says Benjoe. "It is something we

have really been focused on in our strategies and to be the first with a tech company in the province is really important for us because we know the potential it's going to create."

Benjoe says Carignan's determination and his passion for PLATO are what piqued his interest in the IT company.

"When we create these new companies we have to make sure their values are aligning to our values," he says.

On a personal level, Benjoe says it's been great to work with Carignan. (Carignan's home First Nation is one of 11 member nations of FHQTC.) Both are FNUniv alumnus, which is also a plus.

"It showcases the University and its ability to develop strong talent," says Benjoe.

He says it's great to work with other alumni on a common goal and that he is eager to create a better future, not only for Indigenous people, but for all of Saskatchewan.

PLATO Sask Testing plans to train 25 to 30 software testers immediately and begin working on procuring contracts.

"I see us developing individuals in IT and I see these Indigenous professionals becoming very highly qualified developers. We are looking at growing our business in the tech sector," he adds.

Carignan says changing his career path was daunting, but when he realized McIntosh was willing to create a company that could potentially compete with organizations from around the world, he knew it was worth the sacrifice. He adds that someday when his children look back on his career they will know their dad did something good because it was the right thing to do. **D**

## Upcoming Alumni Events

### Alumni Association Annual General Meeting

Regina

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

College Avenue Campus

2155 College Avenue

Regina, SK

### Alumni Crowning Achievement Awards

Thursday, October 10, 2019

Save the date!

## Chapter and branch contact information

### Alumni Leadership Group Contacts

**Calgary:** Stuart Quinn BAdmin'81 – [stuartq@shaw.ca](mailto:stuartq@shaw.ca)

**Edmonton:** Charlene Howard BA'98, MEd'06  
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**Saskatoon:** Richard Kies BAdmin'93, CPR'03 – [richardkies@shaw.ca](mailto:richardkies@shaw.ca)

**Toronto:** Allan Bonner BEd'78 – [allan@allanbonner.com](mailto:allan@allanbonner.com)

**Victoria:** Lisa King BPAS'95, MAdmin'11 – [kisaling@shaw.ca](mailto:kisaling@shaw.ca)

### Alumni Associations

#### University of Regina Alumni Association

Bert Yakichuk PGDSGC'73, MEd'77 – [uralumni@uregina.ca](mailto:uralumni@uregina.ca)

#### Kenneth Levene Graduate School of Business Alumni Association

James Welter MBA'14 – [levene.alumni@uregina.ca](mailto:levene.alumni@uregina.ca)

#### Hill Alumni Association

Nicole Nameth BBA'15 – [Hill.Alumni@uregina.ca](mailto:Hill.Alumni@uregina.ca)

#### Johnson Shoyama Alumni Association

Rebecca Gibbons MBA'13, MPA'16 – [rebeccagibbons@hotmail.com](mailto:rebeccagibbons@hotmail.com)

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## 1970-79

**Tom Heimer BM'76, MM'81** is the author of the recently published *The Most Advanced Clarinet Book*. Heimer has been principal clarinet and soloist with the Westchester Band in New York since 1998. He was a band director for many years in Thompson, Manitoba where his bands won national and international awards. He and his wife Elizabeth reside in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

**Maureen A. MacLeod** was named most inspirational teacher by 2018 Presidential Scholar for Hawaii.

## 1980-89

**Husin Suhaidi BSc'85** is a member of CALINDO – Canada Alumni in Indonesia – an organization focused on strengthening the social and economic bonds between

Indonesia and Canada. Suhaidi specializes in information technology and hospitality.

**Joni Avram BA'87** was accepted to the Executive Masters of Behavioural Science program at the London School of Economics. She will graduate in 2020.

**Catherine Greer BA(Hons)'88** has written her debut book of fiction *Love Lie Repeat*. The novel is a suspenseful psychological thriller about girls, guilt and power. Greer is a copy editor living in Sydney, Australia.

## 2000-09

Since earning her degree in 2002, **Sandra Staples-Jetko BFA'02** went back to full-time work as an occupational therapist for the Regina Qu'Appelle Health District until 2010. After leaving the agency, she provided occasional private therapy work and

began concentrating on her art practice. Sandra combines her two loves as she works on her interdisciplinary MFA with her thesis project using digital media to provide a voice for marginalized people.

**Sandra Rollings-Magnusson BA (Hons)'95, MA'97, PhD'03** continues her research into the Saskatchewan homesteading era. Her most recent book, *The Homesteaders*, was published by the University of Regina Press in 2018. Using numerous archival sources, the book highlights the lives of those who settled in Saskatchewan between 1867 and 1914.

**Darcy Kimmitt BED'04** is a GED preparation instructor for a large geographical area in northern Cape Breton.

**Lisa Engel BKin'05** completed her PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Toronto in 2018. Her tenure track assistant professorship

in the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of Manitoba started in January 2019. **John Pitchlko BSc'05** is the associate dean of the School of Information and Communications Technology at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT).

## 2010 – present

**Heather Kindermann BEd'10, BA'13** is a community planner and GIS Mapping Technologist with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities.

**Ivy Armstrong BSW'18** was awarded the Canadian Forces' Decoration in October 2018 for 12 years of service in her role as cadet instructors cadre officer. Armstrong works with teenagers as a resource room teacher for Saskatoon Public Schools.



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- Location: Regina
- Application deadline: October 1 to February 15
- Document deadline: March 1
- For detailed information, visit: [sasknursingdegree.ca/scbscn/apply-now](http://sasknursingdegree.ca/scbscn/apply-now)

[sasknursingdegree.ca](http://sasknursingdegree.ca)



A woman in a white wedding dress is walking through a field of tall, dry grass. She is looking down and to her right. The background shows a vast, open landscape with rolling hills and a clear blue sky. The scene is captured in a wide-angle shot, emphasizing the openness of the environment.

**Journalism school graduate Nehal El-Hadi reflects on her journey – from Sudan where she was born, to England where her family immigrated, to Moose Jaw where she learned to revere the open spaces and endless sky.**

**By Nehal El-Hadi BJ'03, CPR'03**

Photos by By Christopher Dew and courtesy of Nehal El-Hadi.

# Nostalgic for the sky

I've seen the sky do things I never knew a sky could do.

I first came to Saskatchewan in the autumn of 1999, from London via Toronto. My limited exposure meant that I had fallen into that fallacy of Toronto being the centre of the Canadian universe from which the rest of the country emanated. And so, I expected Moose Jaw to be some kind of Toronto-lite. Thankfully, I was so terribly, horribly wrong.

Now, I live in Toronto. My annual trips to Saskatchewan give me a much-needed recalibration, a reprieve from the neurosis of this city where I make my home, and a reminder that everything is so much bigger than my tiny urban life. And, more intensely, my visits back give me a fix of the flatlands.

It's a landscape that gets in your bones; a constant craving.

The last time I lived in Saskatchewan was over 15 years ago. My parents still live in Moose Jaw, and I visit at least once a year, and more frequently when I can. I don't go only for them, but for what has turned into a necessary and vital reset. More significantly for me, my residency in, and relationship to, Saskatchewan has been formative in my becoming-Canadian identity story.

While we arrived in Canada as landed immigrants in Toronto, my family relocated to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, for work opportunities a year later. I lived in Moose Jaw for a year, having recently completed an undergraduate degree and needing the time and space to figure out what it was I wanted to do. (And that's something Saskatchewan always has and gifts in abundance: time and space.)

I moved to Regina, where I enrolled in the University of Regina's Bachelor of Journalism program. The first Tuesday of classes was September 11, 2001. It was an intense time to begin training to become a journalist. We were being taught approaches to a field that was literally changing before our eyes; as a media event, the coverage of 9/11 has transformed the news industry in ways that are still analyzed and dissected today.

That week, my first ever journalism assignment was to go out and gather people's responses to the tragedy. I almost dropped out – I hated this aspect of journalism and still do. While I'm glad I didn't drop out, that aversion to post-traumatic breaking-news reportage was firmly planted in me during that first week. It led me to focus on developing my skills as a long-form journalist, and to continue to study critical approaches to inclusive, ethical and responsible journalism.

For my internship, I returned to Toronto to work on the Discovery Channel's daily flagship show, called *The Daily Planet* at the time. There, I fell in love with science journalism and producing television and online content. I came back to Saskatchewan to complete my degree and to become a Canadian citizen. My family and I took the oath of citizenship surrounded by a supportive and celebratory community. Moose Jaw is where I became Canadian.

Almost ten years later, Moose Jaw became where I chose to marry my husband, the Black Canadian composer Bruce Russell. Bruce and I had met in Toronto, but he'd grown up in Sault Ste. Marie. He'd never been to Saskatchewan until he flew out to meet my family, and now he comes to visit with me each year. We got married at a mosque in Regina, and our reception was held at the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa in downtown Moose Jaw. We took wedding photos earlier that day at different locations throughout Moose Jaw: the old train station, Wakamow Valley, South Hill. The wedding photo we later distributed to friends and family was of Bruce and I "traipsing through the Prairies" (really, somewhere around 4th Avenue SW), a quintessential flatland scene. We now have two children together, and it is important to me that my children's Canadian-ness extends beyond Toronto to Moose Jaw, that the city environment they are growing up in is tempered by an understanding of different landscapes. I'm glad that my children also get to attach themselves to Saskatchewan.

While my entry portal to Canada was the high-density, multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Thorncliffe Park Drive in Toronto, my becoming a Canadian took place in an inverse setting of flatlands and farmers.





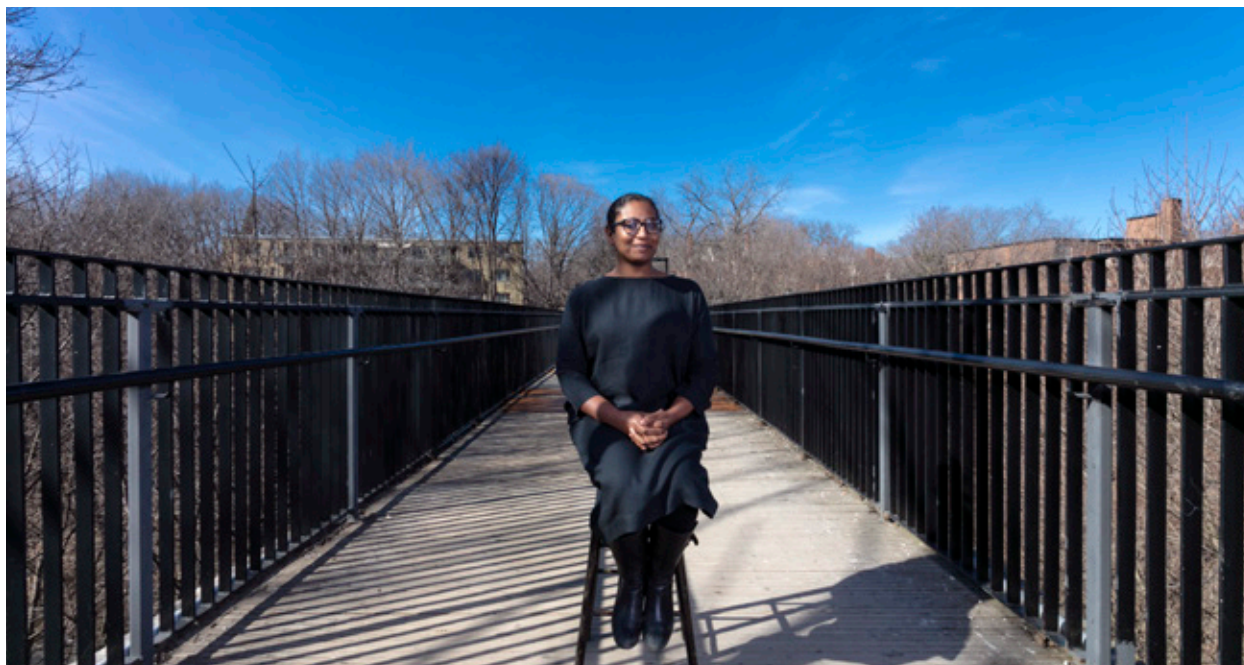


Photo page 38: Nehal El-Hadi and her husband Bruce Russell “traipsing through the Prairies” on their wedding day in 2011. The wedding was in a mosque in Regina and photos were taken in Moose Jaw where the reception was held. Above: El-Hadi photographed in Toronto.

There’s always a sense of incredulity when I mention my affinity for Saskatchewan, a disbelief that underscores a sense of displacement that I understand is meant to convey that I will never belong there. I don’t care much for being challenged in this way, and while I don’t claim Saskatchewan as my land or territory, I maintain that who I am – my Canadian-ness – is inextricable from my relationship to that land. My inclusion in a forthcoming Canadian literature collection called *The Black Prairie Archives: An Anthology* underscores this, and I take pride in being considered part of what has been called “a new black prairie literary tradition.”

I appreciate the role of the Prairies in my narratives of becoming – a citizen, a journalist, a wife – and I am extremely grateful for the ways of seeing and being that my connection to Moose Jaw and Regina has given me. But living there was an extremely culturally isolating experience, especially for an Arabic-speaking young Black woman. This was before we were all online 24/7, before the internet could deliver any product or foodstuff I could desire. Before MySpace, Twitter, Amazon, SSense, Netflix.

There were unpleasant encounters, and some were terrifying. In addition to experiencing random, sporadic instances of explicit and violent racism, my sojourn in Saskatchewan was also a witnessing of the ugliest side of Canada. The thinly-filtered anti-Indigenous undercurrent that pulses through the landscape, that manifests in unimaginable violence. I had grown up elsewhere, not there, and I had no way at the time of understanding the histories and the legacies that could produce such inequity and trauma as I had witnessed. Late-night conversations with friends, other journalism students, and my professors provided history, context, sources, and explanations. It wasn’t until much later, more recently, that I acquired the critical analysis skills to be able to examine and address these issues and to also consider my own role as an immigrant-turned-citizen.

I’ve seen and experienced things I never would have elsewhere. The small size of communities also makes for

surprising and delightful interactions of a kind that don’t ever happen in larger cities. Social relations are flattened, too, and social groups are more porous and welcoming when there aren’t too many other people around. Saskatchewan is where I learned to ride and desire motorcycles. Where I found out about mutton-busting, and that buckles had to be earned not bought. Where I discovered sun dogs and mammatus clouds. I spent more time at punk shows and raves when living in Saskatchewan than anywhere else, learned more about classic rock and football than I ever intended to. The clichés are true: rodeos and country music, ranchers and poets, canola, and Saskatoon berries.

But what’s also true is the radical history of social organizing in Saskatchewan, something that I wish more people knew about. Like the feminist work of the Saskatchewan Indian Women’s Association, or the fact that the Gay & Lesbian Community of Regina bought property and founded a collective-run community centre and nightclub.

I left Regina to pursue postgraduate education in Toronto, a master’s in environmental studies degree where I focused on environmental journalism and risk communication in the Canadian mass media. Five years after completing that program, I returned to university and obtained a PhD in planning, where my research looked at the intersections of online and offline spaces for women of colour social justice activists in Toronto. Returning to the love of science journalism I discovered during my University of Regina journalism degree, I became the science and technology editor at *The Conversation Canada*, a news source that publishes timely articles on research being conducted by Canadian academics.

Since moving away from Saskatchewan, I now carry with me a nostalgia for the sky. **D**

*Nehal El-Hadi is Visiting Scholar at the City Institute at York University and sessional faculty at the Department of Human Geography, at the University of Toronto Scarborough. She lives in Toronto with her husband, composer Bruce Russell and their two children.*

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