

# Degrees

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The University of Regina Magazine



University  
of Regina









Wascana Park was the location of a unique outdoor theatre experience in mid-March. *Come Along* was created by Theatre Department students as a means to interact with a live audience during these pandemic times. Steeped in magical realism, the play presented themes of transgression and transformation. It featured original musical compositions by Music Department students Anika Zak and Connor Stewart. The cast included Kaydence Banga, Bronwen Bente, Benjamin Matity, Macey Hay, Tianna Chorney, Owen Westerlund, Billie Liskowich, Brad McDougall, Jadav Cyr and Jiness Helland. Stage management was by Rachel Butt, assisted by Erik Lillico. Music Department students Anthony Merkel, Joshua Stewart and Nathan Syrnick provided the music. The sold-out show had to close early due to more stringent COVID-19 health measures. Despite the early closure, Media, Art and Performance faculty member Shannon Holmes congratulated the cast and crew and said the experience was a magical, playful romp of a fairy tale for grown-ups. She added it was lovely to remember what it's like to play live and see some joy on a spring evening.

Photo by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina Photography Department.

Welcome to the 2021 Spring/Summer edition of *Degrees*. *Degrees* and its predecessor, *The Third Degree*, have been informing and entertaining University alumni and friends since 1989. In those 32 years, we have brought you thousands of stories of the talents, adventures and triumphs of thousands of people associated with the University of Regina.

For close to three and a half decades, we have shone a brief light on individuals who, in their own ways, are making the world a better place every day. The magazine is the mirror that reflects an amazing community made up of alumni, students, faculty, staff and friends of the University. I also like to think it brings us all a little closer together.

In this issue, we'd like to add a few more stories to the thousands already told.

Our cover story is about Rashique Ramiz, a graduate student in the Kenneth Levene Graduate School of Business. Ramiz, who was born in Bangladesh, is realizing his personal and professional dreams in Saskatchewan. He has landed a co-op placement at the Childhood Trauma Research Centre where

he handles the unit's IT needs. He has fallen in love with Saskatchewan and looks forward to raising his family in the province, all the while giving back to the community. His story begins on page 20.

We've also got a story that profiles three women who are making their mark in professional sports around the world. Business Administration alumna Anita Sehgal is the senior vice president of Marketing and Communications with the Houston Astros. Sidney Dobner, a former Cougars women's basketball player, is now an assistant coach for the Milwaukee Bucks of the NBA, one of the few woman coaches in the league. And Jaycee Magwood, a recent star with the Cougars women's hockey team, is playing professional hockey in Sweden. You can read about the trio starting on page 26.

Starting on page 32, you can read about some of our entrepreneurial alumni who are making tremendous inroads in the tech world. Meet the alumni who started OneShot Golf, a mobile app that allows people from all over the world to play a robotic mini-golf game. You'll also meet a graduate who co-founded Bunch, an app that

allows people to video chat with friends while playing mobile games.

On page 38, U of R journalism graduate Kerry Benjoe shares some insights of her journey from residential school, through a violent spousal relationship that led to the loss of her leg, to homelessness. While many would be defeated by such events, Benjoe has picked herself up and today is telling important stories as CBC Saskatchewan's first Indigenous storyteller.

You can read these stories and so much more in this issue of *Degrees*.

What you won't find in this issue is our Class Notes section.

When I took over the *Degrees* editor's role (admittedly, in the days before smartphones) each issue of the magazine dedicated multiple pages to Class Notes – the little updates of the achievements, milestones and other notable life events submitted by alumni. However, the glory days of Class Notes appear to be behind us. Slowly, submissions began to dwindle to the point where today, we aren't getting many at all. We would like to change that.

Staying in touch with your alma mater is as important as staying in touch with family and friends (socially distancing of course.) We want to know what you've been up to since you walked across the Convocation stage (or virtually graduated) and proudly hung your framed degree, certificate or diploma on a prominent wall.

Please consider devoting a little time to write a short note about what's been going on in your life since you last walked the hallowed hallways of the U of R. Maybe you got your dream job, travelled around the world, welcomed your first child into the world or earned your PhD – we would like to share that with the 40,000 some readers who receive *Degrees* twice annually. Who knows, maybe one of your classmates will read your submission and be inspired to look you up to catch up on old times.

We look forward to receiving your Class Note. You can email it to [URalumni@uregina.ca](mailto:URalumni@uregina.ca).

I trust you will enjoy this issue of *Degrees*.

Greg Campbell BFA'85, BJ'95  
Editor

**[www.degreesmagazine.ca](http://www.degreesmagazine.ca)**



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Greg Campbell BFA'85, BJ'95

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## The University of Regina Magazine

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**On the cover:** University of Regina graduate student Rashique Ramiz is living proof that a can-do attitude and unbridled resourcefulness can overcome any setback. (Photo by Trevor Hopkin, University of Regina Photography Department.)



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### Meet Minister Makowsky and President Keshen 8

Meet new the new Minister of Advanced Education, Gene Makowsky and new U of R President Jeff Keshen.

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The Faculty of Engineering, its students, instructors and graduates have had a long, mutually beneficial relationship with MacPherson Engineering, a Regina engineering firm. Learn how MacPherson and the faculty worked together on a project that's realizing safer, healthier and more energy-efficient First Nations homes.

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Introducing this spring's trio of honorary degree recipients – one of the world's most decorated masters track and field athletes, a respected academic and a tireless Indigenous advocate.

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Life has sometimes dealt Rashique Ramiz some bad hands. But the Levene Business School graduate student has made the best of things in his adopted country and is now making a difference at the University where he is pursuing his dreams.

### Taking their game to the next level 26

Three alumni have parlayed their educational and athletic experiences at the U of R into high-profile positions in the world of professional sports.

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## President's Note

### Concentric circles

Following the Board of Governors' meetings in early May – my last after twelve years of such meetings at the University of Regina and Royal Roads University in Victoria – I have been reflecting on the nature of universities and their governance.

To call universities fascinating places is to understate. They are key pillars of the thousand-year history of higher education. Within their walls, transformation takes place in many spheres, from the personal to the global. People from around the world come together to learn from experts, and indeed to learn from, and come to know, each other. They encounter and absorb different viewpoints, different histories, different cultures. A chance meeting in the hallway with someone soon to become a friend for decades, a new perspective on inequality outlined in an economics seminar, the galvanizing experience of being recognized and engaged by an admired professor who stops to chat after class – for students, these are just a few ways in which universities can, in the span of a few minutes, alter the direction of their lives.

Universities are also home to groundbreaking research, innovation, and creative activity. The speed with which coronavirus vaccines were developed in recent months has its roots in university-based research. The stunning

achievements of NASA's Mars exploration rover Perseverance derive in part from the vision of a University of Regina alumnus, Larry Matthies, who began his scientific career in our classrooms and labs.

Universities can also be challenging places – not least for those called on to administer them! Rather than monolithic, they are highly decentralized. Each of the various faculties has much latitude in determining its academic offerings. Individual faculty members have a great deal of freedom in determining what they investigate and create. To an outsider, it can perhaps seem a bit shambolic at times, a loose collection of individuals and programs working in virtual independence from one another. Indeed, Clark Kerr, former president of the University of California, wryly described a university as "a series of individual entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance about parking."

But it is precisely this decentralization that has been a major factor in sustaining universities over the last millennium. Rather than embodying a "chain of command," a university can usefully be conceived as a series of concentric circles. At the center is the innermost circle, the core. That core encloses teaching and research, and is the one in which the mission of the university is accomplished through daily interactions between students,

faculty, research, and creation. This is the sphere in which transformations occur, and from which the university's powerful impact on the wider society flows.

Around that inner circle are others – student advising and support, recreation and athletics, information technology, finance and facilities, administrative offices, governance bodies – and many more. Varied in nature and purpose, the functions associated with each of these concentric circles play a key role in protecting and sustaining the core: teaching, learning, research, creation, and service.

And I would argue that the outermost circle, a vital and protective "skin" for the institution, is the Board of Governors, which combines faculty, student, and Senate voices with those of members of the wider community. Indeed, at Regina, five of the eleven members of the Board are appointed from outside the University. This not only signals the University's accountability as a publicly-funded institution established by an Act of the Saskatchewan Legislature, but also reminds us of the University's deep roots in the community that surrounds and supports it.

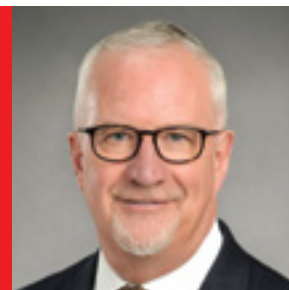
Perhaps more than ever in these times of pandemic and global economic uncertainty, a high-functioning Board is key to a healthy university. It has been my great privilege to work with such a Board.

By demonstrating expertise in diverse professional areas, a willingness to challenge constructively, a strong commitment to accountability, and an unwavering focus on the success of the University, our current Board of Governors has been a tremendous support to me, as has the Executive Team, the Senior Leadership team, and Deans' Council.

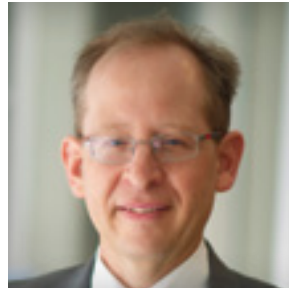
As I prepare to retire, I want to thank not only these leaders, but all members of the University community within these concentric circles – students, staff, faculty, and alumni – with whom I've had the privilege of working over the span of nearly four decades. I'm confident that the University of Regina will continue to transform lives, provide solutions to pressing problems, and contribute to a more just and equitable future for all. To my successor, Dr Jeff Keshen, I wish the very best as he assumes the President's role as the University nears the advent of its second half-century. Jeff, you are coming into an institution that is well-governed by its Board, well-supported by generations of alumni, and animated by its motto, *As One Who Serves*. As an alumnus, I will watch its growth and continued success with pride and pleasure.

Sincerely,

Dr Thomas Chase  
Interim President and  
Vice-Chancellor



**Left: Incoming president of the University of Regina, Dr. Jeff Keshen.**  
**Centre: The Honourable Ralph Goodale.**  
**Right: Dr. Douglas Farenick, dean of the Faculty of Science.**



## Appointments

Following an almost year-long national search, the University of Regina announced the appointment of **Dr. Jeff Keshen** as the institution's eighth president. Keshen joins the University after serving for three and a half years as vice-president at Memorial University's Grenfell Campus in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. Previously he served as dean, Faculty of Arts at Mount Royal University in Calgary. He also served as chair of the Department of History at the University of Ottawa and was an adjunct professor in the Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary.

He holds a doctoral degree from York University with a research concentration in the history of war and conflict. He was the recipient of the Government of Ontario's June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism for establishing the University of Ottawa's Experiential Learning Service. He was a double nominee for the 3M National Teaching Fellowship Award and was awarded both the Ontario Leadership in Teaching Prize and University of Ottawa's Excellence in Education Prize.

Keshen is the author of five books and more than 25 scholarly articles. He has edited

11 books, including 1995's *Social Welfare Policy in Canada*, which he co-edited with Dr. Raymond Blake, a professor of history at the University of Regina.

His book *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* received the best non-fiction book award from the Writers Guild of Alberta. It was also shortlisted for the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences' Harold Adams Innis Prize for the best book in the social sciences. His book *Saints, Sinners and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* was shortlisted for the Raymond Klibansky Prize for the best book in the humanities, another prize awarded by the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The book was also recognized with the C.P. Stacey Prize for the best book on military history.

Keshen's term begins July 1, 2021. He will make the move to Regina with his wife Deborah Moynes-Keshen and children Jacob and Maddie, who will both attend the University of Regina. (See the profile on Keshen on page 9.)

University of Regina alumnus and former Member of Parliament for Regina-Wascana, the **Honourable Ralph Goodale BA'71**, has been appointed as High Commissioner for Canada in

the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. In his new position, Goodale will provide strategic advice to the Prime Minister on areas of importance to people in Canada and the United Kingdom. This includes many current and ongoing challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, pursuing post-Brexit trade and creating job opportunities.

**Dr. Douglas Farenick BSc'84** has been reappointed to a second five-year term as dean of the Faculty of Science effective July 1, 2021. Farenick received his PhD in mathematics from the University of Toronto in 1990 and held a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the Centre de recherches mathématiques at the Université de Montréal before beginning a tenure-track position at the University of Regina. He was promoted to the rank of professor in 2002. Farenick has served as associate dean (Research) of Science and head of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. His professional leadership roles have included vice-president (West) of the Canadian Mathematical Society (CMS) and chair of that organization's Finance Committee. Farenick is a resident of the Canadian Council of Deans of Science, serves on the board of the Pacific Institute for the

Mathematical Sciences (PIMS) and represents the University of Regina on the TRIUMF (Canada's particle accelerator centre) Board of Management. Farenick is an alumnus of the University of Regina, where he studied mathematics and computer science as an undergraduate student. In his spare time, he enjoys swimming and cycling.

Following a national search, **Lori Campbell BA'94 (FNUiv), BA'95, MAEd'16** has been appointed the inaugural associate vice-president (Indigenous Engagement). Campbell's term began June 1, 2021. Campbell is 2-Spirit nēhiyaw āpihtā wikosisān and is a band member of Montreal Lake Cree Nation, Treaty 6 territory. She is an intergenerational survivor of the Indian Residential School system and a child from the Sixties Scoop. She has spent her career advocating for social justice and working towards a more equitable society for all. She was the University of Waterloo's first senior director of Indigenous Initiatives and in that capacity played a crucial role in the university's earliest Indigenization planning.

She previously served as director of *Shatitsirótha'* Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre and program developer and adjunct lecturer in the Indigenous Studies academic program at St. Paul's University College at the University of

Waterloo. Campbell holds two undergraduate degrees in Indigenous Studies and Psychology, a master's degree in Adult Education and is working towards a PhD in Social Justice Education.

She is a sought-after public speaker, educator and media expert. Campbell is the recipient of a wide range of academic and community honours including the Ontario Women's Directorate Leading Women Building Communities Award, University of Waterloo's Equity and Inclusivity Award, UNESCO Global Action Program Award for Regional Centre of Expertise on Education and Sustainable Development, and the 2021 national Women of Inspiration Award.

Following a national search, **Dr. Cheryl Pollard** has been appointed dean of the Faculty of Nursing. The five-year appointment is effective July 1, 2021. Pollard previously served as associate dean of the Faculty of Nursing at MacEwan University. Prior to joining MacEwan University, she managed interdisciplinary teams within the home living, supportive living and rehabilitative health service sectors. In recognition of her ability to create and lead high performing teams, Pollard was honoured as a 3M Health Care Quality Team Award winner.

After completing an undergraduate psychiatric nursing degree, she earned a PhD in nursing from the University of Alberta. Her doctoral work focused on the application of relational ethics. Pollard continues to be an active scholar and collaborative researcher committed to the

promotion of mental health and resilience among people who live with mental illness and their caregivers. Her research has been supported by multiple funders including the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Centre for Aging + Brain Health Innovation, Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Alberta Health.

She has received international recognition from the National League for Nursing (NLN) for her enduring and substantial contributions to nursing education, was inducted as a fellow in the NLN Academy of Nursing Education and received the Alberta Nursing Education Administrators Award for Leadership in Psychiatric Nursing Education.

**Dr. Aziz Douai** was appointed the University of Regina's dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research on January 1, 2021. Douai holds a PhD in Mass Communications from Pennsylvania State University and a Master of Science in Advertising from Boston University. He has lectured on global communication issues in North America, Europe and the Middle East. A Fulbright scholar, who has received Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and international competitive research grants, he highly appreciates the importance of research funding to graduate student success.

Douai maintains an active research agenda focused on disruptive communication technologies, international communication and conflict, with a special interest in the MENA media and politics. He is the author and co-editor of three books, including

recently released *Arab Media and the Politics of Terrorism: Unbecoming News*. He has published more than 50 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters.

He is a founding member of the Center on Hate, Bias and Extremism; a senior research affiliate at the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society; and a member of the Digital Life Institute. He served as grant reviewer and chair of the Multi-disciplinary Committee-Social Sciences at the SSHRC from 2017 to 2020.

University of Regina alumnus **John G. Hampton BA'09** has taken over the helm at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, making headlines as the first Indigenous executive director and CEO of a public art gallery in Canada. Hampton is a curator, artist and administrator who joined the MacKenzie team as Director of Programs in October 2018. He holds a Master of Visual Studies – Curatorial Studies from the University of Toronto, and a BA in Visual Arts from the University of Regina. He is a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, United States and Canada and grew up in Regina. He has previously held positions as executive director of the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, artistic director of Trinity Square Video, and curator at Neutral Ground Artist Run Centre. In addition to his role at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Hampton holds an adjunct curator appointment at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, an adjunct professorship at the University of Regina and is the co-chair of the Indigenous Curatorial Collective board of directors.

## Research

**Dr. Mauricio Barbi**, a professor in the University's Department of Physics and member of the international board of the Hyper-K collaboration, is part of a team of researchers who received significant funding from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI). In total, the University of Victoria received \$5.4 million to lead the Hyper-K project. Barbi and his team at the University of Regina received \$1.4 million from the total grant. The Hyper-Kamiokande detector – called the Hyper-K – acts like both a microscope and telescope, going from observing elementary particles to using neutrinos to observe the sun and supernovas. The CFI funding will allow the team of researchers to continue working on detecting elementary particles through the Hyper-K project, part of an effort that includes 84 institutes in 17 countries.

Three University of Regina researchers have been awarded close to \$600,000 from Saskatchewan's Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) for their livestock and forage-related research projects. This funding is part of \$7.5 million in total funding announced by Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Marie-Claude Bibeau and Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit.

**Kerri Finlay**, associate professor with the Faculty of Science, received \$279,125 for her project *Sulfate removal from agricultural ponds for improved cattle health: evaluating regional and local controls*. Through her research, Finlay will help address water quality concerns that could affect cattle health on the Prairies by



identifying controls of sulfate concentrations in cattle-accessed dugouts and ponds on farmland. She will then use this information to evaluate mitigation opportunities to improve water quality.

**Dr. Wu Peng**, assistant professor in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, received \$149,000 for his project *The application of artificial intelligence in agricultural land flooding prediction in Southern Saskatchewan*. Wu's research will address the need to better understand the interaction between agricultural activities, climate change and flooding in the prairies. Wu and his research team will employ a three-pronged approach to analyze and predict the agricultural flooding in southern Saskatchewan.

**Dr. Denise Stilling**, associate professor in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, received \$150,000 for her project *Discoveries in extrusion pulping agricultural crop residue into compostable products*. Stilling's research will help address the negative environmental impact of single-use plastics. Crop residue from cereal and flax straw has proven to be ideal for single use packaging products and can also be used for compostable dinnerware. Stilling's research will look at using the crop residue to potentially manufacture decomposable drinking straws, stir sticks, container sleeves and medical devices, such as temporary drainage stents.

The University of Regina's **Dr. Sandra Zilles**, Canada Research Chair in Computational Learning Theory, is one of the researchers who received an AI Chair and federal government

funding through the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) AI Chairs Program. CIFAR is a Canadian-based global research organization. Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming more and more integral to our everyday lives, and the federal government has given a boost to Canadian AI researchers so they can more rapidly increase their contributions to the field.

The appointment will allow Zilles to bolster current partnerships, create new ones and exchange research ideas. She will work closely with the Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute (Amii) in Edmonton, one of Canada's three national AI Institutes, along with Mila in Montreal and the Vector Institute in Toronto.

The Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative (PARC) has launched **ClimateWest**, a new non-profit, regional hub that will deliver credible climate information, research data and adaptation guidance tailored to the Prairie region. ClimateWest will work with people, communities, businesses and governments across Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to help address both the risks and opportunities generated by climate change. PARC is one of three founding partners of ClimateWest along with the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Prairie Climate Centre at the University of Winnipeg.

ClimateWest will help address the urgent need highlighted in the recently released Prairie provinces chapter of the *Regional Perspectives Report*, part of the National Research Council of Canada's national assessment process on climate change.

## Donor news

When **Samit Sharma MEng'98** first came to Regina from India in 1996 to study at the University of Regina, his introduction to cold weather, as he said, was more than offset by the warm welcome he received from the people of Regina and the campus community. Sharma came to Canada thanks in part to a scholarship for enrolment as a graduate engineering student in the Industrial Systems program under professor Sanjiwan Bhole.

Now, Sharma is repaying that kindness with some generosity of his own, specifically a \$100,000 donation to create a new scholarship for engineering graduate students. Each year for the next 10 years, one \$10,000 scholarship will be awarded to a deserving student. Sharma said the decision to give back to the University came after some reflection of how his life was impacted by the support of a scholarship – a career that includes his founding of Gaia Power Inc., a power development firm that develops renewable power projects, including some that are operating in Saskatchewan.

For many years, the **Leader-Post Foundation** has been an ardent supporter of journalism and the School of Journalism at the University of Regina. Despite the Foundation dissolving operations, its support will still be felt for many years thanks to the board's decision to provide a donation of \$400,000 to establish the Leader-Post Foundation Chair.

Mark Taylor BA'00, BJ'04, department head of the School

of Journalism, was tasked by the Foundation's board to come up with a proposal as to why the School deserved the funds. He examined the needs of the School of Journalism and determined that establishing a Chair and having it occupied by a working journalist would serve the School and the students best and would complement existing scholarships for students and the state-of-the-art equipment that is already available to them.

## Briefly

The University of Regina's **Registrar's Office** is working with the Paul J. Hill School of Business and the Faculty of Science on a transfer credit pilot project that will benefit newly admitted students coming to the U of R from other post-secondary institutions. Through the pilot project, these students can receive a preliminary transfer credit assessment within two weeks of their offer of admission. University of Regina registrar James D'Arcy says a quicker assessment not only saves students time and money by getting credit for courses they have previously taken, but also helps them to see how their transferred courses fit into what's required for their U of R program.

Wendy Preikchat is the assistant registrar and leads the transfer credit pilot project. Preikchat and her project team began to develop the new transfer credit process in the fall of 2020 by looking at system capabilities, mapping out the assessment process and cataloguing the many transfer courses. In January, they began to use the new credit transfer process for new students in the Hill School of Business and Faculty of Science.

## Meet **Gene Makowsky**, the new Minister of Advanced Education

By Bill Armstrong

The Honourable Gene Makowsky was appointed Minister of Advanced Education in November 2020, following his re-election as MLA for Regina Gardiner Park in the October 2020 provincial general election. In addition to the province's two universities and their federated colleges, the Ministry's portfolio includes Saskatchewan Polytechnic, eight regional colleges, three institutions delivering Indigenous educational programs and services, and private vocational schools.

Makowsky was appointed several months after the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the work of the province's post-secondary institutions and their students. This gave him a unique perspective on how they had adapted to the abrupt changes required to continue their educational mission, while

safeguarding the health and safety of students, teachers and support staff. He is impressed by how the institutions responded.

"I think they did a great job of pivoting to a hybrid model of education in a short amount of time," he says. "That included strictly online learning, and in situations where hands-on lab work was required, the safety of students and instructors was handled in the best manner possible."

Makowsky grew up in Saskatoon and completed his education there. He enjoyed his K-12 experience and decided that an education degree would satisfy his combined interests in sports and education. The idea of being a teacher and coaching high school athletes really appealed to him. Staying in his hometown and attending the University of Saskatchewan was an easy decision, helped by

the interest the U of S Huskies football program showed in him when he was in Grade 12.

Makowsky received his bachelor's degree in education, with distinction, from the University of Saskatchewan in 1996. However, the idea of being a teacher and coach – at least as a full-time vocation – was put on hold while he enjoyed a 17-year career as an offensive lineman with the Saskatchewan Roughriders (he was a member of the Grey Cup winning team in 2007). He served as a substitute teacher in the off-season, which he says was sometimes challenging, particularly when an early-morning phone call meant he had to fill in on short notice. The upside, he observes, is that he met and worked with great people, and was spared a teacher's least favourite chore, marking.

Following his retirement from the Roughriders, Makowsky was first elected as an MLA in 2011, and then re-elected in 2016 and 2020. When it comes to advanced education, as in most areas of our lives, he sees the rapid transition to digital communications and tools affecting how post-secondary institutions deliver their programs, as well as how students select what they will study and in what formats. This will likely mean more courses delivered online or using a hybrid format. He adds that there is increasing interest in what is called micro-credentialing, where students advance their professional or academic accreditation by selecting programs or courses that they find most relevant and that allow them to develop skills in specific areas in a relatively short period of time. He expects this approach to upgrading skills will continue to grow.

Against this background of change, Makowsky believes the Ministry's role is to support institutions with funding to help them through the pandemic recovery period. This is in line with the province's growth plan for the 2020 to 2030 time period, which includes targets for population and labour force growth. In particular, the Minister notes the progress made in increasing the participation of Indigenous people in the workforce by 19 per cent. He also points to the \$23.3 million allocated in the Spring 2021 provincial budget to support the First Nations University of Canada, the Gabriel Dumont Institute and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies.

"Teachers, staff and students have shown resilience and an ability to adapt quickly to changes that no one could have expected," Makowsky says. "I think those qualities will help our post-secondary sector recover and contribute to our province's future growth."



## Meet **Jeff Keshen**, the new U of R president

By Katie Doke Sawatzky

When Dr. Jeff Keshen arrives to begin his term as eighth president of the University of Regina on July 1, he will hit the ground running.

Keshen will be taking the administrative reins of a university just three years away from its 50th anniversary and one year into a new strategic plan. This means celebrating strengths and making improvements, while the institution is preparing for its second year of educating during a global pandemic.

But Keshen is excited about the job.

“The University of Regina is young and young at heart,” says Keshen. “It’s open to experimentation. I think it’s a tremendously exciting place with an amazing future and I think that people want to see it shine.”

Keshen comes to Regina after three and a half years as vice-president of Memorial University in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. Previously he served as dean, Faculty of Arts at Mount Royal University in Calgary. He also served as chair of the Department of History at the University of Ottawa and was an adjunct professor in the Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary.

A professor of history as well as an author and editor of several books and articles, Keshen’s research focuses on war and society, particularly on the home front. His earlier work focused on censorship and propaganda. Most recently, he’s turned his attention to families and wartime, studying the changing roles of women, impacts on children and ways the economy was transformed.

The changes COVID-19 has brought on Canadian society are not lost on Keshen. In fact, they remind him of what happened during wartime.

“Social crisis calls for the best from people under very stressful circumstances,” he says. “It also accelerates change. (Wartime) really did teleport change in so many areas that we knew had to happen. It transformed our society.”

In the environment created by COVID-19, Keshen sees the need for universities to be flexible and responsive to the needs of students on campus and off. Offering more intensive courses and a hybrid of online and in-person learning are experiments that will need to happen, he says.

“If we’re pre-conditioned to think in a certain way, I’m not sure that we’re going to get it completely right,” he adds.

However, in his opinion, the on-campus university experience will always have priority.

“University is not just about learning in the classroom. It’s also about the connections you make, about growing as an individual, about encountering people from so many different parts of the world. That’s absolutely essential.”

*All Our Relations: kahkiyaw kiwâhkômâkaninawak*, the University of Regina’s 2020-2025 strategic plan, was what sold Keshen on the University, along with the institution’s commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Indigenous ways of knowing. Keshen helped develop Memorial’s 2020-2025 strategic plan, which is similar in scope and vision and targets more retention of Indigenous students and Indigenous programming. Strengthening the university’s roots within the community is a key theme in both plans.

“The U of R strategic plan champions ideals, which

I think are inspirational. It is comprehensive; it is accessible,” he says. “It is connected to and really wants to be involved in its community.”

Keshen believes the benefits of community connection go both ways. As budgets tighten across the post-secondary sector and government funding decreases, partnerships with other university stakeholders such as Indigenous communities, as well as not-for-profit, non-governmental and industry organizations, will become vital.

“Establishing partnerships to leverage the potential that you have within the University, to enrich it through connections to others, is going to be important,” he says.

In return, Keshen sees the University as a community hub providing opportunities for the local community to better itself, to exchange ideas and to learn from all that researchers have to offer.

“Universities have expertise in so many areas that affect the daily lives of people. We can show the tremendous good that we can do in people’s lives. I see the University and the community it serves as intrinsically linked.”

He believes working towards reconciliation is also about partnerships and reciprocity. Memorial University is on traditional Mi’kmaw territory and 20 per cent of the students are Indigenous. Keshen wants to see First Peoples as part of the fabric of the university community, something the U of R is committing to in its plan to provide educational opportunities to Indigenous communities across the province over the next five years.

“If any place has the responsibility... to lead in redressing and showing the way of improving for the benefit of us all, it is the university,” Keshen says.



# Working together for the greater good

**In 2019, an innovative engineering project brought together U of R engineering students, their mentors, professional engineering associations, employees of several community-minded companies, and residents of Star Blanket Cree Nation. The goal? To make First Nations homes safer, healthier and more energy efficient. Mission accomplished. The project is just one illustration of the connections between MacPherson Engineering and the U of R.**

**By Bill Armstrong**

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

**T**he University of Regina and local firm MacPherson Engineering have enjoyed a 25-year relationship that has seen the two parties collaborate in numerous ways. Together, the partners have developed unique engineering curriculums and embarked on award-winning community projects. The firm has a long history of providing Co-op placements and innovative engineering solutions, mentoring students and hiring U of R graduates.

The strong working relationship between the University and MacPherson Engineering dates back to the company's incorporation in 1996. In fact, the company's first project with the University took place that same year. Since then, notes company president Murdoch MacPherson, numerous U of R students





Engineers Brad Lulik (left) and Jared Larson epitomize the connections between MacPherson Engineering and the University's Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science.

have completed Co-op placements with the company, along with summer students from various technical and degree programs. "Presently, 35 per cent of our team started out with MacPherson Engineering as students," he notes.

The ties go even deeper. The University has always been willing to entertain the company's ideas while expanding the limits of sustainability, MacPherson says, pointing to the combination heating and cooling system installed in the campus' Research and Innovation Centre and the radiant floor cooling system in the Kišik Tower residence.

In recognition of the company's \$15,000 donation toward the College Avenue Campus Renewal project, the University named the mechanical room and several fan rooms in the College Building in the company's honour. "We appreciated that," MacPherson says, "but it is the

donation of our time and knowledge – particularly to the engineering program – that we are especially proud of."

Two engineers with MacPherson – Jared Larson and Brad Lulik BASC'16, MASC'20 – have been heavily involved, serving as teaching assistants in engineering labs and as mentors to teams of fourth-year students completing their projects. Larson, a MacPherson Engineering partner specializing in HVAC engineering (heating, ventilation and air conditioning), and Lulik first met at a Regina Engineering Students' Society mixer, when Lulik was in the second year of his industrial systems engineering undergraduate program.

Larson would later mentor Lulik and other members of a fourth-year student team on their capstone project (a culminating assignment at the end of the academic program) in 2016. The team worked on an energy assessment of the building that houses the Little Souls Daycare in Regina, a non-profit organization with limited financial resources. The project went on to win a global design competition sponsored by ASHRAE, the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers, a volunteer-run international organization that promotes standards and best practices for the engineering profession.

In other professions such as medicine, explains Dr. Esam Hussein, dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, students interact with professionals in the field. "We try to do this in engineering, especially through the capstone projects: design projects intended to give students a taste of what real engineering is."

Fourth-year students present their capstone projects to their family, friends and peers on Project Day, one of the highlights of the school year. Because of public health restrictions, Project Day 2020 and 2021 were presented virtually over several days.

At the time Larson was mentoring the student team, he was also serving as student activities chair for the Regina chapter of ASHRAE. The organization was looking for ways to make closer connections with the University of Regina and encouraging the development of a full HVAC course at the University.

As a first step, in 2013, Larson was invited to speak to an engineering class, with a similar invitation extended the following year. The interest shown by students led to a decision to develop a full course. At that point Larson recruited Lulik to provide industry input to help faculty members develop the course. Larson describes the course as a joint venture, with faculty handling the lectures while Lulik and other practising professionals serve as teaching assistants and help students with lab work.

"We designed the course to leave the door open for industry participation, including U of R alumni and representatives from ASHRAE," says Larson. "We think the HVAC course gives our students a leg up on grads from other universities."

Lulik and Larson both agree that working with students is rewarding and a good investment of their time. Lulik recalls how, as a student, he was grateful when members of industry shared their time with him. "I understood they were busy," he says, "but somehow they found time to offer advice and point me in the right direction."

Lulik is also a vocal champion for the student teams he mentors. Two teams received grants from ASHRAE and APEGS (Association of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of Saskatchewan) to help them build their own lab apparatus as part of their projects. One of those teams won a Global Excellence Award at an ASHRAE conference in 2020. Currently,



U of R Engineering students install RadiantLink, a heat transfer system, into a home on the Star Blanket Cree Nation. (Photo courtesy of Aura Lee MacPherson.)

he adds, another team has received a grant from ASHRAE to help them design and build a refrigeration system that was part of their capstone project this year.

Lulik's and Larson's experience and expertise were crucial to the Blanket of Warmth for Our Nations Homes project, an initiative designed to improve housing conditions on the Star Blanket Cree Nation. The project's beginnings came when Aura Lee MacPherson (Murdoch's wife), then the office manager for MacPherson Engineering, worked with Wendell Starblanket of the First Nation to organize a ceremony at the Treaty 4 Governance Centre in Fort Qu'Appelle.

A chance remark by Starblanket about mould, high humidity and poor air quality in the basement of his home on the First Nation caught her attention. At his invitation, the MacPhersons visited Starblanket's home and assessed the conditions in the basement. They recognized that the patented hybrid passive heating technology developed by a Canadian company called RadiantLink had the potential to improve those conditions.

RadiantLink is a heat transfer system that uses a coil attached to the furnace to heat a food-grade glycol mixture that is pumped through plastic tubing attached to wall panels and then covered with drywall. The system turns the walls into passive heat sources.

Lulik notes that the techniques used today to promote energy efficiency and indoor environment quality have a lot in common with traditional Indigenous design. As an example, he notes that the tipi is intentionally designed to promote natural ventilation by raising or lowering the buffalo skins. Further, the stones placed around the fire inside the tipi serve as a radiant heat source, which helps maintain the temperature during winter nights.

The MacPhersons realized that the variety of tasks involved in the project would require recruiting other participants. Aura Lee, a strong believer in the United Nations' 17 goals for sustainable development, including the need to develop partnerships to achieve those goals, set to work finding partners. She began cold-calling potential sponsors and suppliers for the project. "In my heart I was thinking 'Do not make me tell Wendell this cannot happen,'" she recalls. "To my sheer amazement not one person said 'No' to the project."

The 2018 partnership with the Star Blanket Cree Nation, MacPherson Engineering and Uponor – the panels and tubing supplier – installed the system in Starblanket's home in just one day. While the Starblankets could feel the improvements in the basement, the next step was to measure what differences passive heating had made to health, safety and comfort. Since





Aura Lee MacPherson sees the University of Regina as “craving problems to solve”, she approached the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science for help.

Professor Amr Henni, who was teaching a U of R capstone project course at the time, proposed a project to his students that would involve measuring the conditions in Starblanket’s basement over the winter and comparing them to those in a similar home nearby without the passive radiant heating system.

A team composed of Kennedy Dollard BASc’19, Anton Movchan BASc’19 and Jeremy Shiplack BASc’19 took on the project.

At the beginning of the heating season in October, the team, with Lulik’s guidance, installed data loggers and sensors in two basements to: a) monitor temperatures and humidity and b) measure natural gas and electricity consumption. Cables were installed from a data collection point inside to a fixture outside the homes so that the students could download the data every few weeks without having to enter the homes. In February 2019, the team began preparing their Capstone presentation. They found that the basement with the radiant heating system was 3.5°C warmer than the basement without the system, and surface humidity reached a high of 41 per cent in Starblanket’s basement, compared with levels as high as 55 per cent in the other home. The lower humidity meant mould would be less likely to form in the space with radiant heating. They also found that the radiant heating system did not increase natural gas consumption, but instead reduced electricity consumption by almost \$900 a year, since space heaters were no longer needed in the basement.

As the second part of their project, the team also performed energy modelling in a similar home and prepared schematics and sizing requirements for a second installation. By making some simple changes, such as replacing copper fittings with PVC piping, they trimmed 30 per cent from the cost of materials for the second installation. “Brad (Lulik) made sure we had all the elements documented; that we had a well-rounded project,” Dollard observes. “We could not have done it without his guidance.”

Larson says when the team made their Project Day presentation, he could see and feel the pride they had in the work they had done, knowing that the project made a positive difference. The student team then presented a written proposal for a second project at Star Blanket. With a \$5,000 grant from APEGS and monetary and in-kind support from MacPherson Engineering, Uponor, Fries Tallman Lumber and Anaquod Plumbing and Heating, the second installation was completed in June 2019.

The members of the student team assisted with the installation, a postscript to the completion of their graduating year. While the work was underway, a community lunch was held on the First Nation, where people could learn more about the installation, assist with the work or visit with others. In a video produced afterwards, Chief Michael Starr said the project was about connecting, partnering and making each other feel welcome.

“The best part of the entire project,” Dollard says, “was seeing something you designed go in and make a difference. When I was choosing a field of study, I wanted to choose something that would help people – that would have an impact. I think there has been a shift in the last 10 years within the profession, with more emphasis on how engineering can serve people.”



**Top:** University of Regina Engineering graduate Brad Lulik.  
**Centre:** MacPherson Engineering’s Jared Larson is a teaching assistant in engineering labs and mentors fourth-year U of R engineering students.  
**Above:** Esam Hussein, dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science.



**Chief Michael Starr of the Star Blanket Cree Nation, Aura Lee and Murdo (Murdoch) MacPherson. (Photo courtesy of Aura Lee MacPherson.)**

The Blanket of Warmth project created another development opportunity, where representatives from the University and MacPherson Engineering travelled to Chief Payepot School north of Regina to host an engineering workshop, discuss the applied sciences and share the story of the work done at Star Blanket with the students there. While the workshop was an optional activity for her, Dollard says it was important for her to be there. It is important to have role models who are a reflection of yourself, she says, and having visible female role models in a field dominated by men was pivotal in her decision to pursue engineering.

“Participating in community outreach is most important in Indigenous communities, as these communities are severely under-represented in engineering. I hope to encourage some of these students to see engineering as an option for them, with the hopes of creating future role models for their communities,” she says.

Dean Hussein says the Star Blanket project is the one that is closest to his heart, because it shows young people what engineering is about, while solving a real problem affecting people’s everyday lives. “We may not always notice it in operation, but our quality of life depends on it, for example, in the water, heat and power we rely on,” he says.

Soon after the project was completed, the United Nations Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development in Saskatchewan recognized the project at its award ceremony for sustainability initiatives. The project is also earning accolades from the industry. The team was honoured to receive the APEGS 2021 Exceptional Engineering/ Geoscience Project Award at the organization’s annual recognition event on April 30 and *Sustainable Architecture & Buildings* magazine selected the project for a 2021 Canadian Green Building Award.

MacPherson Engineering is currently working with Henni and four capstone students on a continuation of the project, wrapping the plastic tubing around the windows in a renovated home and collecting the data over the winter months. “The results look promising,” says Aura Lee MacPherson, “and we expect to soon know if this should be added to the Blanket of Warmth for Our Nations Homes. We continue to improve the system and look for grants to improve homes with poor air quality on Star Blanket Cree Nation.” **D**

*Bill Armstrong is a Regina freelance writer and amateur photographer with a strong interest in Saskatchewan history.*



# Spring 2021 honorary degree recipients

The COVID-19 pandemic put a sudden halt to many special events in the past 16 months. That's true of the awarding of **University of Regina honorary degrees** that are usually presented at Spring and Fall Convocation ceremonies. The last time the University presented its most prestigious awards was in the Fall of 2019. Thankfully, that has changed. This Spring's honorary degree recipients include one of the world's most decorated masters track and field athletes, a respected academic and a tireless Indigenous advocate.

## Carol LaFayette-Boyd BSW'85



Photo by Trevor Hopkin.

In 1992, on a whim, Carol LaFayette-Boyd competed in her first masters track meet. Although she hadn't competed in track and field since high school, she captured the 100 metre and 200 metre gold medals and has been competing ever since. She holds world records in the indoor 60 metres, 200 metres, long jump and triple jump. Her world outdoor records include 100 metres, 200 metres, high jump long jump and

triple jump. 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 100 metres. That same year, at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Málaga, Spain, she won five gold medals and set world records 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 was voted into the Canadian Masters Hall of Fame in 2012 and the Regina Sports Hall of Fame in 2014.

Prior to her track and field career, LaFayette-Boyd worked in nursing and social work. In 1965, she completed her psychiatric nursing training at the Saskatchewan Hospital in Weyburn. She later decided to return to her studies earning a social work certificate in 1977 by night classes. In 1985 she earned a degree in Social Work and continued working for the Saskatchewan Government in Social Services and Corrections.

## Dr. Eric Grimson BSc'75 (High Honours)

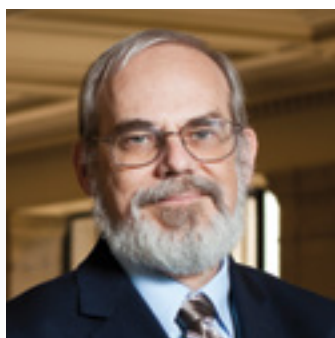


Photo courtesy of Eric Grimson.

After graduating from the University of Regina, Dr. Eric Grimson went on to earn a doctorate in mathematics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1980. He soon became a faculty member at the institution and went on to teach tens of thousands of undergraduate students and supervise some 50 MIT doctoral candidates. His online course in computer science has been

taken by roughly 2 million learners worldwide. Grimson is widely known for his research in computer vision, especially as it relates to medical image analysis and neurosurgery.

He has earned fellowships in the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence, Association for Computing Machinery, and

Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. Grimson was named the first Bernard M. Gordon Professor of Medical Engineering in 1998. He also served as head of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, associate department head from 2004 to 2005, and education officer from 2001 to 2004. From 2011 until 2014, he served as Chancellor of MIT and in his current role as MIT's Chancellor for Academic Advancement represents the institution to alumni, parents and others. He also serves as an advisor to MIT's president on issues related to the institution's Campaign for a Better World, a \$6 billion campaign to meet humanity's urgent global challenges through the vision and talent of the people of MIT. In 2011, he was awarded a University of Regina Alumni Crowning Achievement Award for lifetime achievement.

## Roberta Jamieson



A tireless lifelong Indigenous advocate, Roberta Jamieson is a Mohawk from the Six Nations of the Grand River near Brantford, Ontario. She is a woman who has defined many firsts. She was the first Canadian First Nations woman to earn a law degree, first non-Parliamentarian to be appointed an ex-officio member of the House of Commons Special Committee on Indian Self-Government, first Aboriginal

Commissioner of the Indian Commission of Ontario, first woman appointed as Ontario's Ombudsman and first woman elected chief of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory.

She has received numerous distinctions including the Goodman Fellowship from the University of Toronto, Mary Parker Follett Award from the International Association for Conflict Resolution, National Aboriginal Achievement Award and Inter-American Award at the Conference of the Americas on International Education. She was named a member of the Order of Canada in 1994 and in June 2016, was promoted to an officer of the Order of Canada. She was also appointed to the inaugural Gender Equality Advisory Council of the G7 Summit.

In 2004, Jamieson became president and CEO of Indspire (formerly the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation), an Indigenous charity which invests in Indigenous post-secondary education. She also served as the executive producer of the *Indspire Awards*, an annual, nationally televised award program that honours Indigenous achievement. During her time there, Indspire distributed \$132 million in bursaries and scholarships to more than 40,000 Indigenous post-secondary students across Canada. She stepped down from the position earlier this year. Her University of Regina honorary degree is Jamieson's 28<sup>th</sup>.



On February 10, the 2020 Alumni Crowning Achievement Awards were broadcast on AccessNow and the five outstanding alumni of the year were announced. Each recipient received a sculpture by U of R alumnus **Marc Courtemanche MFA'04**. Courtemanche said the following about the sculpture: "The object that was chosen to represent western Saskatchewan, and specifically Regina, is an old school desk. Why a school desk? Because it signifies institutional culture and evokes our past memories of educational learning. The idea of an old school desk came about from my memories of the old abandoned school houses, farm houses and churches that can be found across Saskatchewan's beautiful landscape."

Generally, he says of his artwork: "I create objects that are visually mistaken for 'real' but a closer inspection reveals them to be made of a foreign material. I do not intend to trick the eye but to draw attention to how such ubiquitous household objects are made. A ceramic chair highlights how chairs are made and how they are used. This is a philosophical gesture, which leads one to question both what it is and what the divisions are between real things and representations – between art, craft and manufactured things. In addition, I am applying wood working methods to clay to expand the range of ceramic techniques."

For more information, visit [www.marccourtemanche.com](http://www.marccourtemanche.com)  
Photos courtesy of Marc Courtemanche.





Previous page: *School Desk* (2021) is the stoneware that Courtemanche created for the 2020 edition of the University's Alumni Crowning Achievement Awards.  
 Top left: *The Studio*. Top right: *Paint still life* (2018) - stoneware, acrylic paint, wood. Above left: *Mission Statement* (2013) - stoneware, leather.  
 Above right: *Flat Cart* (2007) - stoneware, porcelain, metal.



Top: *Wall of Tools* (2010) - stoneware, metal. Above left: *Turning* (2003) - stoneware. Above right: *Trompe L'oeil* (2009) - acrylic paint, metal, wood.





Top: *Toolbox of Tools* (2010) - stoneware, metal. Above left: *Clamped* (2010) - acrylic paint. Above right: *Still life* - acrylic paint on medium-density fibreboard.



# The resilient young **Mr. Ramiz**

Despite the challenges that life has thrown at Rashique Ramiz, the graduate student from the Kenneth Levene Graduate School of Business has landed on his feet and procured his dream co-op placement at the Child Trauma Research Centre. Turns out that, as much as Ramiz is getting out of the placement, the Centre is getting much more from him.

**By Lynette Piper**

Photos by Trevor Hopkins, University of Regina Photography Department and courtesy of Rashique Ramiz.

University of Regina master's student Rashique Ramiz remembers the day his world changed forever. He had just started a co-op term as the IT communications specialist with the newly-established Child Trauma Research Centre (CTRC). His wife, Faeqa Farooq, was four months pregnant with their first child, and the happy young couple was overjoyed at how their life in Canada was unfolding. Then, on September 29, Ramiz was jolted awake at 5:15 a.m. by the persistent buzz of his cell phone. Panicked, he answered the long-distance call from Bangladesh, bracing for news no child ever wants to hear: his beloved father was gravely ill with a high fever.

"I knew in my heart that something wasn't right. My mother and sister were crying and I felt so helpless and so far away," says the quiet, introspective student from the Kenneth Levene Graduate School of Business. Within an hour, his father was gone.



As the only son and eldest of two children, Ramiz sprang into action to help his family in Bangladesh. Even though he couldn't travel and there was a 12-hour time difference between the two countries, Ramiz used his business acumen to sort through company orders, payroll and staffing concerns of his late father's struggling business. Since that fateful September day, his schedule has been relentless. Beginning at 9 a.m., he works a full day from home for the Child Trauma Research Centre. He then takes over cooking and cleaning duties to help out his wife and tends to their infant daughter, Raizel. Then, from 9 p.m. until 1:00 a.m., he manages his dad's Bangladeshi business from afar. "The company is barely making enough money to pay salaries and is operating at a loss," he confides. "I've been trying to sell the business, but with COVID-19, times are hard and no one wants to buy. These are very unpredictable times, but I am not giving up. I like a challenge, and I don't need much sleep. So far, I've been able to manage affairs back home plus take on all of the opportunities with my co-op placement."

Anyone facing similar circumstances would probably have reason to be a little morose, but Ramiz is the kind of person who radiates positivity. His can-do attitude and unbridled resourcefulness have earned him the admiration and respect of his colleagues, in particular his supervisor, Dr. Nathalie Reid, CTRC's director.

"I used to be a high school teacher and I've always believed that youth are our future," she enthuses. "Rashique's story is so compelling. He's helping to shape our future by being the focal point of our values and our mission. His creativity, IT and digital knowledge, along with his data analysis, are helping us

better respond to child trauma issues at home and abroad, with the ultimate goal of helping to prevent child trauma."

The CTRC was established at the University of Regina in March of 2020 to focus attention on issues and research pertaining to child trauma and its impacts on child and youth mental health and well-being. Until the Centre's founding, Saskatchewan lacked the research services to co-ordinate knowledge of child trauma across diverse sectors, programs and stakeholders. The CTRC focuses on multidisciplinary research and collaborates with the Ministries of Health, Justice, Education and Social Services, as well as other agencies across Canada. This is helping mitigate the causes of child trauma and its long-term impacts, which will help spur transformational change, not only in Saskatchewan, but around the globe.

"Child trauma is far more common than we think," says Reid. "Any child from any background or socioeconomic group can be living with trauma. Traumatic events such as poverty, addiction, domestic abuse, neglect and violence in the home can dramatically impact a young person's life. When these lives are derailed, the community at large bears the consequences – from public services that are burdened to employers unable to benefit from a young person's potential."

The CTRC became an official entity on March 10, 2020. One day later, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. "I met with the team and said 'If we can't be relevant now, and respond to how COVID-19 will impact children and their teachers, then we don't deserve our jobs.' So we got to work with coinciding research projects to support those in child-serving capacities, including attending to the dramatic mental health impacts of COVID-19, and



Opposite page: Kenneth Levene Graduate School of Business student Rashique Ramiz. Above: Dr. Nathalie Reid, director of the Child Trauma Research Centre.



# Shaping

THE WORLD IN WHICH YOU WANT TO LIVE



University  
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With the growing realization that we are at a turning point in history, it seems we all have a part to play in determining what our future looks like.

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The Student Success Fund provides scholarships and awards to remarkable students like Rashique who inspire us every day.



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ultimately, how this has impacted the mental state of teachers, administrators and school staff,” says Reid.

Being able to respond on an international scale meant having someone on the team able to tackle the digital demands of the CTRC. Ramiz fit the bill. Before coming to Canada, he received his undergraduate degree in Electronics and Telecommunications Engineering in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Anxious to come to Canada, he and his wife were both accepted for postgraduate diplomas at Canadore College in Ontario, where Ramiz obtained a certificate in Project Management and IT with academic honours. He was then accepted into the Kenneth Levene Graduate School of Business at the U of R where he’s pursuing his master’s of Administration in Leadership.

“Rashique has absolutely wowed us with his ability to get our website up and running ([www.childtraumaresearch.ca](http://www.childtraumaresearch.ca)), build our Digital Connections Hub, research and develop secure data storage, and help us throughout every stage of operation,” says Reid. “His willingness to do whatever it takes to get the ball rolling has really impressed the entire team.”

Ramiz blushes at the compliments, humbled at his good fortune. He admits he was scared at first, but says he was welcomed into the fold by colleagues who are “just like family.” He adds that CTRC’s culture of inclusion has helped him build his confidence.

His first project was to develop the Digital Connections Hub, an online resource for those in child-serving capacities to support vulnerable children and families in the midst of the pandemic and beyond. The website synthesizes a vast quantity of research and translates it into two-page briefs and

information posters. Feedback on the Hub has come in from as far away as the Philippines. Ramiz developed a collection of infographics and poster material for the Hub that can be easily digested by different age groups. “We’re on all of the social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter,” he says. “I’m also making child wellness posters that young kids can relate to about mental well-being.”

Ramiz’s second project was to develop a three-part survey in conjunction with the Faculty of Education. “The first part of the survey dealt with the reality of what Canadian teachers, administrators and school staff faced when the pandemic first hit,” he explains. “We came up with multiple photos of a teacher sanitizing a desk and trying to maintain safe distance in the classroom. We then offered 21 anecdotal responses that a teacher could apply to those photos, from hostile, afraid and nervous to excited, inspired and enthusiastic. While teachers have had to focus on the educational needs of students, they’ve also been faced with huge stress in re-thinking the way they teach.”

Ramiz says they wanted to make sure the responses were analyzed accurately. “We did our coding based on the responses and created groupings from somewhat positive to somewhat negative to get the exact emotional response,” he says.

The second part of the survey was then sent to teachers, administrators and school staff when schools reopened after the lockdown. The third part of the survey, released in May, focused on the mental health and wellbeing of those same stakeholders in the midst of the vaccination rollout.

“What the survey is showing us is that teachers need more funding from governments to balance the educational and health needs of children during COVID-19,” he says. “Based on



**Left:** Ramiz says that Saskatchewan has been so welcoming to him and his family that he wants to stay, raise his kids in the province and give back to the community. **Right:** Ramiz and his wife, Faega Farooq, were both accepted for postgraduate diplomas at Canadore College in North Bay, Ontario where Ramiz earned a certificate in project management and IT with academic honours in 2019.



**Ramiz and his bride Faeqa Farooq pose on their wedding day with members of Ramiz's family. (Back row, left to right) Ramiz's mother Mahbuba Parveen, sister Reyan, and his late father Mohammad Liaquat Hossain. The photo was taken in Dhaka, Bangladesh in December 2016.**

our results, teachers are afraid for their own health and that of their students."

Future projects for Ramiz include: developing a website for a conference called Supporting Systemic Responses to Sexual Violence in conjunction with the Regina Sexual Assault Centre; designing a non-credit professional certificate in trauma-sensitivity and trauma-informed practices; and participating in the writing of grant proposals. Ramiz is also working with a team to help develop resilience in schools by creating a neurological-based tool kit for vulnerable kids.

"Ramiz was hired as a communications person, but we're discovering he has so much more to offer the CTRC," Reid says. "His skills and insight are invaluable."

Ramiz believes it was fate that landed him such meaningful work – a chance to gain insight into his own difficult past and use the lessons learned to help others facing trauma.

"Oh boy, how much time do we have?" the 29-year-old asks, unsure where to begin. "My father moved us around a lot, going from one failed business to another. He always had big dreams, investing all of his money, but those dreams never materialized. Whenever the business would go bad, the whole family was affected. I never really made friends because we were always moving," he confides. "I was a very skinny boy and I have scoliosis (curvature of the spine), so the public-school uniforms never fit. The pants were always very loose. One day, one of the boys pulled them right off me, in front of my classmates, and I remember crying as I ran back home."

Ramiz pauses for a moment, as if reliving that difficult memory. "I had to wear a thick belt to keep my muscles strong because of my back," he continues. To this day, he must take breaks every hour so excruciating pain doesn't set in. "Because of my condition, I lived through a lot of mental trauma of being devalued by relatives and friends. It haunted me for a long time, which affected my confidence."

Ramiz remembers travelling to another country when he was older, and his belt got him confused with a terrorist.

"I had a big beard and I was harassed by security because they thought I was a suicide bomber, pointing to my big belt and beard. I think that's the reason my father changed my last name, but it didn't really help in that situation." Ramiz and his family are Bangladeshi Muslim. He says his father, Mohammed Hossain, didn't want his children to experience the same kind of intolerance that he experienced, so he changed the kids' last names from Hossain to Ramiz so they might escape overt racism.

"Because my family moved so much, I did not have good grades and I struggled with English. The first time I applied to the U of R, my application was rejected," he admits.

Ramiz's positive outlook and unflappable resolve have earned him the reputation of someone who is helping shape the kind of world in which we all want to live. His tenacity to set the bar extremely high in his co-op position, while single-handedly managing an overseas business late into the night so he can provide for his mother and sister in Bangladesh, is one of the reasons why Ramiz has endeared himself to so many.

Ramiz continues to give his all in every aspect of his life. The late cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Although she died nearly two decades before Ramiz was born, one could argue that Mead was envisioning a world made better by people like Ramiz. "I keep reminding myself that I am extremely lucky to be here and getting the education that I am," he says thoughtfully. "Now that I am a father, I have even more reason to make the world a better place." **D**

*Lynette Piper is an award-winning writer and former government communicator and journalist who is now pursuing her BFA in Film Production at the U of R. Outside of school, she's involved with several production companies utilizing her creative writing, producing and voiceover talents. Her passions include mental health advocacy and documenting the lives of prairie pioneers.*



**Kelsey (O'Byrne) Zipchen BEd' 10, BA' 17** has a unique job. She's a teacher on film and television sets across Canada, tutoring young actors who are missing school. Zipchen taught in Regina and Saskatoon before her husband, actor and host Tanner Zipchen, found work in Toronto. While spending time with him on location, she learned about on-set teaching. She went on to earn a California Certified Studio Teacher designation in an intense four-year journey that included a course in child welfare and labour laws, more than a dozen state and subject exams, and additional university classes through UCLA.

**D** Why did you want to become a teacher?

*Since I was little, teaching my stuffed animals, I always had an inkling that I wanted to teach. It wasn't until I was taking high school English that I began to actually consider it as a career. I had incredible teachers who challenged me to dig deeper and to look for the things that weren't on the page and to take risks with my writing. I began helping friends with their essays and poetry analyses and realized I really enjoyed that. I'd always excelled in school, but until then, I can't say I was really passionate about any of it. I realized I wanted to help future students discover their own passions and talents.*

**D** How did your experience at the U of R prepare you for your career in education?

*The best thing about my experience was the opportunity to get into a classroom from the beginning. Things like classroom management, communication skills and effective lesson design can only be learned from experience and I gained a lot of it from my diverse classroom placements and internship opportunities.*

**D** What is your most memorable experience from your time at the U of R?

*Coffee and sandwiches between classes at Henderson's! I also really enjoyed taking summer courses – I really recommend it. Joining the Education Students' Society was another highlight.*

**D** What's the most challenging part of your job?

*Not only do I need to be prepared to help students with whatever schoolwork they bring to the set, but because I am also there as a welfare*

*advocate, I need to have a working knowledge of the many different regulations and child labour laws. The set is a high-stakes environment. Being the person to tell the director that she can't have the child when she needs him because he hasn't done enough school yet, or has to break for his mandated lunch hour, isn't always easy. I feel privileged to be in the position of looking out for these young actors.*

**D** What's the most rewarding part of your job?

*Learning from the incredibly talented young people I work with and seeing first-hand how hard they work. Not only are they brilliant and creative, but they also manage full-time careers with academics when they're as young as five and six years old.*

**D** What is your most cherished celebrity encounter?

*I recently worked on a film in Vancouver starring Ryan Reynolds, Mark Ruffalo and Jennifer Garner. They are the most humble people you could ever hope to meet. It was an incredible experience to watch these iconic actors perform, to see the way they touched everyone on set with their kindness and to watch them model things for my student, who was pretty new on the scene and the only child on set. Jen even baked cookies for the crew. It doesn't get any better than that.*

**D** What do you miss most about not living in Saskatchewan?

*I think it's a four-way tie between my family, my friends, the stars at night and the pace of life. I would give anything to be able to do this job in Saskatchewan where my loved ones are.*



# Taking their game to the **next level**



**Meet a trio of successful women  
who were lighting it up at the  
University of Regina before they made  
their mark in professional sports.**

**By Julie Woldu BAJ'07**

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

**A** World Series champion. An NBA coach. A professional hockey player.  
All women.  
All University of Regina alumnae or former Cougars athletes.

All working in fields traditionally dominated by men.

Because, the truth is, nothing is impossible, according to Anita Sehgal BAdmin'94 and senior vice president of Marketing and Communications with the Houston Astros. "If you work hard, are patient and take advantage of opportunities that come your way, you could end up living anywhere and doing anything you want."



Sehgal did just that. She knew from her time at the U of R that she wanted to have a career in marketing. She enjoyed the balance of creativity with data analytics and customer insight. Self-described as a curious and life-long learner, she has spent over 25 years in strategic marketing functions with organizations including The Forzani Group, Best Buy, Academy Sports + Outdoors, and currently the Houston Astros.

Growing up with brothers Arun and Pankaj, Sehgal spent a great deal of time outdoors and at Regina's Pasqua Rec Centre. Her love of sport was fostered early on with a passion for basketball, football and hockey. To this day, she is a diehard Saskatchewan Roughriders fan and attends nearly every Grey Cup.

"I was in love with sports and was pretty fascinated by the business of sports too," Sehgal says. "If an opportunity came up or I had an opportunity to do marketing and do it in an industry or a category that I liked, I would naturally gravitate there."

While Sehgal credits taking advantage of opportunities that arise, her long-time Regina friend, U of R graduate and former Cougars hockey player, Curtis Kleisinger BEd'96, BA'99, says her success is also a result of who she is and where she came from.

"She's incredibly positive. Her work ethic is ridiculous. She's very intelligent and understands things quickly," he said. "I think she's tough enough to be in that male-dominated world because she grew up with her brothers."

When Sehgal joined the Houston Astros in January 2015, they were the worst team in Major League Baseball. Sehgal was committed to helping turn the team's fortunes around and by 2017, she was planning a World Series championship parade. But that wasn't her only focus.

"I think what's great about the journey is that you get to impact how people feel about the organization's commitment to the city and commitment to creating a team that people want to cheer for and support. We were able to do that and we were able to celebrate these great moments that we've had," she says.

"We won the World Series in a year that Houston had one of its most tragic experiences because of Hurricane Harvey. The fact that the Houston Astros could bring hope and joy to people when they needed it the most was pretty great. The great thing about working for a professional sports organization is it's in their DNA to give back to the community. And so, you have this opportunity to really make an impact in the community because you're tied to a sports organization."

Kleisinger notes how important it has always been for Sehgal to give back, whether it's helping Houston through Hurricane Harvey or being there for underprivileged youth through the Boys and Girls Club of Houston. She even does what she can from afar to support Regina organizations, such as Mother Teresa Middle School, which serves youth in Grades 6 to 8 living in poverty.

As the school director, Kleisinger has witnessed the positive impact of her financial support and equipment donations for the school over the past ten years. He notes, "She never forgets where she came from. She shares. She allows people to share in her success."

"I just feel very honoured that I had an opportunity to help. I will always want to make sure that, no matter what happens in life, I get a chance to continue to give back to the place I grew up in and where my family is," says Sehgal.

"I grew up in Regina, Saskatchewan, and I never imagined that I would have some of the job opportunities that I did, but I feel very fortunate that I have. I've had some great coaches and mentors, and hopefully, I can make a difference as well."



**Opposite page:** University of Regina alumna Anita Sehgal, seen here with the Commissioner's Trophy, is the senior vice president of Marketing and Communications for Major League Baseball's Houston Astros, the World Series champions of 2017. (Photo courtesy of Anita Sehgal.)

**Top:** Sehgal, who has spent more than 25 years in strategic marketing functions, describes herself as a curious, life-long learner. (Photo courtesy of Anita Sehgal.) **Above:** Curtis Kleisinger, Sehgal's long-time Regina friend, U of R graduate and former Cougars hockey player.



**Growing up in California, former Cougars women's basketball player Sidney Dobner never imagined she would be a student-athlete in Saskatchewan, let alone coach in the National Basketball Association. (Photo courtesy of Milwaukee Bucks.)**

Sometimes Saskatchewan values are what draws people to the province – even when they have no idea just how a chance connection could change their lives.

Growing up and spending her first college years playing basketball in California, Sidney Dobner never dreamed she would end up living in Saskatchewan or coaching in the National Basketball Association (NBA). And yet one opportunity made the other entirely possible, in a roundabout way.

“At the end of the day I’m just lucky that I’m doing something that I love. For me, it’s coaching in the NBA that’s my dream. It doesn’t feel like work,” says Dobner from Milwaukee, where she is currently a video assistant and player development coach with the Bucks. She spends her days on the court with the players, putting them through drills, guarding, rebounding and helping them improve.

The rest of her time is spent in the video room, analyzing pre- and post-game film, pulling clips and feeding the assistant and head coaches with information regarding the offensive game.

Her journey goes back to 2012 and the day she met up with a friend from high school, Michelle Clark. Clark had spent the previous season playing with the U of R Cougars women’s basketball team, and connected Dobner with Cougars head coach Dave Taylor, who was looking for a point guard.

Dobner was injured at the time but flew to Regina to play in an exhibition tournament.

“You could see she just loved the game,” Taylor says. “She was a great player and played with tremendous energy.”

Her energy and enthusiasm for basketball led her through the next four seasons with the Cougars. She spent her first





year red-shirting because of eligibility rules, and then five games into the following season she tore her ACL. The tear led to a fractured tibia, which meant another season on the bench.

"Finally, the next season, I was able to step on the floor with my giant knee brace and it was such a relief to get out there. The game really slowed down for me, because I was able to learn so much on the sidelines," she says. "I took so much of that time sitting out just watching game film because that was all I could do, that it became like a habit just watching every game, not just me but everybody else. And for me that progressed, at least on the coaching side of things, my career tremendously."

Taylor says Dobner naturally took on the role of mentor and player-coach during her years with the Cougars, especially when she couldn't be on the court. He says that, looking back, Dobner seemed to already know where her future was heading with the amount of time she spent watching video.

"She was almost like one of the coaching staff and then it was great because players would come off and she talked to them and she really understood. Obviously, she always wanted to get back on the floor," Taylor says. "Whenever she was on the floor, she helped us even more. It also just gave her a look at another side of the game – just looking at it strictly from a coaching-type perspective instead of just on the floor."

When Dobner finished playing with the Cougars, she played professionally for a year in the Netherlands with the FSG Royal Eagles. It was a young, rebuilding team and once again Dobner found herself in the role of mentor. When she fractured her heel at the end of the season, she decided to take the assistant coach position at Cal Lutheran University her college coach back in California offered to her. She simultaneously coached youth basketball for a team run by Don MacLean, a former NBA player. He invited her to help on the court at a pre-draft NBA camp with Creative Artists Agency. The next summer she was invited back to Pro Day, which is when NBA general managers, coaches and scouts come to watch the players.

"I was out there on the court, doing the normal workout, passing, rebounding," Dobner says. "The workout ended and I was packing up my stuff when these guys walked over to me. They asked me who I was and would I ever be interested in working in the NBA. I was thinking to myself, 'This can't be real.'"

After a few weeks, she was invited to fly out to Milwaukee to put some of the Bucks through a workout.

"The next thing I knew I was signed up to join the NBA G league (the NBA's official minor league) as an assistant video coordinator a month later, with no experience in video coordinating. Then I worked my way up from there within different roles to where I'm at right now. It's been an exhausting role, but I love it."

Taylor feels she was recognized by the NBA because she is passionate, committed and talented. "That's typical Sid – everything she does, she just goes all in. She does it as well as she possibly can."

What's next for Dobner? To keep climbing and taking advantage of every opportunity that comes her way.

"My goal is to keep moving forward," she says. "At the end of the day, I really just want to be a part of a program where the players get better and they are able to win a championship with, hopefully, my help."



**Top:** Dave Taylor, Cougars women's basketball head coach, had the pleasure of coaching Dobner for three and a half years. **Above:** Dobner wore number 13 during her tenure with the Cougars. (Photo courtesy of U of R Athletics.)



In 2020, former U of R Cougars star Jaycee Magwood signed to play for MODO in Örnsköldsvik, Sweden. MODO is one of 10 teams in the Svenska damhockeyligan league, the top level of women's hockey in Sweden. (Photo by Mats Bekkevold.)

Pursuing her passion also led Jaycee Magwood BKin'20 to Saskatchewan, although Killarney, Manitoba, is not quite as far away as California. Magwood joined the University of Regina women's hockey program in 2015.

After spending her younger years playing recreational hockey with some friendly competition from her twin brother, she played Midget AAA for five years and then decided to join the Cougars to continue her hockey career.

"I thought it would be a really good fit for me both academically and hockey-wise," Magwood says.

Sarah Hodges, head coach of the Cougars women's hockey team, said the Cougars were lucky to have Magwood come to them and contribute so heavily over her five years with the team.

Like many women playing hockey, Magwood at first assumed that her playing career would be over after university. But then another opportunity arose. Finnish-born Venla Hovi, first a player and later an assistant coach with the University of Manitoba Bisons, reached out to Magwood in her fifth season, offering to help her find a team to play for in Europe.

"I don't know if I would be playing over here if it wasn't for her," says Magwood from her current home in northern Sweden, where she just finished her first season with MODO Hockey in the Svenska damhockeyligan league.

The U of R Cougars certainly prepared her for professional hockey. Magwood says the schedule isn't quite as intense as balancing university classes and hockey.

"It's pretty much just hockey," she says. "We have off-ice strength and conditioning training Monday through Thursday, along with morning skill sessions and then team practices in the afternoon. On the weekends, we usually play two or three games."

While this season was a bit different without fans in the stands due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Magwood says the media coverage is exceptional and they receive quite a bit of support. She hopes to return next season and continue her career in the league which has quite a high level of play. "There are players from the national teams over here in Europe," she says. "Very, very skilled players who lead their national teams."





**Above:** Sarah Hodges, head coach of the Cougars women's hockey team, says the team was fortunate to have Magwood contribute so heavily over her five years. **Bottom right:** Magwood is one of just three players in Cougars women's hockey history to score 100 points or more. She was a three-time recipient of Canada West second-team all-star honours, named to the CIS All-Rookie Team year and finished with 48 goals and 53 assists.

Hodges can see how Magwood would fit in. In her opinion, "The hockey ability is there. She has some things that not all players have. She has the offensive abilities and her ability to score."

Playing in Sweden has also caused Magwood to think about her future in hockey beyond playing. "I always thought coaching would be a really cool avenue to continue being involved in the sport," she says. "There are so many opportunities to be able to stay involved in the game. That's definitely something I'm more interested in now than I think I've ever been."

Magwood may very well become a coach one day. The one thing all three of these women have proven is that anything is possible when you have the drive to succeed, a relentless work ethic, a willingness to take advantage of new opportunities and a strong support system. **D**

*Julie Woldu is a sportswriter and fiction author based in Regina.*





# Alumni take their (One)Shot at success

**There are currently about 1,000 declared computer science majors at the University of Regina. While many of these students will go on to work in traditional IT roles, increasingly computer science alumni are flexing their entrepreneurial muscles and establishing technology enterprises that are changing the computing landscape.**

**By Sabrina Cataldo  
BA'97, BJ'99, Cert. PR'04**

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

**S**tanding outside a warehouse in the industrial area of Regina, you can hear the thunk, thunk, thunk of golf balls ricocheting off wooden gutters. Once inside, you'll see almost a dozen mini-golf courses, each with its own theme – everything from Carnival Crazy to Saloon Old West to Tropical Adventure. What you won't see, however, is a single player. Putters are controlled by robots operated in real time by people all over North America, who are playing through an app on their mobile devices.

OneShot Golf was created by University of Regina graduates Andrew Burant BA'14, BAdmin'14, Tim Borgares BSc'12 and Ryan Donohue BSc'18. The trio met years ago while working on another mobile app, GasBuddy. At the time, it was one of the only reputable startup tech companies in Regina. It was also among the first consumer crowdsourcing platforms in the world, predating Wikipedia.





U of R graduates and OneShot Golf co-creators (left to right) Ryan Donohue, Andrew Burant and Tim Borgares in the warehouse that is home to more than 50 putting robots equipped with cameras that allow people to play the mini-golf games remotely, in real time, from anywhere in the world.

After GasBuddy was successfully sold, the graduates moved on to other projects. Borgares and GasBuddy co-founder Dustin Coupal began working on an agricultural technology project that would allow people to operate farm machinery remotely. There was a snag, though. “We found that none of the video you expect to be live – YouTube Live or Twitch, for example – is truly real-time live. It is multiple seconds delayed,” says Borgares. “When you’re turning a combine in a field, you need it to be 100 per cent in real time, so when you press right, it goes right immediately. That wasn’t really possible.”

The team started developing technology to solve that problem. They realized that this novel approach could be used in the gaming and e-sports industry, and OneShot Golf and its “connected reality” technology was born. “This technology lets anybody with a mobile phone connect to and control robotics completely in real time,” says Borgares. “I’m not aware of any other platform like this. It’s about connecting people, connecting robotics and creating empowering experiences.”

The mini-golf app allows friends to play competitively against one another and win prizes. Many can’t believe the courses they’re seeing on their phones are real, so OneShot Golf employs “hosts” who sit on the course and encourage players. “It’s hard to argue that Emma (one of the hosts) isn’t real,” laughs Borgares. The app was launched across North America in January 2021 and averages about 15,000 putts a day. It has received overwhelmingly positive reviews.

Why mini golf? The goal was creating a competitive sporting experience that stands out from the myriad virtual mini-golf games in the marketplace. “We wanted to create an experience, especially during the pandemic, that resonated with people who can’t get out there and play real golf,” recounts Borgares. “Here in Saskatchewan, what would you rather be doing in the dead of winter than going outside and golfing?”

Burant serves as project manager and robotics administrator, Borgares is a co-founder and chief technical officer, and Donohue works on the mobile app and internal management dashboard. They all say their U of R experience prepared them for success in operating their own startup. Borgares and Donohue are graduates of the computer science program, while Burant has degrees in arts and business administration.

Donohue says, “University prepared me to work on a team and also as an individual. As a team, you can bounce ideas off one another and work it out together, but sometimes you have to work through it yourself and make your own decisions.”

“It helped me think critically and approach problem solving in a different way,” Burant notes. “It teaches you to look at the big picture and focus on what’s important. It’s important to have those foundational skills and that background to decide how to approach problems.”

“In the startup world, you end up wearing a lot of different hats and doing a lot of different things,” Borgares adds. “In my experience at the U of R, I learned about various parts of technology and aspects in the computer science realm. The breadth of knowledge you gain is useful when you go into the startup world. When something needs to get done, you just have to do it, because no one is going to do it for you.”

Donohue says that his time at the U of R also taught him time management and prioritization. “Often in startups, stuff flies in from different directions at any given time. It was the same thing at school – you have a bunch of finals and assignments coming in. You need to understand how to prioritize when time is not an infinite resource.”

OneShot Golf is the first product the team has released in the marketplace. They plan to build on its success and expand to more users and places. “What we’re building is a new and powerful technology that we hope to integrate into other industries and really drive a lot of connection and change,” says Borgares.

Another computer science graduate who has co-founded a successful startup is Jordan Howlett BSc’13, MSc’14. He’s the engineering manager for Bunch, an app that allows people to video chat with friends while playing mobile games. It’s similar to being at a local area network (LAN) party or a Nintendo round with friends on the same couch, but you can access it anytime, anywhere, on your smartphone.

Bunch began three years ago as an app that allowed users to play games while video chatting. The developers originally focused on creating their own games for the app. “Later in the project, we realized that people already have games they love to play, and we could make their experience better,” Howlett

says. Bunch began focusing on linking their chat app with third-party games such as Minecraft, Fortnite, Call of Duty and Roblox. “We try to support any multiplayer game. It’s about creating a real-time experience with your friends. We want people to have a shared experience and laugh over it.”

Due to the challenges of social isolation, Bunch was rapidly adopted around the world in mid-March 2020. It soon made the top 20 social apps lists in 17 countries, the top 100 social apps lists in 35 countries and the top 100 free apps lists in the entire Apple App Store. While thousands were using the app in February 2020, by March, people were opening Bunch millions of times a month, spending over a million minutes a day on the app.

With the coronavirus redefining how people socialize, Bunch is becoming more and more relevant. “Even though we’ve been working on this product for a couple of years, it was pretty much built for the pandemic,” says Howlett. “Everyone was trapped at home, they couldn’t see their friends, they couldn’t do anything. We were able to provide something fun for them to do with their friends while they were at home.”

He welcomed the extra work that the spike in traffic brought, given that he was also stuck at home. “With all this traffic, technical problems were starting to happen. It was something to take my mind off things – I could dive into work and have some fun digging into problems.” More than a year into the pandemic, traffic on the app remains constant. “People are sticking around because they have found a place where they like to hang out with their friends.”

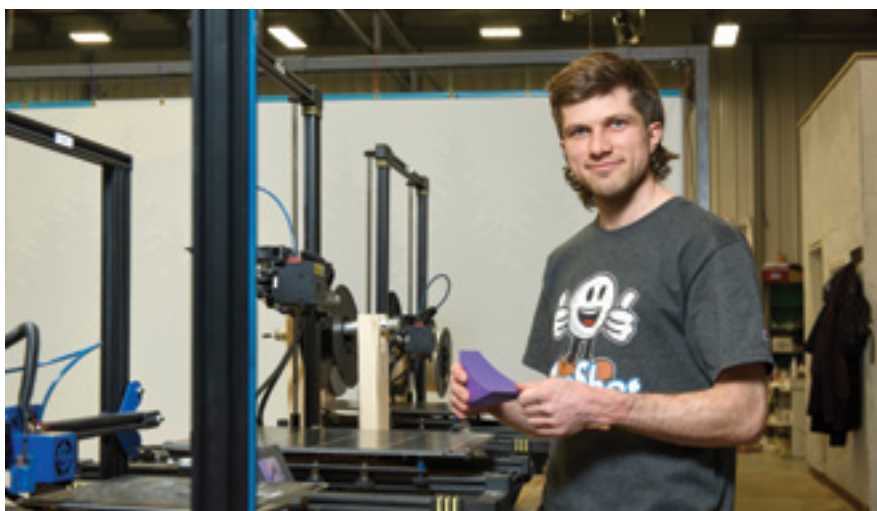
What started as a partnership among three people has grown into a 30-person operation with offices in Waterloo, Toronto, Vancouver, New York and San Francisco. “It’s gratifying to have a team around you who are excited to work on this. They’re really smart, and they’re making me smarter,” remarks Howlett. “It’s also really fun to see so many people using this product.”

Bunch’s revenues currently come from venture capitalists. The company plans to monetize the free app, offering users opportunities to enhance their experience by customizing their games and unlocking exclusive “skins.” A skin is an item that players can acquire in games to change the appearance of their avatar, the character on the screen that represents the player.

Howlett didn’t originally intend to go into computer science; he started his academic career at the U of R in business administration. He took a computer science class in his first year and was hooked. “I enjoyed solving problems and finding out how things worked. Seeing that you could build anything you wanted really appealed to me.” He gives credit to inspiring professors who got him excited about extracurricular projects, where he learned about new technologies. “I learned more than just building technology; I learned what’s needed to take something to market, to build something that solves problems.”

Dr. David Gerhard, head of the Department of Computer Science, isn’t surprised to hear about how well Howlett, Borgares and Donohue are doing. “I hear about the success of graduates like this often, because there are a lot of opportunities in computer science. It’s not just to work at a desk job doing IT, but also to branch out on your own and do a small business startup company,” he says. “If you have a new idea, computers are the way to make that idea a reality. If you have a computer science degree, you have the power to do that yourself without relying on anyone else. You can take an idea, make it real and sell it for money.”

Gerhard notes that most jobs today involve computing in some way. Some have a little bit of computing that most people



**Top:** OneShot Golf’s chief technical officer Tim Borgares. He says that the U of R is well represented in the company. In addition to the three principals, OneShot Golf employs graduate Denis Leanca BSc’20 and, at the time of writing, had four U of R co-op students and interns working for the firm. **Centre:** Ryan Donohue works on the mobile app and internal management dashboard for the company. **Above:** Andrew Burant serves as project manager and robotics administrator for OneShot Golf.





**Left: Jordan Howlett earned his master's degree from the U of R in 2013. He is one of the co-founders and engineering manager for Bunch, an app that allows people to video chat with friends while playing mobile games. The company has grown into a 30-person operation with offices in Waterloo, Toronto, Vancouver, New York and San Francisco. Right: Dr. David Gerhard, head of the U of R's Department of Computer Science, says he often hears about the success stories of graduates, like the four profiled in this story.**

can do, but others are aimed at people who can write code and develop computer systems. "The computer science program is very good at preparing people for the job market, offering a variety of experiences and access to co-op programs where people can get job experiences during their degree. It sets you up to be able to work in the information market that is the future of most work."

The Department of Computer Science goes to great lengths to ensure that students have a valuable learning experience. Gerhard meets regularly with industry representatives to ensure the programs offered are relevant to the kinds of jobs available in the market and brings back alumni to do presentations on their careers. "The computer science curricula is a two-level approach," he says. There are fundamentals that rarely change, such as basic programming, computer architecture and basic theory, but there is also the application of these basic principles and theories. Our professors update their courses regularly to take advantage of new technologies, as well as new applications of these technologies."

The department is in the process of adapting some of its programs into new opportunities for students. It just launched a data science master's degree program, and the first cohort will be accepted in September 2021. "We're always looking to where the industry is going and what computing looks like in the next generation and the generation after that," says Gerhard. "We have to balance that with the fundamentals

of understanding algorithmic thinking and computational process. We don't want to change everything we do all the time. We want to make sure that, as new opportunities and technologies become available, we are giving students the foundational knowledge to approach ways of doing things."

Gerhard asserts you can find computer science graduates working everywhere – for oil companies, with school boards and as sculptors. "Every industry needs computer scientists." He goes on to say that every workforce needs at least three computer science jobs: one for data security, one for commerce and one for data analytics. "These are three completely different things that computer science does that makes it possible for a customer to approach you to buy a product, to protect your IT infrastructure from invasive actions by bad actors, and to leverage data in your organization to solve new and interesting problems."

Enrollment in the program has grown exponentially over the past five years. There are currently more than 1,000 declared computer science majors at the U of R, but the industry is still asking for more graduates. "There still aren't enough computer science grads to do all of the computer science jobs that are in the workforce today. The opportunities are also growing exponentially," says Gerhard. **D**

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



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## Upcoming Alumni Events

### 2021 RESEARCH WITH IMPACT LECTURE SERIES

Hear from leading U of R researchers about how their research is making a positive impact.

**June 15** – “Sixties Scoop Research” with Dr. Raven Sinclair

**July 20** – “The COVID-19 Pandemic: Variants of Concern and Vaccinations” with Dr. Andrew Cameron

**August 17** – “The Future of Public Health: Citizen Science and Social Innovation” with Dr. Tarun Katapally

To register for this noon-hour series, visit <https://alumni.uregina.ca/pages/event-pages/research-with-impact>.

### ALUMNI & FRIENDS NEED TO READ ONLINE BOOK CLUB

The summer reading session runs May 25 to July 29. We're reading *Maybe You Should Talk to Someone* by Lori Gottlieb.

Join the Club!

<https://alumni.uregina.ca/pages/alumni-pages/online-book-club>.

### UR ACTIVE SUMMER FITNESS CHALLENGE

On July 1 lace up your runners and join the University's virtual UR Active summer fitness challenge as part of the Queen City Marathon!

For more information, visit [alumni.uregina.ca](https://alumni.uregina.ca).



### URAA (UNIVERSITY OF REGINA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Save the Date! Wednesday, September 15 at 6 p.m. via Zoom.

More information coming soon at [alumni.uregina.ca/uraa](https://alumni.uregina.ca/uraa).

### ALUMNI CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Celebrate the accomplishments of our alumni this October!

For more information on the ACAAs and other upcoming alumni events, please visit [alumni.uregina.ca](https://alumni.uregina.ca) or check out the events calendar at <https://alumni.uregina.ca/pages/events/calendar>.

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- ✓ Do you have an interesting hobby or unique travel experience you'd like to share?
- ✓ Have you received an award or other special recognition?

- Tell us your exciting news for a chance to be included in the **Class Notes** section of Degrees magazine.
- Submit your **Class Notes** to [URalumni@uregina.ca](mailto:URalumni@uregina.ca).
- **Notes** may be edited for length, clarity, and style.

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# Sometimes the easiest path is the **hardest to navigate**

Kerry Benjoe's journey hasn't always run a straight course. Only three years ago, she was homeless and caring for a young daughter. Two years ago, she faced the difficult decision to have her left leg amputated below the knee, the tragic result of spousal abuse. But Benjoe did what Benjoe has always done – she picked herself up. In 2020, she earned a master's degree in journalism and in February 2021, she was hired by CBC Saskatchewan as the broadcaster's first Indigenous Storyteller.

**By Kerry Benjoe BA'00, MJ'20**

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

**A**s a long-time journalist, I've told many stories of triumph and tragedy. But now I'm sharing the story of my own journey.

I grew up in a big family on reserve. Although we lived just outside Regina, we didn't have the same amenities as our urban counterparts such as indoor plumbing, running water, cable television or a corner store. Still, it was a happy life and we never went without. My parents made sure of it.

Unfortunately my protective bubble burst when I was 13. For years afterwards, I tried to recreate that life, but failed because it was my parents' journey and not mine.

My mom and dad were residential school survivors, as were my grandparents and my great-grandparents. In fact, I was the last generation of my family to attend an Indian residential school.



Four generations of my family attended the residential school in Lebret, Saskatchewan. This school was one of the first three residential schools the federal government opened in 1884; it was closed in 1998. This long line of residential school survivors shaped me and the decisions I've made along the way.

My parents had no choice but to attend residential school and it impacted them differently. They rarely spoke about their experiences. Years later, I learned the true history of residential schools and only then did I begin to really appreciate my parents.

My dad only shared one story about his time at the school and he told it with a gleam in his eye and always ended it with a laugh.

He was dubbed a chronic runaway. He ran away so often that he spent his final year at the school completely bald. Back then, runaways were hunted down and returned to the school. As part of the punishment, the children had their hair shaved off, regardless of their gender. The purpose was two-fold: one was to humiliate the student and the other was to easily identify "the runners."

During my parents' time, the school was called the Fort Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School, which was a place where gaining an education was secondary to learning a skill. The goal was to provide a source for cheap labour for the school itself and other non-Indigenous businesses. My dad was taught basic agricultural skills so he could become a farm hand.

When my dad was around 12 or 13 years old, he gained his freedom. That final year at the school, he began running up and down the hills during breaks, but always returned once the bell rang. He ran in the rain, the snow and the sunshine. After months of this, the priests and supervisors believed he had changed his ways. What they didn't know was my dad was waiting for the perfect time and for his hair to grow back. One warm spring day, he ran up the hill and kept running. He ran so fast and so far no one could catch him.

This time, he didn't go home. Instead, he found work as a farm hand. He lied about his age and said he was 15. Once

harvest was completed, he returned home and by then, the school had given up on him.

The only story my mom told me about her time in residential school was that it was the place where she learned to cry. For a six year old, it was a scary and lonely place. She started school late in the year, so when she got there everyone already had their bonds and she had no friends. Her job was to darn socks, which she did every afternoon after morning lessons.

She said her dad travelled by wagon to visit her and take her home at Christmas and at the end of the school year. This routine continued until a day-school opened on her reserve when she was about 12.

My mom was 80 when she said, "To this day, I still don't know why my dad ever put me there." I gently explained that in her day, residential schools were the law and her dad was probably threatened with incarceration, which explains why she started late in the school year.

Despite the trauma my parents likely endured – but never talked about – they provided a stable and safe home. It's the greatest gift they could have given us and I carry their stories with me.

Unfortunately, as the youngest of eight, I didn't get as much time with my parents as my siblings did. My dad died when I was 13 and my mom had to change from caregiver to provider virtually overnight.

I can go on and on about my parents and the many obstacles they both overcame. Knowing their struggles has helped motivate me even in my darkest times.

My experience in residential school was different from my parents but it still had a big impact on me. When I attended it wasn't mandatory, but with no high school on reserve, my choices were limited. The bottom line is that I had to leave my community if I wanted to graduate high school. My dad was big on education, so graduating high school was expected.

School is where I developed the skills I needed to survive.

I didn't face the same trauma as my parents, but living in an institution surrounded by strangers changes a person. I learned to depend on myself and make my own decisions. I was solely responsible for my actions and I dealt with the consequences of poor decisions on my own. I lived at the school, so there was no going home to mom with my problems.

I learned to work to earn privileges and rewards. Most of all I learned family isn't determined by blood. The downside was rarely going



**Opposite page:** After years of telling other people's stories, long-time journalist Kerry Benjoe is now comfortable disclosing her own tale of tragedy and triumph. **Left:** Benjoe has gone from being homeless three years ago to being hired as CBC Saskatchewan's first Indigenous storyteller. **Right:** Benjoe's mother Yvonne is a Residential School survivor, as were her parents and grandparents. She holds a photo of her grandparents, Bob Obey and Mary Emily, who helped raise her.

home or seeing my biological family. It was a lonely time but I adjusted and worked towards that day when I could leave for good.

I excelled in school and my high school principal recognized my potential and encouraged me to get a degree.

"Get your education, Benjoe, that's the one thing they can't take away from you," he said. It wasn't until years later I realized how true his words were.

Once I completed my time at the school, off to college I went. I was completely unprepared for the culture shock. I had absolutely no idea what I was doing, but I knew I needed to get my education, not only for me, but for my dad who had never had a chance and for those, like my principal, who believed I was capable.

Leaving Lebreton was a lonely time because I had no place to call home. I was 18 and responsible for myself. I failed university that first year but I met my future husband. We started our own family. Barely out of high school, I became a mom and the first time I held my baby, I promised I would give her a good life.

Truth be told, all I really wanted was to have a happy home and a career.

My daughter was three months old when I returned to university, determined to succeed. There were times I brought her to class with me. Twenty-eight years ago, this was unheard of, but I did what was necessary because I refused to quit.

I became the first in my family to graduate when I received a bachelor's degree in English and Indigenous Studies. My plan was to become a lawyer. However, life can throw you curveballs and, in my case, I adopted four children, so I adjusted my life accordingly. Around this same time, I realized I loved writing. For fun, as well as to maintain my sanity, I freelanced while working and raising seven children. The writing led to a gig at the *Regina Leader-Post* where I became the first Indigenous reporter hired in the paper's history.

Unfortunately, during this time, my marriage broke down and I became a single mom. It was a struggle sometimes, but we managed.

In 2011, I met a person who would change the course of my life forever and not for the better. I realized too late that I was stuck in a cycle of violence and it was hard to get out.

In September 2014, I turned to walk away from an argument when I was shoved from behind with a force that knocked me off my feet. When I landed, I heard a loud snap. I thought it was just from me hitting the floor, but when I stood, my leg buckled. When I looked down, my toes were pointing up. The arch of my foot was broken.

Sadly, it wasn't the first time he broke one of my bones. I was silent about the abuse partly out of embarrassment and partly out of denial. The relationship came to a dramatic end in December 2017. I left with nothing but the clothes on my back and my youngest daughter in tow.

In January 2018, I was homeless and living in a shelter with my daughter, but that was the easiest part of the year. While I was rebuilding my life, I had to face my abuser in court. It was a difficult but necessary part of my healing journey. I thought my life was finally going to be normal again, but the injury to my foot reared its ugly head. I faced yet another tough decision.

The bones in my foot were damaged beyond repair and I had to decide whether to have part of my foot or all of it amputated. After several consultations, I decided to have my foot amputated below the knee to end years of pain.



**Within about a year after her amputation, Benjoe was back wearing the boots and skirts that was her pre-surgery fashion practice. She eventually named her gold-coloured prosthetic – she calls it Hardy after actor Tom Hardy. She figured that, if the prosthetic was going to be her life partner, she might as well name it after her Hollywood crush.**

I began 2019 in a wheelchair but determined to walk. However, I had to rethink my career path. Returning to my job as a reporter wasn't possible because it's a physically demanding job. I resigned my position with a heavy heart but, rather than dwell on what I couldn't do, I focused on what I could and I returned to university.

In 2020, the pandemic threatened my education goals but I figured out how to complete my research. In October, I received my Master of Journalism and joined CBC Saskatchewan as part of a 12-week program. In February, I was hired as the Indigenous storyteller for CBC Saskatchewan, which is a newly created role.

Some people have asked why I'm not angry or bitter considering everything I've experienced, but the way I see it, I've gained knowledge. In each hardship, there's a lesson I've learned.

I had dark days but I also experienced the very best in people. When I was at my worst, I had friends and even strangers reach out and lift me up. Any time I ever thought of quitting, I remembered where I came from but most importantly, who I came from. My life isn't all sadness. I've had many opportunities and I've been very blessed.

The road I chose has been one of privilege, in that I've had opportunities my parents never imagined could be possible.

It hasn't been an easy journey, but I wouldn't change a thing. **D**

*Kerry Benjoe is CBC Regina's Indigenous storyteller. She is Saulteaux/Dakota/Cree and is from Muscowpetung Saulteaux Nation.*

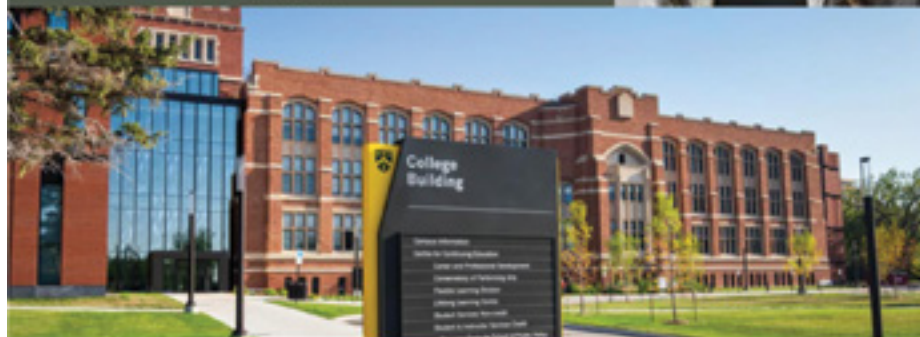


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Amid the challenges of 2020, URAA was pleased to help with a \$10,000 donation to the U of R Emergency Fund.



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