

IMAGINE

celebrating 75 years
1946-2021

COLLEGE OF GRADUATE & POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES



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BOLD & AMBITIOUS

#CGPS75

@UofSCGPS



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UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

The beauty and diversity of Saskatchewan is profound. Under our province’s endless sky, and situated on Treaty 6 territory by its swiftly flowing river (Kisiskatchewanipi) in Saskatoon, we, at the College of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies are proud to call this place home. We are grateful to share this space with you, the Homeland of the Métis and pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

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...a thematic digital platform for grad students

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Dean Burshtyn’s desk

What a privilege to represent CGPS as we celebrate 75 years as a college.

For 75 years the college has been overseeing the expansion of high-quality graduate education and supporting the steadily growing number of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. The COVID-19 pandemic of the last year and a half impacted how we work, but it hasn’t stopped our momentum, and we are excited about the new ways we have found to teach, to do research, and to communicate in general.

As part of our marking the momentous college birthday, we bring you this magazine with a little reflecting back, and a bigger focus on what our students and fellows are accomplishing and where they are headed. These driven individuals from around the world are guided by wise and talented professors, as well as engaged with community partners, all working in concert to unleash the power of new ideas. What better way could there be than to share their stories, their passions, and the amazing projects they do. From Decolonization to conservation to mental health to water decontamination, our students and fellows are working on the big issues of the day in social justice, tackling the climate crisis and innovating technology for good. The profiles in this magazine show our graduate students and postdoctoral fellows pushing the boundaries of what we know and understand about ourselves, each other, the province, and the planet – helping us to be the university the world needs.

Many thanks to the students and postdoctoral fellows who contributed to our 75th Anniversary celebratory issue – I am simply in awe of them. Just IMAGINE what they will do next!

#CGPS75

YEAR	1922-1945	1946-1970	1971-1990	1991-2016	2017- TODAY
AVG STUDENT POPULATION	400	810	1,872	2,308	4,326
OUR NAME	UNIVERSITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES	COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES	COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES & RESEARCH	COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES & RESEARCH	COLLEGE OF GRADUATE & POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

College of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

Throughout its 75-year history, the College of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) has committed to the excellence of USask's graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. Home to over 4000 graduate students and 200 postdoctoral fellows studying and training in over 200 programs and more than 80 academic units, the college works in collaboration with our campus partners to prepare grad students and fellows to solve the world's toughest problems.

Looking forward

Imagine...for the CGPS this invokes an ability to break down barriers, to create a framework of graduate education excellence, to lead collaboratively and to support our students, fellows and partners.

Our vision: be bold and be ambitious.

#CGPS75

1946-2021

Behind the scenes recognizing graduate administrators & college partners

Graduate administrators are involved in every aspect of making a graduate program run. They are advisors, communicators, the keepers of information, and are extraordinarily organized; from admission to convocation, they support graduate faculty and students alike all from behind the scenes providing unwavering support, thank you.

The CGPS would be remiss to not extend our gratitude to our partners from across campus. To the administrative units within [Teaching & Learning](#), [Student Learning Services](#) within the [University Library](#), the [Office of the VP Research & Research](#) (to name just a few) and the 70+ Graduate Chairs who all collaboratively work together toward excellence in graduate programming and student success, thank you.

A look back in time.



Peter Larkin USask Alumni 1946



(Photo: Hillyard & Hume ~1946)

Rhodes Scholar

from USask's special collections (1946 Student Yearbook)

"Peter's first year university classes were taken at Regina College. In 1942 he came to the University of Saskatchewan, 1944 he obtained the Honours Bursary for Biology and the following year he graduated with his Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Biology. At the same time Peter won the Governor General's Gold Medal as Saskatchewan's outstanding graduate of 1946. This past year found Peter engaged in research which resulted in his obtaining his Masters of Arts degree in the spring..."

by W.H. New on Peter Larkin (1924-1996)

Peter Larkin solved problems. He did so in part by refusing to believe they were problems in the first place. Instead, he saw difficulties and disagreements simply as challenges to the imagination, impassable as sites to climb through.

by W.H. New on Peter Larkin (1924-1996) reflections on a note from Peter Larkin...The note (as usual, brief) began with the single word "Awesome!" He was describing something that had appealed to him, and he went on to talk about it in a little more detail. But in retrospect I read that one word as characteristic of the way he met life in general. Enthusiastically. Energetically. Irrepressibly. For him the world was an endless source of wonder and delight. He strove to understand it better, and if possible explain a little more about it. But he took pleasure also in its mysteries. For those things that persistently remained unclear--those that continued beyond the reach of explanation--obliquely and indirectly promised a kind of continuity to scholarly enquiry. Mysteries inevitably led to more thought, more wonder, and--occasionally (the scholar-teacher's dream)--more understanding.

72

Rhodes Scholars

Creating opportunities for change.

Gabrielle Doreen is Kanien'kehá:ka from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. Her Kanien'ké:ha name is Iakotennikonhrare, which translates to "She watches over them".

She is a mother to four sons and a grandmother. Gabrielle attended Shatiwennakaratats Adult Immersion program in 2008, and has worked in different language capacities in her community, including immersion school teacher and language nest apprentice.

Since 2017, Gabrielle has been a course faculty lecturer at McGill University, teaching in the Indigenous Studies program. She has earned her Masters of Education from the University of Saskatchewan focusing on Indigenous Land-Based Education, and is currently a PhD student in the Education (Cross-Departmental) program.

Gabrielle was awarded a 2021 Vanier scholarship for her leadership and commitment to community, academic

standings and research proposal entitled, "Wampum Theories: an appropriate philosophical foundation for Kanienke'hà:ka Land-based immersion schools."

This strength-based research is important as it re-centers Indigenous epistemologies and philosophies at the core of Indigenous education.



"Growing up I didn't have many Indigenous academic role models. After finishing high school, I felt my only option as an adult was to start a family. Through community-led academic partnerships, I was able to complete my undergraduate degrees in both Arts and Education. I then went on to study in the Indigenous Land-based M.Ed program. This program was also based in community and taught by mostly Indigenous Instructors. I have learned more in canoes than in academic halls."

Indigenous relational ways of knowing and doing, connected to land and languages presents itself as an opportunity to change the current hegemonic, hierarchical education system that is contributing to the destruction of land and underrepresented peoples of the land.



Gabrielle Doreen, Vanier Scholar (Photo submitted)

The past is the key to the future.

Dr. Christopher West has always wanted to be a paleontologist and was able to pursue his lifelong passion for fossils and earth history at USask. Under the supervision of Dr. Jim Basinger of the Department of Geological Sciences and Dr. David Greenwood (Brandon University), Christopher explored the evolution of plants and environments in the Arctic, earning his PhD in 2019. During his doctoral studies he received both the Dean's Scholarship and the prestigious Alexander Graham Bell NSERC Doctoral Scholarship. In 2020, he was awarded the Governor General's Gold Medal, Canada's highest honour for a doctoral dissertation. Christopher's research focused on 55-million-year-old fossil plants of Ellesmere and Axel Heiberg islands in the Canadian High Arctic, reconstructing ancient polar climates and ecosystems at a time of extreme global warmth. This research has great relevance to elucidation of causes and consequence of global climate change over periods of geological time. The application of this research to an understanding of future climate change resulting from humanity's greenhouse gas emissions is significant, and is recognized. Christopher's research has recently been cited in the IPCC's 6th Assessment Report on the physical science of climate change.

Since late 2020, Christopher has been a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Alberta in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric

Sciences working with Dr. Alberto Reyes. His current research builds upon his prior work, and involves fossil plants found near Dawson City, Yukon, where remains of a 60-million-year-old subarctic forest are preserved. This research enhances our understanding of the remarkable forests that blanketed the Earth's north polar regions at a time when even the north pole was frost-free. It informs the origins of today's temperate forests of North America, Europe and Asia, and gives insight into the impact of global climate change on the biosphere. Christopher's research is important in the development and testing of predictive climate models that attempt to forecast our role in future climate change.



Christopher West, PhD Photo taken at approx. 77°0' N on Ellesmere Island, Nunavut, Canada (Credit: Markus Sudermann)

IMAGINE

Teacher-scholar doctoral fellows.

In partnership with the GMCTL

TSDFs are committed to high quality undergraduate education, pursue an active program of research and scholarship, and enliven and enrich their teaching and student experiences by incorporating insights from their own research into their instructional activities.

Alexandra M. Zidenberg, B.A. (Hon.) Forensic Psychology, M.A. Experimental Psychology, recently completed her Ph.D. in Applied Social Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. Currently, she is a Postdoctoral Researcher with [iMPACTS](#) at McGill University. Alexandra's research focuses on forensic psychology and, in particular, sexual offending. She has been involved in a number of research and program evaluation projects focused on forensic psychology and plans to continue on in academia/research in the area.



Alexandra Zidenberg, PhD (Photo submitted)
Awarded a TSDF (2020)

Dalia Ahmed is a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Chemistry at USask. Dalia has always been passionate in learning about drug discovery. She pursued an undergraduate degree in pharmaceutical sciences and completed a masters degree in pharmaceutical chemistry and drug design. In her masters research project, she synthesized new molecules that showed anticancer and anti-inflammatory activities. Her doctoral research focuses on understanding how a small molecule inhibits an enzyme. The enzyme she studies is involved in the cell wall biosynthesis of the bacteria that causes tuberculosis. Her research helps in perspective drug design, as this enzyme has not targeted before. Inhibition of the enzyme provides a novel therapeutic strategy for the treatment of tuberculosis.

During her doctoral studies, she has received numerous awards, totalling more than \$70,000, for her high academic performance, outstanding research activity and philanthropy. She was awarded the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship in 2016 and 2017. In 2020, she was awarded a Teacher Scholar Doctoral Fellowship, where she combined her previous knowledge of teaching, her instructional skills, and her passion for learning new and innovative teaching methods, to teach an undergraduate chemistry course. She has also attended and presented at more than half a dozen regional, national, and international conferences, and has participated in several workshops presented by [MITACS Canada](#) to develop her professional skills.

Apart from research and studies, she spends her time with her husband and three kids. Her family has been a constant support, empowering her to continue her studies and pursue what she loves.

She loves being in nature, and appreciates the mountains, lakes and the diversity of other landscapes that Canada offers - nature recharges her soul!



Dalia Ahmed, PhD Student (Photo submitted)
Awarded a TSDF (2020)

“Being a mom while in graduate school is never an easy job, but still possible with hard work and a proper support system.”

4300+

Graduate Students

PhD graduate's research helps teachers avoid burnout.

Dr. Judy Jaunzems-Fernuk (PhD) is on a mission to foster calm classrooms where teachers and students thrive

By Meagan Hinthier (2021)

The University of Saskatchewan (USask) graduate recently earned her doctorate degree from the College of Education in the cross-departmental PhD program. Her dissertation combined educational psychology and curriculum studies to explore what attributes contribute to early-career teacher success.

“I taught K-12 for close to 20 years, and I noticed that during that time the classroom changed from being a relatively homogenous group of students to students who were all over the map with their learning needs, behaviours and mental health diagnoses,” said Jaunzems-Fernuk. “In Saskatchewan, we’re trained as general educators, but I found in the classroom I was doing special education all the time.”

After receiving her Master of Education in 2015, investigating youth at risk of school failure, Jaunzems-Fernuk considered continuing on with a doctoral thesis. She also began pursuing coursework and designation as a Registered Master Therapeutic Counsellor. During this time she was teaching at the Nutana Youth Resource Centre, a hybrid program between the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Saskatoon school divisions.

“I really found myself drawn to supporting behaviour challenges and mental health challenges, and seeing that, though all of this stuff can get in the way of learning, there are people that really want to succeed,” Jaunzems-Fernuk said.

She began considering what she was observing among her colleagues and reading in the literature: not only were students and their families struggling, but so were teachers. Thirty to fifty percent of North American teachers leave the professions in the first five years, and Jaunzems-Fernuk pointed to a 2019 study by the NDP that found 40 percent of teachers in Saskatchewan said they had seriously considered leaving the profession at some point in their careers.

“You hear: it’s so hard, it’s stressful, we’re so burnt out,” said Jaunzems-Fernuk. “I was loving my career even though I was working with challenging situations, so I thought that I should look to teachers in their early careers who are thriving. What is it that helps them to thrive despite being in a difficult situation?”

Jaunzems-Fernuk worked qualitatively over the course of several months with four teachers who self-identified as thriving and who were working in various school settings and teaching areas.

“What I saw, when I observed them teaching and talked to them, was that they were dealing with really tough stuff. They were in schools where they were trying to support students where there had been suicide, or bullying or major mental health issues,” shared Jaunzems-Fernuk. “These teachers were self-identified as thriving, but they were challenged.”

What Jaunzems-Fernuk found in the qualitative data she gathered and analyzed were four major themes that contributed to early-career teacher success: these teachers were resilient, they were resourceful, they sought out and built relationships, and they had well-established routines.

“Those four things were the anchor for their success,” said Jaunzems-Fernuk. “Were they struggling? Were there challenges? Were they dealing with stress? Yes, but they weren’t burning out. They were describing themselves as surviving and thriving.” [More on page 21.](#)



Judy Jaunzems-Fernuk, PhD recently earned her doctorate degree from the USask College of Education in the cross-departmental PhD program. (Photo: Memories by Mandy Photography)

Decolonization of health care.

Advocating for holistic health equity



Adele Bibault, Master's Student (Photo submitted)
Awarded UGS Scholarship 2020

My name is Adele Bibault, my pronouns are She/Her. I am of French, Lithuanian and German heritage and was born on Treaty 7 land, traditional territory of the Blackfoot confederacy; the Tsuut'ina; the Îyâxe Nakoda Nation; and the Métis homeland. I completed my HBSc on the land of the Lekwungen; Esquimalt; Songhees; and WSANAC Peoples, at the University of Victoria with an honours in Anthropology and a major in Greek and Roman Studies. I was extremely fortunate to write my honours thesis with Indian Residential School Survivor, Mark Atleo, and Intergenerational Survivor, Lorilee Wastasecoot, about the repatriation of childhood artwork from these 'schools' and how this art has influenced their lives in a positive way. I learned more from these two Survivors in one semester than I had my entire post secondary career. I would not be where I am today without the guidance and gifts of knowledge these two Survivors gave me and continue to give me. I am currently a Master's student in the Indigenous Studies department at the University of Saskatchewan, located on Treaty 6 land which is the traditional territory of the

Cree; Métis; Blackfoot; Saulteaux; Dene; and Dakota Sioux Peoples. My thesis will be focusing on the navigation of health policies between rural and urban healthcare for First Nations seniors from the Stanley Mission reserve of the Lac La Range Indian Band. It is hoped that this research will be able to be used to apply for grants for the Elders Haven on Stanley Mission, which is a health centre for elders of surrounding communities that provides consistent culturally safe care without elders having to travel far from home. These care facilities in rural communities are essential for elders and the community's holistic health and my research will be able to be used in a reciprocal way to help keep this centre thriving as well as complete my goal of grad school. My goal with this education is to work in the Nuka System of Care and ultimately become a remote, travelling family physician in Northern Canada. In my practice, I will work toward the decolonization of health care in Turtle Island (North America) to advocate for holistic health equity amongst all Peoples in Turtle Island.

New \$1.65-million project.

Helping to develop the next generation of scientists

By USask's Research Profile & Impact

The NSERC-CREATE to INSPIRE (Interdisciplinary Network for the Synchrotron: Promoting Innovation Research, and Enrichment) is a synchrotron training program hosted at USask. INSPIRE capitalizes on the Canadian Light Source (CLS) as a platform unique within Canada to train and mentor highly skilled graduates for a variety of careers. [Read the story.](#)

"As a student who uses the synchrotron, you have access in these very short, intense experimental times—time is very precious."

"You gain the skills of being able to plan well, to use your time wisely, to be able to work in teams, to be able to communicate well, and to be flexible in reacting to surprises—these are all skills which are preparing students for a whole variety of careers."

"One of the things that I got out of this program overall was a lot more confidence in myself—that I can accomplish all kinds of things," said Vogt, who has also served as a tour guide and floor coordinator at the CLS. "Even five or six years ago, I was the student that would be hiding in the back of the class and wouldn't really talk."

"When you put all of these people--experts in their own areas, and students who are the future experts --together and get them talking, who knows what great ideas will come out of that?" said Pickering.



USask geological sciences researcher Ingrid Pickering is the program director of a new NSERC-funding synchrotron training program. (Photo: David Stobbe)

Rethinking the PhD.



The purpose, meaning, and scope of the PhD are changing in response to profound changes in both the academy and society. As the primary national organization on graduate education, CAGS aims to coordinate efforts to build on Canada's position at the forefront of thinking on the future of the PhD.

The purpose, meaning, and scope of the PhD are changing in response to profound changes in both the academy and society. University researchers are increasingly engaged with other societal sectors and across disciplinary boundaries to address contemporary challenges. Doctoral graduates are contributing to society in increasingly varied ways and contexts. To engage in these diverse forms of research and to work and communicate both within and beyond the confines of the academy, doctoral students and graduates require new competencies. As the core of the PhD, the doctoral dissertation is diversifying in its forms and content in step with these changes. The format of a bound volume mimicking a scholarly book is being challenged to better reflect the requirements of scholarship in the 21st century, whether that occurring inside or outside the academy. Digital

artifacts, creative works, and publicly relevant documents are increasingly being embedded within dissertations that may take diverse forms. The modes of scholarship described in this final product are expanding, and include those of engagement, application, teaching, and integration, in addition to that of discovery. As the primary national organization committed to supporting and strengthening the Canadian graduate education community, CAGS embarked on a nation-wide consultation and analysis to build on Canada's position at the forefront of thinking on this important topic. Through these activities, our aim is to develop resources and clear recommendations and strategies to ensure both quality and relevance of doctoral research and the dissertation for the 21st century. [[CAGS Taskforce Report 2018](#)]

Beyond the Academy

Increasingly, graduate, and postdoctoral students are finding employment outside academia. The key skills required for employment within, and outside academia include many of the things valued in graduate programs, such as building a well-developed argument, making ethical decisions, and working independently. [[Ref: Graduate Transformative Skills project](#)]

The [Grad Hub](#), is a static web-based platform that takes a centralized and thematic approach to USask's wrap around support helping graduate students build independent development plans. The CGPS is expanding this approach to include Aurora, an e-learning platform with on-demand, self-paced learning modules that allow PhDs and Postdocs to explore career options and discover ways to apply the skills acquired through their education to get career ready. Aurora features more than 80 hours of seminars, career panels, and interviews with over 170 PhDs who have successfully launched careers in industry, non-profits, government, and higher education. Complimentary content offered through USask's [Career Services](#) will uniquely elevate the user experience.

From the Grad Hub, find Aurora | launching winter 2022.



Steve Irwin
(Photo: Rogue Pet Photography)



Linzi Williamson, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow (Photo: Kristina Laukkanen Photos and Films)

Postdoctoral Fellows

Postdoctoral Fellows (PDFs) are individuals who have completed a doctoral degree and who are seeking further training in a particular area of research. As valued members of the USask community, PDFs make an indispensable contribution to research environment of the University and to their chosen field.



National Postdoc Appreciation Week

Sept 20-24

238+

Postdoctoral Fellows

Dr. Linzi Williamson (PhD) is a USask Postdoctoral Fellow who has been working with Dr. Colleen Dell and the Office of One Health & Wellness in the Department of Sociology since 2018 examining the effects of working with Service Dogs on Veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder and who problematically use substances. In March 2020, Linzi was awarded 3-years of funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Patient Oriented Research Transition to Leadership program to continue researching the role of Service Dogs in the lives of Canadian Veterans. Linzi has also been a part of the evaluation team for the [USask Paws Yours Stress Therapy Dog Program](#). Before working with Dr. Dell, Linzi completed both her MA and PhD in Applied Social Psychology in the Department of Psychology at USask under the supervision of Dr. Karen Lawson.

As a graduate student, Linzi examined the stigma of involuntary childlessness as well as endorsement of public funding for assisted reproductive technology. She has also conducted research pertaining to fertility intentions, reproductive decision-making, sexual health education, rape/sexual assault culture, sexual consent, and

feminist identification in collaboration with her colleagues in the Sex, Gender, and Reproductive Psychology Lab. When she isn't focusing on research, Linzi is training her beloved Australian Cattle Dog, Steve Irwin.



I took a huge leap of faith moving to Saskatoon to begin my graduate studies at

USask and leaving my family and friends behind in Toronto, Ontario. But I can honestly say that it was the best decision I have ever made. I received such incredible support and guidance from so many people and programs throughout my graduate training, and still do as a postdoctoral fellow. I especially wish to thank my mentors, Karen Lawson and Colleen Dell – two of the most amazing humans I am so fortunate to have in my life.

Creating social connections through distance learning. Supporting today's K-12 educators



Racquel Biem, PhD Student (Photo submitted)
Awarded UGS Scholarship 2020

Racquel is a Ph.D. candidate in Educational Technology and Design. Her current research centres on the intersection of social constructivist practices and asynchronous distance learning in the K-12 system. With the immediate shift in education delivery due to the COVID pandemic, social connection through technology is more important than ever. Prior to and during the COVID pandemic, Racquel took a lead role in co-creating various professional learning opportunities supporting collaborative distance learning practices.

She continues to support future distance learning educators as a sessional lecturer in the course Designing E-learning

Environments for Education. Racquel's research blends theory with practice to illuminate practical strategies and contexts that support social constructivist distance learning.

Racquel Biem

“ The Ph.D. program at the University of Saskatchewan has provided me the opportunity to examine how social constructivist practices can be actualized in asynchronous K12 distance learning.

4 Seasons of Reconciliation

promoting a renewed relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canadians, through transformative multi-media learning

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a day in the life

By Ella Macquisten (2021)



Honey, a female wood bison calf, is the successful result of in vitro embryo production. (Photo: Miranda Zwiefelhofer)

Eric and Miranda Zwiefelhofer, a husband-and-wife research team. Eric is a postdoctoral fellow with USask and the Toronto Zoo, Miranda is a PhD student at USask.

As the sun rises, Eric and Miranda Zwiefelhofer gear up for another exciting day of work. The husband-and-wife scientists are part of a Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCV) research team led by reproduction specialist Dr. Gregg Adams, whose goal is to develop a bison genome biobank — a collection of eggs, sperm and

embryos that's a vital step toward conserving the world's wild bison population.

While Eric physically collects the oocytes (mammalian eggs) from the female bison, Miranda specializes in maturing and fertilizing the oocytes, and culturing and freezing the resulting embryos — the laboratory work that's required for in vitro embryo production.



Eric and Miranda Zwiefelhofer (Photo submitted)



A wood bison cow licks Rusty, her one-day-old calf. (Photo: Miranda Zwiefelhofer)

The WCV's bison dream team has had many firsts in recent years, and on this particular day, they're aiming for another first — collecting oocytes from live, pregnant bison and immature bison (pre-pubertal) and using them to create embryos.

“The past two summers we have had bison calves born from embryos that took countless hours at the farm and in the lab to produce,” says Miranda. “It is very rewarding to see them out in their pastures. Each time I see my calves, I feel like all of the hard work was worth it.”

After a long day at the farm, Eric and Miranda load the collected oocytes into the car and head back to the USask campus and the Westgen Research Suite at the WCV — a laboratory devoted to advanced reproduction techniques. Once there, the oocytes will mature before undergoing in vitro fertilization.

“The most gratifying part of the project is that we can apply these techniques that we have developed and may be able to save a threatened species,” says Eric.

[Read the story here.](#)



Chantel Chizen, PhD Student (Photo submitted)
SK Innovation Opportunity Scholarship Awarded 2020

Chantel Chizen is a PhD student in Soil Science under the supervision of Dr. Angela Bedard-Haughn. She completed her Masters in Soil Science as well as her Bachelor of Science in Plant and Soil Science at the University of British Columbia. Chantel's PhD research aims to improve estimates of how much carbon is stored in prairie pothole wetlands that are located in cultivated fields across Saskatchewan. She is also studying how wetland drainage may affect soil carbon storage. The findings from her research be used to create region-specific wetland carbon storage estimates that will inform on-farm decision making and policy development. The Saskatchewan Opportunity and Innovation Scholarship provided Chantel with support as she started her PhD program at the University of Saskatchewan and developed her

research project. Since beginning her studies, Chantel was also selected for the 2021-2024 cohort of the [Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research Fellows Program](#) – Future Leaders in Food & Agriculture.

The FFAR Fellows Program was established to provide professional development and career guidance to the next generation of food and agriculture scientists across the Foundation for Food and Agriculture's Challenge Areas and strategic initiatives.



Erika Gartner (Photo submitted)

MPAcc Opens Doors

By Cassidy Guy (2021)

Erika Gartner (CPA, MPAcc '19), recent graduate of the Master of Professional Accounting program, initially completed her Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting at the Edwards School of Business in 2017. A supportive and positive undergraduate experience paved the way for Gartner to pursue graduate studies at USask, ultimately leading to the title of Chartered Professional Accountant.

After having completed my Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting in 2017, I knew that in order to enhance my technical knowledge and further my career opportunities, the next step was to become a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA)", said Gartner. "I'm a visual learner, therefore, I knew that an in-class experience would be critical to my success. As such, it was evident that completing a graduate degree would be necessary in achieving my goal."

Gartner decided to continue her studies through USask based on her positive experiences as an undergrad at the Edwards School of Business.

"My undergraduate experience had so many positive aspects: learning from high-quality professionals, building life-long friendships and securing full-time employment with a Big 4 accounting firm through the Edwards Co-operative Education Program. These experiences, along with the MPAcc program's strong history of first-time pass rates made USask the obvious choice to pursue my graduate studies."

In 2019, Gartner successfully passed the CFE and earned the title of CPA on her first attempt. However, Gartner claims to have earned more than a title throughout her grad school experience: "The program helped me to become a more well-rounded professional by allowing me to see the bigger picture of the accounting profession in areas such as leadership and strategic planning, setting me up for even more success in the future."



Shayeb Shahariar, PhD, collects a groundwater sample in Indian Head, Sask., as part of his PhD research. (Photo submitted)

Soil science PhD graduate breaks new ground in Canada

By Brett Makulowich (2020)

Completing a PhD is a long and strenuous journey. Moving to a new continent to pursue your PhD, finishing your dissertation and defending your thesis during a pandemic only adds to the challenge. But University of Saskatchewan (USask) graduate Dr. Shayeb Shahariar (PhD) thrived during the experience.

Top 10

USask's QS World Ranking

Shahariar graduated Nov 2020 with a Doctor of Philosophy in Soil Science. Born in Bangladesh, Shahariar now calls Saskatoon home after moving here in 2013 to pursue his PhD.

He discovered USask while researching North American universities online. He chose USask due to its excellent soil science department and the many research opportunities that Saskatchewan offered as an agricultural production-based province. The opportunity to live in Canada was also a draw. "You need dedication and a strong mindset, and support from your family to complete the journey," said Shahariar. "If you have a strong desire and fascination to be a researcher or a professor, then you can even enjoy this challenging journey, I believe. My advice to PhD students is 'just hang in there.'"

Shahariar's focus paid off and he received 10 scholarships as a USask student, including the Teacher Scholar Doctoral Fellowship and the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship. In addition to holding various positions as a sessional lecturer, teaching assistant and research coach throughout his PhD, he made time for extracurricular activities. These included student associations,

helping organize the Soil and Crops Conference, and being a judge and member of the organizing committee of the Saskatoon Regional Science Fair.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in Canada, Shahariar had completed the field work for his PhD but was still writing his dissertation. He had to balance finishing his PhD and his family time with his sons' homeschooling due to the school closure.

He also had the unique experience of presenting his PhD defence online instead of in-person. He describes being less nervous since it was online but also found it more difficult to express himself and explain things.

Shahariar is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher. In the future he would like to hold a faculty position. Completing the difficult work of a PhD was all made worthwhile while at USask.

"My USask experience has been excellent," said Shahariar. "During my studies, I had the chance to learn from many nationally and internationally recognized professors. The College of Agriculture and Bioresources is one of the best and most historic in North America."

[Read the story here.](#)



Khaled Zoroufchi Benis, Vanier Scholar (Photo submitted)

Innovative. Removing arsenic from water with agricultural left overs

Khaled Zoroufchi Benis is a third-year Ph.D. student in chemical engineering. He was awarded the prestigious International Dean's Scholarship (2018) and the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (2020) for his Ph.D. studies. He is currently working on developing a cost-effective and eco-friendly adsorbent to remove arsenic from water using locally available agricultural residues.

The last year of my bachelor studies was the most decisive and consequential time period for my career. I was witness to the silent death of Urmia Lake in Iran due to poor water management and the construction of several dams on the rivers that feed this lake that were choking off the lake's water supply. I have many cheerful memories with this legendary lake—the world's second-largest brine lake—and seeing Urmia Lake take its last breaths was heartbreaking. For me, the drying of the lake was not just the vanishing of a blue spot from the world map, it was losing a piece of my identity and memories. "Can I do something to save the lake?" was the question I always had in my mind. Meanwhile, I read "Silent Spring" by the environmental pioneer Rachel Carson. This compelling book along with the writer's biography showed me how passionate people can make a difference in the world and how raising environmental awareness and developing cleaner technologies are influential strategies to save the environment.

My environmental passion drove me to understand the role of chemical engineering in environmental issues, so I volunteered in ongoing research projects of the Environmental Engineering Research Center during my bachelor studies. Involvement in the research projects showed me how the output of research can be beneficial to reduce the environmental impacts of anthropogenic activities. I was captivated, realizing that I had to find a way to spend the rest of my career solving environmental issues. So, I

selected "environmental engineering" as my major for master studies, and after graduation, I worked in industry as an environmental engineer and continued my collaboration with academia on environmental research.

This desire to build skills and experience to increase my impact led me to pursue a Ph.D. degree at the University of Saskatchewan (USask). The USask experience has exceeded my expectations – I am continually impressed with my research supervisors (Drs. Jafar Soltan and Kerry McPhedran), lab infrastructure, and the willingness of my peers to collaborate and challenge my research to improve my hypotheses and research findings. My industrial work experience, academic background in chemical and environmental engineering, and current opportunity to collaborate with prominent scientists in well-equipped labs at the USask and the [Candian Light Source](#) give me the best possible chance to pursue my dream of doing everything I can to save the environment. It may be too late to save my beloved Lake Urmia, but I rest at night knowing my work on removing arsenic from water may change the world for 200 million people. I will continue this path and find another lake, another mountain, another forest to save by developing cleaner technologies and leading others to join me. That is how I pay my debt to Mother Earth.



The Global Institute for Water Security (GIWS) at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) is the top water resources research institute in Canada and one of the most advanced hydrology research centres in the world.

Activating allies.

Inspiring positive change

Jocelyn Peltier-Huntley is a Vanier Scholar, an EDI researcher, and professional engineer with over fifteen years of experience in the mining industry. She is driven to create awareness and remove roadblocks so that all individuals and organizations can realize the benefits of inclusion and achieve their full potential.

Jocelyn has a B.Sc. with distinction in Mechanical Engineering and a M.Sc. in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Saskatchewan. She is working with [IMII and Mitacs](#) on her PhD project, titled “Activating Allies”. After spending thirteen years of her career working at Canadian mining and mineral processing sites in technical and leadership roles, Jocelyn is now expanding her social impact potential by leading and inspiring positive change through EDI research, facilitation, public speaking, and consulting through her company, [Prairie Catalyst Consulting](#). Jocelyn helps her clients lead changes by investigating problems, translating for common understanding, and collaborating to create practical solutions to these problems.

Jocelyn is an active volunteer and Vice-Chair of the Board with Women in Mining and Women in Nuclear Saskatchewan. Jocelyn was the Co-Chair of the annual 2020 Mine Your Potential conference which virtually brought together 275 people from high schools, mines sites, and home offices across Saskatchewan in an engaging 2-day conference. Jocelyn is currently the Chair of the Mentorship committee which paired more than 100 mentees and mentors from the Saskatchewan mining and nuclear industries.



Jocelyn Peltier-Huntley, Vanier Scholar (Photo: David Stobbe)

Seeking accessible education.



Fidelia Anulika Orji, Vanier Scholar (Photo submitted)

Education is a great equalizer, but not everyone has access to quality education. That's something Orji wants to fix.

I am a Ph.D. student at the Department of Computer Science, University of Saskatchewan, Canada, where I also obtained my Master's degree. My research focuses on application of machine learning for adapting and personalizing eLearning systems to improve their efficiency. My research area is at the intersection of Machine Learning, Data Analytics, User Modelling, Adaptive Learning, and Persuasive Technology. I am passionate about empowering the next generation especially the minorities with skills to succeed in STEM careers. Before

my graduate school, I had over 7 years of industrial experience as a Software Engineer, I worked and led several large-scale industrial projects, both at private and government organizations. I have won multiple awards in recognition of my academic and research excellence, these include the Federal Government of Nigeria undergraduate scholarship, Department Teaching Scholarship/University of Saskatchewan Faculty Scholarship, the University of Saskatchewan's Dean Scholarship, and the Vanier Scholarship.



Osiris Sinuhé González Romero, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow (Photo submitted)

Osiris Sinuhé González Romero earned his PhD at Leiden University, in the Faculty of Archaeology – Heritage of Indigenous Peoples. His PhD dissertation: Tlamatiliztli: the wisdom of the Nahua People. Intercultural philosophy and right to land, has been published as a book by Leiden University Press. In 2015 he was awarded the Coimbra Group Scholarship for Young Professors and Researchers from Latin American Universities. González Romero taught undergraduate courses in the Faculty of Philosophy (UNAM). He is a founding member of Via Synapsis, an academic society focused on the organization of the University Congress of Psychoactive Substances hosted by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Faculty of Philosophy since 2014. Currently, he is a Postdoctoral researcher on cognitive

freedom and psychedelic humanities at USask. His research interests include: philosophy of psychedelics, history of medicine, indigenous knowledge, decolonial theory, political philosophy, heritage studies, and aesthetics. He has been working on the book, *New Essays on History and Philosophy of Psychedelics*.

Romero awarded with the Misiwêskamik International Postdoctoral Fellowship.

The post-doctoral fellowship, funded through USask’s International Blueprint for Action, includes at least \$88,000 in funding over two years, provided jointly by USask’s College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and the fellow’s supervisor.



Mohammad Masudur Rahman, PhD (Photo submitted)
Governor General’s Gold Medal Recipient, Convocation 2020

Dr. Mohammad Masudur Rahman is a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Computer Science at Dalhousie University. He has been working to make the software applications robust, error-free, and cost-effective by examining how they can be better designed or maintained using intelligent tools and technologies. In April 2021, Dr. Rahman was awarded the prestigious Discovery Grant by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada to support his research that aims to combat software bugs by equipping software developers with intelligent debugging tools. Before joining Dalhousie University, Dr. Rahman completed his PhD in Software Engineering in the Department of Computer Science at USask under the supervision of Dr. Chanchal Roy. He also worked as a postdoctoral researcher with Dr. Foutse Khomh at Polytechnique Montreal.

As a graduate student, Masud designed novel, cost-effective solutions to automatically detect bugs, defects, and failures in the software. Software bugs and failures cost the global economy trillions of dollars every year, and his solutions have a high potential to minimize this cost. To date, he has published 36 high-quality research papers, including best papers, and presented them at numerous international venues. Dr. Rahman received many prestigious awards, including Governor General’s Gold Medal, USask Graduate Thesis Award, Keith Geddes Award, and Chancellor’s Gold Medal (Bangladesh).

“I came to Canada in the Fall of 2012. My journey as a graduate student at USask has been a unique, transformative experience due to its challenges and promises.

Making short-term plans and watching their successful execution helped me stay confident and gradually move forward. However, none of these would have been possible without the unconditional love and blessings of my family and the continuous guidance from my supervisor. I would also like to thank all of my mentors, peers, labmates, and the community around USask for their great support over the years.”

330+
Theses Defended Annually

Improving communities.



Nathan Oaks, PhD Student
(Photo submitted)
INGLA Recipient (2020)

Nathan Oaks is an Assiniboine Cree from Piapot First Nation located in the Treaty 4 Territory, Saskatchewan. Nathan completed his Master of Public Health in 2021 at USask where he will continue his studies at the Ph.D. level in the Community Health & Epidemiology Program (CHEP). Leading into CHEP Nathan places particular interest in Indigenous Health Research. Nathan looks forward to the opportunities that his Ph.D. in CHEP will bring both at the level of the institution and in the community. Both his expectation and satisfaction are to continue to establish positive relationships with his colleagues and project affiliations, thereby producing ethical and meaningful work, and to uplift the voices of the Indigenous communities in research.

Nathan was fortunate to be connected to Indigenous culture at an early age and understands the central importance that culture holds to Indigenous identity and both the integrity of individual and community wellness. As an important acknowledgment, Nathan attributes the backbone of support during adversities in academics primarily to his culture, family, and a vast list of mentors and peers. Nathan's experience outside of academia includes being a role model teaching dance, culture camp facilitation as well as science camp facilitation in various urban and Indigenous communities, where his work has engaged Indigenous youth to embrace education, history, culture, self-reflection, growth, and art. With his cultural, personal, and educational experiences, Nathan aims to discover and become part of a vast growing network of Indigenous scholars, Indigenous community leaders, Elders, Indigenous practitioners, and advocates who share common visions toward improving Indigenous community health and cultural revitalization.

As an aspiring Ph.D. student, Nathan envisions effective knowledge exchange between the academic world and Indigenous communities that harbor meaningful relationships, cultural competence, cultural safety, self-determination, resilience, equity, and Indigenous sovereignty in research, and strengthening Indigenous community capacity. Imagine.

The Indigenous Graduate Leadership Award is a collaborative funding opportunity designed to encourage Canadian Indigenous students to attend graduate school. Awarded to those who have demonstrated academic excellence and leadership with a personal commitment to improving their communities.

My name is Lauren Wallingham. I am Northern Tutchone from the Wolf Clan, and I am a citizen of the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun. I was born in Mayo, Yukon, and I currently live in Whitehorse, Yukon with my two daughters. I grew up with a deep appreciation for my culture, Traditional Territory, and family.

I completed my Master's in Governance and Entrepreneurship in Northern and Indigenous Areas through Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Saskatchewan, and the Arctic University of Norway. Throughout my graduate studies, I have focused my research on First Nations authority of First Nations education. During my graduate studies, I am honoured to have received the Indigenous Student Achievement Award and the Indigenous Graduate Leadership Award. I am thankful for all the support from the faculty and my supervisor throughout my studies.

Exploring the complexity of resiliency in Indigenous youth.



Lauren Wallingham, Master's Student (Photo submitted: Mount Haldane, outside of Mayo Yukon)
INGLA Recipient (2020)

'A great learning environment': USask's MFA in Writing community celebrates program's 10-year anniversary

By Shannon Boklaschuk

An acclaimed University of Saskatchewan (USask) graduate program that has helped launch the careers of award-winning writers from Canada and beyond is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

The MFA in Writing Program, housed in the Department of English in USask's College of Arts and Science, has been lauded for pairing students with established writers for mentorship opportunities.

"From what I can see, it has worked very well: authors get to work with highly motivated students and supplement their incomes at the same time, and the students get the mentorship of many of Saskatchewan's finest writers," said USask Professor Emeritus Dr. Bob Calder (BA'63, MA'65), one of the founders of the MFA in Writing Program. "In this way, the writing community feels, I think, some ownership of the program."

For current student Brandon Fick, the mentorship piece is the best part of the MFA in Writing Program. Fick is working with Saskatoon novelist and USask alumnus Guy Vanderhaeghe (BA'71, Arts'72, MA'75, DLitt'72), an Officer of the Order of Canada and a Governor General's Literary Award winner who is best known for his books *The Englishman's Boy*, *The Last Crossing* and *A Good Man*.



Brandon Fick is a current MFA in Writing student. (Photo submitted)

"I don't want to say this is a dream come true, but it's pretty close," said Fick, who grew up in Lanigan, Sask., and earned a Bachelor of Arts (honours) degree in English at USask in 2020. "This couldn't have happened outside the MFA program."



Özten Shebahkeget is a current MFA in Writing student. (Photo: Mike Deal)

Fellow student Özten Shebahkeget, who grew up in Winnipeg's North End area, earned a bachelor's degree in English at the University of Winnipeg before joining USask's MFA in Writing Program last fall. She recently began

a mentorship with celebrated Métis writer Katherena Vermette, author of *The Break*, and will work on a poetry thesis under Vermette's guidance. "To learn and work with a writer who I admire and who grew up in the same neighbourhood as me has been a great experience," said Shebahkeget.

Calder said the MFA in Writing Program wouldn't have been created a decade ago if not for "the conviction and commitment" of USask President Peter Stoicheff, then vice-dean of humanities and fine arts in the College of Arts and Science. Stoicheff, Calder and USask employee and alumna Sabrina Kehoe (BA'94, MA'00) formed a committee that surveyed other writing programs at Canadian universities and met with representatives from Saskatchewan's active writing community. Others at USask also helped bring the program to fruition.

"At one very critical point—the submission of the program to the College of Graduate Studies and Research—Dr. David Parkinson played a pivotal role in devising a model of the program and presenting it to the appropriate committees," Calder said.

Since the MFA in Writing Program was intended to begin as "a one-person program," it was essential to choose the right person to lead it, said Calder. From the beginning, Calder thought Dr. Jeanette Lynes (PhD)—who holds a doctoral degree in Canadian literature from York University and a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing from the University of Southern Maine—would be an excellent candidate for the role.

Lynes is the author of seven collections of poetry, most recently *Bedlam Cowslip: The John Clare Poems*, the recipient of the 2016 Saskatchewan Arts Board Poetry Award. Her second novel, *The Small Things That End The World*, was published in 2018. Her first novel, *The Factory Voice*, was long-listed for the 2009 Scotiabank Giller Prize and a ReLit Award. Lynes' third novel, *The Apothecary's Garden*, will be released in 2022.

"She was a respected writer of both poetry and fiction, was qualified to teach literature courses and had taught at Sage Hill, in Saskatchewan, and I knew that she was comfortable on the Prairies. Most importantly, she had the character to understand students, draw them into the writing world while still demanding a high level of achievement," Calder said of Lynes.

"Despite my feeling that Dr. Lynes would be excellent, the English department conducted a very thorough search and interviewed three strong candidates. In its usual fashion, the department had a vigorous discussion but, in the end, it was clear that the best person was Dr. Lynes.

In the decade since the MFA began functioning, she has done an excellent job of coordinating the program, championing its students and producing her own excellent writing. It's been exciting to see Sheri Benning, an internationally published author, become part of the program as well."



Dr. Jeanette Lynes (PhD) is a faculty member in USask's Department of English and the director of the MFA in Writing Program. (Photo submitted)

Lynes, a faculty member in USask's Department of English and the director of the MFA in Writing Program, looks back on the program's first decade with wonderment at how quickly the time has passed. She said the 10-year anniversary is a milestone to celebrate, noting the program now has 53 graduates. "They've come from across Canada, Finland, the UK, Australia, Ireland and the United States. I'm also proud of the robust number of Indigenous students included in this count, and the current Indigenous students in the program," she said.

Lynes joined USask in 2011 to develop and launch the MFA in Writing Program which, under her leadership, has grown into one of Canada's leading writing programs. She has personally supervised more than 45 MFA students, some of whom have received awards for their published writing; others, meanwhile, have gone on to success in related industries such as editing, teaching, communications and arts administration. Earlier this year, Lynes received the 2021 Outstanding Graduate Mentorship Award, presented annually by the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at USask.

Another program accomplishment of which Lynes is very proud is the numerous books published during the MFA in Writing's 10 years—about a dozen in total so far. "Most recently, five graduates have published books; three of these books have been MFA theses," Lynes said. "Two further MFA theses are being published as books—one this year, one next year—along with a book of essays by an earlier graduate coming out later this year."

The first USask MFA in Writing thesis published as a book was *nipê wânin*, a poetry collection by Mika Lafond (BED'06, MFA'14), published in both English and Cree. Recent books by other MFA in Writing alumni include *The World is Mostly Sky*, by Sarah Ens (MFA'20), a recipient of a 2021-21 USask Graduate Thesis Award; *Tiny Ruins*, by Nicole Haldoupis (MFA'16); *Disappearing in Reverse*, by Allison McFarland (MFA'19); *South Away: The Pacific Coast on Two Wheels*, by Meaghan Hackinen (MFA'16); and *The Burden of Gravity*, by Shannon McConnell (MFA'17, MA'20).

"Looking back, the students in the program are what make me most proud. The students are the program," said Lynes. "I never cease to marvel at their courage, spirit and dedication to the craft of writing. It's an honour to work with these students and be their advocate—also to celebrate their successes as they go forth and build writing communities of their own in their various regions and locales. There's a beautiful sense of an expanding web of connections. Our fabulous mentors have done much to make the program what it is, too."

Nicole Haldoupis, who received her MFA in 2016, said "there were so many wonderful parts of the program"—including her "wonderful and supportive cohort," the workshops lead by Lynes, and the mentorship she received from fiction writer and poet Dave Margoshes. However, the best part "was getting to work and become friends with Jeanette Lynes," said Haldoupis, who lives in St. John's, Nfld.

"Jeanette was my thesis supervisor, and she also built the program into what it is today. She puts everything into making it a thriving community for her students."

Lynes said the MFA in Writing Program remains much the same as its original inception: it's a two-year, thesis-based program featuring a six-month mentorship with a professional author, many of whom are nationally acclaimed writers and recipients of major literary awards. Instruction in the program is offered in three genres—fiction, poetry and non-fiction—and classes are primarily workshop-based. Several students have also worked with faculty from the Department of Drama on playwrighting and faculty from the College of Education on writing for young readers.



Alumna Nicole Haldoupis (MFA'16) is the author of *Tiny Ruins*. (Photo: Geoff Pevlin)

"Since its inception, the MFA has also been deeply committed to community, and to community engagement; this value carries forward in initiatives like the River Volta Reading Series, begun by two MFA students in 2013. Another illustration of community engagement is our annual partnership with the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild in hosting the annual Writing North conference," said Lynes.

"One terrific way the program has evolved is having Dr. Sheri Benning come on board to teach in the MFA since 2017. Dr. Benning contributes enormously to the program in areas like her innovative launching of the

River Volta Review of Books, among other things.”

Shebahkeget, a current student, said the best part of any MFA program “is gaining a group of colleagues who care about the craft as much as you do.”

“Writing is a healing practice for many of us, and to be able to heal with my cohort during these times has been invaluable,” she said. “The program also offers many great opportunities to get involved in the writing community. I recently joined the River Volta Review of Books as interviews editor and I’m learning things that I did not expect to in this position, which has been great. I also have to say that Dr. Benning and Dr. Lynes’ workshops have been incredible learning experiences and continually reaffirm my decision to enrol in the program.” Current student and fellow River Volta Review of Books editor Fick also noted the program’s proximity to “Saskatchewan’s rich writing community.”

“Despite the pandemic, there is a warm, familial feel to the program and Professor Lynes and Professor Benning provide genuinely caring support,” he said.

Lynes said Saskatchewan’s literary community has also been important to her own development as a writer, through programs such as Sage Hill Writing. Before joining USask as a faculty member, she served as the writer-in-residence at the Saskatoon Public Library in 2005-06—a year she describes as “transformative.”



Dr. Sheri Benning (PhD) joined the MFA in Writing Program in 2017. (File photo)

“I met so many wonderful writers and saw firsthand what a rich artistic culture Saskatchewan possesses,” Lynes said. “I wanted to be part of it; it took me five years to return (to the province). Saskatchewan is such a strong province in the arts, and the writing community is amazing.”

Shannon McConnell, who graduated from the MFA in Writing Program in 2017, grew up in B.C. and admitted she was “slightly hesitant” to move to Saskatchewan at first. However, the opportunity for mentorship from a Saskatchewan

writer “was a huge selling point” in her decision to ultimately enrol in graduate studies at USask.

“The classes, mentorship and guest speakers provided such a great learning environment that I really wish I could go back and do the program all over again; it was just so fun and inspiring,” she said. “The classes and instruction are fantastic—but, when it comes down to it, the MFA community really is the highlight of the program. The community is a really special and supportive group that truly cares about each other. With so many talented individuals you’d expect there to be a lot of competition and rivalry, but that’s not the case.

Everyone comes from such different backgrounds that everyone wants to help each other succeed. I think this is largely due to the leadership of Dr. Jeanette Lynes, who founded the program and has worked so hard to (create) such a strong community. It’s so clear that she truly cares about her students, even once they’ve graduated, and the community, in turn, is deeply grateful for her dedication.”

McConnell said she still considers the members of her MFA in Writing cohort to be some of her closest friends, noting they “developed a lifetime friendship” from their time together in the program.

“Not only that, but it’s also been fantastic to continue to connect with and befriend other members of the community even though I’ve been out of the program for four years,” she added. “Saskatoon has such a welcoming writing community, and the MFA fits so well within it. I can’t imagine another city having such chemistry between the university and the greater writing community.”



Alumna Shannon McConnell (MFA’17, MA’20) is the author of *The Burden of Gravity*. (Photo: submitted)

Shannon Boklaschuk (BA’00, MPA’14) is a University of Saskatchewan graduate and a communications officer in the College of Arts and Science.

1100+

USask Graduate Faculty

Continued from page 6.

Jaunzems-Fernuk said the next step with her PhD research was to look into what information needs to be taught to students in professional teacher education programs to help arm them with the tools and knowledge to be successful.

“Personally I feel really strongly that to bring strong, effective educators to our youth, they need to understand the content area that they are going to teach, but that’s only half of it,” said Jaunzems-Fernuk. “I think we need content area curriculum and a human curriculum in education. A human curriculum is all about understanding who we are as human beings, and then we can hopefully be more effective educators.”

From the thriving educators she studied, Jaunzems-Fernuk noted five skills were common: they had a sense of meaning and purpose in their careers; they had a mindset that helped them compartmentalize emotions and shift gears as necessary; they had awareness about their own mental health and how to support it; they had great mentors and they had the confidence and competence to mentor others; and they had good classroom management skills and emotional self-regulation.

“Bringing a managed self into the classroom helps manage those chaotic students that may come into the room. That is what classroom management is; it’s relating to people and being there for people. It’s not a program or a reward system,” Jaunzems-Fernuk explained.

Jaunzems-Fernuk has been bringing these concepts into her College of Education undergraduate classes. She’s been an instructor since 2017, and in her most recent undergraduate courses had teacher candidates develop inquiry-led projects that explored one of the five aforementioned skills, such as meaning or mentorship.

“It’s been a phenomenal experience to see the self-growth and the joy in these

students as they grow as teachers,” Jaunzems-Fernuk said.

Jaunzems-Fernuk’s supervisor in the Department of Curriculum Studies, Dr. Brenda Kalyn (PhD), shared that her research fills a crucial need in teacher education.

“Teacher candidates today have an unprecedented concern for their own mental health and that of their students,” said Kalyn. “Judy has the key messages that are needed, and she’s continuously exploring new ideas and reshaping her context to support classrooms, teachers and learning communities.”

In addition to the support of Kalyn, Jaunzems-Fernuk credits her husband Darren Fernuk and sons Braden, Jericho and Tristan with helping her on the long journey of completing her PhD. During the latter part of her program, she also tragically lost both of her parents to autoimmune diseases.

“My husband and kids are 50 per cent of this dissertation. Cooking the meals, letting me close my door and work for 17 hours a day at times trying to get through this. It takes a whole team, nobody does this alone,” she said. “My son Braden also edited my dissertation for me and he was amazing. I was blown away.”

Jaunzems-Fernuk looks forward to continuing her work with the College of Education as an instructor, in addition to running her private counselling business, Prairie Sky Education. As always, her focus remains on supporting teachers to build calm classrooms.

“We come into this profession with hopes and dreams about helping people and teaching kids and I always thought, how could that lead to burnout so fast? It’s because it’s so tough, but it doesn’t have to be,” said Jaunzems-Fernuk. “Teachers don’t have to go from passion to burnout. They can go from passion to bumps and passion again. There are things we can do to help with the long journey and the difficult times. It’s about mental health.”

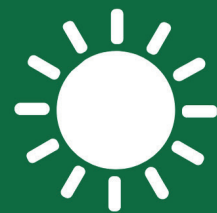
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YOU DON'T STOP AND LOOK AROUND ONCE
IN A WHILE, **YOU COULD**
MISS IT.

“ **I never dreamed I would earn a PhD, and it hasn't sunk in yet. I couldn't have done it without the support of my supervisors, committee members, classmates, family, and friends.**
M.E. Walker, PhD (Nursing, 2020)



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