

## President's Message – May 2016

About two weeks ago, the President's Liberal Arts Advisory Group hosted a presentation by essayist, novelist, philosopher and intellectual Dr. John Ralston Saul. While his lecture focused on the value of a liberal arts education, Dr. Saul offered some interesting observations about the indigenization efforts at the University of Regina. He noted that simple acts like renaming streets and residences, while seemingly small gestures, go a long way towards creating a more indigenized campus.

I appreciate Dr. Saul's perspective, and while some of our indigenization initiatives are small, others have a deeper and wider impact on our campus. Indeed, all of these efforts – big or small – contribute to one overarching mission: to transform the University of Regina into Canada's most indigenized campus.

Canada's Aboriginal population has been traditionally underserved by post-secondary education. In fact, an Aboriginal Canadian is three times less likely to have a degree than a non-Aboriginal person. While our efforts to indigenize our campus will help to better serve Aboriginal learners, there is much to be done to change that disheartening statistic and close the educational gap.

According to a report by Eric Howe, a professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Saskatchewan, closing the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people would increase gross domestic product (GDP) in Saskatchewan by \$19.1 billion over the next 20 years. As Professor Howe puts it, injecting those dollars, and that many new employees, into the provincial economy would result in the first ever made-in-Saskatchewan boom.

In our province, a First Nations woman with a bachelor's degree earns nearly triple the lifetime earnings of her counterpart with a high school diploma. For Aboriginal males, it's nearly twice as much in lifetime earnings. Indigenizing our institution is not only good for the University; it's good for the province and the nation as well.

Those of us at the University of Regina realize that the future begins today. We're working hard to support our Aboriginal students and expand the already robust indigenous research enterprise at the University. Researchers from across campus are working on numerous projects with partners from every corner of the province and beyond. Here are just a few examples:

Dr. Carrie Bourassa, a professor of Indigenous Health Studies in the Department of Indigenous Education, Health and Social Work at the First Nations University of Canada, has received a grant from the Canada Foundation for Innovation to cover 40 per cent of the cost of developing a world-class Cultural Safety Evaluation, Training and Research Lab. The lab brings University researchers together with indigenous communities to undertake unique and innovative research to improve Aboriginal health and address inequities in the health care system.

Dr. Carmen L. Robertson, a professor of art history in the Visual Arts Department, is the author of *Mythologizing Norval Morrisseau* which examines the complex identities assigned to the Anishinaabe artist, one of Canada's most significant painters. The internationally known and award-winning artist, who is from a remote area of northwestern Ontario, founded an art

movement known as Woodland Art developed largely from indigenous and personal creative elements.

Angela Snowshoe and Jolee Saskamoose, faculty members in the Faculty of Education, received a Collaborative Innovation Development Grant from the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation. Their research, entitled *The Concept and Role of Place for First Nations Youth Mental Health*, seeks to address the need-service gap in the delivery of equitable and culturally sensitive therapy to First Nations youth.

The University Press is also a big contributor to indigenous research on our campus. Some of their recent titles include: *The Education of Augie Merasty: A Residential School Memoir* by Joseph Auguste Merasty with David Carpenter; *Children of the Broken Treaty: Canada's Lost Promise and One Girl's Dream* Author by Charlie Angus; *Métis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* by Michel Hogue; *The Decolonizing Poetics of Indigenous Literatures* by Mareike Neuhaus; and, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* by James Daschuk.

Beyond attracting more Aboriginal students and engaging in more indigenous research, we are also working to ensure that First Nations and Métis knowledge and practices are reflected in all aspects of campus life – from curriculum development to campus design. I encourage you to get involved in this process. Watch for lectures on campus or attend coming events, such as the joint book launch of Louise Bernice Halfe's *Burning in this Midnight Dream* and Blair Stonechild's *The Knowledge Seeker* at 7:00 p.m. on May 9 at the First Nations University of Canada. By learning about First Nations and Métis cultures, we are helping to build a future where they are celebrated and honoured.

Sincerely,

Vianne Timmons  
President and Vice-Chancellor