

## President's Message – July 2017

As we approach July 1, I find myself thinking less about our country's sesquicentennial and more about Canadian milestones to come. The reason, in part, is because of the controversy that has arisen over 150th anniversary celebrations. And, it is partially because I am so confident that by working together we will realize a brighter future where all Canadians prosper.

People right across Canada are turning their back on festivities because of our nation's sad record of systemic racism and injustice towards Indigenous peoples. Some Indigenous people are renouncing celebrations because they trace their inhabitation of Canadian lands not to 150 years, but to thousands of years and hundreds of generations.

To be sure, Canadians can never undo the wrongs of past, but I am optimistic that we can work together to realize a nation of which we can all be proud. I also believe that the Canadian post-secondary sector will play a crucial role in creating the equality our great country so richly deserves.

Several years ago, Dr. Blair Stonechild, a Cree-Saulteaux member of the Muscowpetung First Nation and a professor of Indigenous Studies at the First Nations University of Canada, wrote *The New Buffalo: The Struggle for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. Dr. Stonechild writes about traditional culture and how the buffalo provided almost everything that Indigenous people of the prairie needed to thrive. Today, education can serve as the same kind of agent for change and of well-being.

I am proud of our long tradition of Indigenization at the University of Regina. It began almost at the time of our establishment as an independent institution in 1974. And, our commitment to, and support for, Indigenization continues to grow stronger every year.

Recently, Dr. Stephen King, Senior Researcher to the President, and I wrote a commentary on Indigenization and 150th anniversary celebrations for *Policy Magazine*, Canada's foremost publication on policy development and analysis. You can find our commentary here: <http://www.policymagazine.ca/pdf/27/PolicyMagazineJulyAugust-2017-TimmonsKing.pdf>

I ask that you thoughtfully read it and consider its viewpoint.

Ultimately, it is up to each of us to decide what significance to place on this year's Canada Day and how to celebrate it. No, we cannot change the past. But, if we are courageous, keep one eye appropriately on the past, and one appropriately on the future, we can look to our sesquicentennial as an opportunity to reconcile, move forward and prosper together.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons  
President and Vice-Chancellor