



GPRC WISDOM 2019

INDIGENIZING NURSING EDUCATION:

GPRC student, Ashley Rosenberger recently participated in a Blanket Exercise as part of the first-year GPRC nursing program.

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A 100-YEAR PLAN: INDIGENIZING GPRC

Read about the steps GPRC is taking to advance Indigenization in art, curriculum and culture.

NURSING FEATURE:

Take a look into how the Blanket Exercise is used as a valuable tool for GPRC nursing students.

INDIGICONS:

A young Indigenous entrepreneur recognizes a strong market and invents new cultural emojis.



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A MESSAGE FROM THE GPRC ALUMNI/FOUNDATION

On behalf of the GPRC Alumni Foundation, I hope you enjoy this edition of Wisdom magazine, which showcases some impressive accomplishments of GPRC faculty, students, and alumni. Our growing alumni family is constantly inspiring us with its achievements as it represents GPRC on a national (and sometimes international) stage. Your support is what makes the dreams of our students possible — thank you!

Jason Simigan, Chair



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President and CEO

Don Gnatiuk

Vice President External Relations

Carmen Haakstad

CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Evans, Danielle Smith,
Taylor Merkle Doyer, Casey Caines

PHOTOGRAPHY

Randy Vanderveen

DESIGN

imageDESIGN

PRINTING

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It has been two years since GPRC signed the Indigenous Education Protocol. We have come a long way since then, but it's worthwhile pausing to reflect on our progress and look toward the future.

This issue of *Wisdom* puts the spotlight on Indigenous perspectives at GPRC. It celebrates the successes of Indigenous students, alumni and faculty; highlights Indigenous literature and ceremony; and explores GPRC's role in the nationwide movement toward healing and reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples.

I continue to be inspired by the strong Indigenous leadership on our campuses. From the motivated young leaders who form GPRC's Circle of Indigenous Students, to the wisdom and teachings of our Elder-in-Residence, Indigenous leaders at GPRC are making a difference every day. Their voices are invaluable to our institution, and are already guiding the way to a better future for our communities.

This will be my last "Message from the President" for *Wisdom* magazine; I will be retiring spring of 2020. My retirement from GPRC is bittersweet for me, because it means leaving an incredible institution, the remarkable people who work and learn here, and a community that has embraced me and my family. However, it also marks the beginning of a new chapter for GPRC, headed by new leadership, new energy, and new ideas.

To GPRC's Indigenous leaders of today and tomorrow, I wish you courage and wisdom to tackle the challenges facing post-secondary education, and to embrace the opportunities for growth that will emerge. As I transition into the next phase of my life, I will continue to cheer you on. You are all the future of GPRC and of our communities; as the older generation steps aside, it will soon be time for you to take the wheel and lead.

Enjoy this 2019 edition of *Wisdom*. I know the stories of great GPRC staff, students, and faculty contained in these pages will inspire you just as much as they have inspired me.



Don Gnatiuk
President and CEO



IN OUR WISDOM: EDITORIAL MESSAGE

BY CASEY CAINES, STUDENT CONTENT ADVISOR FOR WISDOM

Knowledge is power, and recently post-secondary institutions have begun to see the power of education in a different light. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action set academia on a path to Indigenization, a path that GPRC had set out on several years before.

In 1994, GPRC's first Circle of Aboriginal Students was formed to give a platform to Indigenous students. Just five years later, GPRC partnered with the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre to create the very first On-Campus Friendship Centre in Canada, as well as become the host of the annual Spirit Seekers Youth Conference. These initiatives, ahead of their time, set out to change the way we looked at Indigenous knowledge. For Indigenous people, they signified the reflection of ourselves in an institution that historically was not made for us. For non-Indigenous people, it created a connection to the country we had built, together. For all of us, it was the recognition of our shared history, our triumphs, and our challenges.

Over the past few decades, GPRC has worked together with Indigenous students, faculty, and community members to continue the Indigenization of the College. Traditional names of nations are spoken in history classes; nursing students are learning about The Seven Sacred Teachings; anthropology students are taking an in-depth look at the Indian Act; Cree is an official language course; and smudging is available on campus.

The beating of drums echoes through the halls during round dances, reminding us of the journey we've taken to get to this point, and all around us is evidence of the work that's been done to bridge Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. The artwork we see, the land acknowledgements spoken, and the success of students are footprints of the generations who've worked in the College before us to weave our stories together. Indigenization is the name, but true reconciliation has always been the goal.

It is our education that brings us together. Knowledge is power, but it is also kindness, empathy, and insight. As with Indigenization, knowledge is also less about what we know, and more about what we do with it. So, let us walk through this world with compassion and the understanding that new knowledge always means more, never less. Let us pave the path to our education with stones as diverse as the people of this land. Let reconciliation be not words, but actions that each of us commits to every day. Let us change the world, whether it be speaking to our babies at home, in our classrooms, through our art, or in the senate, with our unique experiences. Let us see Indigenization not as an end goal, but as a lifelong process.

This is where our story of Indigenization begins. This is our future.

Submitted by Casey Caines, fourth year GPRC student and student content advisor for this edition of Wisdom. Casey also belongs to the Circle of Indigenous Students and is an Education Ambassador for GPRC.



Jackie Benning reads to her Grade 4 class in Clairmont Community School.



BOOKS AND BANNOCK

WISDOM BOOK CLUB

Stories have always been an excellent way to share and celebrate culture. Just ask Clairmont Community School Grade 4 teacher and 2012 GPRC alumna Jackie Benning.

Benning's dual role as an educator and as the Indigenous liaison for the Peace Wapiti School Division helps her bring Indigenous cultures into the classroom in new and creative ways.

She helped introduce Books and Bannock, a celebration of literacy and Indigenous cultures as part of the school's annual Literacy Week activities, to Clairmont Community School. On Books and Bannock day, teachers select books by Indigenous authors to read to their classes. After story time, the students enjoy bannock, a bread dish traditional to many First Nations and Inuit cultures, prepared by parent volunteers. The celebration of Indigenous literature and culture was a huge success and beloved by students and parents. "The students are able to see role models in the authors," said Benning. "It's very powerful to see yourself and your culture portrayed in books."

We're thrilled to see this GPRC alumna spreading her love for Indigenous literature.



Looking for a good read? Benning recommends *Starlight* (2019) by Richard Wagamese, a posthumous work (Wagamese passed away in 2017).





GPRC student Rebecca Morin believes Indigenization will not happen overnight, and that we can all play a part in it.

A 100-YEAR PLAN: INDIGENIZING GPRC

Since 2017, GPRC has honoured the Indigenous Education Protocol. This document, signed by both GPRC's president and the president of the Circle of Indigenous Students, represents a commitment to incorporate Indigenous cultures, traditions, and ways of knowing into the fabric of our institution. This commitment is sometimes referred to as Indigenization at GPRC and on many post-secondary campuses across Canada.

It is not easy to define Indigenization in practical terms. The honest, if somewhat clichéd answer, is that it means something different to everyone, and arriving at a singular, true understanding of what it means to Indigenize is impossible. GPRC defines Indigenization as a commitment to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into our education system. According to the GPRC definition, Indigenization is “led by Indigenous people” and “acknowledges Indigenous world views, knowledge, and perceptions.”

At GPRC, Indigenization has become an institutional priority. GPRC Indigenous Initiatives Coordinator Kelly Benning

explained that educational institutions like GPRC have a unique responsibility when it comes to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples because “the biggest harms to Indigenous people took place within the educational system, with Indian Residential Schools.” She quotes Justice Murray Sinclair when she adds, “Education got us into this mess, and it will be education that gets us out.”

For this special issue of *Wisdom*, we decided to explore different perspectives on Indigenization, moving beyond platitudes to ask, what does Indigenization look like at GPRC today? And where will it or should it take us in the years to come?

GPRC Indigenous Initiatives Coordinator Kelly Benning.



WHAT DOES INDIGENIZATION LOOK LIKE AT GPRC?

As you might suppose, Indigenization is a complex, multi-faceted process. For it to be successful, Indigenization initiatives must directly and continuously involve Indigenous people in the decision-making. Benning says that without Indigenous voices, efforts to “Indigenize” however well-intentioned—tend to be paternalistic, domineering, and ultimately ineffective. “When you’re creating things to serve Indigenous people, you need to have that Indigenous voice there from the get go,” she said. “You’re doing it with them, not for them.” Benning, who is Métis, collaborates with many diverse Indigenous groups and individuals to carry out the work of Indigenization at GPRC.

In some ways, says Benning, GPRC has been ahead of the curve on Indigenization for decades. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its Calls to Action in 2015, but as early as 1994 GPRC had created its first Circle of Indigenous Students (then called the Circle of Aboriginal Students); in 2000, GPRC became the first—and still only—post-secondary institution in Canada to have an On-Campus Friendship Centre. Courses in Cree language and Indigenous history have been available at the College since 1995.

But in other ways, the work of Indigenization at GPRC has only just begun. Art, curriculum, and culture are three components at the heart of the Indigenization effort; all three are crucial to creating a campus that celebrates and honours Indigeneity.

ART

Benning is in the midst of developing a long-term strategic plan for Indigenization of the College. Although it’s too early to share details, Benning was able to outline a few key points. “For one thing, we’re taking a look at Indigenization through art,” she said. “There’s a real opportunity for GPRC to have more space for Indigenous culture on campus. We have some beautiful facilities which really lend themselves to Indigenous art forms.”

Len Morissette, local business owner and vice-president of the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre, says GPRC’s Grande Prairie campus can’t help but reflect Indigenous art and culture, simply by virtue of its Indigenous origins. “Your environment influences the way you feel,” he said. “Everyone knows the College was built by Douglas Cardinal, an Indigenous man. When you go [to the Grande Prairie campus,] you feel it. You see the statues, the Indigenous art... you see the architecture and the round curves and you feel it. It’s flowing, and that energy is so beautiful.”

“I think it’s important to see yourself reflected,” said Benning. “Art tells a story; it is the heart of human experience. And it’s been such a big part of Indigenous culture since time immemorial. We’ve always been artists.”

CURRICULUM

Some of the most substantial Indigenization efforts are taking the form of curriculum revisions and updates. Benning says instructors from all disciplines are “Indigenizing” their curriculum. What that means depends on the instructor and the discipline, but it often involves introducing content on the topic of Indigenous culture, history, or contemporary issues or assigning texts by Indigenous writers and scholars.

“When you say you’re going to Indigenize, that should involve the entire college,” said Darlene Horseman, GPRC Indigenous studies instructor. “All programs should be involved, not just certain ones.” As examples, Horseman points to the importance of understanding Indigenous issues in disciplines like health, psychology, and media studies. She argues that even a discipline that seems unrelated to Indigenous studies, say engineering, would benefit from Indigenous perspectives. “Engineering involves having knowledge of and respect for the environment,” she said. “That’s very important in Indigenous cultures.”

In the realm of Indigenous studies, another priority is strengthening Indigenous language programs (in fact, this is among the TRC’s calls to action for post-secondary institutions). “When I come to GPRC, I have to take English, even though English is not my language,” said Rebecca Morin, a Cree student studying social work at GPRC. “That’s good, because I want to walk in both worlds. But why aren’t Indigenous language courses mandatory for others?” Morin adds that Indigenous people are over-represented in judicial, child services, and health systems in Alberta, yet there are no required Indigenous studies courses for students wishing to enter those fields.

Morissette knows the value of strong Indigenous influences on curriculum, primarily because it’s something he feels was missing from his own education. “I didn’t really learn my culture until I was in my thirties,” said Morissette, who is half-German and half-Cree and grew up in the Vernon area of British Columbia. “I knew of my culture – I’d been around the reserve in the Okanagan a few times. But I didn’t know my culture.”

Morissette explained that his academic exposure to Indigenous culture and the effects of European colonialism was limited. He believes educational institutions need to do a better job of ensuring young people develop a complex understanding of

Indigenous culture, history, and contemporary issues.

CULTURE

Morin says her Indigenous identity touches every aspect of her life. “I am Cree,” she said. “I am a student, a mom, a *kokum*, a sister, a woman... I hold space for all parts of me, and all parts of me are Indigenous.” In the same way, Morin believes that Indigenousization must be rooted in all levels of the College.

Morin, who attended GPRC for the first time in 1993 after moving to Grande Prairie from her hometown in the Great Slave Lake area of the Northwest Territories, recalls the intense culture shock.

“I was born in a place where [Indigenous people] are the majority,” she said. “Where I’m from, everything is ‘Indigenized.’ Commercials on TV and the radio are all conducted in four or five different languages. It’s been like that my whole life. I wasn’t exposed to the racial tension and to many of the issues that I saw when I moved to Grande Prairie.”

Morin found during her first stint at GPRC that Indigenous students tended to stick to themselves and rarely ventured outside their own spaces. Some struggled with homesickness,

Darlene Horseman teaches Indigenous Studies at GPRC.



and a few dropped out from their programs. Although she recalls her own first college experience as mostly positive, Morin recognized that for some, college was something to be survived. Now that she has returned to complete a social work degree more than two decades later, she confesses she is disappointed at the progress of Indigenous students’ integration with the rest of the College. “I still see so much segregation,” she said. She mentioned that the Friendship Centre’s hidden location in B Wing is one contributor to an atmosphere where Indigenous cultures are welcomed in principle, but are too often compartmentalized and separated from the mainstream. She hopes the College will take strides to make Indigenous cultures more visible, thus helping Indigenous students feel more welcome in other spaces on campus.

Morin also mentioned the importance of land acknowledgement, the act of thanking and honouring the original Indigenous occupants of a territory. She believes GPRC’s commitment to regular land acknowledgement at public gatherings and in written and web communications is a small but important step in the right direction. “We are land-based people, and we’re very connected to the land,” she said. “When I meet other Indigenous people, usually the first question is, ‘Where are you from? Who are your people?’”





FORMAL LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

On October 25, 2018 a proposal was made to the Grande Prairie Aboriginal Circle of Services (GPACOS) which included two land acknowledgements to encompass the region in which we live and work. This following acknowledgment has been recognized by GPRC and implemented into our communication portfolio across all media.

“We acknowledge the homeland of the many diverse First Nations and Métis people whose ancestors have walked this land since time immemorial. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Treaty 8.”

Treaty 8 was signed on 21 June 1899 by the Crown and First Nations of the Lesser Slave Lake area.

The treaty covers roughly 841,487.137 square kilometers of what was formerly the North-west Territories and British Columbia, and now includes northern Alberta, northwest Saskatchewan, and portions of the modern Northwest Territories and BC, making it the largest treaty territory by area of Canada.

The terms and implementation of Treaty 8 differ importantly from those of previous Numbered Treaties, with long-lasting consequences for the governance and peoples of that area.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Two years after signing the Indigenous Education Protocol, it's natural to wonder how far GPRC has truly gone down the path to Indigenization. Perhaps a satisfying answer to this question does not exist, since with Indigenization, progress is not easily measured.

This is partially because it is dangerous to treat Indigenization merely as a series of items on a list to be checked off. Indigenization is much more complex, holistic and enduring; a methodical, first-this-then-that mindset will not be effective in this context. “We didn't get here overnight and we're not going to leave here overnight,” said Benning. “It's going to take an ongoing commitment of time and effort on behalf of everyone in the institution.”

“When I think of Indigenization, I think of a 100-year plan,” said Morin. “Reconciliation is a way of knowing, and being; it's an inside-out journey of forgiveness and action. We need to keep breathing life into it.”

None of that is to say that progress is not happening. We see it every day in the little things; in the smudging ceremonies that are now held daily at GPRC; in the growing demand for Elders

to speak to classes from all disciplines; and in Indigenous students like Morin who are succeeding at college in larger and larger numbers.

Although it is ultimately up to the institution to live up to the promises of Indigenization, Morin believes that everyone can play a role in the process. The strongest Indigenization efforts are student-centred and student-led. For her part, she carries medicine with her for students she encounters, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who are going through hard times.

“I want us all to make it,” she said. “And I suppose that's what Indigenization means to me.”



“I try to give students that understanding of who we are as First Nations people.”

**-Loretta Parenteau-English
GPRC ELDER-IN-RESIDENCE**

IN CONVERSATION

GPRC is home to the first On-Campus Friendship Centre in Canada. At the heart of the centre is our Elder-In-Residence, Loretta Parenteau-English.

GPRC Bachelor of Arts student and member of the Circle of Indigenous Students Casey Caines sat down with Loretta and shares her story in this installment of In Conversation.

Loretta Parenteau-English hails from the Blackfoot Nation of southern Alberta. She speaks with steady strength as she retells her history for me.

In Loretta's childhood home, four bedrooms accommodated all 18 members of her family: 14 children, two parents, and two grandparents. They were tight quarters, but Loretta smiles as she recalls fond memories of growing up surrounded by family and culture. Her maternal grandmother, a Blackfoot Elder, did not attend residential schools and never spoke English, something Loretta credits for keeping her traditional language alive within her own family. Loretta's maternal grandfather was a Traditional doctor, a powerful man who held a lot of knowledge of different medicines. He inherited this life from the generations that came before him. These strong Elders are the foundation on which Loretta built her young life.

"In 1965 our lives changed," Loretta recalls. Loretta's father, who had enrolled in the military to provide a good quality of life for his family, was killed. That incredible loss forever changed the lives of Loretta, her mother, and her siblings.

Within a year of her father's death, Loretta and her 13 siblings were all in government care, caught up in the 60s scoop. The older children were sent to residential schools and the younger children were sent straight to foster care. Loretta recalls years of struggle with her family being split into different homes. She reflects upon being in care, and the 32 homes she lived in from 10 to 17 years old. Her mother, a strong matriarch, never stopped trying to bring her family back together. Once jailed because she was caught with her children, Loretta's mother left the country to live with relatives, and her children were sent back to their abusive homes. Slowly, Loretta's mother began to bring her children home one by one. Despite all the obstacles, eventually all the children were able to reunite. The power of family and identity is a lesson Loretta imparts upon me dearly.

This connection to culture and identity is something Loretta carries with her. Her grandparents held great influence on her life and she speaks about them with immense gratitude.

An Elder is someone who shares their knowledge, and Loretta embodies that spirit. Her voice softens as she says, "We don't own what we have; we can't hoard it and think it is ours.

I am here as the Creator's instrument to give to the people who need that understanding."

This understanding is what Loretta sees as her role on campus: helping students realize where they are in their journey, what gifts they have in themselves to move forward on their path, and how to evoke the courage within them to continue. Students each have their own story, identity, and personality and everything they need is within them. It is Loretta's position that she is there just to bring it out, much like a grandmother. "I've seen a lot of pride being developed in Indigenous people since I started here in 2014. I am part of their journey as the witness to see growth in them. They are making changes in their own lives, their community, and their world." You can tell in her voice her pride in having seen the success of so many students and the bright futures she is able to view as they pass through the centre.

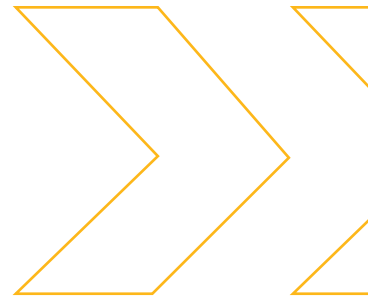
The importance of an Elder-in-Residence cannot be overstated. For Loretta, one of the most important parts of the Elder role is "setting the path of understanding of the Indigenous way of knowing."

"I have the knowledge to help set our teachings out in the right way," said Loretta. "Having that understanding of who we are as First Nations people. This is who we are; these are the ceremonies we do."

As we look to the future, we reflect upon the past and where Grande Prairie has come. Loretta speaks of the great strides the College has made in Indigenization and the successes of Indigenous alumni, and the need to continue in the direction we are going in. "One of the things I really want to see happen is the diversity of Indigenization. We are so diverse; we are not just dealing with one nation. We have many nations, and each has their own way of bringing out who they are and identifying themselves." To keep that diversity yet hang on to our commonality is the next step in our journey.

As we end our talk, she tells a story of a young girl campaigning with her mother for a council position on her nation. She recalls looking to the little girl and saying, "You come from a really powerful family," and the light that lit up in the little girl's face. Knowing where you come from and who you are is a gift that is stronger than any hardship. This is what is being done at GPRC, the gifts we are giving our students, and what our Elder sees in our future. A journey of identity, and a sense of understanding for all.

A UNIQUE EXERCISE



The Blanket Exercise is used as an empathy building tool for nursing students, and is an eye opening way for the students to understand Indigenous history.

Born to a Cree mother and a German father, Ashley Rosenberger never felt like she belonged to either side. Suffering the pain of stigmatizing stereotypes, her self-esteem was at rock bottom during much of her teens.

Today, thanks to processes of healing and self-awareness, some of which are taking place during her education at GPRC, the nursing student and mother of three is confident her children will grow up in a very different world than the one in which she was raised.

“Growing up, I was always so aware of my differences and if anyone wanted to talk or learn about them, I would be defensive,” she says. “Now that conversation is more open and we’re able to connect and come together more easily. It’s so fantastic to see how open and accepting our community, our whole world, is becoming.”

“But what’s most incredible is that these discussions get to start in the helping profession. As nurses, we get to be directly involved at the root of patients’ trauma and look at what we can do to become part of the solution.”

Rosenberger recently participated in a unique ceremony called a blanket exercise, which is part of the curriculum for all first-year students in the nursing program at GPRC. Designed to illustrate historical and contemporary relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, the activity is intended to build empathy for vulnerable people whose paths in life are a direct consequence of the past.

GPRC is the only post-secondary institution in northwestern Alberta that includes this activity, which is performed by an Elder, as part of a holistic approach to healing. Participants assume the roles of Indigenous peoples, while standing on blankets they have brought from home that are meant to represent the land. Together they walk through the history of Indigenous



policies and learn how they've affected First Nations and Métis communities in devastating ways.

These include especially painful parts of Indigenous history, including how the residential school policy destroyed traditional family and cultural teachings. The 60s scoop, which refers to the removal of Indigenous children from their homes and families to be placed in non-Indigenous families and communities against their family's wishes, is also addressed.

At the end of the exercise, students take part in a sharing circle, divulging how they felt and what they learned. In addition to increasing awareness and learning Indigenous history, these ceremonies allow future nurses to build empathy and understanding and apply it within the hectic hospital setting.

"We feel it's important for all future nurses to have that in-depth understanding of the Indigenous peoples of Canada and to learn how their experiences were shaped by the force of colonialism," says Vanessa Sheane, chairperson of the department of nursing education and health studies.

"In our health care system, nurses work closely with patients of all cultures. Having access to this kind of learning will help them provide better care," said Sheane.

“As nurses, we get to be directly involved at the root of patients’ trauma and look at what we can do to become part of the solution.”





Sheane first learned of the blanket exercise after she was approached by a nursing student now entering her fourth year, as well as a faculty member who both had the opportunity to participate in it off-campus. “They were the champions of incorporating the blanket exercise into the curriculum,” Sheane says. “They felt it would fit particularly well into the first-year students’ coursework, so they can carry this experience with them through the rest of their education and into their nursing practice.”

Most graduates from the nursing program at GPRC stay to work in Grande Prairie, where the Indigenous population represents more than 10 per cent of the city’s population. For this reason experiences like the blanket exercise are particularly important as nurses keep in mind the importance and the impact of their interactions with patients.



“It really showed that all the trauma that happened back then, affects the generations to come.”

For nursing student Alycia Dunlap, the experience of watching classmates get dismissed from their blankets and banished outside the room was visceral. “You can’t compare reading something from a textbook to experiencing it, or at least getting a glimpse of what it may have been like,” she says.

“It really showed that all the trauma that happened back then, affects the generations to come. Having that background knowledge when you’re working the floor at the hospital and you’re faced with a situation can help us deal with it better.”

“The human connection aspect of the blanket exercise is perhaps the most powerful of all its elements,” says Rosenberger.

“Going through this with my peers has made me so much more confident. I feel like I have a voice. Being able to share my experience and know that I am on the right path to observe how our profession is changing for the better has created a really awesome dynamic with all my classmates,” said Rosenberger.

SHARING WISDOM: A DISCUSSION WITH DARLENE HORSEMAN

GPRC Indigenous studies instructor Darlene Horseman completed her Master's degree in 2017. For her thesis, she reflected on the experiences of female political figures in First Nations communities, including her own experiences running for chief in Horse Lake. We asked her to talk about her research for the 2019 instalment of our faculty scholarship feature, Sharing Wisdom.





Before entering politics, GPRC Indigenous studies instructor Darlene Horseman had never considered sexism to be a serious problem in her hometown. "I had heard people say there was discrimination against women [in band politics], but I didn't really believe it," she said.

That changed after Horseman's frustrating experience running for chief in her home community of Horse Lake First Nation. During that time, she says she was constantly denigrated, undermined, and treated as incapable because she was a woman. "People would tell me that a woman shouldn't be chief," she said. "They said a woman has no place in that seat, because women are too emotional and they can't handle the everyday dealings of council."

Horseman would go on to lose her leadership bid to a male candidate, but the defeat only intensified her desire to enact change.

Years after Horseman left politics for a career in education, she began to take an academic interest in the issue of gender-based discrimination in Indigenous communities. In 2017 it became the topic of her bluntly titled master's thesis: "Women are Discriminated Against within Politics in Indigenous Communities Because of their Gender." Horseman's research sheds light on the issue of misogyny in First Nations political spheres. Drawing from both personal experiences and

long-form interviews with people in her community, Horseman's 114-page thesis acts as an academic glimpse into political life as an Indigenous woman.

Not many master's theses include personal stories about the author's family, childhood, and hometown, but Horseman's is full of these. She says the structure of her research reflects an Indigenous system of knowledge where narrative is considered as meaningful and valuable as any other type of dataset.

"Cree people are big on storytelling," Horseman said, "especially oral histories." According to Horseman, one of the strengths of the oral tradition is its fluidity. "If you read a written story, that story doesn't change. You could read it a thousand years from now, but it will remain the same as on the day it was written. Oral stories change with the times. When you're telling an oral story, you can adapt it." We live in an ever-changing world, Horseman points out; our stories need to be ever-changing, too.

Capturing the spirit of oral storytelling in her written thesis was a challenge, but Horseman used a number of strategies to emulate the storytelling traditions of her Cree ancestors. Appendices in her thesis include retellings of stories that her sharp-witted *Nicapán* (great-grandmother) used to tell her and her siblings in Horseman's childhood, which influenced her adult conceptions of gender equality. When reading about *Nicapán* and Horseman's childhood, it is easy to become totally



“Her story and the story of her people continue to evolve with each retelling.”

immersed in the narrative the way you might lose yourself in a good book. “*Nicapan* always smelled like smoke,” Horseman wrote. “The kind of smell that campers have after sitting in front of a campfire of burning poplar or spruce. The same smell as a moose hide after it has been tanned over a smothered fire.”

Horseman’s research used an Indigenous feminist framework to investigate misogyny in First Nations politics. Indigenous feminism, Horseman explains, is different from mainstream feminism primarily in that its goal is not the deconstruction of existing gender norms, but the revival of old ones. In many precolonial Indigenous societies, the genders were valued equally and women often occupied positions of leadership. According to Indigenous feminist theory, the sexism that now prevails in some Indigenous communities is largely a result of European influence, and the solution is a return to old value systems and cultural ideals. Like other Indigenous feminists, Horseman believes that if First Nations communities can meaningfully reconnect with their histories and cultures, there is hope that gender equality can be restored in their societies.

In the same year that Horseman completed her master’s thesis, Horse Lake elected its first female chief. It’s not much, but to many it is a hopeful sign of changing times. In other parts of Canada, record numbers of female chiefs have been elected to First Nations councils in the past few years. Horseman may never sit in the chief’s seat in Horse Lake, but she has played an important role in paving the way for other women. Her story and the story of her people continue to evolve with each retelling.



FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

GPRC faculty not only share their wisdom in the classroom but contribute to their professions and academic fields nationally and internationally. Here are just a few highlights from the past year.



LEAD FROM WITHIN



MARINA FRIDMAN

Although 2018-19 marked her first academic year with GPRC, visual arts instructor Marina Fridman has already made an impression with her achievements. In 2018, the drawing and sculpture artist received both the \$5,000 Manifest ONE Prize and the \$18,000 Elizabeth Greenshields Award for outstanding artwork. It was Fridman's third time winning the Greenshields Award, a feat achieved by fewer than 100 artists worldwide. Around the same time, Fridman also accepted an invitation to complete a two-week artists' residency in Israel, where she met artists from around the world. During her residency, Fridman created a unique installation in a gallery elevator using staircases and soft, surreal lighting, which causes the viewer to experience "mystical" shifts in perspective as they enter the space.



UBAID ABBASI

GPRC computer science instructor Dr. Ubaid Abbasi’s recent research includes an investigation into how to make homes more energy efficient using Smart Home technology; for example, by using sensors and machine learning to program devices and appliances to automatically power down during periods of low use. He is also interested in finding ways to manage spatial big data (large volumes of data whose source is moving objects; an example would be collecting data from GPS systems in vehicles to accurately predict traffic conditions). He is a co-author on two 2018 publications: “An Energy Efficient Architecture for IoT Based Automated Smart Micro-Grid” in *Technical Gazette* and “Spatial Big Data and Moving Objects: A Comprehensive Survey” in *IEEE Access*.



SHAWN PINCHBECK

Music technology instructor Shawn Pinchbeck’s multidisciplinary approach to music frequently incorporates soundscapes, dance choreography, computer programming, and visual art. His work often involves using interactive sensor technology to generate sound or visual art from movement. In 2018 Pinchbeck lectured in graduate level courses at Estonian and Latvian universities. His students have also gone on to experiment with sound, dance, and sensor technology. Due in no small part Pinchbeck’s influence, the next generation of electroacoustic musicians has seized the stage in Eastern Europe. Currently serving as president of the Edmonton based Boreal Electroacoustic Music Society, Pinchbeck is also an active organizer of art installations and music events across Alberta.



CHRISTY BARLUND

An authority on cattle and equine reproduction with 17 years of professional experience, Dr. Barlund’s greatest passion is keeping animals healthy. In a partnered study published in 2018, she examined the exposure of people in high risk professions to *Coxiella burnetii*, the cause of Q fever. *Coxiella* originates in animals but can be transmitted to humans via the inhalation of contaminated particles, and can result in very serious or even life-threatening illness. Barlund also sits on the Animal Care Committee and the Research Planning Committee at GPRC, Chair of the Animal Sciences department, and frequently travels to workshops, conferences, and seminars.





GAVIN WINTER

When Gavin Winter began teaching in the Heavy Equipment Technician program at GPRC in 2006, he had no background in adult education, but he was ready to learn and grow in his new role. He discovered he had a passion for education, which led him to take a one-year sabbatical in 2017-18 during which he completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in Adult Education at the University of the Fraser Valley with coursework from a number of different institutions, including GPRC. Now with dual training as a heavy equipment technician and an educator, Winter has developed a teaching handbook for new trades instructors offering advice, encouragement, resources, and information about professional development opportunities.



CONNIE KORPAN AND DAWN MOFFAT MCMASTER

GPRC researchers Dr. Connie Korpan (right) and Dawn Moffat McMaster are working hard on a community-based research initiative after their application for major funding was successful in spring of 2018. GPRC received \$200,000 from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for Korpan and Moffat McMaster to investigate Civic Belonging within a Northern Resource Economy Context. Using an interview type research methodology known as Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), Korpan and Moffat McMaster will investigate understandings of belonging among youth in northwestern Alberta. Korpan has been the principal investigator on a number of community-based research initiatives, including the multi-year Police and Crisis Team (PACT) evaluation study which will conclude in 2019. Moffat McMaster was previously the lead investigator of a community asset mapping project in collaboration with the City of Grande Prairie, work which is now informing the current study.



CARL BALL

In April 2018, GPRC Harley-Davidson® technician instructor Carl Ball travelled to Las Vegas to attend the Power Vision training at the Dynojet training facility. Over the two-day intensive course, Ball took part in both classroom learning and hands on Dyno tuning training on current Harley-Davidson® models, using the 250i dynamometer and the Power Vision software and tuning module. Ball earned a certificate of completion, and thanks to his hard work, GPRC is now recognized as a certified Dynojet Power Vision Tuning Centre.



MÉTIS >>>>>> COMMUNITY BUILDER

ANGIE CRERAR STILL CHAMPIONING THE CAUSE AT 83

The year was 1966 and Angie Crerar was feeling sick and scared. She had just arrived in Grande Prairie from Yellowknife, looking for a change for herself and her family, and not yet knowing just how much she had to offer the world.

In the decades to come, her role in the community would become much bigger than she had ever imagined. Crerar, who turned 83 in July, has been a key player in numerous programs and initiatives in the region, from the On-Campus Friendship Centre at GPRC to a homeless shelter in Grande Prairie for at-risk Indigenous seniors (with a second one soon to be built).

As the president of the Alberta Métis Association Local 1990, Crerar has been an active supporter of the College's Indigenous studies programming. She also offers wisdom and support to local Métis and First Nations students, knowing first-hand the pain of loneliness as a survivor of the residential school system in the Northwest Territories where she grew up.

"It was Grande Prairie and the people I met at the Friendship Centre who taught me my self esteem and how to acknowledge who I am. I never knew I had the skills!" she marvels. "We all have special gifts; I found mine were giving and kindness. I still feel like I have lots to give. I got so much help when I got here and it is now my turn to help others reach their goals and vision."

For starters, Crerar has helped create better access to post-secondary education by advocating for the Métis Scholar Award (Rupertsland Institute) to be offered at GPRC. The very first endowment agreement was announced at Edmonton's MacEwan University by the Métis Education Foundation, and was established by the Métis Nation of Alberta. But Crerar realized not all students wanted to leave home to go to school.

"I wanted Métis citizens in our region to have a choice between staying home in our community or moving to pursue their education. In 2011 we proudly announced the creation of an endowment for students at GPRC that now holds a value of \$400,000.



“Education is always important and some of our students don’t have the means to go further. Quite a few are now in college pursuing a higher education. The future for them is looking bright!”

Crerar played a pivotal role in partnership with Kelly Benning and Melody Wilton in the opening of GPRC’s On-Campus Friendship Centre in 2000, conducting prayers, developing programming, and an initiative that pairs out-of-town Indigenous students with an elder whom they treat as their own grandparent and turn to for advice when needed.

A pivotal moment in her career was being personally invited by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to attend the annual Crown-Métis Summit in 2017. “I was asked to conduct the opening prayer on Parliament Hill – now that was something I never thought I would get to do,” says Crerar.

Now in her 80s, a mother of 11 children and a grandmother to 23, some of whom attend GPRC, Crerar is showing no signs of winding down.

“It took me 64 years to regain my identity, my family and my community,” she says. “I thank God for the opportunity to help those out there, to hear their stories and give them a voice so they can take control of their lives and their self-esteem.”



“I wanted Métis citizens in our region to have a choice between staying home in our community or moving to pursue their education.”



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INNER SPACES:

In Indigenous cultures, the gift of a blanket symbolizes gratitude and respect. This blanket, which is on the Grande Prairie campus in the B Wing near the On-Campus Friendship Centre, was presented to GPRC by the Circle of Indigenous Students (CIS) after the signing of the Indigenous Education Protocol in January 2017.

The protocol, signed by both GPRC's president and the president of the CIS, represents a commitment to incorporate Indigenous cultures, traditions, and ways of knowing into the fabric of our institution. The blanket reminds us of this commitment and of the importance of embracing and celebrating Indigenous cultures and perspectives in our College community.



INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEUR:

BRINGING MUCH NEEDED DIVERSITY TO THE WORLD OF EMOJIS

Miranda Recollet was swapping texts with a friend one day when the idea for her business was born. “We were joking around and I said, ‘You need a smudge emoji!’ and then we both laughed,” Recollet recalls.

While most people would have forgotten the exchange and moved on, it was a light-bulb moment for Recollet, a GPRC graduate who recognized the lack of diversity among traditional emoji offerings and then set off to do something about it.

“I realized the statistics out there – Native Americans under the age of 22 comprise one of the fastest growing youth populations,” says Recollet. “I wanted to bring something to the table that we could laugh about, use, and have fun with and I knew there would be a strong market for it.”

A couple years later, Indigicon was born—a set of 160 emojis across four categories including food, culture, occupations, and the weather, to which Indigenous people across North America can relate. The smudge emoji—which refers to a religious purification ceremony involving the burning of sacred medicines—is one of the most popular ones, says Recollet.

Another emoji in high demand is the “Indian taco,” a popular snack of fried bread topped with chili, cheese, tomatoes, and lettuce.

To bring her venture to fruition, Recollet invested \$5,000 of her own savings, which paid for the coding and graphic design she outsourced to an Indigenous-owned tech company in Winnipeg. Now available for download in the iTunes store for \$1.39, the emojis have been downloaded across Canada and as far away as Australia and the UK.

“The initial inspiration was nothing grandiose, just a simple conversation between two friends, but it’s been received very well,” she says.

“I’ve always had that entrepreneurial spirit. That’s really where this all began – I knew early on that there were diverse ways to be successful.”

Raised on the Wiikwemkoong unceded reserve on Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron, Ontario, Recollet says she grew up with a lot of positive role models.

There were no McDonald’s or Tim Hortons restaurants on the world’s largest freshwater island where she grew up, and the



Entrepreneur and GPRC alumna Miranda Recollet is the creator of Indigenous-inspired emojis, “Indigicons.”



closest town was an hour drive away, but the community was rich in success stories, she recalls.

“There were many great names in terms of artists, musicians, hockey players and business professionals [from Wiikwemkoong],” she says. “When you grow up seeing family and friends doing great things, you end up believing success can be achievable for yourself, too.”

It wasn’t until the fall of 2008 that Recollet moved to Grande Prairie due to her husband’s new job in the oilfield. It took them four days to make the drive out west with their two young daughters in tow.

“If I was going to make this work, I knew I had to really get to know Grande Prairie,” she says. “Post-secondary was always on my list of things to pursue, so I made the leap and enrolled in open studies at GPRC in the fall of 2009.”

Recollet graduated in 2014 with a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Alberta, spending the first two years in the GPRC program. She credits her success to her involvement in the Circle of Indigenous Students.

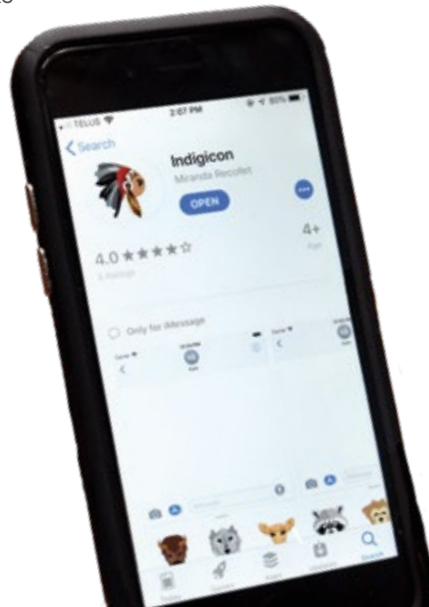
“GPRC is unusual in the sense that we have First Nations students coming from all over. One of my best friends was from the Yukon territory, another was a Blackfoot from the south, and another was Odawa from Ontario to the east,” she says. “The College gave us our own space where we could gather and support each other in our endeavours and initiatives.”

For Recollet, this support was where GPRC shone the most and allowed her to succeed in her chosen path. Currently, she is based in the United States, working as a Native American education specialist with the public school board in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

“I provide academic support for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and also deliver cultural competency training for teachers – I help with lesson plans and make myself available to staff who might have questions about the content,” she says.

“I think sometimes our youth believe some things are just out of reach for them, but it isn’t true. All you need is one good idea, determination, and support and everything falls into place after that.

“For me, Indigicon is important not because it’s going to transform someone’s life. What makes it meaningful is that a student from the sticks brought an idea to the global table, and if that inspires someone to go further in their life I am glad to have paved some part of the way for them.”



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FROM THE >>>>>> ARCHIVES

DR. CORA VOYAGEUR

It's been 16 years since our first interview with University of Calgary researcher and GPRC alumna Dr. Cora Voyageur. At that time, Dr. Voyageur was working on research for the province of Alberta's 100th anniversary highlighting important contributions to the province's history by Indigenous Albertans.

Now a full professor at the University of Calgary, Dr. Voyageur is also a lay bencher (non-lawyer member of the board of directors) with the Alberta Law Society and sits on the provincial museum board. She is currently working on her tenth book and continues to be active in research. Dr. Voyageur says her work bringing Indigenous voices to the forefront continues to be a challenging but worthwhile pursuit. "A lot of Albertans are stuck in the past when it comes to Indigenous people," she said. "Not many people really know what dynamic and robust communities we have."

"We've started down that path, but we're still not where we should be. What I've done through my career is try to look at Indigenous communities through a strengths-based perspective."

Dr. Voyageur's husband is another prolific GPRC alumnus, Brian Calliou. Calliou continues his work in the role of Director of Indigenous Leadership and Management at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

Visit gprc.ab.ca/alumni/wisdom to read the Summer 2003 edition of Wisdom when we featured Dr. Voyager on our cover.



ALUMNI CLASS NOTES

DR. RANDI GUEST | UNIVERSITY TRANSFER, BACHELOR OF SCIENCE | 2007-2009

Dr. Randi Guest, who completed her PhD at the University of Alberta, is currently researching antibiotic resistance with leading scientists at Princeton University's department of molecular biology in Princeton, New Jersey. The long-term goal of her research is to develop new therapies for treating antibiotic resistant infections.

KARA WITOW | UNIVERSITY TRANSFER, BACHELOR OF PSYCHOLOGY | 2012-2018

Kara Witow represented GPRC at the Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) Student Innovation Showcase and the Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance (CADDRA) conference in November 2018. Witow's research examined barriers faced by children with ADHD when participating in organized sport. Witow aspires to publish her research and looks forward to a bright future in the field of educational psychology.

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WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN SINCE YOU ATTENDED GPRC?

We would love to hear about your professional and personal accomplishments since becoming a GPRC alum. Write to us at communications@gprc.ab.ca with a life and career update to possibly be featured in our next edition of Wisdom!



IN CLOSING:

“When we talk about Indigenous culture, we make it concrete. Our culture needs to be experienced.”

Loretta Parenteau-English, GPRC ELDER-IN-RESIDENCE



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