Welcome to the 2016/2017 academic year at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU). As Provost and Vice President Academic and as a member of our university’s Aboriginal Advisory Committee, I write this message to share good news and reflect on the past remarkable academic year.

KPU hosted another even more successful powwow at our Surrey campus on September 19, 2015 attended by over 700 community members. The word is out and we expect another big crowd for our next powwow in September 2016.

It has been a bit over a year since the release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) aimed at improving the lives of Indigenous Canadians through structural changes in Justice, Health, and Education. The federal government has accepted the recommendations and has embarked on diverse projects to help implement these recommendations. At the same time our Provincial government has stepped up its endorsement of the TRC recommendations and has launched a series of funding initiatives, research and surveys to inform and guide how best to implement the TRC recommendations in the three focus areas.

KPU was fortunate to receive one-time funding to establish an Indigenous Competency Training program this Fall that aims to help faculty, staff, administrators and students indigenize our curriculum and educational delivery. At the same time additional training is being planned with other partner public post-secondary institutions to arrive at some sector-wide initiatives and innovative approaches to increase Aboriginal participation.

KPU’s experimental Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN) harvested and sold out its first crop last Fall. This year, KPU and the TFN will step up their level of activity and expand the program to include entrepreneurial elements aimed at helping emerging TFN farmers develop and run sustainable small-scale farm operations.

KPU’s Senate and the Board approved the establishment of a minor in Indigenous Community Justice this past academic year. The program is now going through a final phase of review by the Ministry of Advanced Education and will be soon offered through the Faculty of Arts.

KPU is planning the next National Aboriginal Day at the Surrey campus. The day-long celebration will feature dancing, singing, topical forums, and a dedication by our esteemed Elder in Residence, Lekeyten, from the Kwantlen First Nation.

This past academic year KPU saw a dramatic increase in Aboriginal trades training hosted by the university and delivered at the Squamish Training Centre in North Vancouver in partnership with the Squamish First Nation, the ITA and the North Vancouver School District. Thanks to substantial additional funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education, the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, and the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, KPU has become the largest Aboriginal trades training institution in British Columbia.

2016’s Spring Convocation will honour June Kaminski, an internationally recognized scholar and teacher in our Faculty of Health. As an Aboriginal health practitioner, June has been a champion for Aboriginal causes at KPU bringing about an introduction of Aboriginal content into many KPU nursing programs.

We congratulate her on twenty-five years of dedicated, passionate, and valuable service to the KPU community.

KPU continues its quest to become a destination of choice for Aboriginal learners throughout the Lower Mainland. We will achieve this through continuous dialog, meaningful engagement, and participation with our KPU Aboriginal Advisory Committee and by working collaboratively with our neighbouring nations, the Kwantlen, Tsawwassen, Semiahmoo, Katzie, Musqueam and Squamish Nation to reach new learners in new ways.

kpu.ca/vp-academic
3RD ANNUAL KPU POWWOW

The 3rd annual KPU Powwow, held September 19, 2015, saw at least 700 people attend and engage throughout the event. This was the second competition powwow, where prize money was given for all dance categories.

Ornamented and dignified in regalia were female dancers who danced fancy shawl, jingle dress, and traditional categories. The men’s categories included fancy, grass, traditional, and prairie chicken dances. All categories had their own distinct regalia.

Over 100 dancers took part in the competition, with six drum groups also participating. Dancers and drummers were diversely represented, ranging from children to seniors, and all ages in-between. Vendors were also on-site selling various crafts, clothing, and jewelry.

Administrators, faculty, staff, and students collaborated to make KPU’s 3rd annual powwow a huge success, aided by 20 volunteers from the Kwantlen Student Association’s START volunteer program. Greatest thanks goes out to the powwow participants without whom the sharing of these incredible traditions would not be possible.

Look to 2016’s 4th annual KPU Powwow to continue building on these successes with an even greater community outreach.

kpu.ca/powwow

5TH ANNUAL KPU ABORIGINAL OPEN HOUSE

KPU’s 5th annual Your Path: Aboriginal Open House, held April 27, 2016 at KPU Surrey, gave nearly 200 regional Aboriginal high school students a unique insight into a day in the life of a KPU student by engaging in a series of three abbreviated “classes” from KPU’s Arts and Science Faculties.

Roxanne Charles, a KPU fine arts graduate from the Semiahmoo First Nation, hosted students in one of KPU’s fine arts studios, guiding them through an interactive textile weaving workshop using various fabrics and yellow cedar.

KPU Arts faculty, Dr. Rajdeep Gill, and Future Student Recruitment Coordinator, Brittany McNeill, provided an overview of what to expect when making the transition to post-secondary studies. Together, they highlighted KPU’s array of programming and highlights of campus life. This was complemented by self-exploration activities designed to help determine what makes students feel inspired and alive, and to encourage students to speak out about their gifts and strengths among their peers.

Additionally, students were engaged with faculty in KPU’s science labs for hands-on learning opportunities with faculty and specialized equipment, including, but not limited to, microscopic biological examinations.

The day concluded with this year’s keynote speaker, Ronnie Harris, a professional hip hop and multimedia artist who has also acted on APTN’s Moccasin Flats. Ronnie delivered a strong message, speaking of the challenges he and his family have faced over the years, the legacy of colonization in contemporary society, and above all, how he has navigated his own path in a humbling yet inspiring way. In spite of the successes he enjoys today, he still has the desire to learn more – Ronnie will be starting KPU’s BBA Marketing Management program in Fall 2016!

kpu.ca/aboriginal/events

In her book, Lisa challenges the myth of the “Indian problem” and encourages readers to view the crimes and injustices affecting Indigenous peoples from a more culturally aware position. She analyzes the consequences of assimilation policies, dishonoured treaty agreements, manipulative legislation, and systematic racism, arguing that the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian criminal justice system is not an Indian problem but a colonial one.

At the launch, Lisa spoke about her motivations for writing the book, her challenges along the way, and provided a glimpse into what her book is about. The launch also included a panelist discussion with Dr. Wenona Victor, Indigenous studies faculty at The University of the Fraser Valley, Alana Abramson, KPU criminology faculty and PhD candidate at SFU Criminology, and Andrew Judge, aboriginal education coordinator at the College of the Rockies and PhD candidate in education at The University of Western Ontario. All panelists shared their thoughts and views on the book, which were all very moving, encouraging, and optimistic.

*The Colonial Problem: An Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Injustice in Canada* is available at major Canadian online book retailers.

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kpu.ca/arts/criminology
CONGRATULATIONS TO ROXANNE CHARLES

Roxanne Charles, a proud Salish woman from the Semiahmoo First Nation, completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts along with a Bachelor of Arts double minor (art history and cultural anthropology), convocating from Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) in May of 2016.

Roxanne’s seven years at KPU have been balanced with challenges and successes while wearing any number of hats, including those of a student, an artist, a councillor, an Indigenous advocate, a mother, and finally, a graduate.

Making the most of opportunities offered at KPU, Roxanne tailored her studies to suit her interests and desires, complementing her real-world experience with KPU’s unique combination of thinking and doing, equipping her with all she needs to make a significant impact on her community as a KPU alumna.

Roxanne credits the unique structure of KPU and its knowledgeable faculty for the opportunities and support she received. She believes that KPU has the ideal framework to deliver a unique, interdisciplinary, education experience, applicable to a multitude of career opportunities. She will forever carry the friendships, memories, and skills into her future.

Roxanne continues to be a successful artist, Indigenous advocate, and leader in her community, and will be pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in the fall at Simon Fraser University. Her advice for future students is to follow their dreams – anything is possible.

kpu.ca/alumni

KPU ELDER IN RESIDENCE

O’Siem

Congratulations and welcome (or welcome back) to Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)! I am excited to be with you as a part of KPU’s vibrant undergraduate and professional student community.

I, along with the Aboriginal Gathering Place at KPU Surrey, am here to ensure that you are able to engage with a stimulating intellectual and social community of students and scholars across KPU’s campuses. The Aboriginal Gathering Place is a quiet place where you can access computers, have a place to study and socialize, and obtain information about other resources available at KPU.

KPU works to provide numerous supports throughout your studies, but they aren’t useful if you don’t know about them – be bold and seek out the opportunities and supports on offer!

I look forward meeting you and invite you visit us at KPU Surrey – Main 166, or online.

Sincerely,

Lekeyten Antone

kpu.ca/aboriginal/elder
kpu.ca/aboriginal/gathering-place
Samantha Davis of the Haida Nation, Haida Gwaii, is a full-time mother and student pursuing her Bachelor of Arts degree. In her fourth year, she had the opportunity to take one of the Interdisciplinary Expressive Arts (IDEA) courses offered by KPU. Samantha found this to be one of the richest experiences in her post-secondary journey.

The IDEA program facilitates whole-person learning, connecting personal, creative, emotional, and spiritual explorations to professional and academic development. Students are provided unique opportunities to explore diverse areas of academic interest from an interdisciplinary perspective, find mentorship and support towards their dreams and aspirations, discover their inner lives, give shape to their social and ethical commitments, and undertake community as well as nature-based explorations.

Through different creative and participatory activities and assignments, Samantha was able to connect, not just with her peers, but with herself. Journaling activities and prompts as well as monthly reflective writings enabled Samantha to look deep within and examine herself in ways she had never thought of, making the most of opportunities to meditate, drum, and connect through nature-based activities.

Samantha highly recommends IDEA courses as she believes the experience is personally meaningful and wonderfully beneficial for one’s soul.

kpu.ca/idea
Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s (KPU) 2nd annual National Aboriginal Day celebration, in recognition of the 20th anniversary of National Aboriginal Day in Canada, started off with a feast in the Aboriginal Gathering Place. KPU Student Affairs Senior Director, Joshua Mitchell, then welcomed community members who came to learn and experience the cultural and societal significance of the day.

Aboriginal community members were key to the day’s success. A territorial welcome was given by our Elder in Residence, Lekeyten, followed by engaging Aboriginal dance performances. Petie Chalifoux, Cree, gave a spectacular performance in hoop dancing reminiscent of her championship-winning performances the world over. The Butterflies in Spirit Dance Group followed, combining a unique blend of contemporary interpretive dance with traditional Aboriginal style. Through dance and the expression of personal experiences, the dancers raise awareness of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Meanwhile, Patricia Stewart gave a cedar weaving demonstration and spoke to the significance of the weave with a number of items on display, as well as her personal growth through her experience with weaving.

The KPU Ceremonial Mace, which stands as a key figure in KPU Convocation ceremonies, was on display throughout the event. KPU Elder in Residence, Lekeyten, provided a first-ever public overview of its significance to both the Aboriginal and KPU communities. View the video at kpu.ca/traditions

KPU Vice-Provost Students, Dr. Jane Fee, offered the day’s closing remarks. “This is the second year we’ve helped celebrate National Aboriginal Day at KPU...We’ve attended other events, but we thought it was time that we started celebrating on our campuses.”

“We are, as far as I’m aware, the only Canadian university that’s named after a First Nations group. We have the same responsibility that any other post-secondary institution does to recognize the territory that we live and work in. We also have an additional responsibility to ensure we’re paying heed to our name, and make sure our connection to First Nations groups is understood and respected.”

kpu.ca/aboriginal/events

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY
Tansi! It continues to be my privilege and pleasure to welcome and guide Aboriginal learners along their educational journey at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU).

KPU Aboriginal Services partners with other student service areas on campus to provide access to academic advising, personal counselling, sport and recreation, financial aid, career exploration, and more. Additionally, we work to uphold long-standing connections with traditional, cultural, and spiritual communities, from the initial introduction to university life through to the excitement of graduation.

KPU’s Aboriginal Gathering Place, along with our Elder in Residence at KPU Surrey, welcomes students, faculty, and staff to learn and reflect through a variety of events and activities, such as guest speakers, films, tutoring, meetings of the Aboriginal Student club, powwows, and conferences.

Please come by and say hello – I look forward to seeing you!

Darlene Willier
Coordinator, Aboriginal Services
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