

PIPE CARRIERS

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Biographies

Pipe Carriers

Suzy Bear – Female Pipe Carrier

Suzy Bear is one of two Elders at the First Nations University of Canada, Northern Campus, Prince Albert. As Elder, she believes it is her responsibility to teach students her culture, values and traditions and to pass on her knowledge to them. In her professional life, she worked in various libraries; the Saskatchewan Health Authority Library, Prince Albert, the Wapiti Regional Library and First Nations University of Canada, Northern Campus Library, Prince Albert which she built from the 'ground up'. She saw many challenges and changes in the field of librarianship and truly enjoyed her profession as librarian.

Shelley Belhumeur – 2 Spirit Pipe Carrier

Elder Shelley spent two decades in St. Louis (close to where the FNUniv's Traditional Campus is located) before retiring with her partner of 34 years in the town of Wakaw, Saskatchewan. Shelley, a proud Two-Spirit Elder and member of Métis Nation–Saskatchewan is very involved in her Métis culture. As a Knowledge Keeper/Elder, and Pipe Carrier, she holds ceremonies and teaches cultural awareness throughout the province. She also serves as an Elder at the First Nations University of Canada's Northern Campus in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

Dennis Omeasoo – Male Pipe Carrier

Dennis Omeasoo is a Plains Cree from Treaty 6 Territory in Maskwacis, Alberta. He now resides on Piapot First Nation in Southern Saskatchewan. Dennis is a husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He is currently a resident Elder for First Nations University of Canada.

Dennis is a knowledge keeper with extensive knowledge of First Nations history and works jointly with other professionals to integrate First Nations content and worldview into classroom environments. It is his desire to actively apply and expand his background to further the appreciation and promotion of First Nations people and cultural identity. He has contributed to community initiatives that celebrate cultural diversity and youth. He bases his knowledge on past and present philosophies, teachings, personal experiences and his ability to communicate in both Cree and English.

Emcee

Marilyn Poitras

Marilyn Poitras is an ethical space designer, public speaker, and positive deviant. She attended the Native Law Centre Summer Program, obtained her LL.B. at the University of Saskatchewan, and LL.M. at Harvard Law School, and learns Indigenous law from Elders and the land. In addition to being a lawyer, she has worked as a law professor, writer, film producer, negotiator,

facilitator, public speaker, commissioner, consultant, and design thinker. Michif and Irish Scottish, born and raised in Southern Saskatchewan, Marilyn comes to her work in this field with passion and conviction and focuses her lens on relationship development on the Indigenous front.

Wellness Team

Elder Shelley Belhumeur

Elder Shelley spent two decades in St. Louis (close to where the FNUniv's Traditional Campus is located) before retiring with her partner of 33 years in the town of Wakaw, Saskatchewan. Shelley, a proud Two-Spirit Elder and member of Métis Nation—Saskatchewan is very involved in her Métis culture. As a Knowledge Keeper/Elder, and Pipe Carrier, she holds ceremonies and teaches cultural awareness throughout the province. She also serves as an Elder at the First Nations University of Canada's Northern Campus in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

Eileen Cuthand

Tansi, Kitamiskatinawaw, my name is Eileen Cuthand, I am Cree and Anishnaabe from Little Pine First Nation, originally from Daystar First Nation. I have many years of experience and training in Indigenous Social Work, Mental Health Counseling and Addictions. I am also a Knowledge Keeper. I currently work at the First Nations University as the Wellness Counselor for the Saskatoon Campus. I am here to support you, and I look forward to meeting you, Kinanaskomitinawaw.

Kelly Daniels

Kelly Daniels was raised in a traditional way on the Sturgeon Lake First Nation speaking his first language, Plains Cree. Old people chose to train him to carry on various ceremonies and sacred, traditional knowledge: as he grew other people shared different ceremonies with him also. Kelly travelled the world as an invited champion powwow dancer. From a young age, he was asked to present to various audiences. Public speaking is one of his natural gifts. He has vast experience with public speaking of various sizes and all ages. He even presents at various universities with world renowned people like David Suzuki. Kelly is sought out for his knowledge of traditional Cree Creation Stories across North America. He has been featured in various television shows and even in movies like Big Bear. Even as far as being a part of the television show First Contact where non-Indigenous people with unflattering views regarding Indigenous peoples. He is also an award-winning recording artist – Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards – and numerous nominations throughout Canada and the United States. Kelly is charismatic and accepting, which creates a safe, accepting atmosphere where the audience feels positive and enlightened. For example, his cultural camps are LGBTQ friendly. No matter what, we are just human beings and need to be treated as such.

Sophie Littlechief-Carteri

Sophie Littlechief-Carteri is a proud member of White Bear First Nations and was raised in *oskana kâ-asastêki* (Regina), Saskatchewan, on Treaty Four Territory. With over 25 years of experience working

with youth, Sophie began her journey as a mentor for young Indigenous women. She served as a Teacher Associate for 10 years before earning her Bachelor of Indigenous Education (Secondary) in 2013. Throughout her career as an educator and guidance counsellor, Sophie has worked closely with Indigenous students in both elementary and high school settings. Her passion for supporting others led her to complete a master's degree in educational psychology (Counselling) in 2023. Sophie's counselling practice is rooted in a decolonized, trauma-informed approach, and she strives to support each client based on their unique goals and needs. She is also a registered member of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.

Elder Judy Pelly

Judy Pelly is Anishinaabe-Saulteaux and was born and raised in Cote First Nation. A Residential School Survivor and recovering alcoholic, Judy is also a mother to two sons and Kohkom to four grandchildren.

Judy spent 15 years as an Indigenous Education Manager for Alberta Learning. She later returned to Saskatoon where she worked in various capacities with several Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) institutes. In 2015, and after 21 years of service, Judy retired from the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies as the Dean of Community and Health Studies.

Pelly also supports the First Nations University of Canada as Cultural Advisor and Knowledge Keeper at the Saskatoon campus and greatly values her outreach work with the Saskatchewan Health Authority's

Mental Health and Addiction Services. She lives her life through the Seven Sacred Teachings (Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility, Truth) and she encourages the organizations and the people she works with to do the same. She firmly believes that if all Indigenous and non-Indigenous people live by these teachings, the world will be a better place.

Speakers

Dr. Sharon Acoose

My name is Sharon L. Acoose. My Indian name or Spirit name is Circling Eagle Women. I have 11 grands, 4 great grands. I am a recovering addict, and I have 36 years under my belt. Of the 11 my 20-year grandson died of a fentanyl OD July 5/21 my oldest daughters youngest. I still attend the AA meetings now on Zoom and I go to my homegroup face to face. I have also found my Culture. I attend Sweat Lodge Ceremony's, Pipe Ceremony's. I find that I gain balance in all areas of my life when I participate in Ceremony. I have worked at the University since 1999 first as an Academic Advisor at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College at the University of Regina and prior to our name change to the First Nations University of Canada, and I am now a Professor for the School of Indigenous Social Work – Saskatoon Campus. My area of interest is to work with Street People, those women and girls involved in prostitution and the other violent issues that stem from living unhealthy. I am interested in the world of drugs, and alcohol and the negative impact it has had on Indigenous people and all the harm it has done over the decades. My heart is also with all the Missing and

Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls across Canada. I am a Mental Health Therapist via NIHB, but it is my side hustle. I am still teaching fulltime courses at the School of Indigenous Social Work. I speak to many different things that are all a means to healing our Spirits.

Danita Benjoe

Danita Benjoe is from Muscowpetung First Nation located in the heart of Treaty 4 Territory. She led Thunderbird Lodge male youth treatment centre from 2017-2024 which gave her an opportunity to work with youth and to gain understanding and training in the field of addictions. This role also helped to reawaken her spirit alongside the youth that she served. She believes the cultural and land-based components play a vital role in helping youth with their cultural identities and healing. In 2024, Danita was hired by the Yorkton Tribal Council as the Detox Manager which gave her an opportunity to work with adults. Today she manages the Eagle Sky Healing Lodge on Kahkewistahaw First Nation.

Emily Berg

Emily Berg (She/Her) is a PhD student in the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta. Emily was born and raised in Edmonton, where she completed her BSc with distinction, double majoring in Biological Sciences and Psychology (2021). She remained at the University of Alberta to continue her graduate education, completing her MSc in Physiology (2024), studying the effects of nutrition on chronic illness. During her masters, Emily participated in a graduate internship program, delving into a national project on Post-Secondary Student Houselessness and

health inequity. This sparked her interest and drive to combat health inequities in structurally vulnerable populations at a macro level, driving her pursuit of a PhD in Public Health. Emily's proposed doctoral research will evaluate the *Compassionate Intervention Act*, with a specific focus on ethics and relational impacts. In Emily's free time, you can find her running with her dog Schmidt.

Maria Campbell

Maria Campbell is a celebrated, award-winning Métis author, playwright and filmmaker but first and foremost, she prefers to be known as a community worker.

A dedicated volunteer, activist and advocate for Indigenous rights and the rights of women and children for more than 40 years, Campbell opened doors for Métis writers when she authored her best-selling autobiography, *Halfbreed*, in 1973. She has since written eight books and 6 stage plays, including *Flight*, the first all-Indigenous theatre production in Canada. Maria was inducted into the Saskatchewan Theatre Hall of Fame in 2000.

Campbell's contributions to community and culture have earned her multiple major awards and accolades including the Vanier Award as One of Canada's Five Outstanding Young Canadians, a National Aboriginal Achievement Award, the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, a Distinguished Canadian Award, the Saskatchewan Lieutenant Governor's Lifetime Achievement Award in the Arts, and in 2022 she received the prestigious Kloppenberg Award. She was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in

2008 and in 2012 she received the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Fellowship.

Campbell has also received numerous Honorary Doctorates from Universities across Canada and in 2023, she was elected a Member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cambridge, MA, one of the most prestigious and oldest Academies in the America's.

She speaks three Indigenous languages— Cree, Michif and Saulteaux, —and has had her books translated into German, Chinese, French, Italian, Spanish and Catalan.

Maria is a mother, grandmother, and great grandmother.

Brenda Dubois

Brenda Dubois is a mother and grandmother (kokum), from Muscowpetung First Nation. She has worked extensively in the areas of child welfare, human justice and environmental issues. She is an advocate for education and vulnerable peoples. Brenda believes that practicing culture and traditions is important for people to continually learn and evolve.

Micha Favel

My name is Micha Favel, and I am from Daystar First Nations. I used to choose to live in poverty. I was in gangs and surrounded by negative people. I consider myself a helper with the techniques I've learnt from Elders being in the jail system. As of today, I am still learning to walk in a good way.

Dr. Barb Fornssler

Barb Fornssler, PhD, is a white-settler living on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis, who works as an Assistant Professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Saskatchewan. Barb has been working in community-based substance use research since 2011, her research program aims to support voices of lived and living expertise, to influence policy and health systems change. She has worked as an accomplice in Indigenous health research since 2005 where she has been privileged to partner with many gracious teachers, scholars, and activists to guide her path. Barb directs the Graduate Certificate in Substance Use Health and Wellbeing program at USask and she is also the Knowledge Translation and Exchange Coordinator for the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Matters (CRISM) Prairie Node.

When she's not in the community or the classroom, Barb enjoys outdoor adventures alongside her partner and their dogs, a Great Dane named Opal and a Lab named Kal. The family cat, Raziell, prefers to sunbathe at home in the living room window.

Nova Fox

Nova Fox is a First Nations comedian, speaker, and service coordinator from Ochapowace First Nation. She uses humor and real-life storytelling to connect with audiences while bringing awareness to important social issues affecting Indigenous communities. Through her work as a service coordinator with the First Nations Child Welfare Settlement, Nova supports families by providing information, guidance, and soft

referrals to services, helping people navigate systems that can often feel overwhelming.

With a growing platform of over 60,000 followers on Facebook and 28,000 on TikTok, Nova has built a strong online presence where she shares comedy, lived experiences, and messages of resilience and healing. She has spoken at conferences, youth events, and community gatherings across Western Canada, blending comedy with motivation to create safe, engaging, and impactful spaces.

Nova is known for her authenticity, her strength, and her ability to turn pain into laughter, reminding people that even in the hardest moments, there is power in showing up, speaking out, and staying connected to who you are.

Dr. Holly Graham

Dr. Holly Graham is a member of the Thunderchild First Nation, SK. She has worked as a Registered Nurse (RN) in northern communities and various other health care environments since 1985. Currently, Holly is an Associate Professor in the College of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry at the University of Saskatchewan. She also maintains an active practice as a Registered Doctoral Psychologist, working primarily with individuals who have experienced trauma and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Holly's research is strength-based with a focus on Indigenous health, mental health, and wellness. She currently holds an Indigenous Research Chair in Nursing awarded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Saskatchewan

Health Research Foundation (SHRF), and the Canadian Nurses Foundation (CNF). Dr. Graham's Research Chair, entitled *wahkohtowin* (We are all Related and Interconnected), will support and mentor undergraduate and graduate nursing students to engage in advancing reconciliation within nursing practice, research, education, and administration.

Vice Chief, Fabian Head

Vice Chief Fabian Head is a member of the Red Earth Cree Nation in Treaty Five territory in eastern Saskatchewan. Throughout his life, he has maintained a connection to his culture, language, and identity, the cornerstone of his personal and professional journey.

Vice Chief Head has an extensive background in leadership and education. He has served as Chief, Councillor, and educator and has demonstrated a commitment to the advancement and well-being of his people. His advocacy for the Treaty Right to Education emphasizes his deep understanding of its critical importance for the future of First Nation youth and communities.

Vice Chief Head holds a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Indigenous Studies from the University of Regina and a Bachelor of Education from the University of Saskatchewan. These academic achievements have equipped him with a solid foundation to support his leadership and advocacy efforts.

Beyond his professional responsibilities, Vice Chief Head actively participates in and promotes initiatives that strengthen cultural

identity and heritage, recognizing their vital role in the resilience and empowerment of First Nations communities.

Recently elected as the Third Vice Chief of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), representing 74 First Nations and over 160,000 First Nations people, he passionately advocates for Treaty and Inherent Rights, ensuring these rights are upheld and respected for future generations. His dedication is driven by a vision of a thriving and self-sustaining future for all First Nations people.

Chantel Huel

Chantel Huel is a lived experience advocate who has walked the path from incarceration, drug addiction, and domestic violence to leadership and change-making. As a survivor of these battles, she understands the deep complexities of trauma, resilience, and recovery. With firsthand knowledge of street life, gang involvement, the justice system, and the barriers faced by those inside and outside the carceral system, she challenges how prison administrators make decisions and fights for meaningful change. Her journey from serving time to mentoring others in recovery has shaped her into a fierce advocate. Through peer mentorship and system navigation, Chantel uses her voice and experience to uplift others, proving that transformation is possible and that no one is beyond hope.

Chantel is currently the Program Manager at STR8-UP, a Community Researcher with the Elizabeth Fry Society, and a Street Level Researcher with Dr. Robert Henry at the University of Saskatchewan, where she

brings lived experience expertise to community-engaged research and systems change initiatives.

William Kay

William Kay is a valued member of the STR8-UP team in Saskatoon Saskatchewan. Contributing to the organization's mission of supporting individuals who are exiting gang lifestyles, addictions, and criminalized realities. His work is grounded in respect, accountability, and the belief that change is possible when people are met with consistency, dignity, and genuine care. At STR8-UP William is committed to walk alongside of members as they work towards safer, healthier and more stable lives. He brings a strong understanding of the barriers faced by individuals and families impacted by the street involvement, and he approaches his work with humility, patience, and relationship first mindset. William values teamwork and collaboration and takes pride in being part of an organization that prioritizes lived experience, cultural connection, and contributes to creating spaces where people feel supported, challenged, and empowered to move forward with hope and purpose.

Dr. Jessica Kolopenuk

Dr. Jessica Kolopenuk (Ininiw/Cree, Peguis First Nation) is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry at the University of Alberta and the Alberta Health Services Research Chair in Indigenous Health. She will be joining First Nations University on May 1st as the inaugural Associate Vice President – Health and Research. Her work sits at the intersection of critical Indigenous studies, genomics, and

science policy, where she examines how biomedical research and innovation systems reproduce - or can be transformed beyond - colonial relations of power. She is widely recognized for her scholarship on Indigenous data governance, the politics of genomic research, and institutional approaches to identity verification, including her influential work on “pretendianism.” Dr. Kolopenuk’s research and leadership advance Indigenous sovereignty in health research through interdisciplinary collaboration, policy engagement, and capacity growing, with a focus on developing Indigenous-led frameworks for governance, knowledge production, and improved health outcomes.

Donna Lerat

A fiercely determined Cree woman who left behind a bleak existence on the streets, Donna was raised in foster homes, became addicted to drugs and got caught up in prostitution by the age of 15; she has re-emerged as a powerful voice sharing with laughter her struggles and her accomplishments. Donna has been providing programming, advocacy and education since 1993 on the topics of prostitution, drugs/alcohol, family violence, health and sexual health, Aboriginal parenting, suicide and much more. She is a writer and is working on a book for recovering addicts; she’s been in TV programs, radio and films. Donna continues to motivate, support and advocate for women, and children in turtle island. She can make you laugh and cry at the same time without missing a beat.

Dr. Carrie LaVallie

Dr. LaVallie joined First Nations University in 2003 as a faculty member with the Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan. They are a graduate of Saskatchewan Polytechnic and Athabasca University and hold a PhD in Education from the University of Regina. Carrie is a third-generation born, white Settler with Scandinavian and German Ancestral ties. As a Registered Psychiatric Nurse, they have over 30 years of experience, working in various non-profit organizations, private practices, the University, and with First Nation communities. They were Acting Director of Health Sciences/Campus Manager at Northern Campus and are currently the program coordinator for Indigenous Health. Their area of research explores the role of spirituality in relapse prevention; other areas of interest are mental health, addictions, counselling, and spirituality. Dr. LaVallie resides on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan, where they hold a small private practice and teach for the University in the Indigenous Health Program as an Associate Professor.

Darlene Marchuk

Darlene Marchuk, MSW, RSW, is the Clinical Director at Poundmaker’s Lodge Treatment Centres, a residential addictions treatment facility located on Treaty 6 Territory at the site of the former Edmonton Indian Residential School. With over ten years at Poundmaker’s Lodge, Darlene provides leadership grounded in trauma-informed, culturally responsive care. Her work is shaped by her lived experience in long-term recovery and her belief that Culture is Cure—a wholistic healing approach

integrating Indigenous knowledge, ceremony, and Western clinical practice.

Christine McKenzie

Christine McKenzie, youngest daughter of Chris and Alice Thimpson, was born in La Ronge Saskatchewan and raised mostly out on the trapline. Mother of four and grandmother of one; A Cree language and land-based teacher for 14 years before starting with the WWC. Currently the Cultural Manager at WWC. She graduated with bachelor's in education 2010 from NORTEP. Taught language and culture in Loon Lake Sk until 2012. Then taught Language, Culture and Land-Based classes for 13 years at SMVS high school in La Ronge. They have worn many hats over the years including dog-musher, camp cook, recreation worker, gas station manager, fire fighter, and mayor. They raised four children with traditional Woodland Cree values and traditions and believe that living in the land is the best way to heal trauma and regain identity and connection to the people through knowledge sharing and community.

Elder Sally Milne

Sally Milne is a Woodland Cree Elder with the Lac La Ronge Indian Band and the resident elder at the Woodland Wellness Centre. She has been integral to her First Nation in culture, spirituality, art, and Indigenous traditional knowledge. In 1984, Sally began teaching Cree Culture at a Lac La Ronge Indian Band School, where she developed a teacher's guide called "Mithopimatisiwin: Living in a Good Way." This guide set a benchmark for documents outlining how to live according to Woodland

Cree values, including the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The theory of Mithopimatisiwin has been featured in many academic journals since. Recently, Sally documented the "500-year Bridge Theory" on the colonization of the Woodland Cree from an Indigenous perspective. This document is essential for future generations to understand the Woodland Cree perspective on the colonization of our Nehithuwuk (Woodland Cree) peoples. Sally remains steadfast in upholding our traditional values and teachings.

An accomplished artist in traditional birch bark art, Sally's unique and intricate pieces have made her a cultural ambassador, preserving and promoting birch bark biting. This art form, passed down through generations, holds a special place in her family history. Her remarkable artwork has garnered widespread media attention, recognizing her talent and role in preserving this traditional Woodland Cree art form. Sally has been a leader in preserving Indigenous knowledge, traditional practices, ceremonial practices, and teachings. Her contributions have not only gained her widespread recognition but have also ensured the promotion and preservation of Woodland Cree culture for future generations.

Elder Joseph Naytowhow

Joseph Naytowhow is an award-winning Plains/Woodland Nehiyaw (Cree) Interdisciplinary artist from the Sturgeon Lake First Nation Band in Saskatchewan. His generosity and compassion for sharing cultural knowledge make him a much sought-after speaker, performer, facilitator,

and outdoor educator for adults and children alike locally, regionally, and internationally. A longtime resident of Saskatoon, he has been playing music and telling stories, both tall and short, for over 35 years.

Joseph has served as a cultural advisor to various institutions such as the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) in Saskatoon, and multiple universities across Turtle Island. Joseph holds a Bachelor of Education degree from the Indian Teacher Education Program, University of Saskatchewan. He is pleased to share his creative life experience, coyote trickster tendencies, and cultural knowledge when invited to do so.

In June 2024, Joseph was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Regina "for his significant contribution to the arts, and for his commitment to bridging the gap between the contemporary world and traditional Indigenous culture."

Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann

Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann is Anishinaabe (Saulteaux) from Fishing Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan. Prior to her academic career, Jackie was an elementary, high school teacher and principal. She remains an engaged scholar alongside her responsibilities as a senior academic leader. While at the University of Calgary, she was the Coordinator of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit undergraduate teacher education program, and Director of Indigenous Education Initiatives within the Werklund School of Education (WSE).

After her time with the University of Saskatchewan as Professor and Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement, Jacqueline Ottmann was appointed President of the First Nations University of Canada. Ottmann has been recognized as an international researcher, advocate, and change-maker whose purpose is to transform practices inclusive of Indigenous leadership, methodologies, and pedagogies. Jacqueline is driven to create schools and communities that foster a deeper sense of belonging and appreciation for Indigenous peoples – their histories, stories, ways of knowing and being. Ottmann is also the first Indigenous person to become President of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education.

Miles Oxebin

My name is Myles Oxebin and I am Nakota Cree from Red Pheasant Cree Nation and Grizzly Bearhead Lean Man First Nation. I grew up on both First Nations with my parents, and I moved with my great grandparents. During my younger years I had a chance to learn to sing powwow and round dance from multiple teachers who have gone on to the Spirit World (like the late Art Moosomin, Brain Moosomin, Maurice Nicotine, Pat Butch Bugler, Terrance Fox Oxebin, and Ben Poncho Curley). I grew up learning about Ceremonies as well from these teachers. It wasn't until I was in my earlier 20s that I got into drugs and alcohol. I ended up joining a gang that consisted of my cousins, and I started selling and ended up a bad alcoholic which led me to do crime. I ended up in jail for four years. That is where I realized I need to change my life around. I started going to Ceremonies and I started to learn about protocols from my Ceremony family, and they helped me to become who I am today.

I have changed my life around a lot; I have a full-time job, and I am sober and walking the red road with my Ceremonial family.

Elder Margaret Rockthunder

Elder Margaret Rockthunder is a respected kokum (grandmother) and knowledge keeper from the Piapot First Nation in Saskatchewan. She serves as an Elder/Knowledge Keeper for students, staff, and faculty at the First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv), providing spiritual guidance and traditional knowledge.

Dr. Ginetta Salvalaggio

Ginetta Salvalaggio, MD, MSC, CCFP (AM), is a Professor with the University of Alberta Department of Family Medicine, and an Associate Scientific Director with the Inner City Health and Wellness Program. She received her degree in Medicine from the University of Alberta and completed a family practice residency in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Initially practicing as a rural locum, she eventually returned to Edmonton to establish a family practice. Dr. Salvalaggio joined the Department of Family Medicine in 2007. She has also completed a Masters of Science in Population Health through the University of Alberta School of Public Health. Her academic interests are focused on social accountability, patient and community engagement, and health services for urban underserved populations.

Stacey Swampy

Tansi hello, my name is Hole in the Sky Red Wolf Spirit Man, and my given name is Stacey Swampy. I am from Hobbema, Alberta but I've been living in Saskatoon,

Saskatchewan since 2007. I am product of child welfare, of young offenders, and of the Provincial and Federal jail system. I am a product of the Day school. I am an ex-gang member. I am a Drug addict and Alcoholic. I use play hockey, I use ride in rodeos, and dance pow wow. I am a Sun Dancer, I am sweat hog, I am Pow wow dancer, I am a Helper today.

I lived in the system for three decades, and I thought that I was going to die in the jail system. Until I asked an Elder Moshum "can you help me?" The Elder said, "come see me." I went to see the Elder and he took his time and started sharing with me about the culture. Today I have been clean from my addictions for 20 years. I went back to First Nations University of Canada and got my degree in Indigenous Social Work. I worked at the Saskatoon Correctional Center for three years and worked in Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation. I attend AA and NA meetings for the last 20 years. I am member of an organization called STR8-UP. Now I work for STR8-UP as the Cultural Knowledge Keeper and do outreach. I go all over to First Nations communities and help share the message of hope, and what can help our communities combat the issues that plague them.

Libby Szarka

Libby Szarka has over 15 years of experience working in the addiction and mental health field, and 18 years of personal sobriety.

In 2023, she founded Whitney House, a transitional home that bridges the gap between detox and treatment.

In recent years, Libby has led the development of both men's and women's

post-treatment for Poundmakers Cardinal housing, along with the launch of the first-of-its-kind Rainbow Healing Lodge—created to support minority groups and help them successfully reintegrate into the community.

Dr. Esther Tailfeathers

Esther Tailfeathers, born and raised on the Blood Reserve. Graduated from University of North Dakota School of Medicine and completed her Family Medicine Residency in Edmonton at the University of Alberta. She has worked in many Native communities including The Blackfeet Reservation in the Emergency Room, the Blood Reserve for almost 20 years, and served the remote northern community of Fort Chipewyan. Dr. Tailfeathers was the Medical Lead of the Indigenous Wellness Core for Alberta Health Services until June of 2023. During that time, she organized a relief mission to Haiti after an earthquake with a team made up of Blood Tribe paramedics, nurses and health care workers which took care of more than 2000 patients during their relief effort.

Most recently she has worked with her community in response to the Fentanyl Crisis which started in the fall of 2014. The Opioid Crisis and community strategies of Harm Reduction, Treatment and addressing upstream determinants in her home community has been where the concentration of her work has been over the last 10 years.

She is most proud of her 2 Children; Elle-Maija Tailfeathers who is an award-winning actor and filmmaker winning a Canadian Screen Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role for Night Raiders

and most recently Outstanding Directorial Achievement in a dramatic series for Little Bird, and Piinaakoyim Seen From Afar Tailfeathers, who is a tribal council member for Blood Tribe and who won the heavyweight title in Boxing at a recent Tournament.

Deneh'Cho Thompson

Deneh'Cho Thompson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Drama at the University of Saskatchewan and Coordinator of the wîcêhtowin Theatre Program (WTP). An Indigenous theatre artist, director, and scholar, Thompson's research and creative practice are situated within Indigenous performance studies, praxis-based research methodologies, and Indigenous-led approaches to theatre-making and dramaturgy. Their scholarship examines embodied knowledge, dramaturgies of place, and the ethical, pedagogical, and institutional responsibilities of performance on Indigenous lands. Thompson's work foregrounds Indigenous sovereignty, relational accountability, and research-creation as a mode of knowledge production, contributing to broader conversations in Indigenous theatre, performance studies, and contemporary dramaturgy.

As Coordinator of the wîcêhtowin Theatre Program, Thompson provides academic and artistic leadership for a nationally distinctive, Indigenous-focused certificate program grounded in experiential learning, collective creation, and community engagement. Their teaching and program development emphasize praxis-based pedagogy, mentorship of emerging

Indigenous artists and scholars, and curricular frameworks that integrate creative practice with critical and cultural theory.

Thompson holds a graduate degree in theatre and performance and is actively engaged in advanced research in Indigenous performance studies. They live and work on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis, where they continue to teach, create, and contribute to Indigenous-led performance and research cultures.

Beth Whitebear

Beth is Nêhiyawa (Cree) from Lⁿb^înⁿ (Maskwacîs) studying for a Master of Arts in Native Studies at the University of Alberta. In addition to her two undergraduate degrees (Political Science and Native Studies) she has previously worked in Edmonton's inner city for over two years as a community support worker ending in May 2023. Beth will be bringing her educational and work experience together at ICHWP in her role as a Graduate Research Assistant. She has a keen focus on health and wellness; culture as a social determinant of health; culture as land, language, and relationships; and harm reduction. In what little spare time she has between studying and working, Beth has begun learning to bead.

Witnesses

Audra Cochrane

Audra Cochrane is a third-year student in FNUniv's Indigenous Social Work program and a member of George Gordon First Nation. Inspired by her late grandmother, a

long-time FNUniv Elder, Audra chose this path to reconnect with her language, culture, and community.

Through FNUniv's supportive, holistic learning environment — including experiences like Culture Camp at the Traditional Campus — she's grown in confidence, stepped into leadership, and found healing through cultural connection.

Audra hopes to work with youth in the criminal justice system, offering trauma-informed and culturally grounded support.

Roland Kaye

Roland Kaye is Salteaux from the Sakimay First Nation. He was chosen to be an Elder's helper at First Nations University of Canada through a Circle Helpers project in 1999 and has been with the university since 2003.

Roland is an Oskapewis, the traditional term for Elder's helper in cultural activities and ceremonies on the Regina campus, but he supports the work of First Nations University of Canada across our four campuses.

In his work at FNUniv, Roland coordinates events, prepares ceremonies and ceremonial sites, and raises tipis not only for the university, but also the city, and other organizations.

Dr. Marlene McNab

Dr. Marlene McNab is an Associate Professor and Program Coordinator in the Faculty of Indigenous Social Work at First Nations University of Canada. A registered social worker with more than 30 years of

experience, Marlene specializes in trauma-informed and addiction treatment with Indigenous individuals, families and communities.

She holds a PhD in Public Policy, a Master of Aboriginal Social Work and a Bachelor of Indian Social Work. Her doctoral research, *koskon ââyohkan: Healing the Integration of Intergenerational Trauma and Addictions*, offers a culturally grounded framework integrating Indigenous knowledge, clinical practice, and policy analysis.

Dr. McNab's clinical work includes extensive experience as a mental health therapist in First Nations communities in Treaty Four Territory, addressing intergenerational trauma, residential school impacts, family violence, and addictions. She is the founder of Centre of Choice Counselling and Training, where her practice offers trauma-informed psychotherapy, EMDR, biofeedback, crisis intervention, and mind-body approaches.

An award-winning scholar and educator, Dr. McNab teaches Indigenous social work practice, addictions, counselling methods, traditional self-healing, and practicum supervision. Her work reflects a deep commitment to healing, reconciliation, and Indigenous self-determination.

Kacheena Naytowhow

Kacheena Naytowhow is a member of Cowessess First Nation on her mom's side and a member of Sturgeon Lake First Nation on her dad's side. Her Moshum raised her in ceremony, and this has guided her through her post-secondary journey while she was studying away from home. She has a

master's in business administration with a focus on Indigenous Leadership and Business (Simon Fraser University) and bachelor's in business administration (Okanagan College) with a specialty in Accounting and a Diploma in Management (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies). She has worked extensively in Indigenous organizations and is passionate about working in community with 20 years' experience and served as vice-chair of the Board of Governors for Chief Redbear Children's Lodge at Cowessess First Nation. Something that is dear to her heart since it helps keep children in community instead of being placed in care off reserve. She is a speaker with The Rise Journey, a New York-based organization that focuses on anti-racism and EDI work; she gives talks about Indigenous issues in Canada, such as the MMIWG.

In her free time, Kacheena focuses on spending time with her children, Kahiwyn, Kaylan, Storm, and Rowan and finding ways to make time to travel to see her first grandchild Asiny in Vancouver. She loves running and being active, ensuring she and her family are as healthy as possible and traveling the powwow circuit.