

## MEMO

FROM: Dr. James Mandigo (he/him), Provost and VP Academic  
DATE: February 7, 2025  
SUBJECT: Senate Provost's Report

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Ey Swáyel

Being witness in real time to the recent destructive forces dismantling equity, diversity, and inclusion across Turtle Island have left me on many occasions saying out loud to nobody in particular, "this is utter madness"? I find myself, however, turning to sources of hope and inspiration that demonstrate that EDI is a commitment that ultimately unites us and is a demonstration of strength; and when we are united in this mission, we are better as a society. Let me share a few of those sources of inspiration with you:

- In 2007, a pair of high school students in Nova Scotia organized the purchase of 50 pink t-shirts and handed them out to students the following day to show solidarity for one of their classmates who was bullied and subjected to homophobic slurs because he chose to wear a pink shirt to school. Today, hundreds of thousands of Canadian students wear their pink shirts to school to stand up to bullying and discrimination (NOTE: Pink Shirt Day is celebrated this year on Wednesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>)
- Forty years ago, a decorated Canadian Paralympian decided to use his gifts as an endurance athlete to show the world that individuals with physical disabilities are capable of incredible things. Over a 2-year period starting in 1985, Rick Hansen's Man in Motion World Tour took him to 34 different countries where he wheeled an average of 85 km/ day totaling over 40,000 kilometers – including the Great Wall of China and the Swiss Alps. Rick's goal was "to encourage communities to become more accessible and inclusive, raise awareness for those with spinal cord injuries, and challenge stereotypes faced by those with physical disabilities." Today, the Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) has raised close to \$500 million and funded numerous programs, initiatives, and research projects with the vision to: "inspire, create and deliver innovative solutions that accelerate a global movement to remove barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities."
- When Phyliss Webstad was sent to residential school in Mission at age 6, she proudly wore her new orange shirt that her grandmother had purchased for her to wear on her first day of school. When she arrived, she was stripped of her clothes and her new orange shirt was taken from her and never returned. Today, we stand with Phyliss every National Truth and Reconciliation Day on September 30<sup>th</sup> to wear our orange shirts to honour her bravery and to remember the victims of residential schools and say never again will we allow this genocide to be repeated.

These examples, amongst thousands of others, provide us with a path towards hope that in the face of all the madness surrounding recent attacks against historically marginalized groups, and in humanity's darkest hours, people can and will unite together and support each other to showcase for the world that EDI is what makes humanity better.

It is with this inspiration and by standing on the shoulders of giants before and amongst us, that I have decided to highlight the various initiatives and activities this past month of our UFV community who have continually demonstrated that Indigenization and EDI makes us stronger and supports our Mission and Goals of Engaging Learners, Transforming Lives, and Building Communities. I hope you find as much inspiration in these examples as I do. Thank you to all those who contributed to providing these updates from the Faculties and Academic Units and thank you to all the members of our UFV community who continue to pave a pathway of hope now and for our future.

### **Engaging Learners: Yoystexw ye totilthet**

*Provide inclusive learning environments for everyone.*

- In the first CHASIcast of the year, CHASI welcomed back Dr. Iris Lesser, who was joined by her Kinesiology colleague Amber Johnston, MSc, to discuss their unique course — KIN499: Women's Health and Physical Activity.
- Tier 1 2025 Xwelítem Siyáya: Allyship and Reconciliation Building program registration is OPEN NOW for the 3rd cohort!
- Stó:lō Aboriginal Skills Employment Training (SASET) Culinary Arts Program welcomed a new cohort to the Culinary Arts Pre-trades Program; students will learn technical skills to secure sustainable careers in the food, hospitality and tourism industries.
- Two UFV students were sponsored by the College of Arts to attend the 4th Global Peace Summit at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand, from January 15 to 17, 2025. Gabriella Wertheimer Cinque, a Political Science major with a Communications minor, and David Simmons, a Global Development Studies major with a Geography minor, participated in meaningful discussions, engaged in dynamic plenary sessions, and connected with leaders from around the world. Following their participation, they were entrusted with the distinguished title of Humanitarian Affairs Peace Ambassador for a one-year term, providing them with a platform to actively promote peace.
- The School of Creative Arts recently hosted an event called "Woven Realities: Clothing, Culture, Capitalism" at the S'ELIYEMETAXWTEXW Art Gallery on the Abbotsford Campus. This exhibition was a collaboration between students from VA 260: Professional Skills for Visual Artists, a course led by Dr. Candace Couse which culminates in a public group exhibition on campus. As a unifying theme, the artists explored the multifaceted topic of clothing, examining how these objects are imbued with complex and often fraught tensions that lie beneath their everyday presence. Issues surrounding sustainability, capitalism,

environmental destruction, and culture were examined to ask: How does the fabric of our clothing weave together narratives of exploitation, innovation, and transformation toward equity and ecological responsibility?

- At the beginning of 2025, the S'ELIYEMETAXWTEXW Art Gallery hosted the exhibit "Ghar Kaha Hai? (Where Is Home?)" curated by the LTA Instructor, Anushray Singh. This immersive multimedia exhibition featured evocative time-based media, photography, interactive objects, and vignettes of interviews with fifty diverse voices from Vancouver's South Asian communities. The exhibit reflects on migration, identity, and the concept of 'Third Space.' This collective journey bridges India and Canada, East and West, past and present, creating a space for shared reflection and belonging.
- The culmination of Heather Campbell's (Assistant Professor, BSN Program) Master's Program involved an assessment/orientation proposal designed to foster self-reflection and personal growth in naming, confronting, and combatting Indigenous specific racism wherever it is encountered in health care settings. This work was requested by an Indigenous Cultural Safety Team through Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) at Women and Children's Hospital. Heather conducted a comprehensive literature review which led to a presentation for possible learning options that can lead to a deeper understanding of cultural safety and the role we can all play in undoing colonial harms. An additional team at PHSA has requested this presentation, which Heather will be sharing toward the end of January.
- UFV International has launched a social media community custom-built for UFV. This will support conversion, settlement, and transition, leading to an increased sense of belonging for incoming international students. The app allows for pre-departure and post-arrival connections for students. [<https://www.goinconnect.com>]
- Allyship in Action Project with Dr. Stefania Pizzirani – Stefania is meeting with non-Indigenous faculty to engage in conversations about how to advance Indigenization as an Ally and speak about the barriers, challenges, and successes the faculty have encountered. The outcomes of this project will be shared at ConnectED 2025.
- On Dec. 6th Victoria Surtees facilitated an in-person one-hour workshop for the Library all-staff retreat. This workshop explored the cultural shock curve as a frame for understanding support needs.

### **Transforming Lives: Ayeqet kw'e shxwaylexws**

*Provide opportunities for people to discover, develop, and share their gifts while also recognizing and celebrating the gifts of others.*

- Jelena Brcic hired two Research Assistants to continue her work on Women in Search and Rescue.

- Congratulations to Amea Wilbur, Associate Professor and Department Head, Adult Education. The book on which Amea served as editor, *Geographies of the Heart: Stories from Newcomers to Canada*, is ranked #32 on the Hill Times Top 100 Books for 2024.
- Dr. Cindy Jardine, UFV's Canada Research Chair in Health and Community, co-authored an article with her former PhD student, Dr. Laurie-Ann Lines: "Identifying and Applying a Strength-Based Research Approach in Indigenous Health", published in the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.
- Dr. Rita Dhungel was awarded a SSHRC Connection Grant for a project titled "Empowerment and Capacity Building of Women Living with HIV: Workshop Series".
- In collaboration with UFV's Peace and Reconciliation Centre and South Asian Studies Institute, the School of Education is proud to launch the "SOGI in Schools" website (<https://www.ufv.ca/school-of-education/sogi-in-schools/>). Supported by UFV's Inclusive Community Fund, this site hosts interviews with teachers and educators discussing sexual orientation and gender identification as it is taught in schools. These interviews, along with accompanying resources for students, parents/guardians/families, and teachers aim to provide accurate information that challenges the mis- and dis-information campaigns that exist around how SOGI is taught in schools. The goal here is to create safe and inclusive schools for all students.
- Leanne Joe, Victoria Surtees, and Michelle Johnson hosted an Interactive Indigenous Land and Story Activities on January 10 that was designed as an optional session for the Faculty of Science Council. Using interactive digital tools, this session was a great way to start the new year on Sto: lo territory with an opportunity for each of us to reflect on our relationship to the land and languages that connect us to our ancestors.

### **Building Community: Thayt kw'e st'elt'elawtexw**

*Collaborate and partner in pursuits that enrich the lives of all people on our campuses, in our local communities, and beyond.*

- On February 5, UFV's Peace and Reconciliation Centre and Xwexwílmexwawt remembered the life and legacy of The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair (Mazina Giizhik) at the Clarke Theatre, Mission.
- On January 16, in partnership with the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, PARC hosted "Xyólhmet Ye Syéwiqwélh: Taking Care of Our Children" Panel Presentation. This free community event featured insights from leaders working on the Xyólhmet Ye Syéwiqwélh project and explored its meaningful impact on supporting children, families, and communities.
- SASI partnered with the Surrey Art Gallery and Indian Summer Festival in this year's Media Arts Symposium titled "Roots of Resilience" that took place on November 23, 2024. The symposium focused on the history of the farmworker's movement, working conditions of

migrant workers, and sustainable practices in the face of labour and climate change in the Lower Mainland from the 1970s to present.

- There are 69 countries represented among the international students registered for the winter semester. The top 5 countries overall are India, Nepal, China, Nigeria, and Vietnam. In terms of new students, they are India, Nepal, Nigeria, Mexico, and Spain (tied).
- Special Collections Librarian, Brenda Philip, worked on providing images to Katherine Pitre, Heritage Interpreter, Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, for an exhibit that will be located at Pier 21 and then travel across Canada for five years. The images from a book in the NWCCC, *Dishes of the Orient*, are the cover pages and feature a recipe for Snow Pudding.
- University Librarian, Camille Callison, presented on December 21st as part of an international panel on “Sacred Librarianship, Indigenous Knowledge for Sustainable Practice,” an ALA Governance Office webinar, hosted by Cindy Hohl, President, American Library Association with colleagues from the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Indigenous Matters Section with Chair, Damien Webb (Australia) and Dr. Collence Takaingehano Chisita (South Africa). The panel was moderated by Jonna Paden, President of the American Indian Library Association, with the recording at <https://americanlibraryassociation.informz.net/informzdataservice/onlineversion/ind/bWfpbGluZ2luc3RhbmNlaWQ9MTE4MTg5Mjkmc3Vic2NyaWJlcmlkPTE4ODU3OTIxMjk=>.
- Marina Tourlakis presented at Nerd Nite Squamish on Ribosomes on December 4, after being invited to join a Community of Care in Biology working group funded by RIOS Institute and headed by Dr. Desirée Forsythe (Santa Clara University, CA). The group seeks to identify and mitigate interlocking oppressions in biology/STEM culture towards building more inclusive and welcoming educational spaces for educators and learners alike.
- Fizza Haider and Gena Hamilton (Academic Advisory, School of Education), are co-facilitating a week-long asynchronous course on accessible content creation and design using the POUR framework with BCCampus. (45 participants)

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