

## *Letter from the Guest Editor*

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As the guest editor for this special issue I am delighted to present to you the result of well thought out work that comes mainly from a conference titled Wâhkôhtowin: Indigenizing Practice in Post Secondary education: Linking Kindred Spirits. This took place at University of Saskatchewan in September, 2014, and was materialized as cooperation between University of Saskatchewan's College of Education and Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness.

It is important to note the title of the conference that denotes Nehiyaw (Cree) concept on kindred spirits. Sylvia McAdams negotiated the title with her Nehiyaw family members in Saskatchewan. As an organizing committee, we saw the fundamental role of education was to appreciate that human beings are just but one creation within the whole. As a group we adhered to the principle that human sensibility rests on the understanding that our existence depend on all creation around us and we called upon on kindred spirits to share their thoughts and experiences introducing pedagogies from Aboriginal communities into post-secondary institutions across Canada and around the world.

As a group we were delighted to see kindred spirits registered in hundreds for the three day conference event. The careful preparation to materialize conference took more than three years in making, and done by a group that I set up back in 2008. The group was called Beadwork Group and consisted of College of Education faculty members across the disciplines, across seniority/juniority, and race. As an Inuk originally from Greenland I desired to support Aboriginal/Indigenous and non-Aboriginal scholars alike to form a collective group where thoughts and experiences introducing Aboriginal knowledge and or pedagogy into an institution deeply steeped into hegemonic practices while addressing social and ecological justice could be shared. Aboriginal and Indigenous knowledge is marginalized and each one of the Beadwork Group members knew the onerous work involved in addressing some of the issues. This group became the very foundation from which the College of Education administration negotiated with Gwenna Moss Teaching Effectiveness Centre a faculty and staff professional development program. The program encompassed two years, given a name of Indigenous Voices. It involved sensitizing the participants into First Nations, Metis and Inuit world views, languages and their plight within the Canadian society. Wâhkôhtowin Conference was the very last delivery of the two year program.

The conference participants came to animate Aboriginal peoples' desire for Aboriginal descendants to enjoy effective solutions to the existing and burdensome problems allowing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal souls, and spirits to be consoled, in dignity. This sentiment is greatly elaborated upon by the two key note speakers. One given by Paul Martin Jr. and another one by Be'sha Blondin's from Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Their key notes are made available and accessible through the following link:

<http://www.usask.ca/wahkohtowin2014/conference-program/post-conference-videos-and-photos.php>

The conference theme was further elaborated by a gift the College of Education was given by Leah Dorian. This is now decorating one wall of the College of Education – what an honour! As one can see her art work seems like beadwork. Ms. Dorian is a gifted poet and we have been lucky to receive one of her poems in this publication. I have myself been gifted poetry writing and include one of mine titled Beadwork.

One of the more unique aspects of the Wâhkôhtowin conference was to ensure that Indigenous food was served. Having attended many conferences and workshop I have realized that much more work needs to be made to introduce Aboriginal foods to rekindle relationship with animals, fish, birds, herbs and berries. These have sustained our communities in millennia, and many of our community members need exposure to healthy practices.

This gives me the opportunity to thank the Beadwork Group members for a good collaboration with this journal's editing team. I thank the editing team in particular for their desire to include Aboriginal languages in this special issue. Keep that going! But for now enjoy the poems, the articles and one good book review.

Qujanarsuaq - Quana – Qujannamiik – thank you

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