Near and Far
a sense of community

the doctor is in

AU Honorary Doctorates

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Education anytime, anywhere
Legacies for tomorrow
A GIFT PROMISED TODAY, TO BE GIVEN IN THE FUTURE
by Therese MacNeil

WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?
Making a planned gift to Athabasca University enables our alumni and friends to prepare leaders for tomorrow. Endowing a legacy gift transforms your commitment to education into the next generation's achievements, and through the university, expands their possibilities. Through a planned gift, you can also have a direct impact on AU's academic excellence and create a legacy that will live on for future generations. A planned gift may be large or small, restricted or unrestricted. It can include cash, securities, real estate and life insurance; reallocate retirement benefits, other property, or a percentage of the residue of your estate. To ensure that your wishes are honoured, a planned gift should be prepared in consultation with your lawyer and discussed with a gift officer at AU.

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Gifts from alumni, parents, students, corporations, foundations and other friends help Athabasca University to make a lasting impact on our world. By donating to AU, you help students achieve excellence, you encourage knowledge and discovery, and you support teaching and learning locally, nationally and internationally.

Through fundraising initiatives, the Fund Development Office supports Athabasca University’s mission to remove barriers that restrict access to, and success in, university-level studies and its commitment to equalizing educational opportunities for adult learners worldwide.

If you are considering making a philanthropic gift to Athabasca University, we urge you to contact one of our fund development staff to discuss your gift prior to finalizing the details of your gift arrangement. We are always available to assist you. Please contact Fund Development 1-800-788-9041, extension 7323 or email: development@athabascau.ca.

Athabasca University - As Canada’s Open University we are dedicated to the removal of barriers that restrict access to, and success in, university-level studies and to increasing equality of educational opportunity for adult learners worldwide. We are committed to excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, and to being of service to the general public.

www.athabascau.ca

Current Athabasca University student John Ahern, BGS, LLB (U of A), MA (SFU,) lives in Vancouver, B.C. He has designated a bequest to Athabasca University as an expression of his hope that future generations of students will forever benefit from receiving the kind of education he had.
Had a good day.

Picked up my bike at the repair shop. Downloaded some tunes. My credit card makes it easy, and helps build my credit history too. I can get emergency cash at ATMs, and even pay over time if I need to. Plus, my school gets a contribution for every purchase. Not bad.

Community. People united by a common interest...

For close to 40 years, the instructors, tutors, staff, students and eventually alumni of Athabasca University have been creating a community that transcends any limitations geographical location could impose.

On the surface, everyone is connected to Au for a job or education. There’s a deeper contribution, though, being made by every single person involved in the wonderful adventure that is an open university. Together they are breathing life into the concept, making a virtual university into a real entity.

Their sense of community informs every page of this inaugural issue of Open magazine, from how AU is treasuring the past while reinventing the future of scholarly publishing, to its forays into the North, to its global reach through both professors and students.

Creative director Nancy Biamonte has gathered writers, photographers and graphic designers to bring you your neighbours’ news over coffee – what So-and-so is doing now, how this or that professor is changing the game rules of education, a student or two celebrating opportunities reaped through the self-discipline of study, who has won an award, introduced an innovation, or created a scholarship to give the next round of students a future.

What gives this community meaning is your participation. Do you know anyone with a story to tell? Open invites notes, letters, ideas, encouragement, constructive criticism, reminiscences, news, your comments on community. Besides the autumn issue of Open magazine, look for the timely Open Online coming in 2009. Please join us.

–Melanie Collison, Editor
contributors

Editor & Writer - Melanie Collison  
I write about everything from raising tilapia to planning for the end of life, although my primary beat is the oilpatch from an environmental perspective. Based in High River, Alta., I play bass clarinet better than I tap dance. To me, community means coming to grips with the fur factor.

Writer - Dianne Trach  
To me, community is all about family and friends – supporting each other, volunteering and contributing when we can. Both personally and professionally, we all play an important role. As a communications consultant for more than 20 years, I’ve been fortunate to be involved in some amazing projects that, through effective communication, have had a positive impact on our communities.

Writer - Mari Sasano  
I am a freelance writer in Edmonton, Alta., covering arts and culture for the Edmonton Journal and other publications. Community to me means really living as fully as you can among your neighbours, doing something that makes you and others happy. In Edmonton, where there are so many opportunities to become involved in art, sports, politics, philanthropy, there’s really no excuse not to. I seek to help that process along.

Writer - Melodie Richard  
My passion for my work comes from an insatiable curiosity about people, businesses, and communities. My inquisitive nature is evident in my travels, as I wander the world to satisfy my thirst for exposure to communities from a global perspective. I run a communications firm in Winnipeg, Man.

Writer - Tom Murray  
I am a Western Canada freelance writer and video store clerk. A practitioner of transcendental meditation, I believe in the guiding principle that all humanity is family and community involves us all.

Writer - Trish Morgan  
A passion for lifelong learning has propelled my career and made the world my classroom and my community. Whether writing or editing, I find teachers anywhere I can – on a campus, at my desktop, in my neighbourhood, across the globe or on the printed page.

Illustrator - Christopher Hunt  
I am a latter day Renaissance man, a man of many passions. My perception of community tends towards the global scale, which is the level where I wish to have an effect. My ultimate goal is to inspire a passion in people for living, through my writing and art.

Graphic Design/Layout - Jessica Harrison  
I am a freelance graphic designer based on Vancouver Island. My work as a visual communicator has given me opportunity to work for a variety of industries, but my most rewarding projects are those that educate my community and protect our natural environment.

Email us with your comments and ideas at open_magazine@athabascau.ca
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to Open magazine.
Canada’s Open University remains dedicated to the removal of barriers that restrict access to and success in university-level study and to increasing equality of educational opportunity for lifelong learners.
At AU, we are working hard to ensure the success of current and future students through maintaining our focus on the four key principles (excellence, openness, flexibility and innovation) that underlie all of our activities:

Excellence
We are dedicated to achieving the highest standards in teaching, research, scholarship and student service.

Openness
We remain committed to our mission of guaranteeing access to post-secondary learning to all who have the ability and desire. Anyone 16 or older is eligible for admission to undergraduate study.

Flexibility
Our flexible learning model adapts to learner needs, putting students in the driver’s seat. Students can enrol in most programs and register for most courses at any time of the year and work at their own pace, studying at home, at work or wherever they may find themselves.

Innovation
We continue to adopt and develop new, learner-centred learning models and technology-based alternatives to traditional, classroom-based instructional channels and contexts.

For nearly four decades, AU has been pioneering new approaches to post-secondary learning: through its open philosophy, through its outreach and through its revolutionary methods of course and program design and delivery. As we approach our fortieth anniversary, we remain as committed as ever to our mission.
See what a difference AU’s approach to post-secondary learning can make. In the pages that follow, you will have an opportunity to read about some of the recent success stories that have grown from our unique educational philosophy and practice. They include stories of personal transformation, stories of victory through collaboration and stories of expanding the horizons of human knowledge and achievement.
What the stories have in common is that they all started here, where a belief in openness provided an opportunity to realize a dream that might otherwise have been denied. Perhaps AU’s open door can provide a similar opportunity for you or a dreamer you know.
Frits Pannekoek, PhD
President

“At AU, we offer the opportunity to realize dreams.”
Athabasca University to digitize Kostuch collection

May 1, 2008

“Athabasca University has acquired the digital rights to (Dr. Martha) Kostuch’s personal collection of more than 100 boxes of material spanning three decades of work. Kostuch was keen to protect Alberta’s wilderness and improve the quality of the province’s air, soil and water. The 58-year-old died on April 23 at her Rocky Mountain House home following a lengthy illness.”

– Kostuch’s estate chose AU to ensure her work remains accessible. The material will be made available on the Internet. Kostuch, who was born in Minnesota and moved to Alberta in 1975, was instrumental in getting air emissions in Alberta reduced dramatically and in the province’s decision to include public input on environmental policy. Her opposition to the Oldman River Dam changed national policy to require an environmental impact assessment on large projects.

Learning Communities

Edmonton Journal

Athabasca project targets oilsands workers

March 25, 2008

“One section of research is looking at mobile workers in numerous oilsands production company camps, and looking at mobile devices such as laptop computers, cell phones, PDAs, smart phones, portable media players, cameras and audio recorders so they can access course material anywhere, any time.”

– AU’s $1.3-million Learning Communities Project is featured in a special report in the Edmonton Journal. The project is being funded by Allan Markin
When the post-Second World War baby boom sent the demand for advanced education skyrocketing, the Government of Alberta saw a need for a fourth campus and started planning Athabasca University. Created in 1970, AU was named for the historic Athabasca Hall residence at the University of Alberta.

The new Edmonton campus was to be a traditional undergraduate school until the peak of the boom passed and planners had second thoughts about the investment in bricks and mortar. That prompted AU to propose a pilot project: instead of bringing students to its campus, AU would deliver education to students by means of long-distance learning and open access admission.

AU’s first course, world ecology, launched in 1973. By 1975, 650 students had signed up for the innovative model, and soon 24 tutors were teaching via toll-free phone numbers. That tutoring tradition continues today, with more than 300 instructors helping 37,000 AU students each year around the world.

Athabasca University officially became Alberta’s fourth public university – with self-governing status – on April 12, 1978. Over time, AU began to develop relationships with other universities in Western Canada, a strategy of partnering which has evolved into a network of 350 Canadian and international educational institutions, professional associations, and First Nations groups.

In the ’80s, AU outgrew its Edmonton campus and relocated 160 kilometres north to the town of Athabasca, while maintaining satellite learning centres in Edmonton and Calgary. It pioneered using computers to deliver programs to students anywhere, any time. By the following decade, close to 80 per cent of prospective students had access to a computer, and by 1994, AU offered a full slate of online courses.

AU’s commitment to providing equal educational opportunity for adult learners embraces non-traditional students. One of the most significant groups is Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples. Since the ’80s, AU has worked with aboriginal educators to develop tailor-made courses and programs, and in 2001, the university opened its Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research.

AU has attained an international presence partly through its executive masters of business administration program, which has repeatedly been rated in the top 75 globally by the Financial Times of London. It’s the only executive MBA on the list delivered entirely online. Its flexible programs, which are geared to continuing education using modern communications technology, have attracted students around the world.

In 25 years of teaching, the fast-growing institution has seen more than 260,000 students complete its programs and courses. With 700 courses making up more than 90 undergraduate and graduate degree, diploma and certificate programs, AU is thriving as a global leader. It is known for removing geographical, financial, social and cultural barriers to education. Truly “Canada’s Open University,” it inspires all types of students to realize their dream of becoming university graduates.
“Canada’s Open University” inspires all types of students to realize their dream of becoming university graduates.
Banff in its early days was not the tourist mecca it is today. In the era when a car cost $400 and the Trans-Canada Highway was just a dream, the stunning landscape was much more remote. Any local who expected to make a living off the rare visitor had to be imaginative and self-sufficient. English expatriate Nello Vernon-Wood was both.

During the teens and ‘20s of the last century, Vernon-Wood had hired himself out as an outfitter and guide for wealthy sportsmen who hoped to bag a trophy head in the Canadian Rockies. But when the Great Depression came, even captains of industry were economizing. With the work drying up, Vernon-Wood began instead to write stories about his romanticized livelihood in the character of his Canadian alter ego, “Tex.” He sold the engaging results to popular American men’s magazines such as *The Sportsman* and *Hunting & Fishing*.

This past June, Athabasca University’s AU Press published 25 of Tex’s stories, edited and introduced by Andrew Gow and Julie Rak, including archival photographs and illustrations. The authors wanted to make the collection accessible but also contextualize it for contemporary readers. They have done just that, sure as shootin’, as Tex would have said.

*Mountain Masculinity* and all of the new books from AU Press are available for browsing on its website at www.aupress.ca.
“I left my native village of Hastings, Ontario on the 30th day of April 1884, enroute for Prince Albert, N.W. Territories. Leaving the main line of the C.P.R. at a station called Troy we finished the remainder of our journey by horses and wagon across the prairies for seven days, and arrived at Prince Albert on the 20th day of May, 1884.

“I soon learned that there was a strong feeling of discontent among the half-breeds or Metis…”

By the time Hugh S. Nelson’s first person account of taking up arms against a group of disgruntled Métis in 1885 was published, he’d been polishing his tale next to many a pot-bellied stove for decades.

Called “Four Months Under Arms, A Reminiscence of Events Prior to and During the Second Riel Rebellion,” the slim volume was printed by the Nelson Daily News in Nelson, B.C., circa 1940. Nelson had been a 19-year-old carpenter working in Prince Albert, in what is now Saskatchewan, when the North-West Mounted Police hired him to build some boats. The NWMP were defending the Dominion Government’s interests along the South Saskatchewan River.

Métis settlers had come from Fort Garry to Batoche take up the offer of land that helped end the Red River Resistance – what used to be called the Riel Rebellion – which had given birth to the Province of Manitoba 15 years earlier. The settlers feared their land claims were at risk for much the same reasons that had sparked the earlier turmoil. The Métis laid out their properties as narrow strips fronting the river in the way of the Métis along the Red River and the French along the St. Lawrence.

Government surveyors sent from Ontario were imposing its township system of square sections and quarter sections. That squeezed the settlers’ claims, and in January 1885 they called Louis Riel to return from his exile in Montana and explain their ways to nearby Prince Albert townsfolk. “Riel was fully six feet tall, fair complexion and had a redish beard,” Nelson writes. “He spoke with a French accent and was a fluent speaker.” Riel swayed the townsfolk, until a ringleader still bitter over the Red River Resistance turned them against him.

Ottawa ignored the NWMP warning to respect the Métis claims, and on March 26, the agitation came to a head at Duck Lake, a settlement marking the halfway point between Métis headquarters at Batoche and the NWMP’s Fort Carlton. A skirmish erupted between Métis warriors and the NWMP, who were buttressed by volunteers from Prince Albert. By out-thinking their foes, the Métis were victorious, and the battle came to signal the start of the North-West Resistance.

Nelson describes the desperate flight from Fort Carlton up the long steep South Saskatchewan River escarpment to the level prairie high above – men pulling on ropes, “all working feverishly” to help their horses pull sleighs overloaded with provisions. “The glare from the burning buildings on the dark wintry sky could be seen for miles and was a signal that the police would have to evacuate the Fort,” he writes, the fear as real to him as on the day.
An 1885 staged photograph, well-known among Canadian historians and often printed, of WB Cameron dressed in scouting garb beside one of Big Bear’s sons, Horse Child. In a bold, perhaps presumptuous move, WB convinced Horse Child, then attending the trail of his father, to pose with him in a Regina photography studio for this picture.

Nelson’s narrative thread is picked up a week later by one William Bleasdell Cameron who survived the Frog Lake massacre mere miles away. Cameron was a 23-year-old clerk in the Hudson’s Bay post when slaughter swirled around him April 2. Cree warriors took heart from the Métis victory at Duck Lake, their festering anger fed by the Canadian government’s treaties and the destruction of their food supply, the bison that had once roamed across the Plains in uncountable thousands. On a beautiful warm spring day, cloudless, Cameron recalled, they killed every one of the white settlers in the area except him. He was saved first because he was in the trading post when the bloodbath began, then by staunch friends among the Wood Cree with whom he communicated by speaking rough Cree and Saulteaux and using trade sign language. The tide turned, though, and in less than seven weeks the resistance was crushed. Riel was hanged.

Cameron’s accounting was first published in the 1920s as The War Trail of Big Bear, then revised into Blood Red the Sun in the mid-1940s during the period he worked as a curator for the RCMP museum. Besides these books, he wrote hundreds of short stories, published and unpublished, capturing history in the making. He also kept that history alive in his letters, stories, and what Cameron’s grandson Jim describes in the book forward as “photographs of the majestic, granite-faced Aboriginal peoples of the Prairies,” many of them in traditional dress. There are postcards, tintypes and newspaper clippings. Most are in English; some are in Cree. Elsie Cameron gave everything to Hendriks to flesh out the biography, and now all are available to the public.

“It’s important to finish what we start,” Hendriks recently told Open to explain his commitment to the gargantuan task of researching and writing the biography, but, he says with a laugh, “this book just about cured me of writing.” Hendriks’s Cameron biography and the Nelson memoir both serendipitously have ties to Athabasca University, Nelson’s great-granddaughter, Fran Holler, works at AU, as does Shirley Hendriks’s cousin, Joe Rosich. It came up in conversation that Hendriks “was looking for someone who would keep the (Cameron) collection in perpetuity, then they realized I had the book to go along with it,” Hendriks says. Robert and Shirley donated the collection and their research materials to AU, and university archivist Karen Langley stepped up to shepherd the book through the publishing process and produce the “finding aids” which itemize the collection. The records, photographs and finding aids will be scanned onto a DVD packaged with the book.

Langley is the manager of institutional records for the university and archivist for the Thomas A. Edge Archives & Special Collections. “(Book publishing) is not something we in archives normally do,” Langley says, because an archivist deals with old records rather than current works, but, “it’s interesting to see how these things are put together. We’re going to be distributing the book and finding aids to other archival institutions and cultural institutions across Canada, and we’re going to have it up on our database for researchers.”

Because the Hendrikses also transferred the copyright, AU has been able to digitize Cameron’s unpublished writings and put them on line as context for the book, which will be scanned and put online by the AU Library in company with Nelson’s Four Months Under Arms. It will be on the Archival Network of Alberta database which feeds into Archives Canada.

AU has stumbled across most of its archival collections so far through word of mouth, but that’s about to change when a new campus building is completed. “Archives is going into a much larger space and will be able actively to go out and acquire records,” Langley says with a collector’s gleam in her eye. “Aside from records that pertain to the community and surrounding areas, we’re going to be targeting environmental organizations. There’s a gap in the historical record, especially for smaller non-profit organizations. We’re hoping we can create a niche within the archival community.”

“Between the book and collection we have a valuable resource.”
The centrepiece will be the extraordinary documentation over three decades of the environmental movement in Alberta, donated by its leading activist, the late Martha Kostuch. Her work joins the Friends of the Athabasca collection. Another gem is 20 boxes’ worth of Metis genealogical research. Langley wants people to donate their records to archives where they will be secure, temperature and humidity-controlled, and available to researchers. “A lot of people don’t realize the things they have are useful for archives. It’s the records – how they live their lives – that document what they’re doing, for example, three generations of farming records.”

While the new space will allow for secure storage of much more extensive archives, the flip side is that digitizing everything makes it accessible to everyone. That surely has to be the hallmark of an open university.

— Karen Langley

**AU Press walks confident path**

“For historians, one of the great promises of digital technology is its potential to democratize history – to incorporate multiple voices, reach diverse audiences, and encourage popular participation in presenting and preserving the past (2006).”

– Roy Rosenzweig, Founder and Director of the Center on History & New Media, George Mason University

Historian and poet Walter Hildebrandt, director of AU Press, is proud that with the official launch of AU’s scholarly press in June, the university took a bold stance in the controversy surrounding access to academic works. “We are one of the first overtly open access presses in North America. Anything we publish goes up on a website for access for free. People think it will put scholarly publishing out of business, but some important leaders in the publishing world – who work at Athabasca – are making it accessible. It’s the most central thing we’re doing.”

The geographical focus of AU Press is on Canada, the North American West, and the Circumpolar North. It is publishing innovative and experimental works and reviving neglected forms such as diary, memoir and oral history. Its works emphasize labour studies, Métis and aboriginal studies from perspectives sensitive to aboriginal peoples, gender studies and the environment. All bear the scholarly imprint of peer review and all are in open access technologies. In addition to original works, AU Press is publishing prestigious journals and creating websites carrying credible resource material.

“In the age of the Internet when people are uncertain what information they can rely on, we are providing material that has been assessed. We indicate the scholarly process,” Hildebrandt says. “We’re living in a time when some people are saying the scholarly monograph is in danger of disappearing, pricing itself out of the market when only 300 may sell. Open access is one way of making more material available to more people.” While others see AU as the canary in the mine, “we have no fear,” Hildebrandt says. “Our books are selling quite well.”

Intrigued by podcasts and interviews with authors, readers sample the books online, then buy them with a click of the mouse. AU Library is using LULU, an e-publishing service that handles all the technical aspects of production, book ordering and shipping, totally hassle-free. AU doesn’t even need to keep any inventory.

Hand-in-hand with the philosophical position that knowledge must not be hoarded is the technological means to make AU’s materials fully available. “(We’re) increasing accessibility and usability; we’re not interested in just collecting the documents,” says electronic resources librarian Tony Tin. “Accessibility to Canadian culture and history is really important.”

The springboard is the Lois Hole Campus Alberta Digital Library, a $30-million investment in digital materials the province announced for educational institutions in 2005. AU Library is in the midst of creating a breathtaking digital presence with AU Press and Thomas A. Edge Archives & Special Collections materials. In keeping with AU’s chosen niches, there’ll be an emphasis on local history, women’s studies, natural history, the environment, and resources for AU courses.

Materials such as the Riel Resistance memoir Four Months Under Arms will be digitized within a rich context, what Tin calls “a one-stop experience. We’ll put supporting information, links to video files, audio files, additional information about the rebellion, so you don’t stop at reading one document.” The digitization team is even developing its own search engine.

The practicalities of the project include satisfying questions of copyright and – ironically, in this bid to preserve history – selecting digital formats that can migrate into technologies not yet devised. Coming down the technological pipe is something called Second Life, which Tin describes as a virtual world that will allow people to set up an identity in a house or a museum, or even a deli, where they will experience the original items in a collection and be able to manipulate them in cyberspace. “The digitization initiative is to enhance the value of the collection,” he says. “We’re not trying to replace the original (item), but to reduce the wear and tear.”
Laura Meador

While most other 16-year-olds were sitting around watching television, Laura Meador stepped onto the path towards what has grown into her long-term goal, becoming a producer.

“Three days after starting (as a secretary at a production company) I was in love with that world,” she says in a telephone interview from her associate producer office at Superchannel. “If I’d gone with my childhood dream to be a lawyer, life may have been less turbulent, and there may have been more money, but it certainly wouldn’t have been as (much) fun.”

She’s never really been away from the small screen in the 11 years since that first nibble. From answering phones to working with various broadcasters around town, Meador has seen all sides of the business. And now, after earning a two-year diploma from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in cinema, television and radio arts – with a major in television – she is pursuing a Bachelor of Professional Arts Communication Studies part-time from Athabasca University.

“It looks nice on the resumé,” she laughs. “It also helps with a deeper understanding of the industry. Why Superchannel buys one show over another, that kind of thing. The world of television is a maze, and in Canada it’s so (entwined with) federal politics and funding. It makes sense to try and understand the entire system if I want to progress within it.”

SAIT was fantastic, Meador explains. “It gave me hands-on experience and a view of the industry, but not necessarily an understanding of Canadian cultural studies. (Knowing) things like what is the role of the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, which regulates telecommunications carriers like television and radio), what it’s doing, allows me to defend my opinions on communications and the role of television in Canada.

“I don’t think funding should be automatic just because a production is Canadian. It has to be good as well,” she asserts, and offers up her “secret favourite,” Degrassi Jr. High, as an example of quality television that has done well in outside markets. A groundbreaking CBC production in the ’80s, it picked up viewers worldwide and still shows in reruns in many American cities as a cult favorite.

“The newest version (Degrassi High) isn’t quite as successful, but it was also sold in the States, which means they’ve reached a bigger audience, and that’s exactly what Canadian producers want,” she says.

A few years after her early taste of the industry Meador interned at Edmonton’s CityTV, where she could get into the nuts and bolts, and discovered that news wasn’t necessarily what she wanted to work on. Instead she went on to the Family Channel, where as a production co-ordinator she worked post-production in audio and editing.

In 2003 she got to travel to Ethiopia with freelance producer David Benson for three weeks, as part of a documentary crew “filming in a country where they didn’t necessarily want you to be filming,” she says. “It was a bit of culture shock when I got back. I could shower when I wanted to, buy groceries and eat them and be healthy. But Ethiopia is a beautiful country with rainforests, not deserts and starving people like we think. And the Ethiopians are so incredible and hospitable.”

“The world of television is a maze, and in Canada it’s so (entwined with) federal politics and funding. It makes sense to try and understand the entire system if I want to progress within it.”
As a Toronto teenager of Greek descent, Vivian Elias first became personally aware of the North in 1975. Canada was wrestling with building a pipeline down the Mackenzie Valley from the Beaufort Sea to carry natural gas from the Arctic. Justice Thomas Berger went up there to talk to the people who would be directly affected, and recommended a 10-year moratorium on building the pipeline to allow time to settle land claims and set aside conservation areas.

“Berger was the first establishment figure to actually go and talk to the indigenous people who would feel the effects of such a development, to listen and learn from them,” Elias recounts from her Athabasca home. “He went not only to the few cities and smaller communities to fulfill his mandate; he went to the bush camps and sought out voices there.

“The Berger Inquiry pointed up the exploitation of the North by the South. Canadians finally recognized the North not as a frontier but as a homeland.” That sense of place stayed with Elias.

Three decades passed, and Elias found herself looking beyond her middle-management job for new interests. Through Athabasca University she found an editing contract with the University of the Arctic, a consortium of educational institutions and indigenous groups in the eight polar nations. This had Elias rubbing shoulders with people who had a vision for the North. It was then that she began to think seriously on the lessons of the Berger Inquiry.

“After my husband and I moved back to Athabasca, I decided to check out the education programs at AU and enrolled in the Master of Arts - Integrated Studies program,” Elias says. “I didn’t really want to go back to my job, so I gave fate a chance as a freelance editor and student.”

Elias has thrived on the flexibility of distance learning and on being able to develop her own learning program in conjunction with AU professors. A course with Kadi Purru on the spread of English as a global language was a launching pad to an interest in language, culture, and identity in the North that is earning her recognition and invitations to present her academic work at international conferences.

She presented her final paper for Purru’s course at the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies conference last October in Saskatoon and won a research award for it. Then AU philosophy professor Bruce Morito suggested she read eminent Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor and that led her to look at language retention and identity-related issues through the lens of Taylor’s philosophy.

Immersing herself in a topic that thrills her has caused Elias to view herself in a different light. She has felt the tug of the North again as surely as she did as a teenager. “It’s not so much that I feel I’ve developed a Northern identity, though that’s happening, too,” she says hesitantly, “but I now think of myself as more of a world citizen.”

Just back from delivering a paper at an international conference in Greenland this fall, Elias headed to Tromsø in Norway for the Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium. Indigenous delegates, representatives from the eight Arctic Circle countries and academics discussed the state of languages, how to revitalize and maintain them, and the role of language in transmitting traditional knowledge.

“I’m very excited about this,” she says, “that I have arrived here and had something to offer the symposium as an academic observer. It was a great experience.”

Yuen Ip

He plays bass, guitar and drums, but Yuen Ip is under no illusions about what pays the bills – his job as director of information technology at the Institute for Chartered Accountants of Alberta. “Music is something I do for my church, in my spare time,” he says, although he can hardly have much spare time while he and his wife raise their two children.

Ip also happens to be nearing completion of an Executive Master of Business Administration degree he started at Athabasca University in January 2006.

“It’s a very suitable kind of learning for me,” he says. “It’s been really good for me...
in terms of saving time. When I started the degree I was a project manager at my previous job, and spent lots of time on the road.” Since he was already carrying a laptop, he just fitted his studies around his work.

“It was different at the beginning,” he admits, “but once you figured out the drill it actually wasn’t as hard as it might seem. The work wasn’t as concentrated, and the interactions not so traditional. Rather than a classroom where you would talk to people over an hour, you might have 24 hours in which to get your thoughts together over e-mail.”

Ip sees AU’s kind of outside-the-box education growing more popular as the influence of technology expands even further. He foresees a mix of traditional education with the use of web conferencing, face-to-face lecturing plus long distance teaching, with computers playing more and more of a role in the process.

He was always interested in computing, taking courses as child and tinkering with the first models of home computers. “You could see it becoming a big thing with the Internet especially starting to take off. I enjoy what I do,” he says, and notes he had a good opportunity “to make a living at something I can do and also was fascinated by.”

Ip’s easy acceptance of the rigors of distance education possibly comes from his own unconventional upbringing. Born in Hong Kong, Ip spent some of his early years in Madrid, Spain, where his parents opened a restaurant. “This was back in the ‘80s, and Spain hadn’t yet joined the European Union, so they were a bit closed doors. They weren’t used to seeing foreigners,” Ip chuckles.

One of the benefits of growing up in the Spanish capital was becoming fluent in the language, but his parents wanted him to receive an education in English, which is the second language in Hong Kong because of its decades under British rule. When he was 14, they moved to Edmonton. “The options at the time were England, Australia, Canada and the U.S., and since we had relatives in Edmonton it was the obvious choice,” he says.

“it wasn’t the distance learning that was appealing so much as the flexibility of the program. I didn’t want to have to quit my job -which I love - just to get this Masters.”

As well as teaching and doing some performing, Chan dabbles in writing. Her light-hearted blog, girlsandbicycles.blogspot.com, is inspired by a web log in Europe, Copenhagen Girls on Bikes. Writing about bicycles and fashion is a far cry from her years covering classical music for the U of A student paper, The Gateway, and city magazine Vue Weekly. “I’d cycle around the city and wonder why I wasn’t seeing stylish girls on bikes,” she says, “and why the city is terrible for bicycling. I’d like to make this part of a future project.”

Chan’s time is also taken up with local politics. She’s married to Edmonton city councilor Don Iveson, who shares her interest in environmentalism and transportation issues. “There are times when I’m at community meetings and I realize that I’m the only person under 30 there,” she laughs.

All in all Chan boasts a full life as she finishes up the final part of her AU degree. It’s not the outcome she’s looking at when she studies, it’s the process. “The more time people spend outside of creative endeavors the further from being curious they become,” she observes.
An honorary degree is the highest accolade a university can offer. Even as it is used to recognize outstanding personal and professional contributions and celebrate remarkable achievements, it reflects well on the institution bestowing it as well as on the recipients. This past June (2008), Athabasca University invited three remarkable people to receive its honorary doctorates:

- Dr. Patricia Anne Monture, Honorary Doctor of Laws
- Dr. Janice Morse, Honorary Doctor of Science
- Dr. Mary Lou Jepsen, Honorary Doctorate of Athabasca University.

“It was an honour for Athabasca University to recognize these outstanding individuals,” says Dr. Frits Pannekoek, president of AU and chair of the honorary awards committee. “All have gained international acclaim for their research and scholarship and have made extraordinary contributions to their communities and society in general.”

University secretary Carol Lund explains honorary degree recipients are very special people. “This is recognition for people who have made a significant contribution to their area of expertise or the betterment of society; provided leadership and inspiration; or, achieved an exceptional standard of excellence. It is the highest honour a university can bestow.”
Dr. Patricia Anne Monture
Advocate for Aboriginal Peoples and women speaks truth to power

Dr. Patricia Anne Monture’s passion for Aboriginal Peoples and her exuberance for life come through loud and clear in her multitude of research, writing and teaching initiatives. This vibrant professor is a highly respected academic and strong advocate for Aboriginal Peoples and women. AU conferred an Honorary Doctor of Laws upon her for her strong commitment to academic excellence in research and teaching. Her work has greatly enhanced indigenous studies, women’s studies, law and sociology, and is valued by indigenous communities around the world.

Monture’s passion for Aboriginal Peoples and women was ignited in the late 1980s. She was completing her education – an honours B.A. in sociology from the University of Western Ontario, a law degree from Queens University and a Masters of Law from York University – and was preparing to embark on her teaching career at Dalhousie Law School. “While attending law school in Kingston, Ontario, I discovered that perhaps law was the problem and not the solution,” she explains. “My real interests became both the experience of Aboriginal Peoples in the criminal justice system (and) indigenous justice traditions.”

Monture says her upbringing as a Mohawk of the Haudenosaunee people set the stage for her advocacy work. Her father taught her she could be whatever she wanted to be. She also learned that everything relates to the great law of peace. “When you say ‘law’ in my language, it means the way to live nicely together,” she says. “We presume people want to get along and we build on that belief.” As she notes, that is much different than Canadian law.

Monture credits her elders with guiding her towards her advocacy work. “My first Indian name was Animkik-kwe, meaning Thunderwoman, which I used to give me a voice and to stand up to speak truth to power.” Her second name, also fitting, was Ayewahandeh, meaning Leading with Words.

In 1994, Monture joined the University of Saskatchewan where she has held various teaching and advisory positions relating to indigenous studies. Since 2004, she has been the director of the aboriginal justice and criminology program, which looks at the impact of discrimination on Aboriginal Peoples and prepares them for work in the criminal justice system.

She has just finished a year’s sabbatical during which her research and writing projects included her continuing work on women and indigenous legal traditions; a volume of Canadian Woman Studies, the second to focus on aboriginal women; assembling a collection of essays on aboriginal women; and a book chapter on “whiteness” in academia. Monture says many incidents in her life have illustrated the oppression of Aboriginal Peoples and women. “You can let those negative experiences around race and gender ruin and oppress you, but I use them to empower myself and say ‘No, this will not be,’” she says.

With her determination to make a difference, she has had a tremendous impact on improving the rights and promoting the equality of Aboriginal Peoples and women across Canada. She has also played a significant role in bringing indigenous people’s knowledge to university classrooms, curriculum and research.

Monture deflects attention from herself to her subject material, saying, “I really appreciate being honoured, but not because it’s about me. It’s about the fact that indigenous knowledge matters in a profound way.” She is delighted that the degree is from Athabasca University – the open university with no boundaries. “The values that the institution are grounded on are similar to the ones I have grounded my life on,” she says. “That definitely has meaning for me.”
or perceptions about health care or ways of coping with illness, and it is all non-statistical, without questionnaires and other forms of measurement,” she explains. “We then make a synthesis from the stories to understand what is going on. This type of research is very important; it makes health care (human).”

In the 1990s, the work of investigators who conducted their research using qualitative methodologies was not always fully respected. “Universities valued social science research based on statistics, or quantitative research, and so did the granting agencies,” she says. “Even academic journals preferred articles using quantitative methods. We felt isolated, discriminated against and unappreciated.”

Determined to bring legitimacy to this field, Morse created a virtual network to connect people with an interest in qualitative inquiry. In 1998, she established the IIQM for the development and support of qualitative inquiry. Initially, the institute developed ties with eight universities. By 2007, that number had grown to an impressive 115.

A professor of nursing, Morse served as scientific director of the institute until 2007 when she moved to the University of Utah’s College of Nursing. She holds the university’s Ida May “Dotty” Barnes, RN, and D. Keith Barnes, MD, Presidential Endowed Chair.

In addition to being a leading researcher, she is a highly acclaimed writer. She has published more than 350 articles and 14 books in the fields of nursing, health sciences and qualitative methodology. She is the founding editor of the journal Qualitative Health Research and more recently has launched a web-based journal, the International Journal of Qualitative Methods.

Morse says receiving this honorary degree from AU is a tremendous honour, and adds, “Probably the greatest part is the recognition and acknowledgement from your peers, particularly those who have nominated you.” She also has an honorary degree from the University of Newcastle in Australia.

This recognition helps to substantiate qualitative research as a science, she says. “The industry of qualitative inquiry is still developing. I would call myself the second generation in the health care field. There are some before me who taught me and tried to get through the Plexiglas dome of resistance – I only moved it a little further.”

Dr. Mary Lou Jepsen
Bridging the education gap, one laptop at a time

Through innovation and determination, Dr. Mary Lou Jepsen is opening the doors to learning for millions of disadvantaged children around the world. As co-founder of One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) and lead innovator and architect of the team that created the world’s greenest and lowest-cost laptop computer, she is truly making a difference.

Jepsen received her Honorary Doctorate of Athabasca University for her contributions to education in the developing world on the heels of being named one of TIME magazine’s 100 most influential people for 2008. She is also a leader in the development of advanced computer display systems.

Jepsen co-founded OLPC in 2005 to fulfill a dream of designing and manufacturing a low-cost, low-power, high-resolution durable laptop that could be read in direct sunlight and operate without a dependable electrical source. In November 2007, the first ones were produced.

The XO Laptop has met Jepsen’s goals in that it is extremely inexpensive, has a high-resolution monitor that can be read in sunlight, is durable, and uses ultra low power. Thanks largely to Jepsen’s efforts, it went from specification to mass production in six months. It has gained worldwide attention as the lowest-cost, lowest-power and most environmentally friendly laptop ever made.

“Computer experts like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Michael Dell all said it couldn’t be done,” she says, and adds proudly, “Today, about one million children are using the laptops … in more than 30 countries in the developing world, including Nigeria, Peru, Uruguay, Ethiopia and Mongolia. The Canadian Army has also deployed some to children in Afghanistan.”

In early 2008, Jepsen left OLPC to found Pixel Qi to further some of the technologies she has developed. Initially, the focus will be on bringing a new generation of super-high-resolution, low-cost and low-power screens into mainstream laptops, cell phones and digital cameras.

Previous to OLPC, Jepsen had co-founded and was chief technology officer of MicroDisplay Corporation, which focused solely on the developing microdisplay technology. She then joined Intel.
“Computer experts like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Michael Dell all said it couldn’t be done.”

Consumer Electronics Group as chief technology officer through 2004.

Through the course of her career, she has become an expert in display systems, and her inventions have been adopted in successful high-definition television, projector and head-mounted display products. Jepsen holds a PhD in optical sciences and BSc (honours) in electrical engineering. She also earned an MSc in visual studies from the media lab at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Interestingly, Jepsen became an engineer only at her parents’ insistence. She acquiesced because, “I could still pursue things I was interested in and use the skill set I was developing in engineering to go far in (a variety of) areas,” she explains. “It was a bit like learning how to read or write – I acquired key skills that had a tremendous impact on my life and my ability to have further reach.”

For Jepsen, the honour of being recognized with this degree is heightened by the parallel between AU’s principles and OLPC’s accomplishments. “Athabasca University is part of an upwelling wave of change in education,” she explains, which is overcoming boundaries to connect people. “Through the advent of low-cost computing and widespread telecom access, Athabasca and its partners are reaching even further and giving more opportunity to millions around the world,” she says. “I’m amazed by the university and the profound role it is playing.”

Honorary doctorates 1979 - 2007

1979 Fernand Grenier
1979 The Lord Perry of Walton
1980 Dr. T.C. (Tim) Byrne
1981 Anastasios Christodoulou
1982 Pierre Burton
1982 Bakhshish Singh
1983 Dorothy Livesay
1984 Dr. W.A. Samuel Smith
1985 Dr. Northrop Frye
1985 The Honorable Ernest C. Manning
1985 Clarence “Big” Miller
1985 Lois Hole
1986 Larry Denman Clarke
1986 Chief Walter Patrick Twinn
1987 Maxwell William Ward
1987 Madeleine Parent
1988 Dr. Bernard Trueman Keeler
1988 The Royal Canadian Air Force
1989 Dr. Myer Horowitz
1989 William Patrick Kelly
1990 Dr. Josephine M. Brown
1990 Brian Paisley
1990 Anne Wheeler
1991 The Honourable Marjorie M. Bowker
1991 Ted Harrison
1992 Michael J. Miller
1992 David W. Schindler
1993 Helen Mary Sabin
1993 Ian Tyson
1994 Anthony Lindsay Austin Fields
1994 Dr. Ernest J. Wiggins
1995 Maureen Anne McTeer
1995 Eric Newell
1996 Moses Znaimer
1997 Linda Hughes
1998 Sir John S. Daniel
1999 Gajaraj Dhanarajan
2000 Stephen John Murgatroyd
2000 Eleanor Wachtel
2001 Holger Petersen
2001 Maria Campbell
2002 James Shapiro
2002 Joseph Schwarcz
2003 Robert Stollery
2003 Vicki Gabereau
2004 Dr. Tony Bates
2004 Pamela D. Wallin
2005 Gwendolyn Hooks
2005 Frank Pierpoint Appleby
2006 Marie Smallface-Marule
2006 Dr. Marc Garneau
2006 Peter Hornulos
2007 Professor Mandla Makhanya
2007 Johnsen Sewepagaham
2007 Albert Karvonon
**Protecting your health**

*Edmonton Journal*

**Strong medicine for Canada’s natural health industry**

June 7, 2008

“The opponents of C-51 have resorted to misinformation. At a rally in Edmonton in early May, the signs being displayed were the diametric opposite of the facts. Some signs accused the government of ‘plotting to take away our vitamins.’ The truth is the exact opposite: the latest version of Canada’s Food Guide that came out in 2007 advises large sections of the population to use supplements.”

*– Dr. Norman Temple, AU professor of nutrition, writes a guest editorial in support of the federal government’s efforts to legislate the nutritional supplement industry. Temple was also widely quoted in the broadcast media on the legislation.*

**Mobilizing aboriginal leaders**

*The Calgary Herald*

**Province ignoring natives, critics say**

January 16, 2008

“What’s needed is for native leaders to mobilize their people and have them participate far more in the political process. ‘If politicians don’t hear you, it won’t have any effect at all,’ Smith said. ‘They have to have their leadership come forward.’ He expects that within a few years the political temperature on native issues will heat up. As more aboriginals move to urban areas, a greater number will go to university, form a middle class cadre and jump into the political realm.”

*– Dr. Jay Smith, professor, political science, responds to 2006 census data indicating Canada’s aboriginal population is growing faster than the rest of society, while still remaining largely outside the corridors of political power.*

**Political gender gap**

*TV Ontario: The Agenda, with Steve Paikin*

**The Debate: Women In politics**

January 31, 2008

“In the past, the theory of representation had the view that it was the ‘best’ who should be representatives. And it just so happened that when they went through all the ‘bests’, they were exclusively men. And so there has been a bit of a shift of thinking. The ‘best’ has to mirror the people who are being represented.”

*– Dr. Jane Arscott, AU associate professor and coordinator, Human Services, appearing on a panel discussion about the lack of women in senior political roles in Canada. Arscott is co-author of Still Counting: Women in Politics Across Canada.*
Scholarships offer a tremendous benefit to university students, both for the honour they bestow and for the welcome financial assistance they provide. What’s sometimes missing in the conversation about scholarships, however, is the story behind their origins. A recent conversation with one of Athabasca University’s donors, Patricia Heffernan Wieshlow, reveals the history of the Patrick Heffernan Memorial Scholarship.

In the late 1970s Patrick Heffernan and his wife, Patricia, came to Alberta from Ontario. Unsatisfied with his traditional university experience, Pat decided to fit an education at Athabasca University around his work as a stationary engineer with Imperial Oil and raising their two daughters. Sadly, Pat passed away suddenly at the age of 46 just a year after graduating with his Bachelor of General Studies.

Inspired by her late husband’s accomplishments at AU, Patricia created a student award in his honour. Now in its 14th year, the Patrick Heffernan Memorial Scholarship is awarded to the student entering the second year of an undergraduate degree program with the highest GPA in AU courses. The scholarship has a value of $500.

As well as benefiting the recipient, this award is a significant means of remembrance for the Heffernan family. Patricia is particularly fond of sharing thank-you notes from recipients with her children and grandchildren. “This is an important tradition in our family,” she says. “My grandchildren didn’t get to meet [him], so this is how they get to know their grandfather.”

Scholarship creates a family legacy
by Trish Morgan

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Fil Fraser:
The arts humanize us

Fil Fraser is many things, but a stiltwalker he is not. He’s an author; he’s a broadcaster; he’s a film producer; he’s a tennis player. Since 1991 he has been a member of the Order of Canada. He’s currently a visiting professor for the Centre for Integrated Studies at Athabasca University, where he teaches a course he developed on Canadian film policy (CMNS610). But he’s not a stiltwalker.

Born in Montreal, Fraser began his career in radio in Toronto with Foster Hewitt. He later delved into public relations, where he made a contribution as a health care writer, editor and educator in Saskatchewan and Alberta in the field of alcoholism and addiction. Fraser has worked for many years as a television broadcaster in Alberta and elsewhere, and recent devoted five years to a term as president and chief executive officer of Vision TV.

Fraser is the creative mind behind several feature films, including the 1976 classic Why Shoot the Teacher, based on the Max Braithwaite novel. It became one of Canada’s most commercially successful films. He’s a much-published author, notable for his graceful paean to artistic support, Alberta’s Camelot: Culture and the Arts in the Lougheed Years, published in 2003, and for 2007’s Running Uphill: The Fast, Short Life of Canadian Champion Harry Jerome.

Fraser’s impressive creative work has been balanced by exemplary public service, including his role on many commissions on human rights, film, broadcasting and multiculturalism.

The curious matter of stiltwalking aside for the moment, what brought Fraser to AU? “I first became involved with Athabasca about four years ago when Evelyn Ellerman invited me to participate in an Internet project called MediaCan.” He followed that up by developing his film course which “looks at Canadian movies from the perspective of what they contribute to national culture and identity.”

Having also taught in the classroom, he observes, “There are different satisfactions to be found in teaching online and teaching in a face-to-face classroom setting. When I taught human rights to third-year law students at the University of Alberta, the rush of adrenalin I got every time I walked into the classroom was exhilarating, but with 25 students it was a challenge to deal with any more than a few of them in any depth on a one-to-one basis.

“(Yet) although I never see my AU students, the one-to-one communication is more interesting. We communicate in online forums and via internal mail. One of my current students apologized for being a couple of days late with an assignment – she delivered her first child two days before handing in her paper.” He particularly enjoys teaching graduate students. “Since (they) are, for the most part, already in lives and careers, they tend to be more thoughtful and mature in what they bring to the course. I find the interaction very satisfying,” he says.

Communication in any format is clearly a driving force for Fraser, but radio still holds a special place in his heart. “I started my career in radio in 1951 – before television had come to Canada. While I’ve worked extensively in both, I still prefer radio as a more personal, and I think more effective, means of mass communication.”

While Fraser has been the recipient of many honours, he defines his proudest moment as receiving an honorary Doctorate of Letters in June from the University of Alberta. “Few things in life can top that,” he says. In a speech at convocation, he said, “It is the arts that humanize us. Never let anyone tell you that the arts are a frill; that they should pay their own way; that there are more important things in life than the expression and appreciation of human creativity.”

So, the mystery of stiltwalking remains. Why in the world does Fraser’s website list the Edmonton Stiltwalkers Society as its first link if tottering upon high sticks isn’t his cup of tea? The answer lies in a family connection. Fraser’s son Randall – who has made a name for himself as a theatrical designer – heads the Edmonton Stiltwalkers Society, having taken to them at the age of seven. The elder Fraser ruefully notes he’s increasingly known as Randy’s father.
Dr. Pamela Hawranik: AU’s first dean of graduate studies

Dr. Pamela Hawranik, Athabasca University’s first dean of graduate studies, comes to AU from the University of Manitoba, where she was associate dean of graduate studies. Her research and graduate student supervision will serve as a bridge between the universities as she maintains her status at U of M as an adjunct professor in the faculty of nursing and a research affiliate in its Centre on Aging.

While she’s preparing to expand her gerontology research project into Alberta and to supervise some AU graduate students, Hawranik’s priority is to establish consistent standards for policies and regulations for AU’s various academic centres. Each will retain policies that are specific to their particular needs, but large issues such as student withdrawal and selecting supervisory committees could be more consistent.

“It will involve talking to everyone and working with everyone to find the best collaborative approach,” Hawranik says. Since her appointment in June she has been meeting with colleagues in Athabasca, Edmonton, St. Albert and Calgary, and says, “One of the things I want to do is have a retreat with the directors for (AU’s) centres (because) it will allow us to learn from each other.”

She has been looking closely at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary in particular and soon will be meeting with their deans of graduate studies with a view to adapting strategies from other universities. “Let’s apply a bit of what they’ve learned,” she says.

So far, Hawranik has been delighted with the welcome she has received. She notes AU has had much change recently and she’s “been amazed at how well everyone’s been able to cope with that.” They want to “find out what’s going on in other places and share what they are doing. So I’m very, very pleased about that.”

Hawranik is also keen to work with the Graduate Students’ Association. “What I would like to see is some sort of graduate student website or portal where they could go for information on awards and scholarships, on faculty members who could supervise them and on regulations and policies for programs.” A newsletter, too, might help “promote some of the research students are doing and let students know about deadlines and workshops.”

Until she has UA grad students – “I’m hoping that within the next year I could get at least one,” she says – she is keeping her hand in with a few at U of M.

Hawranik brings a strong research focus to AU with her nursing and community health science background. Since beginning as a nurse’s aide in her hometown of Whitemouth, Man., she’s had an enduring interest in gerontology. “I loved public health – seeing the new babies, the two-year-olds and four-year-olds and the school kids. But I found I enjoyed the older adults more.”

Hawranik recently completed a pilot study on vision care services for the elderly in institutions that clearly revealed the value of regular assessments and treatment. Vision care is generally left up to family members or the individuals themselves, who often don’t notice a gradual decline or simply become resigned to its inevitability. Hawranik says...
Management. Mullaly is president of management in the Centre for Innovative Athabasca University’s MBA in project Poland in July. Thomas is director of Management,” at a conference in Warsaw, “Understanding the Value of Project the final findings from the landmark study, and Mark Mullaly presented their preliminary investigations by implementing standardized project management programs to deliver projects and programs on time and within budget.”

“Tangible value, the results and the insights (from this project) will aid executives and practitioners in capturing that value in their organizations,” Thomas reported in her conference presentation. The conference was organized by Project Management Institute (PMI) of Newton Square, Penn., the leading not-for-profit professional association of project managers.

PMI commissioned the C$1.6-million multi-year research project in 2005, one of the largest grants in the field of project management. Its value was enhanced by another million dollars’ worth of in-kind contributions by participants in Australia, China, Europe, North America and South America. The cross-disciplinary research teams examined the value of project management from diverse organizational and theoretical perspectives.

The preliminary results are based on an 18-month examination by 17 research teams of 65 companies, all household names. “If we were allowed to provide their names, you would recognize them,” Thomas says. “You drink their beer, you use their computers, you go to work in their buildings.”

“They’ve gathered a huge quantity of very valuable data, the analysis of which will probably take a couple of years,” Dr. Brian Hobbs of the University of Quebec, remarked after hearing the preliminary findings. “The presentation that Janice [Thomas] and Mark [Mullaly] gave just gives us the tip of the iceberg. I think they did a very good job in presenting how rich that data is.”

For example, the key preliminary finding that companies investing in project management generally do not track their return on investment will be mined for future study. “This study generated an amazing database to further research,” Thomas said in a post conference interview.

In a PMI news release following the presentation, Andrews notes, “As this study clearly demonstrates, project management provides critical business solutions that can help any company or organization achieve tangible business results and be more competitive in today’s global marketplace.”

Research focus:
Project management adds tangible value

Standardized project management gets tangible results, an Athabasca University-led team of international researchers says. Bringing projects in on time and on budget makes businesses more competitive, their preliminary results released in July show. Yet even though businesses invest in project management, they generally don’t track their return on that investment.

Principal investigators Dr. Janice Thomas and Mark Mullaly presented their preliminary findings from the landmark study, “Understanding the Value of Project Management,” at a conference in Warsaw, Poland in July. Thomas is director of Athabasca University’s MBA in project management in the Centre for Innovative Management. Mullaly is president of Interthink Consulting in Edmonton, Alta. A 25-year industry veteran, Thomas was recognized in 2006 as one of the most influential women in project management by PM Network magazine.

“I can unequivocally state that not only does project management deliver value, the results and the insights (from this project) will aid executives and practitioners in capturing that value in their organizations,” Thomas reported in her conference presentation. The conference was organized by Project Management Institute (PMI) of Newton Square, Penn., the leading not-for-profit professional association of project managers.

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The preliminary results are based on an 18-month examination by 17 research teams of 65 companies, all household names. “If we were allowed to provide their names, you would recognize them,” Thomas says. “You drink their beer, you use their computers, you go to work in their buildings.”

“This is the most definitive research ever commissioned to study the value of the implementation of project management,” Dr. Edwin J. Andrews, PMI’s director of academic and educational programs and services, said ahead of the conference. “The findings are expected to quantify that project, program and portfolio managers are making significant contributions to organizations by implementing standardized project management programs to deliver projects and programs on time and within budget.”
Awarded for excellence

Dr. Kam Jugdev, associate professor of project management at the Centre for Innovative Management, and her colleagues Dr. Gita Mathur (San Jose University) and Dr. Tak Fung (University of Calgary), were awarded an Emerald Literati Award for Outstanding Paper as part of the annual Literati Network Awards for Excellence 2008.

The group’s paper, “Intangible Project Management Assets as Determinants of Competitive Advantage,” was published in 2007 in Management Research News, 30 (7). This paper was part of a body of work funded by Athabasca University and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Three received 75K grants

Dr. Oscar Lin, Dr. Dragan Gasevic, and Dr. Ken Munyikwa were awarded grants by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), announced in Victoria on May 21, 2008 by federal Industry Minister Jim Prentice. Each will receive $75,000 over the next five years to continue their research projects at Athabasca University.

Munyikwa, an assistant professor of Earth Sciences, is studying patterns of environmental change in central and northern Alberta over the last 20,000 years, using a technique called luminescence dating. Munyikwa, who has been with AU since January of 2006, has carried out field work in southern Africa, Europe, East Asia and North America.

Lin is a full professor at the School of Computing and Information Systems. His research is focused on developing adaptive learning technologies for use in modern distributed learning. Lin has been with AU since 2000.

Gasevic is an assistant professor at the School of Computing and Information Systems. His research specialty is semantic web-enhanced model-driven software engineering. His goal is to provide additional tools for software developers to increase productivity and efficiency. Gasevic has been with AU since January of 2007.
Ingenuity has its rewards

Dr. Gasevic has also been awarded a 2008 Alberta Ingenuity New Faculty Award worth $288,860 over three years. Gasevic’s application was one of 37 received by the Alberta Ingenuity Fund. Alberta Ingenuity was established to develop competitive science and engineering expertise in the province. The New Faculty Award Program provides seed money for funding recipients’ first laboratories and programs.

Personalised learning on the go

Dr. Kinshuk, director of the School for Computing and Information Systems at AU, has completed a series of lectures in Japan in association with a short-term research fellowship from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. Its Invitation Fellowship Program promotes international co-operation and mutual understanding through scientific research.

At Tokyo Denki University, Kinshuk lectured on “Adaptivity and Personalization in Mobile Learning.” He has been assessing research on adapting mobile learning to individual learners. Aspects of location, context, device and learner modeling can be adjusted to customize “delivery of multimedia-rich learning objects, collaborative problem-solving in the context of learners’ surroundings, authentic problem-solving through multiple forms of input, and appropriate use of these different media formats as part of problem-solving for rich learning experiences,” he says.

At Hitachi Software, he lectured on “Adaptivity and Personalization in Learning Systems through Cognitive Modelling.” Of that research, he says, cognitive capabilities of learners can be identified through pattern detection in their work. These patterns could contribute to automatic customization of their learning activities, which would optimize each individual’s experience.

Virtual calculus

Improving poor success rates in first-year calculus is the goal of a project that’s developing five interactive online multimedia tutorials in pre-university algebra over the course of one year. Athabasca University is partnering on the project with the Canadian Virtual University, which is a group of Canadian universities specializing in online and distance education. Funding of $112,000 has been awarded by the Inukshuk Wireless Fund, which supports the creation of content that can be carried on the Canada-wide wireless broadband network Bell Canada and Rogers Communications are building through their Inukshuk Wireless partnership.

Journal receives 25K award

The International Review of Research on Open and Distance Learning, a peer-reviewed journal supported by Athabasca University, has received a $25,000 award from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council’s Aid to Scholarly Publication Program. To win this award, the maximum allowed under the program, the journal’s editorial board submitted documentation of the influence and reputation of the journal, its recent download statistics and details of its peer review process.

Newly appointed

Dr. Sharon Moore, associate professor in the Centre for Nursing and Health Studies, has been appointed to the Seniors’ Advisory Committee, one of eight advisory committees of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. This national initiative is based on the Senate Committee report “Out of the Shadows at Last: Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada,” the first national study conducted of these issues.

New learning technology

Primary investigator Dr. Beth Perry, with Dr. Margaret Edwards, both of AU’s Centre for Nursing and Health Studies, are adapting a research technique called Photovoice as an online teaching tool to encourage learning through active participation. Their research is funded by the Western Region Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing.

Photovoice was originally developed as a data collection technique. Researchers gave subjects cameras to record images of their communities. Photovoice appears to focus student attention, stimulate creative thinking, help create community and convey a sense of human presence in the online educational experience. Edwards and Perry will use this basis to create a user-friendly, pedagogically sound, interactive teaching technology that can be used in a range of online experiences.
“Individuals, governments and industry together,” argue Khare and Bellman, “must take steps to shift the focus from individual mobility to better and more affordable public transportation.”

Reducing CO₂ emissions

A decade after receiving his first Humboldt Fellowship, Dr. Anshuman Khare was in Germany early in 2008 on his second, pursuing research on environmental sustainability in the German auto sector. Khare, professor of operations management in the Centre for Innovative Management, was hosted by Prof. Klaus Bellmann at the Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz. The two co-authored a research report entitled “Response of German Car Manufacturers to the European Union Directive on Reducing CO₂ Emissions from Passenger Cars” which was published by the Center of Market-Oriented Product and Production Management, Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz.

In their report, Khare and Bellman delved extensively into the EU’s targets for automobile emissions reductions and how German car manufacturers are responding to the challenge. They also looked at how Canada’s targets and regulations compare to several countries in the EU and beyond, resulting in interesting questions about Canada’s commitment to addressing climate change.

Khare and Bellmann make the case that increasing the efficiency of individual automobiles will likely never bring about the desired effect of reducing the total amount of CO₂ entering Earth’s atmosphere, because making cars smaller and cheaper would put more on the road and could even increase emissions on a worldwide basis. The problem is further complicated by the absence of global emission standards, leaving attempts at solutions regional and unco-ordinated. “Individuals, governments and industry together,” argue Khare and Bellman “must take steps to shift the focus from individual mobility to better and more affordable public transportation.”

PARSE award for AU professor

Dr. Jane Arscott, associate professor of human services and co-ordinator of the Human Services Program in AU’s Centre for Work and Community Studies, has won the President’s Award for Research and Scholarly Excellence (PARSE). The award, which consists of four months’ research leave, will enable Arscott to ready her book, “Primed and Ticking: The Royal Commission on the Status of Women,” for publication. The manuscript is under contract to the University of Toronto Press.

The annual PARSE award recognizes a record of excellence in research scholarship carried out by a full-time member of the AU faculty or staff. Its purpose is to afford the recipient time to complete the preparation of a manuscript for publication.

The title of Arscott’s book refers to a newspaper article written about the tabling of the royal commission’s findings in Parliament on Dec. 7, 1970. The article described the report as “a bomb, already primed and ticking,” that is “packed with more explosive potential than any device manufactured by terrorists.”

Professor elected chair

Dr. Paul Jerry, associate professor in the Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology, was elected chair of the Canadian Psychology Association’s Psychoanalytical and Psychodynamic Psychology Section.

AU president goes international

AU president Dr. Frits Pannekoek was elected president of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) at this year’s meeting of the organization’s Permanent Secretariat in Oslo, Norway.

AU professor first aboriginal woman to earn a Canadian PhD in law

Dr. Tracey Dee Lindberg, associate professor in the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research at AU, earned her PhD in law from the University of Ottawa in October of 2007. The Ottawa Citizen reported that she is the first aboriginal woman to have earned a PhD in law from a Canadian university. She also received the Governor General’s Gold Medal in the Humanities, awarded to the most outstanding doctoral degree recipient in the humanities and social sciences.
AU Press celebrates launch

AU Press celebrated its official launch and presented its first published works at the Congress 2008 Book Fair held in June in Vancouver in conjunction with the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. AU honorary degree recipient Vicki Gabereau was the emcee. Dr. John Willinsky, a leading proponent of open-access publishing and professor of literacy and technology at the University of British Columbia, was a special guest.

AU Press, Canada’s first 21st century scholarly press, is committed to the principle of open access as a means of overcoming barriers to knowledge. Access to all AU Press publications is free over the Internet and, wherever possible, its publications are licensed with Creative Commons, which is a not-for-profit organization that enable authors, scientists, artists, and educators to determine the degree of copyright they want their creative works to carry.

AU professor becomes president in N.S.

Dr. Kimberley Lamarche, assistant professor in the Master of Nursing program at AU, on July 1, 2008, assumed the role of president of the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia for 2008-2010. She will oversee the College’s 100th annual general meeting in May next year.

A registered nurse/nurse practitioner, Lamarche has a doctorate in clinical leadership from Case Western Reserve University and maintains her clinical skills by working part-time as a primary health care nurse practitioner at the Canadian Coast Guard College in Westmount, NS.

She is a novice nursing researcher and a member of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation/Canadian Institutes of Health Research Chair in Advanced Practice, which focuses on the development of advanced nursing practice researchers.

AU Centre for Distance Education presented award

Dr. Bob Spencer, director of AU’s Centre for Distance Education, was presented the 2008 Award for Leadership in Distance Education at the Canadian Network for Innovation in Education (CNIE) conference, hosted by AU in Banff. Spencer received the award in recognition of his outstanding service to distance education.

Publication wins gold & silver

Heather Newton, manager of Marketing and Student Recruitment in the Advancement Office, has received a gold award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) District VIII (Pacific Northwest and Western Canada) for AU’s prospectus publication, “The Book of Answers.” The publication also received a silver award from the University Continuing Education Association, which represents post-secondary institutions in the U.S. and Canada.

AU professor goes international

Dr. Leslie Main Johnson, associate professor of anthropology, became Secretary of the International Society of Ethnobiology at the International Congress of Ethnobiology in Cusco, Peru.
Athabasca University is using its unique attributes as Canada’s only open university to dismantle barriers to learning in Northern Alberta, one community at a time. Access, confidence, learning styles, lack of prerequisites— all play a part in hindering learning. Fortunately, AU has just the portfolio of supportive attitudes, one-on-one teaching techniques and technological aids to serve northern communities.

Last year, while researchers were looking into how to help oilsands construction workers north of Fort McMurray boost their education, they were aware their insights could apply much more widely. A shift of the kaleidoscope turned their three-year research project, called Learning Communities, into a five-pronged long-term opportunity to make lifelong learning available across the North.

AU’s original intention, in Phase 1 of Learning Communities, was to identify the barriers to learning and devise support systems for the 8,000 workers living in Canadian Natural Resources Ltd.’s work camps. It’s a fluid workforce, changing with each phase of construction of the Horizon oilsands surface mine development. Phase 2 was then to look at learning needs in rural, remote and isolated communities.

AU wanted to have mentors and technology in place and be teaching courses in the camps by mid-2010, but embracing the wider potential highlighted by the research changed the parameters before the project was even halfway through its time frame.

“We’ve learned from the Horizon site, we will be learning from all the other communities we’re (currently) exploring, and now we feel we have a contribution to make to the province,” says Lisa Carter, director of arts and science at AU and co-leader of Learning Communities. “We’ve recognized the barriers, (understood) the challenges and now we’re going to be using that information and projecting it to other targeted communities.”

CNRL chair Allan Markin funded the first three years out of his own pocket, reasoning that educational opportunities would improve life in the camps, and that developing the home-grown workforce would address root problems in an industry hobbled by a shortage of skilled labour. “A more educated workforce benefits workers, communities and the province,” Markin says. His thinking dovetails with an industry push to formalize workers’ credentials and career paths so their futures won’t be curtailed by limited education.

Learning Communities project liaison officer Lois Shaw, who has been in the camps talking to CNRL employees and contract workers, says there’s a big call for project management programs, for certification in any area that will bring recognition for existing skills, and for business programs. There’s a need for training in English as a second language and computer basics.

Yet even just getting the word out about what could be available is not a straightforward matter because of the complexity inherent in a construction project of this size. Learning Communities has needed to understand the makeup of the population and create avenues of communication for support, awareness and delivery of learning opportunities.

“What we found out through our study on the Horizon site is that (our programming) has to be very directed and specific,” says Lori Van Rooijen, vice-president of advancement at AU and Learning Communities co-leader with Carter. “It needs to cover everything from trades to college to university preparation, and also university level. Athabasca University cannot provide it all,
but what we can do is collaborate with others offering programs in the North, like the institutions involved in Alberta North and Keyano College. We also need to work on how we motivate students, some of whom feel intimidated."

Now underway, Phase 2 is broadening its study of rural and remote communities to incorporate AU’s ability to help them catalyze economic development. Industry expansion in the North is creating work opportunities, but communities need to manage their own economic development. Learning Communities is targeting 15 rural communities in Alberta this year north of Athabasca, drawing on its success in 2007 in helping Three Hills and Hanna create virtual learning and business centres, a project that was backed by the provincial government’s rural development fund.

“Learning Communities is based on that model because we know it works,” Van Rooijen says. “Learning Communities has become a strong brand for Athabasca University’s work in rural and remote communities. Everything we’re doing is to understand what the need is, the learning opportunities, the kinds of partnerships that need to be struck, with Athabasca University spearheading (the effort).”

AU knows working in close partnership with other institutions is essential to meeting the learning needs while avoiding a duplication of services. “We want a seamless transfer (of credits) for students,” Van Rooijen says. “With Alberta North technical and community colleges, we’ve worked hard on course by course transfer rather than program by program, which reduces the time and intimidation factor.”

The university is seeking funding to take Learning Communities beyond the three years and develop the identified potential. First, it wants to reach out to aboriginal communities. “We need to understand learning opportunities and needs for people living on the reserves, to learn what’s there and what’s not, and what opportunities there are to work with others – for example, elders,” Van Rooijen says. “We want to help ensure that people can stay in their community and continue to contribute to the economic and social well-being of that community. And, we want to understand how distance and online learning can support the work and education that is already in progress.”

Next, the project wants to invest in the interdisciplinary Athabasca River Basin Research Institute, a consortium of scientists looking at the social, economic and environmental impacts on communities of development along the river. The belief is that better-informed communities can engage more effectively in policy development that affects them. The vision is of long-term sustainability of the river, the communities and the activities that depend on the river.

All of these initiatives will depend on having a work belt full of the technological tools that make distance learning possible, from smart software to hand-held electronic devices on up.

“Our job is to provide opportunities to use the SuperNet, using distance education to facilitate the content,” Van Rooijen says. “(We) have a role to play in helping to realize the vision.”

SuperNet is the technology infrastructure that links every Alberta settlement that has a government building, school or library to a broadband network and the Internet.

“We want to help ensure that people can stay in their community and continue to contribute to the economic and social well being of that community. And, we want to understand how distance and online learning can support the work and education that is already in progress.”
Anna Fabbroni

Anna Fabbroni’s graduation with a Bachelor of Health Administration this spring was the summit of her personal Mt. Everest after a long, steep climb to overcome the active discouragement of people who didn’t value her dream of a good education.

She was 15 when her parents gave up their new life in Toronto to return to Italy with their Canadian-born family, throwing her into a whole new life. “In Italy, there were no educational support systems,” she says, “no special classes to deal with the language barrier. I was actually encouraged to drop out of school, and went to work.”

It was a bitter disappointment for Fabbroni. “It took 20 years and lots of hard work to understand that ignorance and intolerance were not a reason for abandoning a dream,” she says. Finally, in 2001, still in Italy, she began studying French online through Athabasca University. And her life changed. “I was treated as a person with the right to learn, and not just an ID number,” she says. “I never felt rejected; nor was I told there was no hope for me.

Because she had always been interested in working in health care, AU’s health administration program piqued her interest. With its variety, versatility and range of experience, “you never have the chance to get bored,” she says. “And it’s unique; it has two practicums that allow students to gain incredible hands-on experience in the field.”

So, tough as it was, Fabbroni decided to pursue her dream full-time. Returning to school at 40 meant balancing several part-time jobs to cover her bills and tuition fees, and persevering with her studies through long nights and weekends, not to mention the stress of moving back to Canada.

“Sometimes what we need as mature students is moral support,” she says. Between the faculty, administration, and tutors who accommodated her schedule at all hours, Fabbroni says she felt that support through the three-year program. She even found a place to live through someone affiliated with AU.

Fabbroni says it took determination to stick with her studies and believe in herself. But she completed the program, and did her practicum placements with the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch at Health Canada in Alberta. She credits those placements as milestones in giving her a professional edge, and helping her land a permanent position with Health Canada.

And at 43, Fabbroni realized her dream when she graduated – with a 3.87 average – and was invited to give the 2008 graduate address. “Athabasca University has been such an integral part of my life,” she says. “It helped me understand that education is a right, not a privilege. Everyone has an equal opportunity at a second chance in life.”

Harriet Thornhill

When Harriet Thornhill began her Masters of Business Administration in January 2002, life was already extraordinarily full. “My two sons were transitioning from the teenage years; my daughter was only three years old; my husband was busy with his career; and I had a fully charged role at RBC (Royal Bank),” she says.

The flexibility provided by the AU MBA, though, along with the support of RBC and her family, allowed her to tackle the challenges. “The transition required me to be more accountable for my time and how I prioritized work, family, and studies,” Thornhill says. “The level of

“Athabasca University has been such an integral part of my life,” she says. “It helped me understand that education is a right, not a privilege. Everyone has an equal opportunity at a second chance in life.”
intensity and discipline required was an eye-opener to me and has helped me to work smarter.”

Thornhill was looking to broaden her management perspective and develop her global mindset, and found herself “intrigued with the calibre of individuals in the program – high achievement individuals with diverse backgrounds and strong professional experience,” she says. “The passion and experience of many came through in volumes through the frequent daily exchanges.” Students readily shared their wide range of management approaches and practices online.

Having lived in Barbados and England as well as Canada, Thornhill delighted in the residential elective in Germany. “The international element was awesome,” she says, “particularly because we had the opportunity to spend time with key businesses and gain a better understanding of how they operate. It’s hard to describe the power of that intense immersion in another country’s business, economic, social and cultural environment – (the chance) to draw lessons and parallels with your own experiences.”

Thornhill’s MBA propelled her promotion to regional vice-president with RBC in the Greater Toronto Region. Her responsibilities include developing sales and service staff to maximize revenue and provide superior financial advice and client experience. She leads the implementation of strategic initiatives, and represents RBC in the local community.

James Harrison

High-profile clients like songstress Anne Murray and Project Runway Canada finalist Lucian Matis make it clear Alavri Web Design has hit a high note with the arts crowd. Company owner and AU alumnus James Harrison couldn’t be happier.

“It’s a very people oriented, social job. I really enjoy getting to know each one of my clients and their needs,” he says. “Whether it’s a highly corporate or more artistic client, working with people makes it for me.”

Harrison credits his AU Bachelor of Science in Computing and Information Systems for his professional start in web design, an ever-evolving field where function is as critical as form. “I have taken courses in art and design, but AU gave me the understanding of computer programming as a discipline, theory and logic,” he says.

When he started the program, Harrison was keeping his career options open. He embraced the coursework in database management, content management and the C++ programming language, “but it was the web design component that really interested me. That’s when the light went on. It combined my passion for art and my love of computers.”

In addition to finding his career path through AU, Harrison gained his first freelance project on a referral from his professor. He designed the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Northern Canada website. That project led to more referrals and a viable business opportunity.

“I feel like I am ahead of the game. I have a badge that says I studied computer science and I did it online. And I wear it.”

James Patras

James Patras knew he wanted to stand out. In 2000, when the Edmonton native received his diploma from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), the information technology industry had been booming. But soon came the dot-com bust, and the market was flooded with experienced IT people looking for work as well as new graduates.

Today, Alavri’s portfolio includes professional web work ranging from a Flash-based site for Canadian photographer Yuri Dojc to a content-managed site for Alive Holistic Health Clinic. Harrison employs several designers to help support his growing client list from his office space in Toronto near Yonge and Bloor.

Like many students at AU, Harrison fitted the flexible program around work, in his case, long and unconventional hours in the restaurant industry. “I’m an independent learner, and always felt like I was in control,” he says.

He’s also proud that his educational experience was online because it’s an ideal fit for his industry. “I feel like I am ahead of the game. I have a badge that says I studied computer science and I did it online. And I wear it.”
than he wanted, or based largely on a single industry platform. He found his complete solution at AU in the Bachelor of Science in Computing and Information Systems.

“The schedule was really flexible and Athabasca University was really challenging,” he says. “Lots of programs are more theory than technical, but this one provided a great balance. Lots of places are based on one player in the field – completely Microsoft oriented for instance,” he says. “But AU uses a whole range of technology, including open source technology. I learned a lot.”

Patras graduated in 2005. He went on to become a software consultant for the Telus National Applications Solutions Group, where he’s responsible for business and data analysis, and requirements gathering.

In his current IT role, he finds AU gave him another surprising professional edge by honing his communication skills.

“The courses to learn to write concisely were a real eye opener on how to focus on being concise and clear. It has been extremely useful.”

He credits AU with being highly supportive, with accessible coaches and administrators. “I could always contact people when I needed to. They wouldn’t hesitate to help me.”

Akin Oni

Akin Oni’s education has been a worldwide adventure. Canada. The United States. Chile. Peru. Australia. He traveled them all while he was studying for his Masters of Business Administration specializing in project management, through Athabasca University.

Born in Nigeria, Oni had a degree in mechanical engineering and had worked in several countries before he made his way to Yellowknife, N.W.T., where he was a project control leader for BHP Billiton, an international mining and natural resources company.

But Oni wanted more. He wanted to deepen his knowledge of project management, and he knew he could do that through AU. “I chose Athabasca University’s online MBA program for several reasons,” he says, citing AU’s location in Western Canada, its coaching crew and learning environment, and the attitude of its people when he went to visit.

Oni says he was excited about the program because it offered flexibility, portability, and allowed him to remain employed full-time wherever he was while he studied. “They’ve helped me apply myself to further my goal in becoming a world class project manager,” he says. “It’s a very well organized program and they’ve taught me what I’ve needed to know.”

It has also helped him communicate his passion for project management, and explain its value and its role in the organization to his peers. “As project managers we translate business strategies into operational realities. We integrate human and business needs with projects,” he says.

Oni completed his MBA in three years. He and his wife have now moved their three children to Perth, Australia, where he is deputy project director of a nickel mining project for BHP Billiton.

He says the AU program – and the other students in it – were inspiring. “The quality of peers to network with, the breadth of knowledge and experience - it helped me connect and relate with a group of like-minded people from all over the world.”

Norm Taylor

When Norm Taylor wanted to take his company to the next level, he knew Athabasca University could help him get there. Taylor is an independent educator and consultant in Oshawa,
Ont. who creates lifelong learning pro-
gramming for individuals, organiza-
tions and communities.

Working with police chiefs and law
enforcement organizations to develop
better leadership, training and re-
search methods, he was creating a pro-
gram for the Canadian Association of
Chiefs of Police through its Institute
for Strategic International Studies.
The focus was policing methods in oth-
er countries.

Taylor wanted to strengthen the pro-
gram’s theoretical foundation and re-
search component to make it one of
the premiere executive development
programs in the country, so in 2007,
he joined AU’s Master of Distance
Education program.

“The quality of education was superb,”
he says. Even as an experienced educa-
tion professional, he “was surprised,”
he adds, “by the creativity and breadth
with virtually every subject. The faculty
at Athabasca University took things
in directions that were richer, deeper –
not pedestrian or rudimentary at all.”

Taylor appreciated the disciplined
approach to research, and the chal-
lenge of intellectual debate with fellow
students all over the world. Their in-
teraction fueled his work, his policing
program development, and his own
personal growth.

“The AU program gave me a richer
knowledge base to apply to what I’m
doing,” he says. “And the cumulative
effect was reawakening a passion for
lifelong learning, something you don’t
want to lose. I’ll be working to inte-
grate even more of my global and social
awareness into the work I do.”

In 2008, Taylor completed his degree
and graduated with the university’s
highest honour, the Governor General
of Canada Gold Medal, which is award-
ed annually to the student finishing a
graduate-level program with the high-
est grade point average in AU credits.

Taylor says MDE was “a great per-
sonal challenge. You have to be in-
dependent and self-driving as a stu-
dent.” But he was passionate about
the program, “because of the great
independence it affords you.” And
true to his engagement with lifelong
learning, Taylor, 53, is already looking
at the doctoral program in distance
education AU recently established.
The educator may soon find himself a
student again.

ALUMNI & STUDENTS

calendar of events

Athabasca University boasts a family of more than 10,000 alumni who
make remarkable contributions to the business, health, social and cultural
progress of their communities. Because AU graduates are found in all
Canadian provinces and territories, we make a special effort to stay in touch
through regular social events in locations across the country.

As a graduate, current student or potential student, you are invited to
attend one of our receptions or events wherever is convenient for you. We
always look forward to bringing our alumni, students, special guests and
faculty together. These gatherings – food and refreshments are on us – are
a great opportunity to stay connected with the university and meet people
who share a love of life-long learning.

If you have been considering Athabasca University to continue your
education, you are invited too! These events are an opportunity to speak
to alumni, students and the university’s senior leadership to gain a better
understanding about our programs and student life.

November

**Thursday, Nov. 6**
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Lethbridge Lodge
& Conference Centre
320 Scenic Drive, Lethbridge, AB

**Wednesday, Nov. 19**
5 p.m. – 7 p.m.
Vancouver Maritime Museum
1905 Ogden Avenue,
Vancouver, BC

**Friday, Nov. 21**
2 p.m. – 4 p.m.
AU Calgary
Open House
Third Floor, 1030 7 Avenue SW,
Calgary, AB

December

**Thursday, Dec. 4**
5 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Spadina Museum:
Historic House & Gardens
285 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON

**Friday, Dec. 5**
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Dundurn National Historic
Site, Coach House Hayloft
610 York Boulevard, Hamilton, ON

For more information about events and a map to each location, visit
www.athabascau.ca/alumni and follow the links. To RSVP, please call
800-788-9041, ext. 7285 or e-mail aualumni@athabascau.ca.
Cindy Amerongen  
BGS (Bachelor of General Studies) 2000, current MAIS (Master of Arts – Integrated Studies) student – has been named the new vice-president, external relations, for Keyano College. She has been with the college for 17 years and in her new position will be providing leadership to marketing and communications, foundation and government relations activities. Past roles with Keyano include bookstore manager, community education co-ordinator, executive director of Alberta North, and director of development for the Keyano Foundation.

Marc Anderson  
BGS 2007 – and his business partner Daniel Cotton are collaborating on Exclusive Language, a web-based English language training company at www.exclusivelanguage.com. Both grew up in Orleans, Ont., but they’ve never met in person. Anderson in Seoul, South Korea, and Cotton in Harbin, China, have relied on web-conferencing technology to communicate. Exclusive Language offers global companies customized English training on-line for their global teams.

Denise Bedard  
MHS 2007 – has been appointed administrator at Dearness Seniors Home in London, Ont., one of the city’s top management positions. She has more than 30 years of long-term care experience, having moved up through the ranks from housekeeper as she pursued her education. Bedard graduated in 2002 with a bachelor’s degree in kinesiology from the University of Western Ontario and last year earned her Master of Health Studies degree from AU. She is currently working on a PhD through Western.

Richard Bourgeois-Doyle  
Current MAIS student – is the National Research Council’s director of corporate governance. He is also an author, most recently of Her Daughter, the Engineer: The Life of Elsie Gregory MacGill. The subject of that work was the world’s first female aeronautical engineer and professional aircraft designer, and daughter to suffragette and judge Helen MacGill. Bourgeois-Doyle also wrote George J. Klein: the Great Inventor, and edited Renaissance II: Canadian Creativity and Innovation in the New Millennium.

Walter Korz  
MBA 2006 – has been named president and chief executive officer for Chemokine Therapeutics Corp., a biotechnology company. He has 17 years in the biotech sector following 10 years in health care. He has been with Chemokine since 2003, and previously served as vice-president of drug development.

Blaine Mathieu  
MBA 1999 – is the senior vice-president of marketing for Lyris Inc., a provider of marketing technology solutions. Prior to joining Lyris, Mathieu was general manager and vice-president of product and marketing at Corel Corp. where he was responsible for creating global marketing and product strategies for a wide range of software products. He received a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Alberta before earning his MBA from AU.

Andre Tricoteux  
Current BA student – is the new manager of procurement and logistics with Fortune Minerals Ltd., a natural resource company. He is responsible for co-ordinating supply and procurement of materials and equipment, and manages a variety of supplier, contractor, brokerage and transportation issues. Prior to joining Fortune Minerals, he spent nine years in logistics, project management and construction supervision roles for a diamond mine in the Northwest Territories.

David Stanley  
Advanced Graduate Diploma 1998 – is general manager of professional products with pesticide supplier Syngenta’s NAFTA region. He joined the company in 2005 as global head, lawn and garden. Prior to that appointment he was vice-president and general manager of consumer and professional pest control products for Nu-Gro Corp. In addition to a bachelor’s degree in agriculture and soil science and MBA, both from the University of Guelph, he holds an advanced graduate diploma in management from AU.

Randall Sawka  
BA 2005 – has self-published his first novel, Rough Business. The police thriller begins its story in Edmonton but soon involves a chase around the world. He had travels of his own as he toured the country promoting his book, which has enjoyed enough success that he has secured a publishing deal with a company in England. The release date is set for this fall.

Sheilah Weber  
Current Bachelor of Professional Arts-Criminal Justice student – has been awarded the inaugural Gimborn Scholarship, co-sponsored by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the International Police Association, Ontario Region. The scholarship provides an opportunity for a police officer from Ontario to travel to Germany to participate in specialized policing seminars. Currently in her 21st year of policing, Weber is a staff sergeant assigned to the Greater Sudbury Police Service’s Criminal Investigation Branch.
Veteran banker and volunteer Lorraine McGrath is the recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award, which recognizes the accomplishments of an AU graduate who has brought honour and prestige to the university.

Entrepreneur Sharon Barnes has captured the Rising Star Award, which acknowledges early career expertise, and leadership or major career advances. It is available to alumni and associate alumni, including current students who have completed at least 15 credit units.

A banker for more than two decades, McGrath is also known and respected for her volunteer work. She has held key roles in more than 20 community organizations and in 2007 was the Sara Treadgold Memorial Woman of the Year. The award is given to an outstanding citizen whose dedication and achievements make a significant contribution to life in Kelowna.

McGrath credits her MBA for her success. “Athabasca University catapulted my career,” she says, “not only because it gave me a knowledge base necessary for executive levels, but because it gave me the confidence to set my goals higher and know I could achieve much more. Thinking big became bigger and the parchment provided the platform.”

Barnes co-founded RFind Systems Inc. in 2005 after developing her business plan as her applied project for her MBA. RFind has already grown from a high-tech start-up into an award-winning member of the radio frequency identification (RFID) industry, which uses radio waves to track inventory throughout a supply chain.

In 2006, the company won the prestigious Telus New Ventures B.C. competition. It was named one of the Top 10 Companies to Watch in 2008 by Managing Automation magazine and is included in the 2008 Ready to Rocket list by Rocket Builders.

“My experiences at Athabasca changed the way I view and approach problems,” Barnes says. “I have a strong and solid base from which to grow and develop. RFind uses many of the principles I learned while at Athabasca.”

Do you know of someone worthy of nominating? More information, including the nomination brochure, is available on the alumni website at www1.athabascau.ca/alumni/alumni/awards.htm. Nomination deadline is Nov. 30, 2008.
is an open university a “real” university?

by Mari Sasano

Well, there’s learning and degree-earning going on – seems to me that’s the important part. But at the same time, we’re so attached to the idea of a physical campus, mortarboards, rah-rah varsity and Animal House. And there’s a place for that. It’s about finding yourself, right? But if you’re looking to fit an education into your life once the formative years are done, you probably don’t need the experiential side of a traditional university, never mind the structure of having to show up to a classroom during work hours.

As a freelance writer, I’m a huge fan of work flexibility, doing whatever from home, at my own pace. Snacks, naps, and a little TV isn’t frowned upon, since there is no-one to argue with the genius that is my creative process. I never have to worry about dressing to impress. To me, “investment dressing” is high-quality pyjamas.

Now, it takes a lot of self-discipline to avoid frittering the day away, but as I see it, that’s the grown-up way of doing things. As long as I respect my job enough to get stuff done, my colleagues in the office don’t need to know how much sleep I’m really getting. They don’t need to watch me work; I don’t need to look busy just for show.

Likewise, at Athabasca U the learning is up to you; we’re grown-ups now. Teacher won’t rap your knuckles for daydreaming. You’re there for your own reasons: professional development, personal interest, the satisfaction of working towards a degree. You get an education of substance, served up when and where you want it, just as long as you’re willing to put in the sweat.

And that, my friend, is progress.
Attention AU Alumni and Students!

“The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called “truth.” – Dan Rather

As a student or alumni of AU is there a tutor or professor that really stood out, who challenged you and inspired your imagination. Make a donation in that person’s honour. Submit to the address below.

Tutor/Professor Name__________________________
Course Taught__________________________ Year ________
Submitted by (Name)__________________________
Telephone (daytime)__________________________ Email__________________________

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Public and private support is crucial to sustaining excellence in scholarship, learning resources and technology at Athabasca University, the pioneer of distance education and e-learning. Your financial support will build the university’s capacity to deliver academic excellence to students within Alberta, across Canada and around the world.

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We look at learning from a different perspective – for the benefit of our students – in all aspects of their lives. By building on our experience and expertise, we help our students realize their goals. This has been our ambition for the past four decades.