

## USask nursing graduate looks forward to making a difference



In May 2023, fourth-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing student Dilraj Singh celebrated his entry into the nursing workforce. He joined approximately 270 University of Saskatchewan Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduates across the province.

Eight years ago, Singh left India to come to Canada as an international student. After spending two years in British Columbia, he decided to move to Saskatchewan. "I found a sense of belonging in Saskatchewan and have been happy to call Saskatoon home," said Singh. "The friendly community, beautiful scenery, and strong support network have made it a great place for me to pursue my education and start my career in nursing."

Looking back on his time at the College of Nursing, Singh drew a sense of pride in his success, despite struggling to balance his work and academic life at the start of his program. "The BSN program comes with high academic standards, so it is important to prioritize studies. The workload can be heavy at times and when trying to balance that with work, it's challenging. However, I am grateful to have received multiple scholarships and bursaries, which helped to alleviate my financial stress and allowed me to focus on my studies. These scholarships were a



College of Nursing Bachelor of Science in Nursing spring 2023 graduate Dilraj Singh (BSN'23).  
📷 Kylie Kelso

motivator for me to keep pushing and striving for excellence in my program."

Pushing through his studies came with great rewards. "My experience at USask has been enriching. The opportunity to learn from experienced faculty, who are experts in their field, and the amount of hands-on learning opportunities provided during labs and clinical, was invaluable in building my skills and competencies." Singh also became a

Canadian citizen the year he graduated, and accepted a position at Saskatoon's Royal University Hospital in cardiology.

"I am excited to join the front lines of health-care in Saskatchewan where I can apply my knowledge and skills to make a difference in patients' lives by helping them manage their health and promote healthy behaviours," said Singh.

## Did you know USask houses the historic Florence Nightingale medicine chest?



The historical Florence Nightingale medicine chest.  
📷 Dave Stobbe

Most nurses are familiar with Florence Nightingale (1820–1910), a British nurse, social reformer, statistician, and the founder of modern nursing. But did you know the College of Nursing is home to the Florence Nightingale medicine chest, a historical nursing artifact dating back to the Crimean War?

In 2023, the College of Nursing launched a dedicated section on the college website celebrating the artifact, which dates back to the 1850s (<https://nursing.usask.ca/about/florence-nightingale-medicine-chest.php>). The medicine chest came to Canada in 1912 and was donated to the University of Saskatchewan around 1956.

The five-foot display case is currently

located in the Health Sciences Building E-Wing fourth floor at the University of Saskatchewan Saskatoon Campus. Take note of the secret compartment at the back of the medicine chest that opens by a sliding wood panel. Maybe it concealed the dangerous drugs and poisons of the day!

We'll know even more about the chest soon—a research project titled, "Explore the Secrets and Provenance of the Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest in Canada," is currently underway by University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing researchers Dr. Arlene Kent-Wilkinson (PhD), Dr. Helen Vandenberg (PhD), and PhD candidate with the Department of History, Letitia Johnson.

## wahkohtowin symbol gifted to College of Nursing

Symbols are an important part of creating culturally safe spaces. They contribute to knowledge mobilization, and are an opportunity to create awareness and educate all peoples about Indigenous culture. In 1990, the Native Access Program to Nursing (NAPN), now the University of Saskatchewan Community of Aboriginal Nursing (UCAN), in collaboration with the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing, created a symbol to represent support and mentorship for Indigenous nursing students.

In 2020, when Dr. Holly Graham (PhD) was awarded Indigenous Research Chair in Nursing, she took the initiative to update this symbol. Now she has gifted the *wahkohtowin* symbol to the College of Nursing.

*wahkohtowin*, the name of Graham's Chair, is a Cree worldview that describes how we are all related and interconnected, and how the energy in our relationships can create transformation. At a gifting ceremony held in Saskatoon on September 18, 2023, Dr. Graham, Elder Louise Halfe, and Val Arnault-Pelletier presented the framed *wahkohtowin* symbol to USask College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter (DCur).


"It is my hope *wahkohtowin* will be embedded within nursing curriculum and all future nursing students will understand how we are all interconnected, interrelated, and the energy in all relationships can create transformation," said Graham. "Secondly, I hope all nursing students will integrate the Seven Sacred Teachings into their lives and their work. Animating these values will create a culture of caring and safety for all peoples."

"By gifting this symbol to the College of Nursing and the College incorporating it wherever possible, it is a welcome symbol to all Indigenous students and visitors, and demonstrates acceptance and a valuing of Indigenous peoples and their worldviews," said Graham, who moved from the College of Nursing to the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan in May 2023.



This symbol depicts cultural concepts to represent First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples. The Inuit peoples are represented by the Qulliq (oil lamp), Métis peoples are represented by the sash and beadwork, First Nation peoples are represented by the beadwork and the drum. Overarching cultural concepts include Family; Father Sky; Circle of Life and Mother Earth's heartbeat represented by the drum; Fire; Rocks are used in ceremonies and are considered sacred and animate; Eagle represents love, one of the Seven Sacred Teachings (humility, bravery, honesty, wisdom, truth, respect, and love). The Seven Sacred Teachings are values when embodied will promote harmony and a good life.



*wahkohtowin* symbol gifting in Saskatoon. (back l to r) Tammy Morrison, Elder Louise Halfe, Dr. Holly Graham, Dr. Solina Richter, Val Arnault-Pelletier, Kylie Kelso. (front l to r) Tania Bergen, Kim Lytle, Gina DiPaolo, Roxanne Cossette, and Cheryl Besse.  [Ali Abbas](#)

The updating process of the NAPN symbol included feedback from USask undergraduate Indigenous nursing students, the Indigenous Health Committee chaired by Dr. Veronica McKinney (MD), the USask College of Nursing Indigenization Sub-Committee chaired by Drs. Holly Graham and Hope Bilinski (PhD),

UCAN Indigenous Nursing Advisors, and the Indigenous Advisory Committee to the Indigenous Research Chair.

A *wahkohtowin* gifting took place at each nursing campus and distributed site in 2023 as part of the College of Nursing 85th Anniversary celebrations.



## Chief Nursing Officers visit USask

The College of Nursing welcomed Health Canada’s Chief Nursing Officer Dr. Leigh Chapman (PhD) and Government of Saskatchewan Chief Nursing Officer Liliana Canadic for a visit in 2023. Discussions focused on the current state of nursing education and the nursing profession in Saskatchewan.

Chapman toured the USask Prince Albert Campus, the nursing lab, and met with Prince Albert based faculty, staff, and students. She also met virtually with faculty, staff, and students from the Regina Campus and distributed sites. In Saskatoon, she had lunch with nursing leadership and met with College of Nursing faculty and staff. She toured the Clinical Learning Resource Centre during a Post-Degree Bachelor of Science in Nursing lab, and visited a class of second-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing students. Government of Saskatchewan Chief Nursing Officer Liliana Canadic joined Chapman in Saskatoon.


“It was an honour to show Dr. Chapman and Liliana our beautiful Saskatoon campus and state-of-the-art facilities and it was wonderful for Dr. Chapman to have the opportunity to travel to Prince Albert and tour the great new campus,” said College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter (DCur). “To spend time with these two incredible nurses, hear their plans for the future, and to have the opportunity to share our comments and concerns about nursing education and the students transition into the workforce, was a privilege.”



(l to r) USask College of Nursing Associate Dean Academic Dr. Mary Ellen Labrecque, Government of Saskatchewan Chief Nursing Officer Liliana Canadic, Health Canada Chief Nursing Officer Dr. Leigh Chapman, USask College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter, and USask College of Nursing previous Associate Dean, Distributed Nursing Education Dr. Lynn Jansen.  [Kylie Kelsa](#)

## Celebrating Huskie athletes



(l to r) Caleb Dolman, Haley Poier, Rayne Butler-Siemens, Dr. Solina Richter, Halle Krynowsky, and Hannah Lytle. Missing: Jade Houmphanh.  [Submitted](#)

The College of Nursing congratulates six nursing students honoured by Huskie Athletics for their academic achievements in 2022/2023:

Student	Degree	Sport
Rayne Butler-Siemens	Year 3 BSN	Women’s Cross Country
Caleb Dolman	Year 3 BSN	Men’s Hockey
Jade Houmphanh	Year 3 BSN	Women’s Soccer
Halle Krynowsky	Year 4 BSN	Soccer
Hannah Lytle	Year 4 BSN	Soccer
Haley Poier	Year 3 BSN	Women’s Volleyball

The U SPORTS Academic All-Canadians are U SPORTS athletes who achieve at least an 80 percent average on a minimum of 18 credit units.

“Nursing education can be challenging and time management is of utmost importance,” said College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter. “Rayne, Caleb, Jade, Halle, Hannah, and Haley not only balanced both the nursing workload and their sports schedules, but excelled in their studies. It was an honour to join all USask athletes at the Huskie Athletics U Sports Academic All-Canadians Breakfast, but a particular honour to celebrate our nursing students.”

## College of Nursing's Roxanne Cossette completes USask CBUS



Roxanne Cossette walked proudly across the stage at the University of Saskatchewan spring convocation to celebrate the completion of her Certificate in Business (CBUS) from the Edwards School of Business.

Cossette started at USask in the College of Engineering in 2007 and joined the College of Nursing in 2012. She decided to start her Certificate in Business at the Edwards School of Business in 2019, despite juggling life with a two-year-old. By spring 2021, her daughter was three and she'd added a six-month-old son to her family, but decided to continue her studies while on maternity leave. When she returned to work, she kept up her studies, while working full-time as an administrative assistant in the dean's office at the College of Nursing.

"It was quite challenging to balance work, kids, and school, especially during a pandemic as my children were dependent on me during the day," said Cossette. "There were a lot of late nights trying to complete assignments and study for exams, so I could work during the day and spend evenings and weekends with my family."

Today she's full of gratitude about the opportunity. "I would like to thank everyone who supported me throughout my program, in particular, the College of Nursing Faculty and Staff Development committee and CUPE 1975; without their support, I financially would not have been able to achieve this. I wanted to show my children that it's never too late to pursue your dreams."

Cossette has found ways to apply her studies to her position in nursing and plans to continue to use the knowledge she gained from her program to improve her work.

From everyone at the College of Nursing, congratulations!



College of Nursing Administrative Assistant Roxanne Cossette. Submitted

## Video series highlights Indigenous nursing alumni



College of Nursing alumna Cara Arcand (BSN'12). USask Media Production

Indigenous Research Chair in Nursing Dr. Holly Graham, in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing, launched a series of video interviews in 2023 with Indigenous alumni exploring the reasons why each became a nurse.

"Not everyone who becomes a registered nurse knows that nursing was for them," said Graham. "Some students take a little longer to find their path and their passion."

Often when nursing alumni are asked why they became a nurse, they reply because their mother or their grandmother or an aunt was a nurse. However, this is not always the case with Indigenous nursing alumni.

"Many USask nursing Indigenous graduates are the first members in their family to take post-secondary school and their reasons for selecting nursing as a career are diverse," says Graham.

Alumni featured in the short videos are from Indigenous communities across Saskatchewan. They are practicing registered nurses and nurse practitioners who completed their nursing programs between 1990 and 2020.

The series of 11 videos were launched as part of National Indigenous Peoples Day and are available on the College of Nursing YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@usasknursing>).

"USask Indigenous nursing alumni are doing wonderful work in their communities across this province and this country," said Graham.

"Putting together these videos was emotional, yet so inspirational. Every alumni member had a different story, but the passion they have for nursing, for helping their families, and for being role models within their communities really shines through. I hope these videos inspire more Indigenous people to consider nursing as a profession, as the career opportunities are truly endless."



## College of Nursing receives Bachelor of Science in Nursing program approval



College of Nursing BSN student at the University of Saskatchewan Prince Albert Campus. [Dave Stobbe](#)

The College of Nursing Bachelor of Science in Nursing program received the highest level of approval possible (seven-year approval rating) from the College of Registered Nurses of Saskatchewan (CRNS) in 2023. The CRNS Nursing Education Program Approval Committee oversees the approval for entry-level nursing programs in Saskatchewan.

Program approval promotes the safe practice of nurses by ensuring that programs align with entry-to-practice competencies and supports continuous evaluation and improvement of nursing education programs in Saskatchewan. Regulatory approval also ensures that BSN graduates meet the criteria to write the national licensing exam and to proceed to registration as registered nurses. The entry-to-practice competencies are inclusive of the need for the nursing profession to collaborate with all Indigenous peoples, healers, and Elders to address the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The review process with the CRNS Nursing Education Program Approval Committee is comprehensive and requires great attention to detail. It includes the submission of many documents, as well as a three-day site visit by assessors to the College of Nursing.

"I wish to express my gratitude to Associate Dean Academic Dr. Mary Ellen Labrecque (PhD) for her leadership and her team's dedication throughout the review process," said College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richer (DCur). "Their tireless efforts played a pivotal role in ensuring our success, alongside support from our faculty and staff."

## Dr. Roslyn Compton receives Provost's Teaching Award



College of Nursing Associate Professor Dr. Roslyn Compton. [Submitted](#)

Associate Professor Dr. Roslyn Compton (PhD) was awarded a Provost's College Award for Outstanding Teaching in 2023. This award recognizes an outstanding teacher in each College at the University of Saskatchewan. Compton is a prominent researcher focusing on gerontological nursing, a collaborative co-worker, a graduate student supervisor, and an exceptional mentor.

Faculty who teach alongside Compton are also enthusiastic about their teaching style, noting that "Compton creates a healthy academic learning-centered environment, models support for undergraduate and graduate student mentorship, and successfully employs a responsive learner-centered approach." Another colleague noted, "Dr. Compton values continuous quality improvement, evidence-based and data-informed decision-making, and collaborating to facilitate learning change in their nurse, nurse teacher, or nurse researcher roles."

Compton completed their Bachelor of Health Science at Western Sydney University in 1992, Masters of Education at the University of New England in January 2006, and Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Alberta in 2014. Compton joined USask College of Nursing in July 2017 and holds an adjunct senior lecturer appointment with the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Australia.

The entire College offers its congratulations. "Dr. Compton's commitment to academia and their passion to provide mentorship for and build relationships with their colleagues, fellow researchers, and students is exemplary," said Dr. Solina Richter (DCur), Dean of the College of Nursing. "The College of Nursing is fortunate to have Dr. Compton as an associate professor."

## USask College of Nursing intensifies research focus

By Elizabeth Ireland

Nursing is a rapidly changing profession and research is an important way to incorporate the patient experience into future health-care. The College of Nursing at the University of Saskatchewan is highly committed to the university's intent to "be the university the world needs." As part of its Plan 2025 strategies, USask College of Nursing is expanding its research impact — focusing on research that will drive improvements in health-care practices, especially around primary and patient-centred care.

With more than 10,585 undergraduate students, 268 graduate students, and 10,591 alumni at the end of 2023, the College of Nursing has a large scope. Currently, 16.7 per cent of students have self-declared as Indigenous. Plus, the College offers a variety of graduate programs for registered nurses to keep learning and advance their careers.

Dr. Louise Racine (PhD) is the College of Nursing's associate dean, research and graduate studies. A registered nurse herself, Racine earned her BSc and MSc in nursing from l'Université Laval and her PhD from the University of British Columbia.

Racine has been a faculty member at USask for 18 years and she has taught both undergraduate and graduate courses. Her own academic research delves into immigrant, refugee and Indigenous health, cultural safety, marginalized populations, and providing better health outcomes.

"I'm interested in how nursing and health issues intersect with race, gender, and social class to affect equitable access and use of health-care services," says Racine.

Racine describes the College's Master of Nursing Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner degree as its "flagship graduate nursing program." She says the nurse practitioner program has a large number of applicants from across Canada and applications keep increasing each year.

"The internationalization of our graduate programs is aligned with the mission and vision of the University of Saskatchewan," says Racine.

With a laser-sharp focus on research, the College has three signature research areas

based on the strengths it has identified. These are innovations in health systems and education, community-engaged health and nursing research, and health equity research.

Innovations in health systems and education research include rural and remote nursing practice, virtual reality as a teaching strategy, enhancing health service delivery, and the history of health systems.

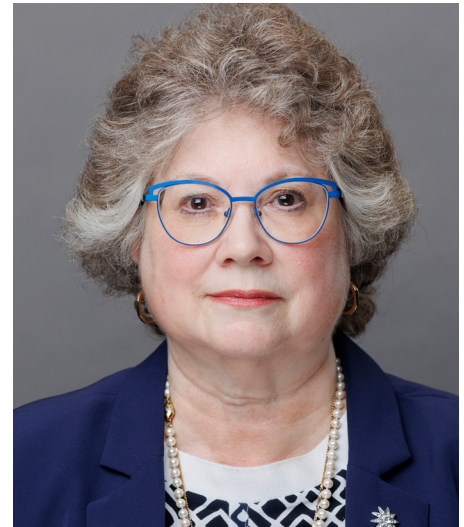
Community-engaged health and nursing research topics include mental health and well-being, addressing health inequities, substance use prevention and dementia patient care. Associate professors, Drs. Jill Bally (PhD) and Shelley Spurr (PhD) are examining resiliency and wellness among Indigenous and Métis populations living with Type 2 Diabetes. Particularly after the difficult years of the COVID-19 pandemic, these topics are top-of-mind for many people.


Health equity research topics include equal partnership in health-care, pediatric pain and palliative care, improving immigrant, refugee and Indigenous health and wellness, food security and quality housing (especially in rural and remote communities). In many ways, Saskatchewan is an ideal province to research health equity and patients with more complex problems.

USask's Prince Albert campus increases opportunities for students to access learning in a city that often serves as a gateway to northern Saskatchewan's rural and remote communities. The College of Nursing is one of the few USask faculties that offers a full program out of the Prince Albert campus.

The Prince Albert campus also acts as a research base for some faculty members. For example, associate professor Dr. Geoffrey Maina (PhD) focuses on health and social priorities and community driven interventions to address health disparities. Also in Prince Albert, assistant professor Dr. Sithokozile Maposa (PhD) is doing research focused on Indigenous women's health.

As Canada experiences a shortage of nurses in community and hospital settings, nurses are faced with solving complex transdisciplinary problems that impact the health of patients and communities. "I'm proud of the work we are doing and look towards a bright future," concludes Racine.



College of Nursing Associate Dean Research and Graduate Studies Dr. Louise Racine.  Dave Stobbe

“The internationalization of our graduate programs is aligned with the mission and vision of the University of Saskatchewan.”



## Strengthening communities of care for persons living with dementia



By Brooke Kleiboer

Living with dementia or being the person's caregiver can be a daunting experience for all involved. University of Saskatchewan PhD student Mariana dos Santos Ribeiro hopes to find the best way to strengthen community support systems for a better quality of life for persons living with dementia and their families.

Making the decision that a person needs to enter a long-term care home is emotionally difficult for individuals and families. Often, it is a choice made when care and support are more than what is offered or available in the home and community.

dos Santos Ribeiro, a graduate student in USask College of Nursing and a researcher within the BetterLTC research team, has first-hand experience with the challenges of living with dementia and being a caregiver. At the age of 11, her grandparents came to live in the house next door to her family's in Brazil. Her mother became the primary caregiver for her grandfather, who lived with blindness, and her grandmother, who lived with dementia for more than a decade.

"I have learned from a young age what it means to care for older adults with special care needs and persons living with dementia," dos Santos Ribeiro said. "I have recognized both the joys and challenges of caregiving."

After becoming a community nurse and moving to Saskatchewan in 2021, dos Santos Ribeiro began volunteering at the Crossmount Memory Café, a social and recreational support group designed for persons living with dementia and their families. The stories and experiences she learned about on the job became crucial to her research interest.

"We are unprepared, individually and as a society, to care for persons living with dementia," said dos Santos Ribeiro. "It is critical we, as members of the community of Saskatchewan, know how to be a kind and supportive presence to persons living with dementia and their families."

dos Santos Ribeiro is developing a research project that will look at how caregiver supports can be enhanced within one's



University of Saskatchewan PhD student Mariana dos Santos Ribeiro hopes to find the best way to strengthen community support systems for a better quality of life for persons living with dementia and their families.

Submitted

own community, reducing the resource burden and extending the time span that a person living with dementia may be able to continue living in their home community.

She said hearing from and working directly with people in communities – including health-care experts, people living with dementia, and caregivers – is integral to developing community care approaches that work and are sustainable for people who need them.

"Understanding that community care is also part of the health-care system, that investments in this area diminish expenditures, is necessary for strengthening care that is responsive to the wishes of people living with dementia and their families," she said.

How does one begin to examine what types of community supports are needed? dos Santos Ribeiro said that telling stories and listening to each other's stories is the most important part of her work. She will begin listening to the stories of families impacted by living with dementia as the first part of her research data collection. The project will be supervised by Dr. Roslyn M. Compton (PhD), associate professor in the College of Nursing.

dos Santos Ribeiro will explore how

people living with dementia feel in their communities, what kind of support they feel they receive, and what improvements may be necessary to address gaps. The conversations will include sharing memories through photographs, other objects, and activities that have meaning to the study participants. The goal is to change the way communities engage with persons living with dementia, and to use their stories to inspire social change and create new policies that support this outcome.

The BetterLTC research team plans to attend to the stories and experiences shared by persons living with dementia and their families to co-identify gaps and strengths to bring a change in culture and policy that builds "strong age and ability-friendly communities in Saskatchewan."

"As a child, I wanted to change the world with big hopes," dos Santos Ribeiro said. "Later, I got into a more introspective phase, reflecting on how I could change myself to be a better person and nurse. Now, I understand I can be a catalyst for change within communities and health-care systems."

The research is supported by the USask Dean's Scholarship and the Judy Gajadharsingh Award for Graduate Student Excellence in Dementia/Alzheimer Research from USask College of Nursing.

## College of Nursing faculty celebrate tenure and promotion

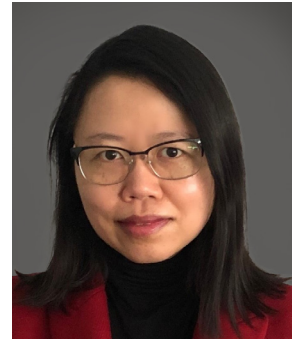
The College of Nursing congratulates the following faculty on achieving significant career milestones in 2023.


### Tenure

**Dr. Tania Kristoff (PhD)** – Assistant Professor – Academic Programming, Prince Albert Campus

**Dr. Hua Li (PhD)** – Associate Professor, Saskatoon Campus

**Dr. Schroder Sattar (PhD)** – Associate Professor, Regina Campus



College of Nursing faculty (l to r) Drs. Tania Kristoff, Hua Li, and Schroder Sattar.  [College of Nursing](#)

### Promotion to Associate Professor

**Dr. Hua Li (PhD)** – Saskatoon Campus

**Dr. Schroder Sattar (PhD)** – Regina Campus

Congratulations to our faculty on these successes! As College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter (DCur) notes, “These achievements are important career milestones recognizing the commitment our faculty are making to the professoriate. Our faculty work incredibly hard on their teaching, research, and scholarship activities in order to achieve this success.”

## Changes to pre-professional year of study

The College of Nursing is in the process of revising the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) curriculum. Changes to the pre-professional year of nursing were approved by University of Saskatchewan Senate in 2023 and the new course requirements were implemented for students applying for the fall 2024 intake.

The USask BSN requires students take 10 pre-professional year courses before applying to the College of Nursing, where they then complete three years of nursing theory and practice learning. The 1+3 format of the BSN program is not changing, but some of the 10 pre-professional year courses were altered to better prepare prospective students to enter the new BSN curriculum.


“The changes to the pre-professional year courses will benefit prospective students in a number of ways,” said Associate Dean Academic Dr. Mary Ellen Labrecque (PhD). “Changing some of the required pre-professional year courses also means that students throughout Saskatchewan will have the opportunity to access all 10 courses in their home communities, meaning more students in Saskatchewan can consider studying nursing in the province,” she adds.

The adjustment of the pre-professional year courses also responds to the changing scope of nursing practice. “The revised pre-professional year is aligned with foundational nursing knowledge essential to meeting professional entry to practice competencies and standards for practice as registered nurses (RNs),” said Labrecque.

Other benefits of the updated course requirements include the addition of a nursing anatomy class that will be a good foundation for upper-level nursing courses, and a wider variety of content in the first year, including prospective students' first ever nursing class. As well, a broader selection of courses that are in high demand means students will have more classes to choose from to fit their schedules.

Prospective students may continue to take their first year of pre-professional year courses through the University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon and Prince Albert campuses), University of Regina, Northlands College, Lakeland College, Suncrest College, North West College, and other regional colleges in Saskatchewan. The remaining three years of the USask BSN program are offered at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon and Prince Albert or at one of the College of Nursing distributed sites in La Ronge, Île-à-la-Crosse, Yorkton, Lloydminster, and North Battleford starting fall 2024.



Bachelor of Science in Nursing student at the University of Saskatchewan Saskatoon Campus.  [Dave Stobbe](#)



## Nursing graduate competes in Olympic qualifiers

Nursing graduate Alexis Ashworth (BSN'23) skipped her spring graduation, but for good reason—she was training in an attempt to qualify to represent Canada in women's Olympic weightlifting at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, France.


Ashworth started Olympic weightlifting in fall 2019, after being introduced to the sport through CrossFit. Despite the pandemic shut-downs, she continued to train at home, and resumed competing in summer 2021. She won a silver medal in women's weightlifting at the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Ashworth started her Bachelor of Science in Nursing program in fall 2017 at the Regina Campus. In her third year, she decided to go part-time in her studies to accommodate weightlifting.

While training and studying was a challenge, Ashworth enjoyed her time as a BSN student. "The best part of the nursing program was completing my final practicum in Estevan at St. Joseph's Hospital in emergency. I gained a lot of confidence as a nurse from this experience, had freedom to use my critical thinking skills, and I felt like a working member of the team. That is what nursing is: a team." Ashworth is excited about working as a registered nurse someday, and is interested in exploring areas such as travel nursing, emergency, cardiology, and psychiatric nursing.


"I am looking forward to being a small part of someone's toughest days," she said. "I understand what it is like to be on the other side of things as a family in the hospital. I know nurses have a very difficult job to do, but if I can be a small part of that, I know I will have a lot of purpose and fulfilment in my career."



University of Saskatchewan Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduate Alexis Ashworth (BSN'23).  Submitted

## From Nigeria to Canada: a student journey



Bachelor of Science in Nursing spring 2023 graduate Ucheoma Oji (BSN'23).  Breanna Pochipinski

Ucheoma Oji (BSN'23) came to Canada to take her nursing degree, and has decided to stay and work as a registered nurse in Saskatoon.

Choosing the University of Saskatchewan for its open welcome of international students, reputation, and affordable tuition, Oji came to Saskatoon in 2019, after finishing high school in Nigeria in 2017 and taking two years off.

"I had a really great experience at USask. Throughout my program, I acquired so much knowledge about health-care and how to care for patients in different settings. My favourite part of the program was the hands-on experience learned during clinical, where I got to care for patients by transferring the knowledge learned in class into the clinical setting."

While she says the workload was "intense," she now recommends the program to others. "I absolutely encourage anyone who is interested to apply. The workload is tiresome, but we're dealing with human lives and the learning process is worth it in the end."

Oji has made many friends while at USask and said that, besides the weather, coming to Canada has been an amazing journey. "I am very excited to become a registered nurse," said Oji. "I look forward to taking care of patients, and being a part of their health journey."

Ucheoma knows becoming a registered nurse requires a commitment to lifelong learning.

"I look forward to working with the health-care team, growing professionally, and adding to my skills and competencies. In the future, I am considering returning to school to become a nurse practitioner."

## USask Nursing student aims to advocate for patients



College of Nursing Bachelor of Science in Nursing student Jenna Masey Bear.  
 Submitted

By Shannon Bolaschuk

Jenna Masey Bear decided to pursue a degree at the University of Saskatchewan after working alongside nurses for 11 years in her job as a continuing care aide.

"I always desired to be more involved in-patient care by actively supporting, advocating, promoting, intervening, and aiding in the healing process," said Bear. "While there are many other reasons, I really want to help and support people through some of their most vulnerable moments in their lives."

Bear is from the Mosquito Grizzly Bear's Head Lean Man First Nation and was raised by her kohkom (grandmother) and her late mooshom (grandfather) at Little Pine First Nation.

"Growing up in the community and by my grandparents, I was raised to honour and respect my traditional roots," she said. "It is here where these core values, morals, and beliefs enabled me to have continued

faith in my educational journey, and continued to motivate me to keep trying, despite continuous obstacles I had to face throughout the years to be where I currently am."

In 2023, Bear was honoured for her leadership at the Indigenous Student Achievement Awards Ceremony. The leadership award recognizes students who have demonstrated exemplary leadership on or off campus.

"I was extremely happy, thankful, and to be honest, stunned," said Bear, when asked how she felt after receiving the good news about the award.

In May, Bear and two other students travelled to St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, to present at the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) Biennial Canadian Nursing Education Conference to promote anti-discriminatory pedagogy in nursing education. Bear was known as a student who showed exemplary leadership and diplomacy in the College of Nursing and within the larger community, including her advocacy work to bring awareness to issues around homelessness, addictions, and mental health in honour of her late brother.

"As a student mentor and as the Saskatchewan Nursing Student Association - Saskatoon (SNSA) Indigenous representative, I really wanted to help others who may need additional support, guidance, and resources to aid in their educational journey," said Bear. "As someone who can relate to others and provide support, I believe I can be a great asset as I have had to overcome a lot of barriers and obstacles in my nursing journey."

Bear noted that it took her nearly eight years to complete the four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing program because she took time off from her studies to care for her brother. She believes sharing her personal story can help others.

"In nursing school, I faced plenty of obstacles and moments that forever changed my life, such as holding my brother's hand while he was on life support, being with him during his heart procedures while juggling clinicals and school. In my final year of school, I grieved the loss of my late brother, who lost his battle to mental health and addictions," she said.

"Then, I took care of my mother, who was facing her own health concerns in the intensive care unit for four months. It is here where we faced a family crisis due to the loss of my beloved brother, where I took on the responsibilities of raising my little sister. I believe my story can resonate with others."


Despite feeling defeated during those difficult times, Bear said she stayed strong and continued to believe that she could overcome "whatever life has to throw at me." She now aims to "help prevent others suffering with their own obstacles and let them know that they are not alone in this fight and that there is additional support out there."

"My advice for future nursing students is to not give up. "Keep trying; don't let failure scare you or stop you from achieving your goals."



## Historic fall nursing convocation



University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing Nurse Practitioner graduates gather at Fall Convocation with College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter and Associate Dean Academic Dr. Mary Ellen Labrecque.  [Breanna Pochipinski](#)


The College of Nursing celebrated its largest class of Saskatchewan-based nurse practitioner graduates to date at the fall 2023 convocation. The class also included the largest number of self-declared Indigenous nurse practitioner grads in college history.

Fall convocation celebrated graduates from a number of nursing programs including Master of Nursing – Thesis, Master of Nursing – Professional Practice, Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner, and Postgraduate Degree Specialization Certificate Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner.


Melissa Mish from Kenosee Lake, Sask., is one of the NP fall graduates. “I accepted a nurse practitioner position in a rural community,” she said. “I strive to provide my current and future patients with the highest quality of care and utmost compassion.” She recalls her student experience fondly. “Getting to meet so many wonderful nurse practitioner students from across the country, we all support one another,” she said. “We bounce different ideas and questions off each other, which is especially helpful going forward in our new careers as NPs.”

Janet Luimes, academic program lead for the nurse practitioner program at the College of Nursing, is pleased with the increase in NP grads. “The number of nurse practitioner students has grown substantially over the past decade and graduating 32 new NPs, 16 of whom are from Saskatchewan, is something to celebrate. Each graduate will make a difference in the community where they practice.”



Each graduate will make a difference in the community where they practice. 

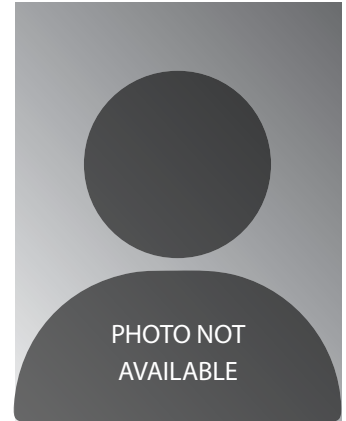


College of Nursing fall 2023 Nurse Practitioner graduate Melissa Mish (MN-NP'23).  [Submitted](#)



## Four nursing students receive USask Indigenous Student Achievement Awards

The College of Nursing is proud to announce we had four highly deserving students receive University of Saskatchewan Indigenous Student Achievement Awards in 2023. The awards are announced annually during Indigenous Achievement Week, and celebrate Métis, First Nations, and Inuit students. This year's winners included Jenna Masey Bear, Jessica Harper, Tanis Moberly, and Maddy Soles.



Submitted

**JENNA MASEY BEAR**, from Mosquito Grizzly Bear's Head Lean Man First Nation and raised in Little Pine First Nation, was a Bachelor of Science in Nursing student at the Saskatoon Campus at the time of this award. She was recognized with a leadership award.

Bear enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program after working as a continuing care aid for 10 years. She was the Indigenous representative on the Saskatchewan Nursing Student Association in Saskatoon, worked with College of Nursing advisors to host mentorship events, and volunteered to assist with college recruitment events. Bear was both a mentor and presenter with the Brave Spaces project, a pilot project to provide support for students, as they navigate their first clinical experience in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program.

**JESSICA HARPER**, from Onion Lake Cree Nation, was a student in the Master of Nursing Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner program at the time of this award. She was recognized with an academic achievement award.

Harper began working as a registered nurse in her home community in 2018. Her ongoing commitment to Indigenous health and education led her to enroll in the Master of Nursing Nurse Practitioner program at USask in 2021. Since beginning her program, Harper excelled academically. After graduation, she hopes to work as a nurse practitioner within her community.

**TANIS MOBERLY**, from Birch Narrows Dene Nation was a Bachelor of Science in Nursing student at the Saskatoon Campus at the time of this award. She was recognized with a leadership award.

Throughout her program, Moberly embraced her culture and excelled at sharing Indigenous ways of knowing and perspectives with her peers, her instructors, and at the school where she completed her community health placement.

Moberly is consistently reflecting on her learning and striving for continuous improvement in her work. She presented at the 2023 Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing conference in Newfoundland, with a presentation titled, "It's in my DNA: How an Indigenous nursing student found their voice in community health nursing."

**MADDY SOLES**, from the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan, is a current Bachelor of Science in Nursing student at the Prince Albert Campus. She was recognized with a resiliency award.

Soles demonstrated resilience and growth in the following areas: confidence, organization, balancing her personal and work life, and academic achievement. Upon completing her BSN degree, Soles wants to nurse in her home community of Prince Albert, which will allow her to serve in the community that played an important role in raising her to be a hardworking, compassionate, and dedicated person.

"Congratulations to Jenna, Jessica, Tanis, and Maddy," said College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter. "I am proud of all our Indigenous nursing students' success, but in particular these students, who are being recognized for their academic achievements and for being leaders both among their peers and in their communities."



## Combating diabetes using community strengths, aided by USask research



(l to r) College of Nursing Associate and Professors Drs. Shelley Spurr and Jill Bally.  College of Nursing

### By Dr. Sarah Oosman (PhD)

A University of Saskatchewan research team is working directly with Indigenous communities throughout Saskatchewan to improve methods for preventing Type 2 Diabetes. College of Nursing's Drs. Shelley Spurr (PhD) and Jill Bally (PhD) have teamed up with lead researcher Dr. Sarah Oosman (PhD), acting director of USask's School of Rehabilitation Science, on a project titled "Strong Bodies, Spirits, Minds, and Voices" Privileging Indigenous Knowledge to Guide Pediatric Type 2 Diabetes Prevention with First Nations and Métis Communities in Saskatchewan." Dr. Amanda Froehlich Chow (PhD) from the School of Public Health, and Knowledge Keepers Gilbert Kewistep and Margaret Larocque are also contributors.

The goal of the project is to connect directly with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth, and families in Indigenous communities to co-create and implement an Indigenous-driven health promotion intervention toolkit for preventing Type 2 Diabetes, that is grounded in Indigenous world view. "We want to reframe our approach to health promotion and wellness research

in ways that are relevant and meaningful to Indigenous communities in order to positively impact and influence wholistic wellness among Indigenous youth and their families, particularly as Type 2 Diabetes continues to grow," says Dr. Oosman.

According to Diabetes Canada, age-standardized prevalence rates of diabetes in the country are significantly higher in the Indigenous population due to a number of factors including "Canada's historic and continued colonial policies, such as residential schools, Indian hospitals, and the '60s Scoop; lack of access to healthy, nutritious, and affordable food; and a strong genetic risk for Type 2 Diabetes."

Diabetes is prevalent at a rate of 17.2 per cent among First Nations peoples living on-reserve, 12.7 per cent among First Nations peoples living off-reserve, and 9.9 per cent among Métis peoples – compared to a rate of only five per cent among the general population.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and community leaders including community members with Type-2 Diabetes lived experience participated in numerous think

tank sessions to help create a comprehensive funding proposal that was informed by First Nations and Métis knowledge, expertise, values, culture, and language.

The proposal calls for culture-based health promotion interventions designed to wholistically prevent Type 2 Diabetes among Indigenous youth using a preliminary *mitos miyoyawin* (Cree for "tree of wellness") framework developed by think tank participants and informed by Indigenous knowledge.

"We have built relationships with several Knowledge Keepers who remind us that answers are already in the communities, and we must create space and opportunities to bring this knowledge to the foreground," Oosman said.

Oosman and her team were awarded nearly \$2 million in funding over the next five years from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to continue their research with current community partners and eventually expand it across diverse Indigenous communities throughout Saskatchewan.

Île-à-la-Crosse and James Smith Cree Nation are the first two communities to partner on this project. Several other communities, including Clearwater River Déné Nation, La Loche, Sweetgrass First Nation, Little Pine First Nation, and Poundmaker Cree Nation, have also started engaging as partners with the project.

"This program continues to support the community and will enhance our ability to address Type 2 Diabetes among our [Métis] people, with thoughtful consideration of unique, historical food accessibility realities in the Saskatchewan north," said Nap Gardiner from Île-à-la-Crosse.

Margaret Larocque, a lead Knowledge Keeper originally from Waterhen Lake First Nation who is guiding the project, noted the importance of addressing diabetes for

children in Indigenous communities.

“Diabetes is an epidemic with Indigenous people, and we really need a lot of education and prevention for kids,” she said.

Indigenous youth have also been involved with the project in order to bring an intergenerational focus and to have their perspectives integrated throughout the research program.

“I honestly think it’s a great opportunity to be doing this. We need more opportunities to connect young people to have conversations and learn from one another. We need to help other [young people] recognize the symptoms so diabetes can be

controlled,” said Chloe, a Cree youth from northern Saskatchewan.

Early intervention is a sentiment mirrored by many involved in the program’s development. “This project is important so we can work with young people on the overall management of diabetes, including nutrition, physical activity, and Traditional Knowledge from our Elders,” said Mike Marion, health director for James Smith Cree Nation. “Our Elders have knowledge from our history of living on the land and off the land, dealing with different diseases, how they dealt with diabetes and used traditional medicines, which is tied into a healthy body and healthy mind.”

While the focus of this project revolves around the prevention of Type 2 Diabetes among Indigenous youth in partner communities, Oosman expressed optimism that the framework being developed could have more applications and provide more culturally responsive framing relevant to Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan and beyond, for future health-care research.

“We have this great opportunity to come together to work as a collective to find the middle ground together as a team and with communities, and build something that can impact health equity and future health and wellness,” Oosman said.



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## NURSE team presents research at international conference



Research Coordinator Caitlin Olauson and Research Facilitator Robin Thurmeier at the National Organization of Research Development Professionals annual conference. Submitted

In spring 2023, College of Nursing research facilitator Robin Thurmeier and research coordinator Caitlin Olauson travelled to present their project “Exploring the role of research development in building a strong culture of research: Co-creating with researchers and research development professionals through participatory diagramming” at the National Organization of Research Development Professionals (NORDP) annual conference.

Thurmeier and Olauson are members of the Nursing Unit for Research and Scholarship Excellence (NURSE) at the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing, which provides supports for nursing researchers to advance their research and scholarship activities.

With funding from NORDP, Thurmeier and Olauson travelled to Crystal City, Arlington, Virginia to present their project, which was a fantastic opportunity to share their insights. “Caitlin and I felt this was an excellent chance to present to a room full of international research development professionals, who could also benefit from our on-going work on this project,” said Thurmeier. Their presentation covered how research development works within the context of a Canadian U15 university, discussed their ongoing NORDP and InfoReady funded project, and engaged in discussion with session participants asking them the same research questions they asked others as part of their study.

“The conference was an tremendous opportunity for us to present what we have learned from this project so far and to also gather feedback from other like-minded individuals,” said Olauson, adding that information sharing was a bonus as well. “It was helpful to hear what other research development professionals experience in their organizations, what barriers they face within their institutions, and what their values and beliefs were regarding research.”

## USask to deliver nursing program at Lloydminster’s Lakeland College



At the official signing event in Lloydminster. (l to r) Tina Shaw (provincial lab manager, USask Nursing), Colleen Young (MLA Lloydminster), Maddex Neufeld (2nd year USask Nursing student), Jackie Bender (dean of university transfer and foundational learning, Lakeland College), Mark Tomtene (director of operations and strategic planning, USask Nursing), Dr. Alice Wainwright-Stewart (president and CEO, Lakeland College), Dr. Solina Richter (dean, USask Nursing), Louisa Burry (2nd year USask Nursing student), Dr. Lynn Jansen (previous associate dean distributed learning, USask Nursing), and Dr. Mary Ellen Labrecque (associate dean academic, USask Nursing). Cecelia Foster

The University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing is now offering its Bachelor of Science in Nursing program in Lloydminster, Alta., in partnership with Lakeland College.

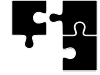
Prior to the partnership, students located in the Lloydminster area relocated to a USask campus after completing their first pre-professional year in the university transfer program at Lakeland College. Now, following their first year of university transfer at Lakeland, students can complete the remaining three years of the nursing program through USask, while staying in Lloydminster.

“We are excited to enter this partnership with Lakeland College, as it enables us to deliver high quality nursing education in another community,” said College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter. “Students in Lloydminster who may not have considered nursing education in the past will now have access to learn where they live, as a result of this collaboration.”

Students working towards their BSN degree in Lloydminster participate in classroom learning at Lakeland College, while connected virtually with Nursing professors and other USask nursing students across Saskatchewan. Local nurse educators from Lloydminster and the surrounding area teach in-person labs in modern Musgrave Agencies Nursing Labs provided by Lakeland College. The majority of clinical placements will occur at a variety of local agencies.

“The collaboration between Lakeland and USask is welcome news for our students and our region as the need for registered nurses continues to grow,” said Lakeland College Dean of University Transfer and Foundational Learning Jackie Bender. “New degree completion pathways that allow our students to stay in the community while receiving a robust educational and campus life experience is a priority for Lakeland. We’re thrilled to see our students and community benefit from this partnership.”

## Students launch Nursing Graduate Student Association



Because our population base is spread out across Canada, we want to be able to be a representative for them, to advocate for their needs, and to work with the College of Nursing administration to see what resources would be most helpful.



Why work alone when you can work together? At heart, this was the thinking bringing together a handful of nursing graduate students to form the Nursing Graduate Student Association (NGSA) in fall 2023. When students are coming from a learn-where-you-live program, or conducting graduate work independently, the students saw the opportunity as one where they could share academic advice, mentor fellow students, and find ways to connect socially.

“We had been thinking there’s something missing in terms of collegiality, the social aspect of graduate studies within USask College of Nursing,” said Catherine Lavigne, the NGSA’s vice-chair administrative and communications liaison. “Studies can be isolating, especially when you are full-time from home at your desk taking courses. You want to get to know your classmates, to get involved.”

After coming together officially in the fall, the NGSA now meets monthly on Fridays over video conference. The association not only holds executive roles, but also ensures inclusive representation by incorporating delegates from each graduate program cohort, as well as invites students to hold special chairs to advocate for a broad range of equity-seeking groups.

After becoming recognized and ratified by the university’s Graduate Student Association, the NGSA started by initiating a student satisfaction survey to send out to the over 200 graduate students at the College of Nursing and learn what their members want in terms of events, support, and representation. They also created a mentor network to connect new students with students further along in their program for advice sharing.

Lavigne, who lives in Winnipeg and is now in her clinical rotation year of the Nurse Practitioner program, has already taken on a mentor role for a fellow student, noting that new students often have questions around placement opportunities. As she helps to develop the NGSA, Lavigne says she hopes the association grows even stronger in terms of its ability to represent nursing graduate students and advocate for their needs.

“Because our population base is spread out across Canada, we want to be able to be a representative for them, to advocate for their needs, and to work with the College of Nursing administration to see what resources would be most helpful.”


To learn more about the NGSA, or to get involved, please visit <https://nursing.usask.ca/get-involved/ngsa.php>.





## World University Services of Canada scholarship brings student to USask Nursing



Bachelor of Science in Nursing student Martha Korok with College of Nursing Associate Professor Cheryl Besse.  Submitted

“

The emphasis placed on communication, empathy, critical thinking, and the development of interpersonal skills in nursing school is often underestimated until one is faced with situations that necessitate these skills. ”

Before receiving the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) Scholarship through the Student Refugee Program (SRP), College of Nursing student Martha Korok had not heard of Saskatoon. “I became aware of the University of Saskatchewan on the day I received my placement letter,” said Korok.

Korok attended Morneau Shepell High School in Kenya, where she successfully completed her studies in 2018. Her strong academic performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) made her eligible for the WUSC refugee students' scholarship.

“After students are accepted in the WUSC SRP program, WUSC shares the names of scholarship recipients with various universities in Canada,” explained Korok. “Students are then subsequently placed in the university where they have been accepted. The selection process is based on

the top three programs students indicate when applying for the scholarship.”

This brought Korok to the University of Saskatchewan College of Arts and Science in 2021, where she completed her pre-professional year of nursing studies. “Initially, the experience of coming to Canada was filled with excitement, as is natural for anyone to feel enthusiastic about relocating to a new place,” reflected Korok. “However, the experience became challenging when I arrived in Saskatoon during winter and I began to feel the added difficulty of living so far away from my family.”

As Korok settles into Saskatoon, she is excelling in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. Besides the WUSC SRP scholarship to come to USask, she also received the Mary Hallet Undergraduate Scholarship from the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW).

Korok is enjoying her time in the BSN program. “The nursing program at USask has been instrumental in allowing me to apply the theoretical knowledge I have acquired in real health-care settings. The emphasis placed on communication, empathy, critical thinking, and the development of interpersonal skills in nursing school is often underestimated until one is faced with situations that necessitate these skills.”

Upon completion of her program, Korok plans to stay in Saskatoon for a few years. Her long-use goal is to return to South Sudan to use her acquired expertise and experiences to positively contribute to her home country. “I recognize the importance of gaining valuable nursing experience and expanding my academic qualifications before embarking on this long-term goal,” said Korok.

## Celebrating Nursing students with over \$315,000 in awards


Undergraduate and graduate University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing students were awarded over \$315,994 in student scholarships, awards, and bursaries in 2023. Eighty-nine USask Nursing students received a combined 119 awards.

“The awards presented at the annual student awards ceremony truly change the lives of nursing students, one student at a time,” said College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter. “Receiving these scholarships and bursaries is a testament to the dedication these students have made to their studies.”

“Thanks to the generosity of our donors, these students have one less thing to worry about while concentrating on their studies,” said Dr. Richter. “Without our donors, this would not be possible. Donor support is instrumental in student success and for that, we thank our donors.”

Congratulations to the 2023 College of Nursing award recipients! For a complete list of all recipients, please visit the College of Nursing website (<https://nursing.usask.ca/documents/awards/2023ceremonylistofwinners.pdf>).



University of Saskatchewan nursing students alongside donors and College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter at annual College of Nursing student award ceremony.  [Kylie Kelso](#)

## Government of Saskatchewan expands communities eligible for student loan forgiveness

Source: Government of Saskatchewan

The provincial government has expanded the Saskatchewan Loan Forgiveness for Nurses and Nurse Practitioners program to five mid-sized communities. The newly eligible communities are Prince Albert,

Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Yorkton, and The Battlefords. Notably, many of these are communities where the College of Nursing offers programming.


Nurses and nurse practitioners who started employment in the newly designated communities on or after January 1, 2023, may be eligible to receive up to \$20,000 of Saskatchewan student loan debt forgiveness.

This initiative supports Saskatchewan’s Health Human Resources Action Plan by providing incentives to work in areas of the province with high recruitment needs. Previously, eligible applicants must have been working in a designated rural or remote community with a population of less than 10,000. Since the program began in 2013, over 550 nurses have received nearly \$1.7 million in student loan forgiveness.

“This initiative will not only alleviate financial burden, but also encourage myself and other nursing students to see a future where we can stay and serve our community of Prince Albert as registered nurses,” said University of Saskatchewan nursing student Precious Alozie.

“We need every one of our nurses to serve the needs of residents across Saskatchewan, through their skill, their leadership, and their compassion,” Advanced Education Minister Gordon Wyant said. “This expansion will help with recruitment and retention efforts and is a positive step forward in addressing the need for more nurses in our communities.”




College of Nursing student Precious Alozie from the University of Saskatchewan Prince Albert Campus speaks at the event highlighting what the expansion of the program means to her.  [Submitted](#)



## A small difference can change the world



The NURS 405.3/805.3 course emphasizes the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).  United Nations

By Shannon Boklaschuk

A new course at the University of Saskatchewan is inspiring nursing students to learn more about how they can support ecological health for the benefit of people and the planet.

The innovative College of Nursing course, NURS 405.3/805.3: Environmental Sustainability in Health Care, was first offered in 2023 as an introduction to planetary health and environmental sustainability practices for nurses and other health-care professionals.

The course was developed by Dr. Wanda Martin (PhD), a planetary health nurse who is passionate about creating a healthy lifestyle and growing food while supporting local, small-scale farmers who engage in ecologically sound practices. Martin saw a need for such a course at post-secondary institutions across the country and created NURS 405.3/805.3 as a result.

“From a nursing perspective, I belong to the Canadian Association of Nurses for the Environment and there’s very little nursing education preparing nurses for how to nurse, or what you can expect, as the climate changes,” said Martin, an associate professor in the College of Nursing.

“What are we going to expect in terms of health changes, and what is our role as defenders of social justice? How do we

advocate for a healthy environment as part of our advocacy package?”

Martin noted that during the summer of 2023, the health of people around the world was negatively impacted by environmental factors, such as wildfires and heat waves. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), climate change is directly contributing to humanitarian emergencies from heat waves, wildfires, floods, tropical storms, and hurricanes, which are increasing in scale, frequency, and intensity. In fact, research shows 3.6 billion people already live in areas highly susceptible to climate change.

Martin said nurses are often envisioned by members of society as taking on individual bedside roles in health systems and patient care. However, she said nurses are trusted health-care professionals who have important roles to play at the community level and in making vital, and large-scale, policy change.

“From a climate change mitigation and sustainability perspective, the voices of nurses can be quite powerful in that dialogue because of the health implications,” said Martin. “I want nurses to be able to do that—to step up and be that advocate.”

Brandy Pearson, a master’s degree student, enrolled in Martin’s course. As part of course requirements, Pearson completed

an action plan outlining how she can help preserve natural resources and decrease carbon emissions in her community. The assignment reminded her that “a small difference can change the world.”

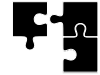
“We are only borrowing this planet for the short time we are on it. It is our roles as human beings to leave things better than when we arrived, for our children and children’s children,” she said. “This includes being more conscious of the decisions and choices that we’re making and implementing short-term strategies that can have lifelong effects.”

NURS 405.3/805.3 is open to undergraduate and graduate students, including students enrolled in the College of Nursing and other academic programs at USask. The course focuses on interdisciplinary learning and includes an art-project component. It also emphasizes the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and inter-professional action, while integrating topics, such as systems thinking, movement building, health equity, and social justice.

Pearson said enrolling in Martin’s course further opened her eyes to “the significant steps that need to be taken to help preserve our environmental natural resources and decrease carbon emissions.”

Sharon Sackey, a master’s student in the College of Nursing, came to USask after

## Student leader reflects on Black History Month at USask



College of Nursing student Tobi Bolaji-Joseph, president of the Pan-African Student Association at the University of Saskatchewan.  
 Submitted

By Chris Morin

When he first arrived as a new student at the University of Saskatchewan, Tobi Bolaji-Joseph says he found community and a sense of belonging with groups, such as the African Students Association.

In his fourth year in USask's College of Nursing, Bolaji-Joseph wanted to provide that same sense of community in his role as the president of the Pan-African Student Association (PASA).

"When I first arrived at the university there was an African Students Association, which I felt reached many people in the community, especially Black students," said Bolaji-Joseph. "I felt very welcomed being a part of this association, but because of COVID, the association stopped running."

While the pandemic prevented students from meeting on campus, Bolaji-Joseph and several of his friends and classmates decided to reactivate the association, rebranding as PASA in order to get new students involved. As the president of the organization in 2023, he was an advocate for those Black and African students at USask.

"In terms of a student voice, I feel like we are able to help those who might be seeking financial or academic help, or even just offering assistance to those who might just be looking for someone to talk to," said Bolaji-Joseph. "My role is to be that connector for people—to be a part of PASA to help create that community for those who might be far away from home."

"I've been able to be a part of other associations and being able to connect with people you can relate to is good for your mental health. I know it takes a while for new students to get used to the environment. I want PASA to provide that kind of space for students."

In 2023 during his final semester at the College of Nursing, Bolaji-Joseph said he was looking forward to the next phase of his career, and hopes to do his part in terms of improving access to health-care using the skills he picked up with PASA.

As the on-person campus events returned, Bolaji-Joseph noted that PASA held several successful events, including those held during Black History Month.

"For Black History Month, I feel like it is something to celebrate throughout the year. But having this month gives us a chance to amplify our voices, and as a minority group, we don't always get a lot of these chances. Black History Month gives us a chance to recognize the achievements of those people in the past. I'm always surprised to learn more about previous USask students who went on to achieve great things, as well as those Black Canadians, who also contributed throughout history."

pursuing an undergraduate degree in nursing at Valley View University in Ghana. Sackey was pleased to have an opportunity to enroll in NURS 805.3, which provided her with valuable information on how to protect the planet, conserve resources, and create a more sustainable future.

"As a research student, the course broadened my understanding on the interconnectedness between the environment and various research disciplines," she said. "This knowledge has inspired me to make innovative research ideas and approaches to prioritize sustainability. Also, it has enhanced my ability to conduct environmentally conscious research, promote sustainable practices, and contribute to the global effort of addressing environmental challenges."

Professor Airini, provost and vice-president academic at USask, said "USask has the bold ambition to set the standard in teaching and learning. USask Nursing courses are growing world-class graduates".

"Our students are the future of nursing at home in Saskatchewan, across Canada, and around the world," said Airini. "Developing innovative and cutting-edge courses, such as Environmental Sustainability in Health Care, is an important part of preparing our learners for the challenges and opportunities they will face today and tomorrow."



## North West College and College of Nursing join forces to expand registered nursing education

The University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing and North West College in North Battleford announced a partnership at the end of 2023 to bring expanded educational opportunities to students of northwest Saskatchewan. This collaborative endeavour will create new pathways for aspiring registered nurses to pursue their Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree without leaving North Battleford and surrounding communities.

Recognizing the growing demand for health-care professionals and the importance of accessible education, this strategic partnership marks a significant step towards enhancing the region's health-care infrastructure. The joint initiative will not only strengthen health-care services across the region, but boost the local economy as well.


North West College renovated the Cenovus Energy Simulation Learning Centre, which is a modern, state-of-the-art facility with enhanced technology, ensuring nursing students will receive a high-quality education that supports the achievement of the entry-level competencies for registered nurses. Students will also benefit from the teaching of experienced faculty members from both institutions.

"The University of Saskatchewan is committed to making quality nursing education accessible to all, regardless of geographical location," said College of Nursing Dean Dr. Solina Richter.

"There is a global shortage of registered nurses and it's felt here in Saskatchewan, especially in our rural and remote communities. This partnership with North West College is an important step forward in the Saskatchewan Health Human Resources Action Plan. We look forward to recruiting and educating the next generation of registered nurses in northwest Saskatchewan."

Dr. Eli Ahlquist (EdD), president and CEO of North West College, expressed his excitement about the partnership, stating, "This collaboration is a significant step forward in our mission to provide educational opportunities that meet the unique needs of our community. It is a win-win situation for both students and the region's health-care sector."



At the official signing event in North Battleford. (back l to r) Dr. Mary Ellen Labrecque (associate dean academic, USask Nursing), Dr. Lynn Jansen (previous associate dean distributed learning, USask Nursing), Mark Tomtene (director of operations and strategic planning, USask Nursing), Dr. Priscilla Lothian (VP academic, North West College), Bill Volk (Board of Governors, North West College). (front l to r) Dr. Solina Richter (dean, USask Nursing) and Dr. Eli Ahlquist (president and CEO, North West College).  [Kylie Kelso](#)



The University of Saskatchewan is committed to making quality nursing education accessible to all, regardless of geographical location. ”





## Canadian nursing schools make Indigenous training part of curriculum

By Paul Sinkewicz

When graduating nurses accept their degrees at universities and colleges across Canada in the future, it will be with a deeper understanding of the history of colonialism in Canada.

And when they begin their work at the bedside, caring for patients of Indigenous heritage, it will be with a better appreciation for their culture and needs, and with more sensitivity to racism.

This is thanks to the work of Dr. Holly Graham (PhD) and the other five Chairs of Indigenous Health in Nursing in Canada. They collaborated with the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) to offer a series of five virtual workshops to CASN member schools in 2023. The topics included: Anti-Indigenous Racism, Cultural Humility, Cultural Safety, History of Indigenous Peoples, and Implementing Call to Action #24.

Graham and the other Chairs were also part of a review and revision of CASN's Accreditation Guidelines for baccalaureate, nurse practitioner, and practical nurse education programs, which resulted in the inclusion of a standard requiring schools of nursing to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 24 in each of these programs across Canada.

Call No. 24 says: "We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism."

The Truth and Reconciliation Workshop Series for Nursing Faculty will assist schools of nursing in its implementation.

"After I took a graduate class taught by Dr. Verna St. Denis (PhD), an expert in Anti-Racist education, I had always said if I had the opportunity, I would bring anti-racist education into the nursing profession,"



Indigenous Research Chair in Nursing Dr. Holly Graham. Dave Stobbe

said Graham. "So, when I was awarded the Indigenous Research Chair, that was one of the first things I started to do as part of reconciliation and supporting mentorship."

Graham was an associate professor at the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing, and is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist. She became a nurse in 1985 and worked in northern communities before returning to school for further degrees. In May 2023, Graham moved from the College of Nursing to the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan.

"I'm very excited that nursing schools are going to be required to respond to call No. 24 of the TRC Calls to Action, because that will ensure all nursing students will receive this content as part of their education."

Prior to the launch of the workshop series, Graham, along with a group of Indigenous nurses, started an online Indigenous Nursing Professional Practice Group (PPG) whose

goal is to educate, collaborate, and enable all Saskatchewan nurses to work together to address current health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and to facilitate a platform for direct communication between the College of Registered Nurses of Saskatchewan (CRNS) and the Indigenous nurses in the province.

The group is called *kā-wīci-pimohtēmāt* (pronounced: gaah-weechi-bimohte-maat) PPG, which is a Cree word that translates to a person who walks with others in their journey.

"Part of my plan when I received the Chair was to lobby for policy change, which we have now successfully done," said Graham. "And my plan was also to work with the College of Registered Nurses of Saskatchewan to find a platform for Indigenous nurses to communicate with each other and with CRNS, and to provide some resources for education, and this led to the PPG website (<https://indigenousnursesppg.ca/>) being developed."

The other Chairs of Indigenous Health in Nursing who worked with Dr. Holly Graham are:

British Columbia – Dr. Lisa Bourque-Bearskin (PhD)

Manitoba – Dr. Wanda Phillips-Beck (PhD)

Quebec – Dr. Amelie Blanchet-Garneau (PhD)

Nova Scotia – Dr. Margot Latimer (PhD)

New Brunswick – Dr. Jason Hickey (PhD)

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