Teaching LIFE
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BUILDING CONNECTIONS
HOLISTIC GRAD STUDENT MENTORING

SHIFTING SIGHTLINES
Mentorship in music and fine art

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Indigenous approaches to mentoring
MESSAGE
FROM JANICE RISTOCK, PROVOST AND VICE-PRESIDENT (ACADEMIC)

At the University, we are keenly aware of the connection between mentoring and teaching. Many of us can attest to mentoring’s positive force, having been mentored through our own academic journeys. For most, that mentoring continues in various forms.

In this issue of TeachingLIFE, our cover story highlights the motivation and support mentors can provide to the sometimes-isolating experience of being a graduate student. The undergraduate research awards are the focus of another piece; this unique, four-month program pairs students with their mentor of choice for an exciting research project. Another feature considers the role of mentoring in music and fine art in helping students to develop their creative vision and to perceive the world with new eyes.

We also look at the university’s mentoring engagement within the wider community, and how the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba is “mentoring a nation” by collecting and sharing Survivors’ stories, while transforming archival practices throughout Canada.

A compelling feature on Indigenous approaches to mentorship opens the issue. We hear from various community members in light of work at the U of M to engage with Indigenous communities: mentoring as a "personal, relational and generous process," a motivation to "step out of that comfort zone and ‘it's not my problem’" and a way of "encouraging one another to do more than we might feel capable of."

At its best, the mentoring relationship is empowering and enabling, inspiring students to heights, and rooting their confidence on their paths to becoming fuller human beings and outstanding academics, teachers, artists, musicians, researchers, specialists and leaders in their chosen fields.

Faculty and academic leadership mentoring have similar benefits. “Spotlight” draws attention to the collegial aspect of mentoring in teaching: “Sharing what we know about teaching makes sense.” Though we may too often see teaching as a solitary activity, teaching help is available—and there is relief in realizing that “we are not alone.”

Sharing is at the heart of the New Student Peer Mentor and Neechiwaken programs, also covered in the issue. These are two of several student peer programs at the U of M, all of which hinge on students helping each other through the academic experience, taking into account the myriad social and study skills in play.

As Mary Wilson, Resident Elder at Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, says, “That’s what a mentor does. They walk with you and learn with you.”

Welcome to our special issue on mentoring.
EMBRACE THE POSSIBILITIES PERSPECTIVE
Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning) on the impact of mentorship

BRIDGING DISTANCE
Mentoring for community space in the virtual classroom

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The role of mentorship in music and fine art

WEAVING CONNECTIONS
After-school programs that create community

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I CALL YOU FRIEND
Neechiwaken Indigenous Peer Mentor Program

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Students on the rewards of becoming a mentor
FROM EVERYDAY RESPONSIVENESS TO PROFOUND IMPACT

EMBRACING THE POSSIBILITIES OF MENTORING

MARK TORCHIA
ACTIVITIES OVER the past few months at the Centre of the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (the Centre) have incorporated a strong theme of mentoring. Our second annual Teaching Café in May, entitled “The Teacher as a Mentor,” focused on topics ranging from building a research community to mentoring opportunities in everyday life. I was particularly struck by the idea of “real-time responsiveness” and how even our smallest bits of feedback can have profound positive effects. Our 27th annual Student Teacher Recognition Reception (STRR) provided an opportunity for more than 20 students to present an award in person to special teachers each chose from their K-12 and university experiences. Many of these students spoke about how their teacher-mentors had completely transformed their lives. (We had good reason to provide a box of tissues at the podium; next year we’ll make that available to the audience as well!) They expressed sentiments like: “I could not have done it without you”; “You took me under your wing”; and “You were a teacher and a friend.” These events started me thinking about the concept and relationship of mentoring.

Perusing some academic articles I found on the topic led me, not surprisingly but sadly, to a number of obituaries published in various journals that paid tribute to these outstanding leaders in their fields. Many, many times, the individuals were recognized not only for leadership, skills and knowledge, but also for their ability to mentor. I was moved as I read through the (inadequate) summaries of these incredible lives. What an amazing experience it surely must have been to have been mentored by them.

I started to think about individuals in my life that transformed my way of thinking and doing. I have been fortunate to have had a number of outstanding mentors. Some guided me through the grind and rigour of graduate school; others through the grind and rigour of being a researcher, teacher and administrator; yet others through (a theme is developing here) the grind and rigour of life. What would my life have looked like without them? It’s difficult to predict the result, but I am absolutely certain that my life would have been so much less fulfilling, and the results of any of my work, far less impactful.

Over the past 25 years, and especially within the last 10 years, I have had many opportunities to be a mentor—to students, to new administrators and scientists, and to others that just ask. I have been fortunate to have many students stay in touch after they have, in turn, blossomed into amazing people and investigators. It remains incredibly humbling to have them call and ask advice about something—and frankly, now that they know more than I do, I wonder why they call!

My experience as a mentor has been that in every case, I learned something. At times, it’s been a lesson about what not to do or say as a mentor. (It’s a growth experience.) Mostly I learned that people are often just happy to know that they have someone in their corner. Someone safe to bounce off ideas, a quiet, reassuring voice at the end of the phone (or, now, a text message) or an opportunity for celebration of their success.

Most recently, I had the opportunity to serve on the selection committee for the Faculty of Graduate Studies Awards for Excellence in Graduate Student Mentoring. Clearly, the curricula vitae for the various nominated faculty members were impressive. But what was really meaningful was reading various letters of support provided by the mentored students, in which they listed the characteristics that made a difference.

Here are just a few:

“amazing balance of providing leadership and giving me independence”

“mutual trust”

“appreciation for the insights that students can bring to the research question”

“treats trainees as people first”

“believes in every student’s potential and does everything possible to develop it”

“helped me to find my voice”

“profound impact in my life”

Most of us would agree that the characteristics are ones each of us could take to heart in our own roles.

I recommend that each of us takes stock of those key mentors in our lives—maybe even send a thank you card or make a telephone call. And, give some consideration to how you might further your personal acts of mentoring, whether large or small. Embrace mentoring for all the wonderful things it can be.  

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DISTANCE COURSES are often thought of as impersonal. There are impediments, including people being separated from each other; you don’t encounter other students in person. But over one term of an online session of social work practice, students from across Canada and beyond began to know each other by their words and their ideas, even without seeing one another. It taught me about what a classroom can be, even a distance learning classroom.

The course had 15 or 16 students. Many of the students were experienced and had been practising for a long time and were coming to get their credentials. One student expressed over the term that he was going through difficult personal and family circumstances. Other students didn’t want to pry and ask him about it in the class context, since people have a right to their privacy.

But one day, after a good discussion about issues that surfaced from our readings, he said to everyone, “I feel safe enough to talk about this in this class.”

He told us a story that was difficult to hear, about oppression and living through social attitudes that had really hurt him.

Everyone had support for him and insights about what could happen. We all learned from him. We thanked him for sharing and from that point on in that class, no one missed, everybody was there, we supported each other’s ideas. It was wonderful.

“I feel safe enough to talk about this in this class.”

It affected me. I thought about how we can promote safety in distance education learning. And how we know when we have enough safety; students sometimes take a risk because they know they have a safe space, but they aren’t always entirely sure.

It happened that everyone was there, with him. You can make a classroom, even a distance classroom, receptive and inclusive of everyone. It affects a person in such a profound way.

The experience brought home to me that there are ways to work with groups through distance that can help build that kind of community space.

Tuula Heinonen is a professor in the Faculty of Social Work and with the Interprofessional Education Initiative, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences.
WALKING TOGETHER

INDIGENOUS APPROACHES TO MENTORING AT THE UNIVERSITY

For our special issue on mentoring, TeachingLIFE asked several Indigenous members of the University of Manitoba community to provide their thoughts on Indigenous approaches to mentoring at the university, with an emphasis on teaching and learning. Here’s what they said.

Right: The commissioned illustration for this feature is by Sébastien Aubin. According to the artist, its inspiration is flowers growing, the idea of growing together and getting information from different sources. Aubin served as the University of Manitoba’s first Indigenous designer in residence at the School of Art from September 2017 to February 2018.
Mentoring for me means that you have the spiritual direction to help guide and teach. Number one, by example. One of the issues we’ve had with our society is partly because of colonization and partly just because we are egotistical human beings and have that superficial brain—we have to work to get down to our heart. As a mentor, I open up my heart. I sit with the person, I sit in a circle of truth. So if people want to know something about me, I’m very open. I don’t believe in a playing area where you are talked down to. We share, we grow, we guide. We do things together, hand in hand.

It’s very important when we are dealing with people’s lives and with futures, that they see what’s available.

They also have the opportunity to know that it’s not always easy, that we all have struggles. But that our struggles become our teachings and ways of learning and that we can overcome the obstacles that get put in our way.

We can still focus on the future and not be afraid to call for support. Because of colonization, I believe that there’s shame attached because of the suffering in the past. We weren’t allowed to be open, we weren’t allowed to be honest, we weren’t allowed to follow any of those teachings that are so sacred to us.

In an attempt to break the sacred teachings, what happened I call the burying of the pipes. It’s one of the things our ancestors did—they buried the pipes. Like in everything—a seed—once you bury it, those tears of the past, they can water the ground and it will rise. I’ve had those visions of the pipes rising out of the ground. But as we come out of this, the healing, those sacred teachings that are held in that pipe will come back into the heart if we openly share them without that ego or fear involved. We have to have the courage to let go of that fear and take that risk. To be transparent and open so we can heal those pieces of the past that keep us apart.

We weren’t allowed to speak our truth, we weren’t allowed to play, to speak our language, to walk and respect one another. Those sacred teachings were part of the breakdown, the cultural genocide.

But we’re strong. And we’re resilient. And our spirit, like that pipe, is rising.

To be a mentor means that you have to have the courage—which is one of the sacred teachings—to step out of that comfort zone of silence and ‘it’s not my problem’ and go back to the teaching that we are related, we are family. So the acceptance of the differences becomes beautiful rather than ugly.

“As a mentor, those are the kinds of things to support as people grow. As they find out what they want to do and where they want to go and how they’re going to get there.

I dress in a modern way, I don’t fall into a box so easily. What I believe in is how I am, where I go, what I do, how I approach. I honour my gift. In doing that, you become an automatic mentor because you’re safe. If you’re safe with yourself, you’re safe with others.

You have to honour your own spirit before you can honour anyone else’s.

We’re all different. Life is a family.

So if someone comes to me and they’re heavy, we lighten their load. If someone comes to me and they’re confused, we sort. We walk those teachings right through from morning to night.

What’s my life like? I get up and as my feet hit the ground, I look at that light and say a prayer in gratitude for one more day, at being able to see the sun. I thank for the day. Then I talk to my dogs; they’re very important to me.

My own personal life starts with loving thoughts and ends with gratitude. It’s a circle for me. Love and gratitude for me are very connected and sometimes the same thing.

So when you are challenged, those things walk you through. Those simple things. Family, friends, school, the day, the sun. If you don’t have anything else, you find a sparrow in a tree. You go right back to nature. Nature will nurture you and provide you answers every time. Because our mother is alive and she will take care of us if we take care of her.

We talk about medicine and talk about what it means to work with medicine, to work with sciences that come from the earth, to work with your gift that is chosen for you…. It ends up being a spiritual quest and a calling, rather than a job to do and a way to make money. Are those things important? Yes, but are they the most important? Absolutely not. Life is important, and honouring your life.

That’s what a mentor does. They walk with you and learn with you. They do things with you. The first way of being a good mentor is to be a good human being.
Friendship is the foundation; mentoring with a holistic approach

I’ve been interested in the power of mentoring since a call to action for Indigenous women to mentor Indigenous girls came through my inbox in 2005. By 2006, I was a mentor for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Winnipeg and I am still a Big Sister to my Little [Sister], Chelsey. In 2009, I launched a peer mentor program at the University of Manitoba, called the Neechiwaken Indigenous Peer Mentor Program. Friendship is the foundation of the program because Neechiwaken is a Cree word meaning “friend.” Mentors are more than just students who have campus experience; they help provide that friendly face on campus, introduce their mentees to students they know and lasting friendships are created.

“We operate on a system of sharing and community where there is no ‘expert.’ To the group, we are all Neechiwaken who walk the academic journey together.”

This is how I see our format as being holistic: because we operate on a system of sharing and community where there is no ‘expert.’ To the group, we are all Neechiwaken who walk the academic journey together.

By the time this program was fully established, I had begun my M.Ed. and when I asked my thesis advisor, Dr. Marlene Atleo, if it was possible to do a research study where research subjects would be program members, she said, “You can, but your work will be your research and your research will be your work. Are you ready for that?” Yes, I was and away I went. I explored whether student engagement in the form of peer mentoring could be connected to student retention or sense of belonging. A qualitative, phenomenological study with interviews of 10 members took shape.

Using Tinto’s theory of student departure and Astin’s theory of student engagement, I concluded that Indigenous students who take part in a peer mentoring relationship have a better chance of successfully integrating into a post-secondary institution because they are given the opportunity to meet with other Indigenous students they can relate to on a regular basis. This was demonstrated by study participants who saw peer mentoring as a way to make friends and get academic guidance. Having a mentor available to talk to about challenges, to have as a friend and to socialize with gives new students a better chance at persisting because they have someone who can help them navigate university life.

I am happy to say that since 2009, I have had the pleasure to observe students beginning their first year of university and monitor their progress until graduation. Program members have gone on to become social workers, nurses, doctors, government workers, teachers, graduate students, community workers and so much more. Creating connections is definitely one of the best things I get to do in my work. 

Carla Loewen is a student advisor at the Indigenous Student Centre, where she facilitates the Qualico Bridge to Success and Neechiwaken Indigenous Peer Mentor programs.
Mentorship, teaching and learning are relational, ongoing, generative

My understanding of mentorship is informed by an understanding of teaching and learning as relational, ongoing, generative processes. I don’t see teaching and learning as mutually exclusive categories, but as activities that we each engage in to some extent every day. I understand them both to be parts of a lifelong journey that takes place through a dynamic and reciprocal process of interaction and interrogation with the people and places we share our lives with.

Mentorship is one way of understanding these forms of teaching and learning that take place within our day-to-day networks and relationships. We learn things from those who came before us, and pass that knowledge forward to those who have more recently joined our line of work. As the person being mentored is receiving gifts of time, wisdom and experience from their mentors, it’s about giving something back to these relationships and also paying them forward. In my own work, mentorship has often taken place informally over conversations, shared meals, texts or other forms of long-distance communication as the work Indigenous scholars engage in can sometimes be very isolating in broader institutions.

Mentorship does not involve directing another person in what they should do, but equipping them with the self-assurance and necessary tools to decide how best to achieve their own potential. It’s about providing support and reassurance in times of doubt, isolation or anxiety. It’s about encouraging one another to do more than we might feel capable of, and helping others see their mistakes as learning opportunities.

“...It’s about encouraging one another to do more than we might feel capable of, and helping others see their mistakes as learning opportunities.”

My own mentors have been incredibly generous and giving of their knowledge, experience and resources. They have also shared examples of their course materials, PowerPoint slides, CVs, grant applications, teaching dossiers, annual reviews, research and analytical frameworks, and other products of their personal labour. I am grateful for this as I know many of them didn’t have senior mentorship to help them as they went through these learning processes, as they were part of an earlier generation that was still carving out space in the academy and had to come up with these things from scratch.

For this reason, I am continually trying to find ways to pay this forward to the next generation of Indigenous scholars. This is how we transmit and generate new knowledge, and build up our collective capacities to affect change into the future.

Learning is holistic and we need to focus on connectedness and relationships*

In the Indigenous community, I believe we are committed to creating transformative change in education by creating learning environments that utilize Indigenous perspectives and provide safe spaces for all learners that come from a strength-based approach to education. To fulfill this personal mandate, one must create an environment full of reciprocal relationships and a network of mentorship.

Reflecting on my experiences within the reciprocal relationships I have with my peers, professors and colleagues, I attempted to understand my journey with mentorship. An understanding I can only reflect on my lived experience. I began to recognize how incredibly humbled and honoured I am to be a part of the network of mentorship that I am at the University of Manitoba. Sharing in a network that extends from undergrads to seasoned, tenured professors all sharing knowledge and teachings with each other daily.

In my experience, this differs from conventional mentor-mentee relationships as no single person holds a place of power or superiority of knowledge. In the Indigenous network in which I have found myself, there are times when I am in a position of the mentee growing and learning from another, and there are other instances where I am in the position of mentor, lending the teachings that I have gained to others. The relationship then becomes reciprocal as time passes and there are numerous instances of sharing both ways. These instances of growth can be an extremely formal group setting, casual luncheons or as simple as a text.

Gina Starblanket is an assistant professor in the department of Native studies and the women’s & gender studies program.

Frank Deer is an associate professor and Canada Research Chair in the Faculty of Education.
Within the Indigenous network of mentorship to which I belong, a reflection of the motivations is needed to understand why this is our reality at the University of Manitoba. Are we guided by teachings? Does this allow us the humility to admit when we need help? Or does our living in a place of trust in each other enable us to be vulnerable when we need assistance and willing to share when others demonstrate their need?

Perhaps we are adhering to a Métis tradition taught to me by [author, educator and historical researcher] Lawrie Barkwell: When we are looking for answers, we go to the one that knows. No one person knows everything, and it is up to us to go to those within our networks that can help us in that situation.

“When we are looking for answers, we go to the one that knows. No one person knows everything, and it is up to us to go to those who can help us in that situation.”

Regardless of what guides us, we see the connection between ideas and teachings, the process of actualizing the knowledge and the transformation of this practice on campus and in our research. In my reflection, I must thank all those within our Indigenous network, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, that, regardless of institutional position, understand our obligation to our community members and the need to help each other.

Kishchee tey mo’yawn aen li Michif wi’yawn (Proud to be Métis).

Responsiveness, localizing curricula and supporting work toward reconciliation

My entry into academia was borne out of a desire to bring my perceived aptitudes and skills to bear in the hopes of affecting the quality of human knowledge and discourse in Indigenous education. This trajectory may be similar to that of other professors: we often want to make a difference. In some important ways, this difference is made through instruction. In my case, the journey toward becoming an effective instructor benefited from the support of key people who offered guidance, knowledge and inspiration.

“My journey toward becoming an effective instructor benefited from the support of key people who offered guidance, knowledge and inspiration.”

Teaching in a relatively new area of scholarship that is required for all students of initial teacher education programs—an area of study that has the potential to cover content that may be seen as politically and racially charged—can be a challenge. Through discussion within the relatively small community of scholars and community members who teach such courses, I’ve found that some have had positive experiences whilst others have experienced resistance. It has become clear that there is an important dimension in the teaching of Indigenous education—the sometimes relentless reference to history and Indigenous historical narrative. It seems that the balance between discourses in history that explore colonial and post-colonial experiences and the need for practical knowledge that will be applied in classrooms is important. I would characterize my position on this as being responsive to the need for discussion, resources and exploration of best practices in the areas of Indigenous curriculum and pedagogy. The task that I feel I must set for myself is to make this position clear and honestly reasoned.

I currently believe there is a fundamental “new” quality to my field that may not be as significant in other disciplines. This governs the instructional choices I have made. That “new” quality may be best understood by considering university responses to the growing desire/need for Indigenous content, Indigenous perspectives and the affecting of culture and climate in our institutions. I can only hope that I do this field justice and that I am as much a support for others as my mentors have been for me.

Laura Forsythe, BA, B.Ed., is the Métis inclusion coordinator at U of M and a sessional instructor in the department of Native studies. She is currently completing her master’s degree.

*comment by a participant in a regional session organized by the British Columbia Ministry of Education, published in the 2015 report, “Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom: Moving Forward.” It reads in full: “Learning is holistic and we need to focus on connectedness and relationship to oneself, family, community, language, culture and the natural world.”
Mentoring and Relations

There are many ways in which university research and teaching are different from traditional Indigenous modes of education, but one crucial thing they share is the importance of mentoring. The roots of the Western university arise from small groups of people who gathered together to share knowledge and to debate important questions. It was a personal gathering, a space in which learning occurred through the development of relationships. This is not so different from traditional Indigenous forms of education, which have always been directed toward building relationships between people and also with the land. Mentoring is by its very nature a personal, relational and generous process. It cannot successfully be achieved within a rigid hierarchical system that treats people as numbers, or as clients. This is why I feel that it is a very important value to emphasize in our current drive to Indigenize the university.

“Mentorship is all about giving back, and about acknowledging all of the relationships that have formed us. When Indigenous people say ‘all my relations,’ this is one meaning of that powerful and profound phrase.”

Virtually everything I have accomplished as an artist, researcher and teacher can be traced back to mentors who modeled this work for me, and who provided advice and support when I needed it. Many of these mentors I encountered within the university, from my first-year English professor in 1984 to my senior colleagues at the U of M today. Many other mentors I have met outside of the university, but their teachings have been equally important to me, and they have also been very relevant to my university work. My father showed me through his example that it was possible to be a great storyteller and also a scholar. He moved seamlessly between the oral traditions of our community and the realm of legal research in his work as a lawyer. He taught me that it was not necessary to abandon my roots in order to succeed in the world beyond my home—and that in fact those roots would always be a source of strength. I have never forgotten that lesson, and it continues to inspire me today.

I can’t really recall the specific time when I became a mentor myself, possibly because in my family we were expected to perform this role even as youth. Mentorship in our community is a natural extension of being in relation to other people. In my role at the university, I feel that being a mentor is one of my key responsibilities, but it is not really part of a “job description” or something that would appear on a curriculum vitae. It is instead an ethic of reciprocity: receiving a gift, and then sharing that gift with someone else. Whenever I am asked to give advice to students or colleagues, I remember all the generous and thoughtful and brilliant people I have encountered in the process of my education who have done the same for me. Mentorship is all about giving back, and about acknowledging all of the relationships that have formed us. When Indigenous people say “all my relations,” this is one meaning of that powerful and profound phrase.
‘I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD’
A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO GRADUATE EDUCATION

BY ABIGAIL BYLE
The “Bliss of Solitude,” as poet William Wordsworth once rhapsodized, may be lost on the graduate student hustling to meet deadlines, slogging through comps and filing necessary paperwork, all while trying to publish and present their research. Graduate school can be solitary, especially once coursework is completed or if a student is far from home.

Having a mentor can make a huge difference. One of the key benefits of mentorship is the strong relationship that develops between the mentor and mentee, which may become vitally important to a student. Sean Byrne suggests that good mentors remember the stress of being students. For the past decade, Byrne was director of the Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice. He’s also a professor in peace and conflict studies and a recipient of the 2017 Faculty of Graduate Studies Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Mentoring.

Byrne believes that part of being a mentor is providing “a home away from home,” adding that students may need something as basic as a warm meal or a good conversation. Some students may be facing homesickness, culture shock or personal challenges such as health issues, divorce or even financial troubles. Each student has different needs, but all students need an open and supportive environment to ensure that they are able to be honest about challenges they are facing, whether professional or personal.

For Juliette “Archie” Cooper, professor emeritus, College of Rehabilitation Sciences, mentoring similarly plays a role beyond simply directing students through their thesis or research projects and signing forms.

And being an advisor does not automatically mean that you are or will be a mentor, she notes in her “Mentoring Graduate Students” workshop at the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning.

Cooper suggests encouraging students to approach different people, whether researchers in the field or faculty in other departments. As she puts it, “Mentors are chosen. You really can’t impose mentorship.” The key is to create a collaborative, nurturing environment for students.

A reciprocal and enriching relationship.

“Students don’t just learn from mentors; mentors learn from them,” agrees Malcolm Doupe, associate professor in community health sciences at the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences. “And mentoring is one of the most important things that we can do at the university.”

Growing confidence

In order to support students, mentors can help them identify their long-term goals and how they can achieve them, says Cooper. It could mean simply asking students, “What do you want to do?”

Once the student has those answers, a mentor helps them to achieve those goals by providing advice and feedback on whatever an individual student may need, whether that be funding, publishing or networking. According to Cooper, a mentor should ensure that the graduate student, or mentee, is able to accomplish his or her goals, whatever those are.

Guidance, tangible support and suggestions play a significant role in mentorship. Tenured faculty members may forget how intimidat-
while the student learns through engaging his or her own agency. Each student has a unique perspective and approach, based on their own story and experiences, but mentors believe in students and grant them the freedom and agency to produce knowledge themselves.

**EMPOWERMENT TO JOIN IN AS A PEER**

The holistic approach used by her advisor Sean Byrne makes her feel empowered and included in the academic community, says Patlee Creary, who graduated in spring 2018 with her PhD in peace and conflict studies. When she began her graduate degree, she had a larger concept of her work, but was unsure of what the research project would actually look like. As Creary explains, Byrne “gave [her] room to ask questions and to pursue storytelling [as a method].” She appreciated the respect he showed in providing a “complete education experience,” encouraging her exploration of different paths and empowering her as a researcher and academic.

For some disciplines, such as in the health sciences, the ability to communicate with stakeholders and decision-makers is a key skill, and mentors can help students learn how to talk about their work. Doupe incorporates mentorship into the program curriculum and also into his own activities as an advisor. He says that students need to understand how to go beyond their research, ask the right questions and think outside the box in order to actually implement change.

As the director of the Manitoba Training Program for Health Services Research, an applied training program for graduate students, he describes one of the goals of integrated health science as “trying to get things so [that] evidence is always at the table.” Students need to develop critical thinking skills, but they also need to be comfortable communicating that research and knowledge to others, whether it is other academics, decision-makers or the general public.

In mentoring, adds Sean Byrne, ultimately the hope is to contribute to the generation of new knowledge and to produce the next generation of leaders. As a mentor, his goal is “to see students fly, be successful and grow intellectually.” He encourages mentors to champion their students, so that once that student has graduated, he or she truly is your peer, i.e., *primus inter pares* or the “first among equals.”

Mentoring helps students become future peers, he suggests. And having peers is another remedy for isolation.
“These archives are people telling their own stories, in their own languages—and sharing their knowledge more directly through the use of video and audio,” says Raymond Frogner, head of Archives at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR).

With its decolonizing and Indigenizing approach, NCTR Archives is unique. In fact, the NCTR is committed to Indigenizing the archival profession. Prioritizing the hiring of Indigenous interns and archives staff, it also seeks advice and guidance from the Survivors Circle, a seven-member body of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Survivors from various regions, selected by NCTR’s Governing Circle.
Frogner: “The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is blessed with an amazing collection of testimonies, over 7,000 personal, intimate and eye-witness accounts of people’s experiences in Residential Schools.”
Archivists at the NCTR are tasked with the keeping of records, history and stories from Survivors of Residential Schools. The NCTR also provides a platform for mentorship and guidance as archivists and non-archivists bridge the gap between information in archives and an understanding of this information by the general public.

“The NCTR is blessed with an amazing collection of testimonies, over 7,000 personal, intimate and eye-witness accounts of people’s experiences in Residential Schools,” says Frogner. “The real gem of what we are holding is a cross-country collection of the thoughts and experiences from Indigenous communities from north, east and west.”

The use of audio and video tools allow for archiving oral history and stories in a way that wasn’t possible in the past. Elders and Survivors from across the country now have the ability to tell their stories to people outside their community and in classrooms they may not be able to reach otherwise.

Indigenous input is incorporated at the outset in processing records that were buried and inaccessible. So past narratives are preserved without forgetting the contexts in which the Residential School records were created, interpreting them through an Indigenous lens. Ongoing community engagement meets the needs of Survivors, Intergenerational Survivors and their families.

**WORDS OF THE SURVIVORS AT HEART OF NCTR ARCHIVES**

NCTR digital archivist Jesse Boiteau, who is Métis, was encouraged to explore Indigenous voices in archives by his mentors, Tom Nesmith, senior scholar, and Greg Bak, associate professor in the archival studies master’s program at the U of M.

When he started working at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba in 2008, it was obvious to Boiteau that the Indigenous records housed in archives were predominantly written by non-Indigenous peoples, placing Indigenous peoples as subjects of the records.

At the NCTR, he says, no one accepts the status quo of traditional Western archival theory and practice. “We work collaboratively to discover innovative ways of how technology and Indigenous input can put decolonizing archival theory into practice,” says Boiteau.

“I am also mentored every day by the words of the Survivors, whom I’ve either met in person or witnessed on screen in audio/visual testimonies. [They are] at the heart of the NCTR archives,” says Boiteau.

And so the NCTR has become a mentor to all of Canada in the sharing of the difficult history and experiences of Residential Schools.

**Boiteau: “I am mentored every day by the words of the Survivors.”**

Opening the doors to all in the interest of implementing the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the NCTR is also providing a place for academics from all disciplines to begin connecting with Indigenous communities, to break down barriers and to start building relationships.

“The UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples is here for the self-determination of Indigenous Rights. NCTR is a strong centre for the study, preservation, and pursuit of those rights,” says Frogner.

“There is to be a new set of relationships built and hopefully we can be a bridge to building those relationships.”

*The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is located at Chancellor’s Hall, 177 Dysart Rd., University of Manitoba.*
The classroom visits were what Jocelyn Thorpe most appreciated about the mentoring that’s part of the Teaching Learning Certificate, or TLC. Her mentor, program coordinator Colleen Webb, “watched my teaching strategies and offered practical and useful comments on how I could improve,” she says. Webb notes that Thorpe is an innovative and exciting teacher from whom she herself learned many new approaches.

Thorpe, an associate professor, completed the two-year program that combines workshops with teaching mentorship. It’s run by the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (the Centre). Thorpe has been asked to be a mentor for others in the program.

Turn the page for her takeaways.

Right: Jocelyn Thorpe, associate professor, women’s & gender studies program and history department, Faculty of Arts.
JOCELYN THORPE
ON MENTORING IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

The word “mentor” sounds like pressure to me—but the idea of sharing what we know about teaching makes sense.

Sometimes, even after many years of teaching, I still feel like I have no idea what I’m doing. But I enjoy having the opportunity to talk about what I have learned along the way because people sometimes find it useful, because it helps me to understand that I have in fact learned something over the years, and because I always learn something from others as well.

ON THE TLC PROGRAM’S UNIQUENESS

Whenever I leave a classroom after teaching, I wonder what students are thinking about the class.

At the beginning, practicing teaching in front of a room full of students can feel like a trial by fire. We do not often have opportunities, unless we create them, to watch our colleagues teach or to have our colleagues watch us teach.

The TLC program allows participants to feel like we are not alone in learning how to teach, providing us with both evidence-based suggestions for what works well in the classroom to encourage student learning and a mentor to support our development as teachers. Mentors give specific, invaluable comments and suggestions based on individual teaching performance.

ON PROGRAM BENEFITS

There is good research out there on teaching and learning, but we are often too busy teaching and trying to do our own research to keep up on the research on teaching as well.

The program provided me with big-picture ideas about how students learn and gave me the opportunity to put them into practice.

It allowed me to think through the relationship between my teaching philosophy and my teaching practices and how to align the two, so that what I am doing in the classroom is now better reflective of what I believe about teaching and learning.

20 Fall 2018
I was in science, studying biochemistry and biology. And then I started working as a summer student for the department of soil science at the U of M. And that was that. I was hooked.

As a summer student, I was very fortunate to work with Laryssa Grenkow, who was in her final year of studies, and to have such a strong person in agriculture with a strong agronomy background teach me not only the hard agronomy stuff and the science, but also the importance of the research we do and why we do it. She showed that passion—and it sparked for me. The passion and drive to make things better; that really struck a chord. I decided to pursue graduate studies with professor Don Flaten, who was also Laryssa’s supervisor at the time.

It was very valuable to me to have mentors throughout my program. They came in all shapes and forms, from different organizations and backgrounds! I’ve been lucky to have mentors from fellow graduate students to industry members to academics to government personnel.

As a police officer. Go figure. But my mom knocked that out of my head…. I knew she used to work in a lab, but then I found out she did very similar work as what I did as a summer student. So maybe that’s where my desire comes from. She used to be a soil scientist too.

The fieldwork. Going out there, seeing the crop grow from seed. And watching it grow through mid-season to harvest. It’s so satisfying. And it helps when your hypothesis works out.

In terms of my academic mentoring, Don has been the biggest influence. What didn’t I learn from Don Flaten? He made me into a very strong and confident person. He... recognized what was there and helped me to build to the point where [I was] able to take off on my own.

He is a prominent researcher who’s well-respected in the community. A scientist with a lot of integrity who also puts farmers first. That was one of the things I’ve always been impressed with. He taught me the importance of having credibility and having people respect your work, of doing it for the betterment of the agricultural community.

This mentorship that I’ve received from these fantastic individuals, it doesn’t end once you graduate. It extends beyond—and I think that is a very special characteristic of the agricultural industry. There’s a culture of support. And starting in a new role, you continue those relationships. They are definitely valued and I’m very fortunate to have them.

With files from Sean Moore.
WAYS OF SEEING

BY MARIANNE MAYS WIEBE

When fine art and music students work with mentors, they learn new perspectives.
Music composition student Ross Budgen with professor Örjan Sandred.
FEATURE

LEARNING TO SEE, according to visual artist Mark Neufeld, can be a matter of unlearning as much as learning. The assistant professor of painting at University of Manitoba’s School of Art gives the example of perspectival drawing. Someone who is untrained, he notes, will want to stick to their rational idea of a known form—the length of an arm, for instance—despite how different it may look from another angle, such as pointing directly at you from a distance. That bias has to be unravelled in order to give primary attention to what is actually seen.

There may be other tendencies that need to be liberated in favour of enhancing skill or advancing individual expression. “Growing up, school tends to make people similar in a way,” says professor of music composition Örjan Sandred. The classroom setting typically demands some uniformity, to work the way the teacher tells you, to follow along.

But, he says, “There is no book that will teach you how to successfully compose a piece of music. You will have to discover it yourself.”

THE BIGGER PICTURE

For Derrick Gardner, becoming a good musician takes something beyond talent. In fact, Gardner, who holds the Babs Asper Professorship in Jazz Trumpet, prefers to work with individuals who are dedicated and persistent over those who display initial aptitude. It’s partly because the trumpet is extremely physical. Daily warm-ups take at least an hour and you need to “keep up your chops,” he says. “As the saying goes, you take one day off, you know it. If you take two days off, everybody else knows it.”

Gardner: “It’s impossible for any one student to perform like any of their heroes. It takes their whole lives to get to that level.”

He sees music as a lifelong pursuit defined and fueled by commitment. “It’s impossible to have any one student perform like any of their heroes. It takes their whole lives to get to that level. But before you leave the program [at the U of M],” he says, “you’ll be able to perform on a professional level and find [your] professional voice.”

Catherine Robbins distinguishes teachable underpinnings that can help to advance talent. “You can present, from a pedagogical standpoint, a method of practice that will increase one’s ability in certain areas,” suggests the assistant professor of choral studies and musical education in the Desautels Faculty of Music.

Overall, she believes talent needs to be developed rather than taught. Mentors help students connect their prior knowledge to developing knowledge in building a frame of reference, she says. A mentor may notice a particular talent that has been unrealized, and can also “see where deficiencies exist in understanding or exposure and help students learn more in these areas and relate them to the bigger picture.”

Development is a major factor, agrees Sandred. It takes time for an artist to find her or his own voice. “Maturity has a large role in a musical mind, as a composer and a person,” he says.

“Music composition means that we’ll see what you have inside yourself and then we’ll develop that and figure it out and communicate with others—so you can go beyond the norm and find out what’s not in the textbooks, so to speak.”

SHIFTS IN BEING, HEARING, SEEING

In order to cultivate a ‘musical mind’ in students, Sandred provides an abundant amount and variety of musical material; first year studies typically involve a lot of listening. Each week, students are introduced to a different piece of music and asked to listen to it while looking at the score. Whether or not they like it is beside the point.

“I’m asking them to think about it and understand the purpose of the piece or a style,” he says. “And then that will slowly be part of their music language, either ‘I want to relate to it’ or ‘I want to do something different.’ Both outcomes are good for me, but they have to know as much as possible.”

In similar fashion, Neufeld encourages visual art students to “learn as much as they can about their areas of interest, to look at everything with an eye to what is best, and to sharpen their ability to see quality through critique and comparison and then bring their own ways of thinking and seeing to bear on things.

“Or maybe it’s the other way around,” he reconsideres. “Start with your own way of seeing and thinking, and then add in or incorporate other ways of seeing and thinking, and then revise.”

Robbins, whose research straddles choral studies and music education, regards music and choral conducting as a way of being and a way of life. “The big thing that we refer to is trying to ‘be in tune with your way of being.’ How are you with others?—not just what
CAN TALENT BE TAUGHT?

Derrick Gardner, assistant professor, Babs Asper Professorship in Jazz Trumpet, Desautels Faculty of Music

With people I recruit, students, I interview them quite extensively to find out what they want to do with their life and career. I might have a trumpet player that is really, really talented as a high school student but has doubt whether music as a profession is the route they want to go. A student that has less talent on the horn but has the dedication to see it through and wants to be a professional performer ... I would take that person in a heartbeat.

Mark Neufeld, assistant professor, painting, School of Art

I’m not sure there is Talent, singular—but there are definitely talents, plural. A similar word might be “vision,” which shades into things like single-mindedness and confidence, and then a big word: originality—and the pursuit of this originality, even when people find it weird, pointless or even bad. We often encourage students to take chances and this is what we mean: to pursue an odd, quirky or even embarrassing idea, and to give it visual form. A lot of what we do is encourage students to take chances, and we try to create an atmosphere of trust, for them to fail and revise, and ultimately develop sets of criteria that haven’t existed widely.

Catherine Robbins, assistant professor of choral studies/music education, director of U of M Concert Choir, Desautels Faculty of Music

I firmly believe that a mentor’s role is to help students to realize their full potential. Mentorship differs slightly from teaching, although they are closely related. I am in a position to identify what activities, reading, lessons and focus will help the student develop expertise in their area. A student will always possess a certain degree of talent in different areas of a craft they are studying and a mentor can help bring this out.

Neufeld encourages visual art students to “look at everything with an eye to what is best, and to sharpen their ability to see quality through critique and comparison.”

“we have a curriculum of a butterfly to teach people art, but what is missing is the dragonfly to teach people history and the spirit. They need to come together. That’s what I’m trying to do, put them together, use that teaching to make sure that people get a balanced learning, using the arts. That’s my purpose in life.”

THE INWARD EYE

All agree that the growth process goes deeper than the technical learning and requires a lot of the individual.

“The quality of being an artist is that you are supposed to develop your inner voice and have something to say, worth listening to,” says Sandred. “That’s a huge challenge for an 18-year-old person. So you can’t say that at the start; you start to work and see what comes out and go from there.”
The mentoring is multi-dimensional, adds Gardner, because of those requisites. Jazz—with its emotional, interpretive and improvisational character—is demanding.

“The written part might account for five per cent of the total performance. Everything else is improvisational,” he explains. “Jazz is particularly a very emotional music. You have to be able to tell a complete story to the listener—it’s like reciting a poem, or an actor being on stage in the theatre. You’ve got to call on certain emotions to tell that story.”

Neufeld counts mentoring as something that happens both formally and informally, in educational settings and elsewhere. He tells students that one of the things they can gain from their educational experience is a peer group. “To continue to look at each other’s work and get feedback,” he says, “is a good way to get to the next phase in your work.”

Peer exchange is crucial in moving towards “a way of life in thinking about teaching others and teaching ourselves,” says Robbins. It starts in the music classroom, where students teach and mentor each other through small group work, providing critical feedback to each other.

Students sometimes get caught up in the idea that there is one particular way of doing things or boxes to check, she notes. Instead, she wants them “to be curious humans who are always asking questions from a philosophical point of view, rather than trying to look for the ‘right’ way to do it,” she says. Rather than assuming students don’t know anything about a given topic, she wants them to see that “they know a lot and that they need to understand what they know and transfer that to different situations.”

Robbins: “What has your journey been, who have your mentors been and are you actually living that? Those are the questions that should fuel a career.”

It reaches beyond an apprenticeship model. “I really want them to be questioning that, to grab knowledge from wherever they can and to think about their history,” she says. “What has your journey been, who have your mentors been and are you actually living that? Those are the questions that should fuel a career.”

“How did I come to believe things about the discipline I work in? And how will I keep working with that knowledge as I grow?”
A young girl, recently immigrated to Winnipeg, is trying to fit in at her new school. Quiet and observant, she keeps to the peripheries of rooms—and classmates.

Then, at an after-school program, she is taught something so inspiring that she heads straight to the school office the next day. Can she start a club with the new skills she’s learned?

A space is booked, supplies are provided and on the first lunch hour that she hosts the club, there is a room full of eager students. What are they there to do?

Arm knitting.
Honeyford: “When we share our passions with others, a different kind of relationship is developed.”

Through that relationship, and a high teacher-to-student ratio, another skill emerges: being a reflective practitioner. At the end of each CanU session, the B.Ed. students engage in peer-to-peer mentoring. They talk about what went well, what was unexpected and what their response could be next time.

“Maybe one of the students was really quiet and sitting off by themselves,” says Honeyford. “They start talking about what could be prompting that and then they make a plan together. To see how their peers interact with students gives them another set of approaches, repertoire and ways of thinking. That collaboration is so important to developing effective teachers, and it’s an opportunity they don’t get a lot of.”

**MENTORSHIP COMES FULL CIRCLE**

Last year, professor Joannie Halas started her Diverse Populations Mentorship course as she always does: by showing her new crop of students a photo of kids who participated in the Rec and Read program. The program is another way the U of M is extending mentoring into the wider community.

“All of a sudden, this young woman goes, ‘Oh, that’s me,’” says Halas. The young woman was pointing to a girl in the photo. “She was a high school mentor [in the program] at Garden Hill First Nation and...”

You won’t find it in the provincial curricula, but that’s exactly the point, says Michelle Honeyford, associate professor, department of curriculum, teaching and learning, Faculty of Education. She is also director of CanU, the after-school academic, sport and nutrition program for Grades 5 to 12 that inspired the arm knitting club.

“I say to the students [who coordinate the program], ‘This is an opportunity to step outside the kinds of things you might be expected to teach. Design a program around your passions and interests where the relationships come first. It’s about developing community.’”

Musical theatre, escape rooms, robotics, archaeology, nutrition. Name the subject, and there is probably a CanU Academy teaching it. Run by U of M student volunteers, many earning their B.Ed., CanU has grown from just three programs with 15 kids and 30 student volunteers to almost 50 programs with 500 kids from across 40 Winnipeg schools. They are joined by 500 U of M student volunteers from 30 different faculties and departments.

**SHARING PASSION, LEARNING SELF-REFLECTION**

For the middle school children in CanU, the six-week initiative opens up a world of ideas, possibilities and aspirations. For the university students, the outreach experience is unlike anything else in their studies.

“During their practicum, [students] focus on doing well in the curriculum and developing teaching strategies,” explains Honeyford. “We’ve deliberately made CanU a space where they can try something new. When we share our passions with others, a different kind of relationship is developed.”
now she’s in Winnipeg coming into University. That was beautiful.”

It’s the full-circle, ‘cradle to career’ result the professor in the bachelor of physical education program in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management has been striving for over the past 20 years.

Rec and Read began in 2002 as a way to attract more Indigenous students into careers in physical education. It also helps current university students become more effective teachers by experiencing a diverse curriculum.

“With Rec and Read, Indigenous values inform everything we do,” explains Halas. “A lot of mentoring programs are based on a Western model where a more experienced, older, mature, mentor works with a mentee. We see mentorship as reciprocity. Learning is happening both ways.”

The university students collaborate with high school students to plan a customized after-school program centred on physical activity, nutrition and literacy. Together, they deliver the weekly program to early years students from Indigenous and diverse communities around Manitoba.

Halas: “Our strongest pedagogy, if we look at the most successful practices, is relational and experiential.”

“Some university students have to unlearn what they’re taught in some of their courses because in Rec and Read, you’re there to facilitate the leadership and the gifts of the high school students. You have to find a way to be a good mentor, to bring out the best in the young people you’re working with.”

As the high school students learn organization, communication and group management skills, their confidence builds. They can see themselves as leaders in their communities, or going further with their education—like the Garden-Hill-mentor-turned-U-of-M student did.

Building relationships through outreach is invaluable to the university mentors, too. Many choose to become educators up North or in the inner city, working with Indigenous and newcomer youth. Halas considers that the biggest contribution of Rec and Read.

“Our strongest pedagogy, if we look at the most successful practices, is relational and experiential,” says Halas.

Should more mentorship be integrated with teaching?

Yes, says Halas. “It just makes a lot of sense.”
A MENTOR’S ROLE is to listen and ask questions, exchange stories, expand the mentee’s network and encourage them to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Psychology professor Kristin Reynolds says the excellent mentorship she received as a student definitely helped guide her to her current work, including a focus on health information access and literacy. She now passes that experience on to students such as Teaghan Pryor, a fourth year honours psychology student who is a member of Reynolds’ Health Information Exchange Lab and a recipient of a 2017 Undergraduate Research Award (URA). The summer program allows students to be mentored with a professor of their choice for 16 weeks.

Pryor explains how mentoring differs from teaching. “It involves investing time and effort in a one-on-one relationship,” she says.
“Rather than just learning in a classroom, Dr. Reynolds shares her knowledge with me in hands-on research situations. I can ask as many questions as I need and I learn in a way that is guided by me.”

The work supported by the award included the creation and evaluation of an information tool for late-life depression. The decision-aiding tool provides clear and concise information and resources for older adults, and those that are close to them, to help them make informed decisions about treatment options.

Pryor was the lead research assistant for the project. She was given the opportunity to collaborate with faculty from multidisciplinary backgrounds and other student researchers. She conducted literature reviews, created content for the tool and co-facilitated focus groups with health professionals. She gained not only practical research experience but also received valuable feedback and insight as she built critical thinking and leadership skills.

The URA is a very beneficial program, agrees Reynolds. It “gave me the opportunity to work with a highly-qualified student who helped move my research forward.”

And, she notes that undergraduate students are keen to get involved. “It’s extremely important to foster this early passion and enthusiasm, and provide occasions for skill-building and professional development that will help students develop as people, researchers and potentially assist in the pursuit of their career paths,” she says.

What’s next for Pryor? She says that her mentee experience has created a path for her.

“Dr. Reynolds’ dedication to her field and support for me has inspired me to pursue a graduate degree in clinical psychology or counselling and hopefully continue into research as a career,” she says.
I CALL YOU FRIEND

THE NEECHIWAKEN INDIGENOUS PEER MENTOR PROGRAM

BY MIKE STILL
When Carla Loewen started working as an Indigenous advisor in University 1 in 2005, there was little Indigenous programming at the University of Manitoba. Her director was reviewing different student populations and suggested looking at options for developing programming for the academic units.

“There was already an international mentor program in place,” she says, “so I looked at it from more of a non-hierarchal model and developed Promoting Aboriginal Community Together (PACT).”

The intent of PACT, which started running in 2009, was to match new Indigenous students with experienced Indigenous students to provide academic and social support and ongoing advice in order to make the transition from high school to university easier.

When Loewen transitioned to the Indigenous Student Centre as a student advisor in January 2016, she took the program with her. It’s now known as Neechiwaken, which is a Cree word that means “friend.”

The program matches Indigenous mentors and mentees based on mutual interests. They meet before the school year starts to trade contact information and to get to know each other; Loewen also schedules monthly meetings for the students to share successes and challenges.

“I’m the facilitator and I tie up the loose ends,” she says. “If I’m noticing there’s non-communication going on, I’ll check in with both of them and make sure things are moving along as they should be with minimal interference—because when it comes to a volunteer program, you can’t put too much pressure on students.

“I love that I’m able to build those connections with students, because really it’s them making the initiative to make sure that their mentor-matching works.”

Paying It Forward

Loewen’s goal has always been to have a complete cycle: new students coming in, getting assistance from somebody else, and saying, ‘You know what? I thought that was really helpful. I’d like to be a mentor this year.’

“For the most part that’s happened,” she says. “In 2013, the first round of peer mentors and mentees graduated from the U of M. Currently, there’s a fairly new slate of mentors and mentees.”

Leah Marion-King is one of the new mentees this year. Loewen is her academic advisor and prior to the start of the school year, told Marion-King about the aspects of the program such as the program orientation, where the mentors and mentees first meet.

“It was nice, because we got to meet before school started, and I made some friends during that orientation,” she says. “So, when school actually started, I kind of knew some people already. If I wasn’t in it, I wouldn’t have made friends as fast.”

For mentor Bobby McNair, the program gave him the chance to reflect on how much he knows about the university compared to when he started.

“Things that you kind of take for granted after a while, like where to get a transcript,” he says. “This was something that was super stressful for me in my first year. Now I can get a text from my mentee asking where to get a transcript and I can tell him where to find it. It feels good for me to be able to help him that easily with things that I’ve taken for granted, and I’m sure it helps him. I was in the same boat.”

When the peer mentorship program started, there was an average of six matches per year. Currently, there’s roughly 20.

“I put my trust in the students to do what I hope they can do—and it just keeps happening,” Loewen says.

“I’m really happy about that, and I’m proud that there’s so many students on campus that are willing to do this kind of work. They’re doing it out of the goodness of their hearts and I think that’s pretty special.”
TOP 5 REASONS TO BE A MENTOR

BY KEVIN OLIVER
Being part of the NEW STUDENT PEER MENTOR PROGRAM as a mentor is a great way to make a difference. The program assists new students in their transition into a new chapter of their lives, but there are also several ways that mentors benefit.

1. Being able to make a new friend
   – Camila Bentes Rodrigues Da Costa, returning mentor

We match a new student with an upper years student within the same faculty or in a faculty that the mentee aspires to enter. The program runs alongside the Neechiwaken Indigenous Peer Mentor and the International Student Mentor programs so that our social events can connect students from all three programs! Making friends at university is a great way to reduce academic stress.

2. As a mentor, one gains many skills that help you grow as a person while having fun. What you learn in the New Student Peer Mentor Program can help with future jobs or volunteer positions.
   – Joyce Almonte, new mentor

We provide mentors with training in communications, time-management, relationship building and accessibility awareness. We connect them with resources available on campus. Throughout the year, we also provide optional training exclusive to participants in our programs, such as bystander training and study tips workshops.

3. The people, events and food makes this one program that should not be passed up!
   – Kapilan Panchendrabose, returning mentor

It’s true! There are fun times to be had. Last year’s orientation event started at Degrees Restaurant before we headed out for some games. We have trivia, board games, video games and a bunch of outdoor options. There’s also an intercultural potluck and a movie night.

4. You can learn so much from your mentee; both of my past mentees were from the Philippines and they shared so much of their culture with me.
   – Tori Miller, mentorship programs assistant

We work very hard to match mentors with the perfect fit to ensure that both students get just as much as possible out of the experience. Our program is open to all new students; a mentee may be a new student coming from high school, a graduate student in Canada for the first time or a parent coming to university with 20 years of work experience.

5. You get recognition on your Co-Curricular Record (CCR).

Upon completion of the program, students are recognized for their involvement by receiving a notation on their CCR. Your CCR tracks all of your co-curricular experiences and can be a useful tool when building your resumé or cover letter.

For more student mentoring programs at the U of M, see: umanitoba.ca/studentlife/mentorship/
Performance and Installation view of Mark Neufeld’s 2015 exhibition, IDEAS & THINGS, Kamloops Art Gallery. Image courtesy of the artist.
See “Ways of Seeing” feature on page 22.