

OFFICE FOR  
ABORIGINAL  
PEOPLES LOGO

SFU's Office for Aboriginal Peoples logo, designed by Haida artist Juanita Ens, features an eagle with two abstracted

U forms representing Burnaby Mountain. The Eagle, a highly respected creature amongst First Nations people, symbolizes honour, strength and wisdom. The eagle's beak and tongue overlap with the mountain. In Haida art and mythology, creatures and spiritual beings often touch their tongues with other beings or objects to depict the transfer of knowledge, song and story. It's a fitting representation of what occurs between Aboriginal Peoples and Simon Fraser University.



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

## Tansi!

This has been an exciting first year for SFU's Office for Aboriginal Peoples (OAP), which is working together with many others to implement the First Nations University-Wide Strategic Plan.

Our Burnaby campus office is located in a beautiful space in the Academic Quadrangle, room 3140, with two historic totem poles by Tsimshian artist Ray Wesley greeting visitors at the front entrance.

As the year began, our office quickly followed through on some major initiatives. First, we changed our name from the Office of First Nations to the Office for Aboriginal Peoples to better reflect our entire constituency—Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

With our campus partners we also formed a First Nations university-wide steering committee composed of faculty, students and staff to help implement the First Nations University-Wide Strategic Plan.

We also have an exciting new website. Located at [www.sfu.ca/aboriginalpeoples](http://www.sfu.ca/aboriginalpeoples), the site centralizes links to all Aboriginal people, programs and services on campus.

Our office also worked throughout the year with on- and off-campus partners on numerous other new and existing initiatives. They include establishing Aboriginal contacts in Career Services, Graduate Studies and Continuing Studies; Aboriginal alumni initiatives; improvements for Aboriginal students in the SFU Library system, Career Services and Graduate Studies; Aboriginal community outreach; strengthening the Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) and Aboriginal Pre-University Bridging programs; discussing potential Aboriginal international student exchange agreements and field schools overseas; and developing a soon-to-be-established Indigenous Research Institute.

In addition to those people working on these issues, I would like to thank the numerous other faculty, staff and students who have done fine work in the interests of Aboriginal people at SFU this year. They include Jon Driver, our VP-academic and provost; SFU's 10 Aboriginal faculty members; OAP administrative assistant Klahanie R. Rorick; our dedicated First Nations Student Association; the Indigenous Student Centre's Jenna LaFrance, Gary George and Heather Macdonald; Indigenous Recruitment Coordinator Jennie Blankinship; and all the non-Aboriginal staff and faculty doing work in the Aboriginal field. We are also excited to welcome Andrew Petter, our new university president, who joined SFU with a solid background in Aboriginal affairs.

Please enjoy this first edition of the *SFU News* Aboriginal Peoples supplement and discover some of the Aboriginal-SFU success stories that have emerged this year. We look forward to the same kind of engaging work in the year ahead.

**WILLIAM G. LINDSAY (CREE-STONEY)**  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

# SFU funds secure bridge programs

GREG DELERS

SFU has committed three years of funding to the new Aboriginal Bridge Program, which provides Indigenous students with a foundation of academic and personal success skills in preparation for transition to university.

SFU has committed money from its university priorities fund to bankroll pre-university Aboriginal Bridge programs for the next three years.

"In view of the difficulty in obtaining consistent external funding for these programs, the university felt it was important to provide stability for a number of years," says VP-academic Jon Driver.

Meanwhile, adds Driver, "we'll continue to search for external support from public and private sources."

"This is awesome news, and it ties in nicely with our new Aboriginal undergraduate admissions policy," says Office for Aboriginal Peoples director, William Lindsay. (See related story p.2).

"It makes SFU a Canadian leader in Aboriginal education in this regard."

The funding "means we can plan ahead and properly recruit for

the programs instead of having to wait for last-minute funding from various sources, as has been the case in the past," says Lindsay.

"Our students and community partners can also plan ahead because now they know the programs are going to run every year starting next year, so it's better all around.

"Prospective students who apply under the new Aboriginal admissions policy who may not be quite ready for university study will be directed to the bridging programs, which will now be running for sure."

A few other Canadian universities have similar bridging programs," says Lindsay, but they all rely on temporary grant support.

"The coordinators of all those programs spend a lot of their time trying to drum up financing, just like ours had to do, and it's really tough to do that." (See related story, p.3).

## Merck funds Aboriginal mentoring program



Merck & Co., one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, has awarded \$15,000 to finance a program to help mentor Aboriginal students in pre-health programs at SFU.

The Training Aboriginal Youth in Biomedical Labs (TAYBL) program is designed to provide entry-level jobs and mentorship for Aboriginal students who are interested in health careers.

The program, which is being administered through the biological sciences department, targets students who have completed the Aboriginal Pre-Health Program at the Surrey campus and then entered programs in biomedical science at the Burnaby campus.

"We hope to support two to three students in part-time jobs and training for the spring semester, and then a similar number for full-time jobs in the summer," says biologist and department chair Felix Breden, who applied for the grant.

Three SFU labs have expressed interest in the program so far.



Andrew Petter

## President a champion of Aboriginal rights, education

You would be hard pressed to find a Canadian university leader with a better track record on Aboriginal rights and education than SFU's new president Andrew Petter.

As Minister of Aboriginal Affairs from 1991-93 with Mike Harcourt's NDP government, Petter led development of the mandate for the Nisga'a treaty negotiations that culminated in British Columbia's first modern-day treaty. He also led the province's efforts to create the B.C. Treaty Commission and to negotiate a treaty cost-sharing agreement with the federal government.

As University of Victoria law school dean from 2001-08 he collaborated with northern partners to establish the Akitsiraq Law School, which offered UVic law degrees to Inuit students studying in Iqaluit, Nunavut.

Petter also helped establish two new Aboriginal research chairs at UVic Law and a Law and Society graduate program

See **PETTER** page 4.

## ABORIGINAL ART AND CULTURE

## Art course recalls ancient skills

Students taking First Nations 383, a popular sustainable Indigenous technologies course, learn how to sew animal skins, weave cattails and cedar bark, sew beaded designs, make drums and carve wood. They also learn about culturally relevant First Nations protocols and spiritual practices related to the materials and their home environment.

The class has given U.K. exchange student Pippa Clifton greater appreciation for how First Nations communities work with and sustain the environment. She says the cattail mats students weave are reminiscent of the coverings early First Nations people created for their homes.

But there's more to the class than crafts, including lectures, weekly readings, critical discourse, storytelling and dancing and singing.

"There's something powerful about knowing how to make beautiful things," says assistant professor annie ross (her spelling), who notes students must use the lessons to make items reflecting their own culture and personal ideas.

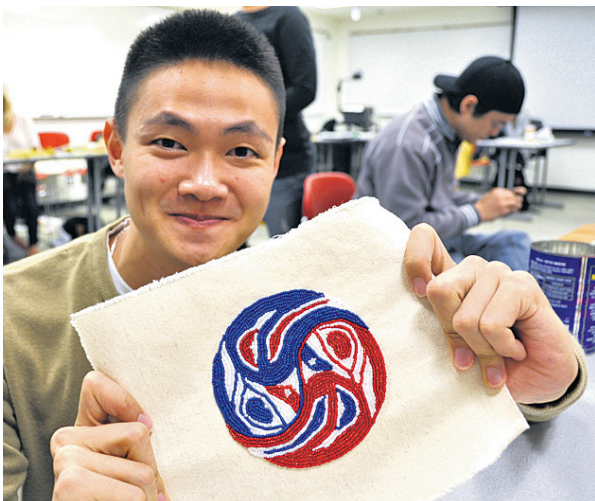
Students also must find their own materials in the appropriate season, an exercise that ross says illustrates the fragility of First Nations crafts, which rely on a sustainable, healthy ecosystems, and human engagement within it.

She says it also helps students to think about the sacrifice that an animal or plant has made in order for them to have nice things.

Many students who take the course have no Aboriginal background and ross says it becomes a transformative experience for them. "You can see the respect they gain for people who make things, and the confidence they have in their own hands."



Making moccasins are (l-r): Beverly Brown, third-year communication, and Audrey McDougall, fourth-year history.



Learning beadwork in First Nations 383 gave fourth-year communication student William Au an interesting means of expressing the Asian symbolism of yin and yang in an Aboriginal context.



## MOU promotes 'collective partnership'

Jenna LaFrance (left), director of the university-operated Indigenous Student Centre signs an agreement with Janelle Kasperski of the independent student-run First Nations Student Association. The groups pledged to work together to support SFU's Indigenous students.

SFU's Indigenous Student Centre (ISC) and First Nations Student Association (FNSA) signed a tentative agreement during the April 2010 Honouring Feast that promises to alleviate years of uneasiness between the two organizations.

The draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) is subject to review by the FNSA's newly elected board members. But Angela Semple, a five-year veteran board member, is confident it will lead to a closer working relationship.

The MOU commits the two organizations to enhancing and strengthening Indigenous student services and academic success and acknowledges their "collaborative partnership" while retaining their autonomy.

"We still have our differences," says Semple, a member of the Ktunaxa (Kootenay) Nation who's completing the fifth and final year of her BA honours degree in English with a minor in First Nations Studies.

"But basically we all want the same thing, which is to move forward as a whole community on campus rather than being separated.

"In this way, we hope to reach our collective goal of supporting Aboriginal students throughout their university experience—from high-school graduation to entrance into the workforce."

ISC director Jenna LaFrance agrees, and takes it one step further. She would like to see both organizations housed in the same space.

"We have different mandates and different roles to play at the university," says LaFrance (Cree/French Métis).

"But we're both doing two essential things connected to student services and retention, one of which is our community area for students and the other is the FNSA's computer room.

"If we could find a larger space where we could consolidate the two services it would make things far more convenient, particularly for new Aboriginal students."

Semple adds, SFU's four main university Indigenous organizations—ISC, FNSA, the Office for Aboriginal Peoples and the First Nations Studies department—have recently started meeting monthly as an "Indigenous inclusion committee to keep us connected. And the MOU was the start of this."

## New policy encourages Aboriginal enrolment

SFU reinforced its commitment to First Nations student success this fall with the launch of an admission policy specific to Aboriginal undergraduates.

First Nations, Métis or Inuit students who lack the high school qualifications required to enter individual SFU faculties and schools can now request a special review of their application.

Under the Aboriginal Undergraduate Admission Policy approved by SFU's senate, an applicant's educational history, cultural knowledge, work experience, educational goals and other achievements will also be considered.

SFU currently has an estimated 500 Aboriginal students. The Assembly of First Nations notes that only 27 per cent of Canada's status Indians hold a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree, compared to 46 per cent of the broader Canadian population.

"This new policy ensures SFU offers all the benefits of post-secondary education to Aboriginal people who may not have had full access in the past," says SFU President Andrew Petter.

"Education is the best vehicle for helping individuals and communities strengthen their circumstances, and SFU will support their success in education."

Petter points to a discussion paper circulating in senate when the policy was approved, which observes, "The reverberations of the residential school system are still being felt."

It continues, "there has been a lack of relevant cultural content in modern school curriculums; and ignorance and racism are still endemic in many places in modern Canada. As a result, Aboriginal People have had decidedly mixed experiences when it comes to formal education.

"In some communities, poverty and concomitant social problems



SFU's new Aboriginal admissions policy extends post-secondary education to Indigenous people who may not have had full access in the past.

hold young ones back from achieving their full potential and from achieving the kinds of grades usually necessary for university admission. Statistics show that high-school incompleteness rates are still too high in the Aboriginal community.

"However, as many young Aboriginal men and women mature, they establish solid work records, they have families, and they come to realize the value of a formal education. (They) are ready and motivated for the challenge of post-secondary education."

ABORIGINAL BRIDGE PROGRAM

## Building a bridge to the future



Ivy Bell

Ivy Bell isn't sure how she'll use her degree after she graduates. "But I'm reaching for the stars," says the first-year health sciences student who was one of the first graduates of SFU's Aboriginal Pre-Health Bridge Program.

The two-semester program first offered in September 2009 and the one-semester Aboriginal University Preparation Program (AUPP) operating since 2007 were both incorporated as formal pathways to conditional SFU admission in the new Aboriginal Bridge Program the senate approved in January.

And this month VP-academic Jon Driver announced continuing funding for the new program,

which had previously been dependent on temporary grant funding (see related story p.1).

Continuing Studies developed the two popular tuition-free programs in partnership with First Nations peoples and communities to provide greater access to SFU post-secondary opportunities as mandated in SFU's First Nations Strategic Plan, says program coordinator Natalie Wood-Wiens.

"They're both hugely popular," she says, "so it was a logical step to recognize them formally as 'bridging programs' to provide improved access and acknowledge coursework completed by the students."

The cohort-based programs are both designed to give students a solid foundation of academic and personal success skills to help them prepare for a full range of post-secondary education options.

Both programs include foundation courses in university-level reading and writing, mathematics, science and Indigenous knowledge in the modern world, as well as study skills, managing stress, motivation, wellness and careers in a global environment.

The pre-health program Bell was in also explores various health career options while building the necessary prerequisites for health-sciences programs such as nursing, midwifery and dental hygienist training.

Wood-Wiens says possible future bridging streams will also be based on the AUPP core model and will be similarly recognized as part of the Aboriginal Bridge Program.

"The work is quite tough," Bell says of her pre-health program training, "but I really enjoyed it and the instructors were very helpful—and still are. I feel like I'm ready now to train for a career that will be great for the future."



The Squamish Nahanee Dancers delighted guests last June at the First Nations Honouring Feast, which became a regular SFU convocation event three years ago.

## Honouring feast reinforces Aboriginal heritage

For as long as First Nations students have been graduating from SFU the university's Aboriginal community has been holding its own traditional ceremonies in tandem with the university's to celebrate their achievement.

Over the years the informal ceremonies have drawn increasing numbers of people until three years ago when the First Nations Honouring Feast became a regular event during spring and fall convocation.

The much-anticipated feast draws proud families from a cross the country to celebrate their children's achievements in a culturally appropriate way that also reinforces their Aboriginal heritage.

SFU is on traditional Squamish Nation lands so the university's First Nations community "asked us to help 'set the table'", says Squamish Nation education department head, Deborah Jacobs.

"We provide the fish for the feast" and the ceremony is conducted using Squamish protocols that involve applying a very particular set of cultural values to the ceremony, explains Jacobs.

"We blanket a speaker, who speaks for the host family—the university, the First Nations Student Association, the Indigenous

Student Centre and the First Nations Studies department."

The speaker then takes everyone through a series of events in what is known as the "calling of witness" ceremony, which represents the traditional recording of oral history as it happens.

After the witness ceremony the salmon feast begins, followed by traditional drumming, singing and other festivities, and speeches from SFU's president, campus First Nations community representatives and the graduates.

"Personally, I'm thrilled to be involved, as I'm an SFU alumni," says Jacobs, who completed her graduate degree in Indigenous education at the Burnaby campus.

"But having said that, the honouring celebration and ceremony is a wonderful expression of asserting our presence within our territories and it honours all First Nations students from across Canada who are at the university.

"And we ourselves at the Squamish Nation grow from it and are uplifted because the families come to join in and it's just a really incredible event in terms of looking at First Nation identity and our culture and our values.

"Hearing our language spoken at the event puts us that much closer to looking at our ancestors."

## First Nations Studies marks 12 years

BY ELDON YELLOWHORN  
DIRECTOR, FIRST NATIONS STUDIES

SFU introduced First Nations Studies (FNST) as a minor program offered on the Burnaby campus in 1998. Initially, the program offered a limited number of courses but it has grown incrementally since.

A dozen years later, students can pursue a bachelor of arts degree in First Nations Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Creating a stand-alone major for FNST was among the recommendations of the First Nations University-Wide Strategic Plan, adopted by SFU in 2007.

Implementing that initiative meant hiring the faculty contingent comprised of four members, with three jointly appointed in archaeology and one in English.

Although the department of archaeology has been the institutional host from the outset and continues to act in that role today, establishing a physical presence for the academic program was an important recommendation of the strategic plan. When Saywell Hall was built it included space to house FNST faculty, staff and instruction.

In the seminar room adjacent to the atrium, faculty members offer courses that examine topics in Aboriginal literature, visual arts, heritage, traditional knowledge and politics.

While FNST might be a fledgling venture that has taken a significant step forward, there are still future initiatives to consider, such as seeking departmental status.

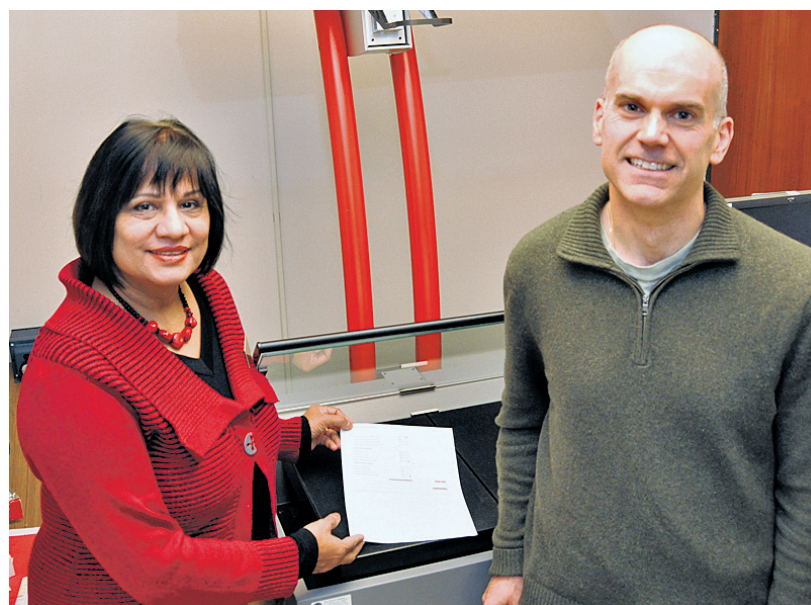
## Unique collection speaks with 'Indigenous voice'

Indigenous scholars worldwide will soon have open Internet access to a unique SFU collection of digitized graduate theses, research papers and other materials all written by Indigenous authors from an Indigenous rather than a Euro-centric perspective.

Dubbed the Indigenous Academic Resources (IAR) project, the collection is the result of a partnership between SFU's Indigenous Student Centre (ISC), the institutional repository and the Bennett Library, using a \$5000 grant from the library's Scholarly Digitization Fund.

"Lots of libraries across the world have institutional repositories of locally produced digital material that's kept safe and secure and migrated to new formats as they come along," says digitization fund coordinator Don Taylor, the library's assistant head of access services. "But no one else has an Indigenous collection quite like this."

When it's completed next spring, the repository will house up to 20,000 pages of materials all produced by Indigenous authors, including SFU and other scholarly works and First Nation studies and reports (with their permission).



Liaison librarian Moninder Bubber (left) and digitization fund coordinator Don Taylor.

The project came about when ISC director Jenna LaFrance approached SFU liaison librarian Moninder Bubber to ensure that an ISC work-study project was not duplicating existing SFU Library resources of Indigenous material.

"That's when I told her about RefShare," says Bubber, referring to a component of RefWorks, an online research management, writing and collaboration tool that helps researchers manage, store and share all types of information, as well as generate citations and bibliographies. ISC now has an Indigenous Academia folder in Refworks.

RefShare gives RefWorks users a quick and easy way to share their

research information, further enhancing collaborative research. Users can share their RefWorks references with both members of their own institution and globally with any researcher having Internet access.

Bubber is working with several Indigenous SFU students as part of an ISC work-study project to catalogue and process the ISC's material.

"Many of our databases cover Aboriginal subjects, but no others speak with an Indigenous voice," says Bubber.

"This is an exciting collection that will be invaluable to SFU students and other researchers around the world for years to come."

## 'Indigenous' name change reflects global realities



(l to r) Indigenous Student Centre First Nations student life coordinator, Gary George (Wit'suwit'en First Nation), centre director Jenna LaFrance (Cree/French Métis) and SFU Indigenous recruitment coordinator Jennie Blankinship (Secwepemc [Shuswap] First Nation).

SFU's Indigenous Student Centre (ISC) recently changed its name from its previous designation, First Nations Student Centre, to better convey the inclusive nature of the centre for both local and international Indigenous peoples.

The term Indigenous "is recognized throughout the world by other Indigenous peoples as well as international organizations such as the United Nations," says ISC director Jenna LaFrance.

"But the term 'First Nations' is only used in Canada and the term 'Aboriginal' is used only in Canada and Australia.

"So we wanted a name that was both more representational of all the people we serve locally and more in line with the global focus of the university."

Jennie Blankinship, who dropped the term First Nations and changed her job designation to Indigenous Recruitment Coordinator, agrees.

'Indigenous' is a more widely recognized term and because we are 'thinking of the world', as our logo says, I wanted to expand on that. Plus the other terminologies are more colonial in their origins and not as inclusive, says Blankinship.

"Also, we're recruiting for students from places in the U.S. and Latin America where the words 'Aboriginal' or 'First Nations' are practically unknown.

She adds, "A lot of the faculties are also looking at changing their terminology to 'Indigenous' because we have knowledge from Indigenous peoples all over the world. We don't want to categorize them in different boxes."

### PETTER from page 1.

that has attracted an unprecedented number of Aboriginal students. Aboriginal enrolment rose to almost 10 per cent of the law student body on his watch.

"Canadians have a huge responsibility to Aboriginal Peoples, who have been poorly served historically," says Petter.

"Education can help overcome past wrongs by empowering Aboriginal people to address social and economic challenges and giving them the skills to work with businesses and influence governments.

"And when an institution has a significant proportion of Aboriginal faculty and students it enriches the academic environment for everyone.

"Non-Indigenous students not only gain a better understanding of Indigenous history and culture in Canada, they're invited to view their own history and culture through a different lens.

"They're also encouraged to consider how things might need to be changed to better accommodate Indigenous values and experience."

### SFU OFFICE FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

[www.sfu.ca/aboriginal\\_peoples](http://www.sfu.ca/aboriginal_peoples)

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY



## Ahp-cii-uk: going the right way

The Ahp-cii-uk program helped the Vancouver Island community of Ahousaht revitalize its deteriorating Wild Side heritage trail, which has been reborn as an eco-tourism destination.

The Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations of Ahousaht, Tseshaht and Ehattesaht on Vancouver Island are models of how grass roots initiatives among First Nations, corporations and government can lead to great things.

Just six years ago, Ahousaht, population 850, suffered an epidemic of 65 suicide attempts and two suicide deaths over a 12-month period, with some people attempting suicide more than a dozen times.

Critics say the crisis in the tiny fishing village just north of Tofino highlighted the failure of previous federally developed solutions to create lasting change in First Nations communities.

And it prompted creation of a new approach, the Aboriginal Leadership Initiative, by Health Canada, B.C.'s Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, anti-poverty group Synergos and the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council.

The idea was to empower the communities to come up with their own economic and social revitalization projects while simultaneously building relationships of trust and understanding between the First Nations, government and private partners.

Ahousaht hereditary chief Shawn Atleo, now chief of the Assembly of First Nations, dubbed the initiative Ahp-cii-uk, meaning, "going the right way."

"That's where we came in," says Mark Selman, director of the SFU Business Learning Strategies Group, which was contracted in 2007 to advance the project and enlist corporate support.

Selman recruited business undergrad Bryan Gallagher to work with renowned facilitators and SFU adjunct professors Barry Stuart and Glenn Sigurson to help the three nations choose community-led projects.

He also enlisted a multi-sector team to participate in Ahp-cii-uk, each donating \$10,000 and supplying employees to help.

Ahousaht chose to revitalize its deteriorating Wild Side Trail, which has been reborn as an eco-tourism destination, complete with a welcome figure. Tseshaht developed an artists' market and road safety program, while Ehattesaht has focused on skills development for youth.

The other Ahp-cii-uk partners provided financial support and know-how on marketing and tourism development.

"The whole thing has been a life-changing experience for me," says Gallagher, who plans to continue working with Aboriginal communities after completing his PhD.

"We're now in discussion with other communities about extending the approach," says Selman, adding, "the plan is to have Ahp-cii-uk rolled out nationally."

## Northern boy makes good

Vancouver Métis filmmaker Kelvin Redvers has come a long way from his birthplace in Hay River, NWT—and it's been a wild ride.

His last five years polishing his craft in SFU's Contemporary Arts film program were punctuated by a string of awards and a celebration of his roots while working to increase the profile of Aboriginal culture on campus.

A fixture at the First Nations Student Association, he organized two annual Aboriginal spring feasts, several coffee houses and an Aboriginal storytelling workshop, all the while maintaining a near straight-A average.

At spring graduation this year, his extraordinary record earned him SFU's most prestigious undergraduate honour, the Gordon M. Shrum gold medal.

Then barely two months later he scored a plum job as a producer with CTV's Aboriginal current affairs show First Story.

Still, you can take the man out of the north but you can't take the north out of the man, and the concerns of Indigenous communities bordering the 60th parallel have never been far from his mind.

"So when a friend told me how Treaty 8 lands near Fort St. John were being contaminated from about 1,400 old oil and gas sites and eight-year-old oil spills were poisoning the caribou, I jumped at the story," says Redvers.

The result was *Black Blood: Tainted Land, Dying Caribou*, his inaugural First Story report, which first aired Nov. 14 and can be viewed at the program's website [www.ctvbc.ctv.ca/firststory](http://www.ctvbc.ctv.ca/firststory).

The story attracted national media attention and prompted promises from Victoria and Ottawa lawmakers to look into the problem.

Redvers' grad film *Kid's Court* opened at the



Kelvin Redvers

International Student Film Festival Hollywood the same weekend, where it picked up an award, and the next weekend it was screened at Austria's Youki Internationales Jugend Medien Festival.

When asked the secret of his success so far, the young TV producer doesn't miss a beat: "SFU has been a huge part of it," he says.

"It was my home for five years and the best part of my life and the First Nations Student Association was like a second home. SFU was pivotal to my becoming a filmmaker and learning how to bring attention to the Aboriginal people and culture I love so much.

"Now I'm able to do it on a much larger scale."