

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

October 2024

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

The University of Saskatchewan observed a week of reflection leading up to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30th. As part of this observance, the Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement led the culmination of the blanket project, which used the orange ribbons placed around campus in commemoration of Le Estcwicwéy (the missing) that were discovered at Tk'emlúps Residential School in 2021. Units across campus have worked together to weave and sew these ribbons into star blankets, a symbol of honour and healing. As part of the Week of Reflection, these **blankets** have been framed and are displayed at prominent locations around campus. There is a QR code next to each blanket to provide the viewer with information about the project.

USask building on strong performance in Times Higher Education rankings

For the second year in a row, the University of Saskatchewan has maintained its strong position as a research and scholarly institution in the **2025 Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings**.

The THE rankings measure the performance of universities around the world through 17 metrics across five pillars: teaching, research environment, research quality, industry, and international outlook. USask jumped significantly in the rankings released in 2023, moving from the 501-600 tier of universities to its highest-ever placement in the 351-400 tier. This year, USask has once again achieved the 351-400 tier, as the university's unprecedented progress continues. USask's ranking remained steady overall after last year's leap forward, with upward movement in the teaching pillar. USask also increased its score in all of the metrics in the research quality pillar.

Alumni Achievement Awards

The University of Saskatchewan announced the **2024 winners of the Alumni Achievement Awards**, one of the university's highest honours. This year's six recipients embody the university's aspiration to Be What the World Needs because of their significant accomplishments and contributions since graduating from USask. Each year, Alumni Achievement Awards are presented to notable USask alumni for their accomplishments and impact on their communities and the world. Award recipients are nominated by their peers and chosen based on their achievements, commitment to excellence, community engagement, leadership, and contributions to the well-being of society.

Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award

As the highest honour presented by the University of Saskatchewan Alumni Association, this award recognizes an alumnus/alumna for an outstanding lifetime of accomplishments.

- **Murad Al-Katib (BComm'94)** is the founder, president, and CEO of AGT Foods. Al-Katib has helped revolutionize the province's agricultural industry by connecting local producers to global markets. Widely known as the "lentil king of Saskatchewan" and internationally recognized for his work, Al-Katib has worked with farmers to grow alternate crops, such as the hearty lentil varieties developed by USask researchers.
- **Dr. Jim Dosman (BA'59, MD'63, MA'69)** is considered the "Father of Agricultural Medicine" in Canada. A highly regarded clinician-scientist, he led efforts to raise awareness and develop programs to prevent and treat agricultural-related health conditions. Dr. Dosman has led or been involved in the founding of numerous research centres, associations, and societies dedicated to agricultural safety and rural health, including the Canadian Centre for Rural and Agricultural Health at USask.
- **Judy Pelly (BEd'85)** is a lifelong advocate and educator. Retiring from the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies as dean of community and health studies after 21 years of service, Pelly continues working with organizations to provide cultural guidance on Truth and Reconciliation. She also played a pivotal role in establishing National Ribbon Skirt Day held every January 4 in Canada.

Outstanding Impact Alumni Achievement Award

This award recognizes an extraordinary alumnus/alumna who is currently making significant personal and professional contributions in society and demonstrating exceptional leadership in their field(s) of endeavour.

- **Andrew Chau (BComm'09)** is a visionary tech entrepreneur who co-founded SkipTheDishes and Neo Financial—two of the most successful tech startups to come out of the Prairies. During a time when there was less activity in tech innovation in Saskatchewan, SkipTheDishes became emblematic of the innovation and outstanding entrepreneurial ideas with international impact that can be built, and blossom, right here at home.
- **Neal Kewistep (MPA'11)** is highly respected throughout Saskatchewan for his work in Indigenous governance and economic development. He co-founded the W̓ic̓ihitowin Indigenous Engagement Conference, which aimed to honour residential school survivors and survivors of the Sixties Scoop. Among several other organizations and community groups, Kewistep's leadership has supported the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, the Saskatchewan Health Authority, and Yellow Quill First Nation.

"One to Watch" Alumni Achievement Award

This award recognizes young alumni who are making significant contributions to society at large and setting an example for fellow and future alumni to follow.

- **Dr. Arinjay Banerjee (PhD'18)** is a rising star in the field of virus-host interactions and coronavirus biology at USask's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO). Dr. Banerjee has received multiple prestigious scholarships, fellowships, and awards, including academic and society-level awards. He has previously been honoured for his work to shed light on the novel pandemic-causing coronavirus and in enabling a Canadian rapid response to curb the impacts of COVID-19.

This year's recipients will be honoured at the annual awards gala on October 21 at Remai Modern, hosted by award-winning CBC journalist and USask honorary degree recipient, Susan Ormiston (DLET'22). More information can be found at alumni.usask.ca.

Honorary Degrees

At Fall Convocation on November 13, [USask will award honorary degrees](#) to award-winning writer and Indigenous rights advocate Doug Cuthand, and to business and community leader Greg Smith, celebrating their career achievements, dedication, and lifetime of work in support of others.

Doug Cuthand

(Honorary Doctor of Laws)

Cuthand was born in 1946 and raised in La Ronge, Ahtahkakoop First Nation, and Kanai reserve in Alberta. After completing high school, Cuthand attended Simon Fraser University before moving on to Edmonton to work with the Alberta Native Communications Society as publication editor during a time when Indigenous political organizations were just beginning to become organized. Cuthand later returned to Saskatchewan and headed up communications for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI), now known as the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) representing 74 First Nations in the province. Cuthand would later successfully run for the position of Vice-Chief of FSIN and served for five years. He was named the first chairperson of the Board of Directors for the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, now known as the First Nations University of Canada.

Cuthand is a member of Little Pine First Nation, a Plains Cree community in Saskatchewan, and chaired the Treaty Land Entitlement Trustees for 20 years, leading the First Nation's purchase of 50,000 acres of land for \$24 million. Following his leadership work in First Nations politics, Cuthand began his own television production company, drawing from journalistic experience and producing numerous documentaries and dramas mainly centered on Indigenous themes. For three years he hosted the CTV series *Indigenous Circle*, and for the past 34 years Cuthand has written a column for Postmedia, published in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* and Regina *Leader-Post*. In 2003, Cuthand received the Best Column Award from the Native American Journalists Association.

Now semi-retired, Cuthand continues to write an Indigenous affairs column for Postmedia and produces TV series, recently completing production of a feature film. Cuthand previously led the Saskatoon-based company Blue Hills Productions, and his director/producer credits included the mini-series *Big Bear*, the animation series *Guardians Evolution*, and NFB-produced documentaries *The Gift of the Grandfathers* (1997), *Patrick's Story* (1999) and *Donna's Story* (2001). He is also the author of *Tapwe* (2005) and *Askiwina: A Cree World* (2007).

Greg Smith FCPA, FCA

(Honorary Doctor of Laws)

From volunteer service to business excellence to exceptional educational leadership, Smith has long been engaged in his home community and with USask. A 1979 USask graduate (Bachelor of Commerce), Smith joined the university's senior leadership team as a member of the Board of Governors from 2007-2017, serving as board chair from 2014-2016, and past chairs of the presidential search committee, and finance and investment committee. Smith has continued to support the university as a member of USask's Comprehensive Campaign Cabinet since 2019, helping lead the *Be What The World Needs Campaign*. Smith has also served on the governance and executive committee and on the Dean's Circle with USask's Edwards School of Business.

Smith was born in Ile-a-la-Crosse, Sask., and spent his formative years in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. Smith's commitment to community was celebrated in 2008 when he was named Citizen of the Year by the Swift Current Chamber of Commerce, honouring his service with local organizations and his commitment as a volunteer. His involvement in the community includes serving terms as president of the Swift Current Kiwanis Club and a director for the Saskatchewan Special Olympic Games, Swift Current United Way, and the Southwest Centre for Entrepreneurial Development, as well as volunteering with local arts and church organizations and as a coach in minor hockey and soccer.

A Chartered Professional Accountant since 1983, Smith began working with Stark & Marsh CPA LLP in 1984 and was a partner in the firm from 1985-2019, continuing to serve as a consultant since 2020. He was also a governor of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants and past president of the Saskatchewan Institute of Chartered Accountants. Smith served on the educational advisory council for the Swift Current School Division for 12 years and was an instructor at the University of Regina and for Athabasca College. He was recognized for lifetime commitment to community when he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal (Saskatchewan) in 2023.

Research Highlights

Shklanka gift to advance critical minerals research at USask

University of Saskatchewan alumni Dr. Roman Shklanka (BA'51, BComm'53, MA'57) and PhD'63 from Stanford University and Patricia Shklanka (BSc'58) have generously donated \$3 million to create the Shklanka Chair in Precambrian Critical Minerals Systems in the Department of Geological Sciences in the College of Arts and Science. The funding will support an outstanding scholar who will explore fundamental and applied aspects of critical minerals systems, including ore-forming processes and metal-mineral associations. The chairholder will lead critical research, mentor students, and help to build the future workforce in this emerging field.

New funding announced for Indigenous health research network

The Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR) have received \$37.6 million over five years from the federal government through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The funding, announced on Oct. 9, will serve as a renewal of NEIHR centres across the country, including the Saskatchewan centre featuring University of Saskatchewan researchers. Dr. Robert Henry (PhD), an associate professor in the Department of Indigenous Studies in the College of Arts and Science at USask is the nominated principal investigator for Saskatchewan NEIHR and a co-lead with the NEIHR National Coordinating Centre. NEIHR programs across Canada are intended to connect and support researchers, Indigenous leaders and community members in community-based research to improve Indigenous health.

Innovation Saskatchewan invests \$400K in Fedoruk Centre to advance nuclear research

Innovation Saskatchewan is investing \$400,000 in the Sylvia Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation (Fedoruk Centre) at the University of Saskatchewan to support and expand nuclear research in the province. The funding will support up to eight research projects led by Saskatchewan-based scientists through the Fedoruk Centre's 2024 Call for Proposals. The projects will focus on areas of nuclear science, such as nuclear energy and nuclear medicine, with priority consideration for those linked to workforce development for the deployment of nuclear technologies in Saskatchewan for energy, health and advanced materials.