

ALUMNI connections

Together in Our Communities

Sue Mylde Influencing
Global Citizenship

FALL 2019

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Respect, dialogue and reciprocity are key to the Werklund School of Education's decolonization and Indigenization undertakings

The commitment to weave Indigenous perspectives, beliefs and ways of knowing into the Werklund School of Education gained momentum in 2013 with the hiring of several Indigenous academics. In 2015, when the Indigenous Education Task Force was formed, they fittingly selected a sweetgrass braid as a metaphor for how this endeavour could be successfully carried out.

Much like the braid, the fashioning of a welcoming learning environment for all learners could only happen when members of Indigenous communities and allies united in a new partnership based on respect, dialogue and reciprocity. In other words, creating an ethical space was essential if the Werklund School intended to decolonize and Indigenize the academy.

"This new space of learning recognizes the value of long-held Indigenous knowledge traditions and considers how the values inherent in Indigenous ways can help inform, improve and even sustain our contemporary lived and educational experiences," says **Dr. Yvonne Poitras Pratt**, BA'02, MA'05, PhD'11, associate professor and director of Indigenous education in the Werklund School.

Creating such a space would not be an easy task as the impact of a colonial history and the residential

schools system continues to be felt today. To many members of Indigenous communities throughout Canada, the school system remains a symbol of colonialism, despite discourse around increased diversity in education.

Understanding this history, the Werklund School began by listening to and engaging with Indigenous communities during the 2013-14 Kindling Conversations symposium and discussion series. The latest iteration of this forum continues as a partnership between Indigenous scholars in the Werklund School and the Faculty of Arts, and with financial support from the University of Calgary's Office of Indigenous Engagement. The first two Ignite sessions explored diverse ideas around decolonizing education and understandings of research impact from the perspectives of eight Indigenous scholars.

In addition to ongoing dialogue, the Werklund School committed to critically examining research and program curriculum to ensure they encompassed Indigenous ways of knowing. One of the most impactful outcomes was the introduction of the Indigenous Education course in the Bachelor of Education program. During the eight-week course, students explore educational policy, practices and

Moving forward in a good way

Members of Manitoba First Nations celebrate with Werklund School staff at the signing ceremony marking a new partnership.

legislation relating to Indigenous peoples so that they, in time, can develop relationships, lessons and programs that will support Indigenous perspectives in their teaching.

“Multiple teachers, administrators and other educational leaders have noted the difference that these graduates are already making in the school system,” says Pratt. “Many have been assigned leadership roles because of this critical training.”

Along with preparing culturally competent teachers, the Werklund School is welcoming Indigenous youth to the university.

The annual Indigenous Youth Forum brings Grade 9 and 10 students from across Alberta to campus to experience learning in a university context. Organizers furnish challenges that require design thinking, problem-solving and collaboration skills. As well, time at Writing Symbols Lodge (formerly known as the Native Centre) and discussions with Elders provide insight into the significant support available to UCalgary’s Indigenous students.

“We hope that the core takeaway for students is that attending UCalgary is a viable aspiration, and that it is a

community where they belong,” explains Anthony Hampshire, BA’74, BED’77, project relationship specialist in the Werklund School.

Each of these initiatives supports the goal of weaving Indigenous ways of knowing into the Werklund School while also demonstrating the foundational need for reciprocity. “From an Indigenous perspective, reciprocity is viewed as central to a healthy relationship. This principle reflects the notion of a mutual exchange but, importantly, this exchange is viewed as the basis for an ongoing relationship,” explains Pratt.

If Indigenizing the academy can be regarded as a braid, then it is a braid without end; a partnership that must endure as further work remains to be accomplished. ■



Learn more about how the Werklund School of Education is engaging with Indigenous communities across the country at werklund.ucalgary.ca/indigenous

A collaborative approach to **child well-being**



As increasing rates of anxiety continue to impact children's health, self-esteem and success in the classroom, parents and teachers struggle to respond. At the Werklund School of Education, researchers and practitioners are studying the factors that contribute to anxiety and other disorders impacting children, helping parents and teachers recognize the signs while learning more about prevention and the avenues for treatment.

The Werklund School's director of Integrated Services in Education (ISE), **Dr. Erica Makarenko**, PsyD, is working with educational psychology students to help children succeed in their learning, social relationships and mental health, as well as improving resiliency and overall well-being.

"Child well-being is a lot like happiness," explains Makarenko, a registered psychologist. "It's a long journey, not a destination. A well child isn't always happy, or successful, or emotionally regulated. A well child is one that can adapt — to their own feelings, to new situations, and to setbacks and struggles."

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In focusing on child development and by bringing innovations in neuroscience and psychology to the field of education, the Werklund School is educating future teachers to better understand children and adolescents as developing, complex human beings, and not just receivers of knowledge. If educators have a strong foundation in how children's brains develop, they can better address the needs of their diverse classrooms.

Makarenko's team offers assessment and diagnosis for children facing difficulties, whether academically with issues of attention or memory, or those struggling with anxiety, including children experiencing bullying who are overwhelmed by their worries. Beyond

support for individuals, educational psychologists help schools design and measure programs that support all children, building positive school climates and proactive programs for wellness and inclusion. As well, they support teachers in identifying students who may be at risk academically, or aid in planning small-group interventions for children who may require extra support.

Whatever the service, it must be a collaborative effort, says Makarenko, who worked closely with children, parents and teachers when she was a school psychologist in Delaware and New Jersey before moving to UCalgary to pursue post-doctoral work.

"Well-being is a team sport," she explains. "Children need others to model and support well-being. As teachers, parents and psychologists, we can help create the conditions for well-being by showing children how to handle difficult situations, how to react when you are sad or angry — and that it's OK to be sad and angry — how to be flexible when plans change, and how to ask for help when you don't understand something."

Each year, the ISE serves as a practicum site for approximately 50 Master of Education, Master of Science, and Doctor of Philosophy students. Based within a faculty of education, school psychology can offer a bridging opportunity between psychology and educational research.

"There are many things that teachers can learn from school psychologists and equally as many things for school psychs to learn from teachers," Makarenko says. With child well-being as their common goal, there are increasing prospects for integration and collaboration within schools and during pre-service teacher training.

"Children flourish when the adults in their life have a consistent message and work together," she says. ■

Learn more about the services and events offered through the Integrated Services in Education clinic at

werklund.ucalgary.ca/integrated-services

Reimagining STEM

Werklund School of Education researchers are rethinking science, technology, engineering and mathematics conventions by **asking hard questions**

When you picture a successful person in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, who do you imagine? Who do you think belongs in the discipline?

Dr. Miwa Takeuchi, PhD, is one of several Werklund School of Education researchers who are reimagining STEM by scrutinizing the assumptions that underpin access and equity in these fields of expertise — and these are just some of the difficult questions they are asking.

“By creating a space within STEM education, where hidden culturally and historically rich resources can be affirmed and accepted socially, we can all benefit from the richness of diversity,” she says.

At the Werklund School, for example, **Dr. Pratim Sengupta**, PhD, and **Dr. Marie-Claire Shanahan**, PhD, are designing spaces that challenge typical notions about computation and science by making interactive coding opportunities available to the general public. Their goal is to create an enhanced sense of publicness, ownership and participation.

“We are imagining a different kind of STEM education where the silenced histories and voices of learners are brought to the centre,” explains Sengupta. “We are asking: how can oppressed identities shape

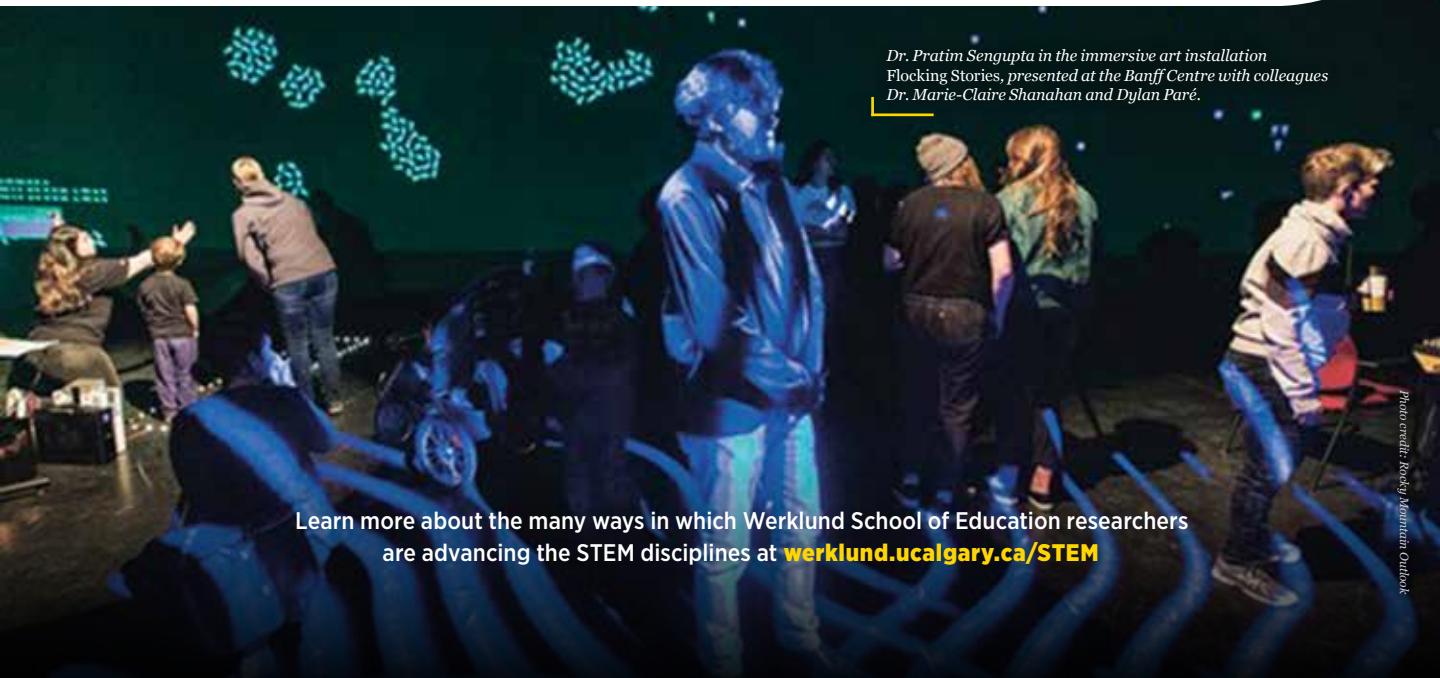
what new forms of computing can look like? How can art make STEM public?”

Redefining what is judged to fall within STEM’s domain is also necessary, says **Dr. Jennifer Adams**, PhD. “Careers in journalism or teaching are not typically considered STEM careers, simply because they do not involve doing STEM research,” she says. In addition to this shift, the questions Adams believes carry most weight focus on ways for emphasizing collective effort over individual competitiveness and addressing biases towards underrepresented groups in STEM, whether these groups be marginalized due to language, cultural background, social class, gender or sexual orientation.

While posing these enquiries, the researchers are also offering answers for why this reimagining is imperative. “Diversity potentially leads to different questions asked, different approaches to experiments and, ultimately, different answers to address the same issue,” says Adams.

Adds Sengupta: “As our societies become more multicultural, our economies need to become progressively more diversified. The economy runs on STEM professionals.” ■

Dr. Pratim Sengupta in the immersive art installation Flocking Stories, presented at the Banff Centre with colleagues Dr. Marie-Claire Shanahan and Dylan Paré.



Learn more about the many ways in which Werklund School of Education researchers are advancing the STEM disciplines at werklund.ucalgary.ca/STEM

Child star, science enthusiast, teacher

Sue Mylde, BEd'19, nurtures a commitment to global citizenship



As a child star in Singapore, a graduate student in London, and as a science enthusiast performing experiments on stage and on Global News, **Sue Mylde, BEd'19**, travelled a unique and diverse path before attending UCalgary's Werklund School of Education. By her convocation last June, she had already signed a contract as a full-time teacher in a technology-integrator role at a local elementary school.

"Growing up, I was mesmerized by the romanticized image of teachers in literature or the big screen," Mylde admits. "But it is my real-life experiences which led me to the steps of education."

Starting in television when she was five, Mylde is a natural in front of the audience. "I loved talking and performing — so my mother signed me up for a children's television workshop in my native Singapore." She was on screen for three years as a child anchor for a local TV show.

Her passion for global citizenship started when she was awarded a scholarship to complete high school at the United World College of the Adriatic in Italy. This life-changing experience cemented her connection to, and interest in, global affairs and the role of education in promoting international understanding.

After receiving a Master of Science degree in science communication from Imperial College London, Mylde

and her husband, Chris, sought out international challenges and found opportunities to work first in Toronto, then Oslo and then Aberdeen, Scotland. They have always loved Canada and settled in Calgary to raise their two children. Soon, she was combining her love of performance with a passion for hands-on learning, sharing live science demonstrations and experiments on stage at the TELUS Spark science centre, and later on a weekly Global TV spot called *Get Sparked*.

In a digital age when children are spending multiple hours in front of screens, Mylde sees value in exploring education issues related to hands-on learning, literacy and creativity. She addressed this in her talk, *The Forgotten Power of Hands-On Learning*, at TEDxYYC last year. Mylde is also involved as a research assistant and facilitator for the Play and Learning Think Tank, a Werklund School and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connections Project and, this fall, is presenting at the Alberta Technology Leaders in Education Convergence 2019 Conference.

Mylde does not see education as limited to either technology-based or hands-on learning; there can and should be both. What matters most, she says, is that, through these tools, teachers are helping students recognize their own agency.

“In an increasingly polarized world, education offers a powerful vehicle to inform and empower youth engagement,” Mylde says. “I want to play a part in influencing the awareness of our students to issues bigger than themselves through compassion and global citizenship.” She does this through bringing creativity and innovation to the classroom in a role that is the culmination of her international education and professional background.

“My experience with different schools and education systems across the world has assured me of one thing: the teacher is a huge determinant of student success,” Mylde says, citing many teachers who inspired her to serve in the community, to encourage different perspectives and to always make a difference.

Mylde, who completed her International Baccalaureate in Trieste, Italy, and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Policy from the London School of Economics, still sets her studies at

the Werklund School apart from her other degrees and accomplishments. “The education degree is exciting because it signifies not just a professional qualification earned, but also a responsibility bestowed,” she says, thoughtfully. “To answer the call to teaching means I choose to play a bigger role, and have a greater responsibility for our common future.”

Above all, Mylde says she has found her purpose in teaching children about the dynamic nature of good citizenship — which, in today’s world, involves not only critical thinking, but also responsibility to each other.

“Whether we choose to teach in a K-12 classroom, or get involved with advocacy for youth, or even to impact the conversation on education, we have the power to influence, and to make a difference,” she says. “We can speak for those who have no voice, but we can also empower those in our charge to use their voices. How we exercise our influence matters.” ■

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Share your alumni story with us at
werklund.ucalgary.ca/alumni

Message from the Dean

A vision toward advancing education and society

As the new dean of the Werklund School of Education, I am honoured to lead a vibrant and energetic faculty in pursuing innovative research and teaching, locally and globally. Much like Calgary, which has become a global, cosmopolitan city rated one of the most desirable cities in the world to live, the Werklund School has experienced significant strides in advancing ideas that will better the lives of children and improve the human condition.

There is an energy at Werklund with more than 100 faculty members from across the world working in partnerships with schools, organizations and communities that will better serve the needs of educators today. In our teaching and research programs, our faculty are collaborating with academics from Medicine, Social Work, Nursing, Engineering, Science and Kinesiology to find alternative and creative ways of thinking and learning. This is evident in: our shared commitment to child well-being as a central tenant in how children can thrive in a demanding world; our reconciliation initiatives with Indigenous peoples that recognize a shared ethical space and enduring reciprocity; and our reimagining of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) as part of a greater civic dialogue. The Werklund School is future-focused and looking for new ways to solve old problems.

I am excited by how far the Werklund School has come, and what utter potential there is for this faculty, together with the support of alumni, in making the world a better place.

Our alumni are the faces that remind us of our strengths and our diversity, from our Bachelor of Education graduates who provide supportive and engaging learning environments for our children in increasingly more complex times, to the graduate students entering leadership roles across sectors and the educational psychologists who work with students, parents, teachers and communities to improve well-being for all individuals in our society. With more than 30,000 Werklund alumni in more than 60 countries, we see the incredible difference that so many individuals are making locally, nationally and internationally.

Without a doubt, the Werklund School is elevating what's possible in the classroom and beyond. There is a willingness to take risks, and to think creatively and critically. The work of students, faculty and alumni truly energizes and inspires me as a leader, and it is one of the reasons why I returned to the University of Calgary.

These stories illustrate the powerful work of our students, faculty and alumni in research and teaching endeavours. As Werklund continues to strive high in envisioning the possible, I hope that you will join us in being part of this vision.

Dr. Dianne Gereluk, MA'99, PhD
Dean, Werklund School of Education



Check out a Q&A
with our new Dean at
werklund.ucalgary.ca/Dean

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