

# Circle

AUGUSTANA CAMPUS ALUMNI MAGAZINE WINTER 2023/24

## Unearthing the Value of Wetlands

One grad works with farmers to find common ground.

Prison Voices  
Rarely Heard  
and  
Tips for Making  
Big Life Decisions





**We'll  
done**



We don't usually blow our own horn, but the university's recent ranking as a top five research institute in Canada is worth making a little noise over. Not only are we proud to be a U of A campus, but our research in areas like AI also shows that while we may be small, our capabilities are mighty impressive.

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**UNIVERSITY  
OF ALBERTA**

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The University of Alberta's **Augustana Campus** does things a little differently. As a small liberal arts and sciences campus, we focus on educating the whole person in the classroom, laboratory and field. Students find their passion at Augustana while earning a University of Alberta degree with Top 5 teaching, learning and research opportunities. *Circle* is dedicated to highlighting the achievements of the Augustana community, distributing to alumni and friends of the campus.

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## Message from the Dean of Augustana Campus

### The lasting impact of universities

**A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION** is a precious commodity. The University of Alberta and Augustana Campus have been around for more than 100 years and will continue to educate students for decades to come. But what we teach and the way we teach are changing in response to new developments in education, technology and society. So we keep changing, improving and responding to developments. For instance, we are excited to bring a new bachelor of education program to campus next year as well as three master's programs in rehabilitation medicine.

Our liberal arts and sciences mission, delivered by our caring and committed faculty and staff, will prepare students for lifelong learning and success. As alumni, you believe in the mission and purpose of universities, too. In this issue you'll find stories about alumni and researchers who embody that mission and purpose. I'm confident that you'll enjoy reading about two new faculty colleagues: Clark Banack (rural studies) and Gianluca Vernillo

(physical education), both of whom are conducting exciting research and scholarship. Meanwhile, our established faculty members continue to excel in their respective areas, such as criminologist Justin Tetrault's innovative research on the experiences of incarcerated people, in particular, Indigenous programs in prisons.

The focus of higher education should be to prepare students for changes to come. So we spoke to three alumni about how they made decisions in their careers — whether to change or stay the course. We also spoke to alumnus John Pattison-Williams about his research on wetlands and agriculture, and how his career combines academic rigour and industry-forward research.

In this issue, you will also meet our three 2023 Augustana Alumni Awards recipients. We recognize and celebrate our community members' achievements and their sustained support of our campus community. Our award recipients (Dee Patriquin, James Mayer and Elder John Crier) exemplify what it means "To Lead and to Serve."

In this, my final year as Augustana's dean and executive officer, I think of how quickly time passes. I have found my role at this top Canadian university challenging and rewarding. And besides enjoying my administrative work and the success of our students, faculty, staff and community members, I also have appreciated how Camrose, the surrounding communities and our alumni continue to support Augustana and its students.

Thank you, and please enjoy the stories in the pages ahead.

**Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos**  
Dean and Executive Officer  
Augustana Campus



# the lame



## Get Out There

An outdoor adventure is close at hand, whether it's your first Alberta winter or your 50th

**AUGUSTANA LIBRARY IS MORE THAN BOOKS!** In partnership with Augustana Campus Recreation, it's home to the Dr. Garry & Dorothy Gibson Nordic Ski Library, which boasts cross-country ski equipment, skates and snowshoes. Students, staff, faculty and alumni can borrow the equipment for 72-hour loans. The Stoney Creek Valley trails (above), with their 16 kilometres of trails maintained by the Camrose Ski Club, are less than a block away from campus. Just pick up your equipment and head outside. Campus Rec also offers learn-to-ski sessions and social ski meet-ups. See the Campus Rec website at [uab.ca/augrec](http://uab.ca/augrec). -LAUREL WARKENTIN



**RURAL HEALTH**

## Rehab Med is Back at Augustana

CENTRAL ALBERTANS SEEKING health-care careers will have more opportunities closer to home, thanks to new provincial funding for three rehabilitation medicine programs at Augustana Campus.

The province is providing more than \$7.4 million to create 44 seats per year for satellite master's programs at Augustana in speech-language pathology, occupational therapy and physical therapy, all offered by the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine.

"The Augustana community enthusiastically welcomes the return

and expansion of these professional programs on our campus," says Dean Demetres Tryphonopoulos. He says the initiative makes programs accessible to students who want to study and stay in rural Alberta, where there's a shortage of physical, occupational and speech therapists.

The funding is part of a larger investment by the Alberta government to offer post-secondary programs across the province, prioritizing health care, technology and business. The investment will also allow 40 new seats to be created for other U of A health science programs, including nearly \$2.7 million for 22 seats in the BSc in medical laboratory science, \$288,480 for six seats in the MSc program in public health and \$320,000 for 12 seats in the course-based master's program in modelling, data and predictions.

—MADISEN GEE, '21 BA, '21 CERT(CSL)

**QUOTED**

**"It's ironic and kind of tragic that when we most need to understand society and the impact of religious ideas and movements, these subjects are being sidelined. Our conversations around them open up awareness of how people navigate these issues and their identities every day, no matter their social position. They show how important these subjects are and that public spaces are filled with religious ways of being. We gain little by ignoring that."**

Joseph Wiebe, in a blog post for the Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life last year. Wiebe was recently appointed director of the centre, after serving as interim director for a year.

**NUMBERS**

# TEN

The number of Academic All-Canadian Awards won by Vikings athletes in 2022-23, the highest number in the ACAC. All told, teams won seven league medals.

**LIBERAL ARTS**

## Home Arts Network

Regional representation is alive

WHEN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ANDREA KORDA went to conferences of art historians in Vancouver, Montreal or Toronto, she saw that Canada's metropolitan centres had strong networks of art historians, gallery owners, artists, curators and arts professionals (people working in museums, galleries and artist-run centres). At one conference, she found herself huddled with peers Devon Smither from the University of Lethbridge and Karla McManus from the University of Regina, talking about the challenges of Prairie networking amid greater distances and smaller populations. It was the genesis of the Prairie Art Network.

First, they found out who wanted to take part in a network, and that a significant subset were interested in an in-person institute. Second, they set about organizing that institute, an event they called, Art Under the Big Sky: Building a Prairie Art Historians Network and Summer Institute, which was funded by a SSHRC Connection Grant, the Jarislawsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art and the three respective universities. "We met in June 2023 in Regina," Korda says.

And there was enthusiasm for the institute. Attendees included 125 art historians, artists, curators, students and arts professionals. "We heard that people want help with fundraising, supporting smaller institutions and cross-institute collaboration," she says. Especially gratifying was the enthusiastic participation of students who wanted arts careers close to home. "We want to support students and a thriving art scene." But if you ask Korda to define Prairie art, she won't. This network, she says, is about the people behind the art. —MIFI PURVIS, '93 BA

VIKINGS ATHLETICS

## A Base on Which to Build

Women's basketball had a great first season with new head coach

**Megan Wickstrom**, '14 BKin, '17 MCoach, grew up playing basketball, like her mom **Sarah Wickstrom**, '81 BED. And like her mom, she played for the Pandas. "I played during my undergrad and graduate degrees," she says. She built her resumé with the Junior Pandas, as an assistant coach at MacEwan University, and as a strength and conditioning coach. She started her first head coaching gig with the women's Vikings in 2022-23. "We had a great run, played really well into playoffs and ended up finishing second in the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC). We went to nationals for the second time in program history, and finished tied for fifth." The team now includes veterans who are "highly motivated to experience similar success and to win our first ACAC gold medal for Augustana," she says. We asked what advice she'd give to new coaches. —MIFI PURVIS, '93 BA

### Use Your Past

"I worked for several years as a strength trainer in a physio clinic," Wickstrom says. "It gives me an advantage at a smaller campus. We don't have a full-time strength and conditioning coach for our athletics teams. I have a good



understanding of rest and recovery. I know the physical demands of the sport and the season, and how to periodize training to perform at our best throughout the year."

### Wait for Breakthroughs

"One of our athletes was a good scorer in practice, but during games nothing would

go in the hoop. So we spent time talking to change her thoughts and mindset during games," she says. "Athletes can get to that zone of, 'I missed again, when am I going to score?' I knew she was a good player. Midway through the season, the Saran wrap came off the hoop and she started scoring consistently."

### Do What You Love

"Maybe long term, I'd like to be head coach of a U Sports school, but right now I'm so happy where I am," she says. "I'm really excited to do this job. People are gonna pay me to hang out in a gym with a bunch of young people that love to play basketball! That's really awesome." 🍷

EXCELLENCE

# Meet the Teachers

Augustana is home to researchers who work across the university with surprising areas of expertise



▲ Gianluca Vernillo



▲ Clark Banack

**CLARK BANACK**  
Assistant Professor, Rural Studies; Director, Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities (ACSRC)

**CLARK BANACK HAS** taught political science at Augustana since 2017, but his appointment as assistant professor is new. His research focuses on rural studies,

Canadian politics, and religion and politics. He thinks a lot about sustainability.

The nature of agriculture has changed, Banack says, and with it, rural communities. "There's been a consolidation," he says. "The size of farms is growing exponentially, which means there are far fewer farm families living in rural areas. In addition,

government investment in rural communities has been in decline across Canada for decades." He says the industrialization of agriculture and the globalization of agri-food systems have reshaped rural communities.

Under his directorship since 2021, the ACSRC is a U of A initiative focused on fusing research and local outreach. The goal is to improve the sustainability of rural communities by connecting U of A resources with rural organizations, researchers, students and policymakers to create the needed changes.

At ACSRC, Banack hosted a large conference in the fall. Speakers included rural entrepreneurs, co-operative developers and academics to show how the co-operative model can drive sustainable rural economic development. A rural Albertan book author, he's working on his next writing project. —ROBBIE JEFFREY, '12 BA

**GIANLUCA VERNILLO**  
Assistant Professor,  
Physical Education

**A LONG-DISTANCE RUNNER,** Gianluca Vernillo comes from the University of Milan. His research focuses on

neuromuscular fatigue, high-level sport performance and endurance. "I want to understand the limits of our capacity during prolonged exercise, like ultra-marathons," he says. "I'm interested in the body's physiological and biomechanical adaptations, how neuromuscular fatigue influences exercise and performance."

He has seen how fatigue affects athletes, working with elite Kenyan marathon runners and the Italian snowboarding team, preparing them for the Olympics. But elite athletes aren't his only focus. He's teaching a course on exercise in special populations, such as people with disabilities. "Exercise is also medicine," he explains. "Evidence shows that physical activity reduces the risk, prevalence and severity of chronic diseases, decreasing the risk of mortality from all causes."

In addition to running, Vernillo is reading *Don Quixote*, and likes to listen to music, "as long as it is rock and roll." And what does he wish people understood about exercise? "I already spoiled the answer! I wish everyone understood that, if we're able to move, we can exercise and exercise is medicine." —MIFI PURVIS, '93 BA



**WEBINAR WISDOM**

# Missing and Murdered

Researcher traces violence against Indigenous women through the centuries

**DURING A RECENT** lunch-and-learn event, researcher **Willow White**, '15 MA, explained how colonialism has contributed to the ongoing crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people (MMIWG2S). She is a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta and an English literature and Indigenous studies professor at Augustana Campus.

"Indigenous women continue to experience the greatest amount of violence of any identity group in this country," White says. "MMIWG2S is not a modern phenomenon. It is a tradition of colonialism in North America."

She explains this violence started more than 400 years ago, when a Pamunkey and Mattaponi teenager called Pocahontas was kidnapped by English settlers and taken to England. Centuries later, legislation like Canada's 1876 Indian Act made the problem systemic.

"The Indian Act devalued Indigenous women and sanctioned violence against them," says White. One consequence of the act was that Indigenous women lost their status and treaty

rights if they married non-status or non-Indigenous people. Without status, the women, their children and their grandchildren didn't have the right to live on reserve, isolating them from community support and making them more susceptible to violence.

In 2016, Canada launched a national inquiry into the MMIWG2S crisis, partly in response to outrage over the 2014 death of Manitoba teenager Tina Fontaine. But White says many Indigenous people and others say the inquiry has been insufficient. "Until Canada is ready to truly acknowledge its colonial history, to tell and teach the truth and seek justice alongside Indigenous Peoples, the violence is unlikely to stop." —SANDRINE CAMMINGA

*White is one of many experts to speak at Augustana events. For more, visit [uab.ca/augevents](http://uab.ca/augevents).*

**CORE COURSES**

## From the Start

Students develop critical learning and career skills from their first day with courses that ready them for success

**Carly Rombs**, '23 BA, is among the first cohort of students to graduate with Augustana's four mandatory "core courses" under her belt.

According to science professor **Brian Rempel**, '03 BSc(Hons), who helped develop and teach the curriculum, the core courses teach skills employers value: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and research skills. Students like Rombs gain experience working on multi-faceted problems within a team.

Rombs says the core courses enhanced her academic and personal skills. In her application for graduate studies, she had to account for her teamwork abilities. "I realized I had done this my whole undergrad university career," she says. "I had so many valuable experiences that helped me get where I am today."

The core courses build progressively. The first-year seminar introduces students to critical thinking and academic skills. It encourages students to explore topics from multiple perspectives. The second-year core course focuses on teamwork and collaborative projects. In third year, students match with community groups to tackle real-world challenges. Finally, fourth year is dedicated to solving aspects of complex, real-world problems, coalescing what students have learned in the previous courses.

Rombs and her team chose to address the problem of isolation and loneliness, designing a fictional social event that brought people together in a friendly competition, in the manner of the TV show, *The Amazing Race*.

The core courses also teach business communications, project management, budget management and networking. Students learn to work with minimal supervision to become conscientious colleagues and citizens.

Rombs is prepared for future challenges, she says. "I've developed professionalism and learned skills that give me the opportunities to make the world a better place." —BEV BETKOWSKI



PHOTO BY SYDNEY TANCOWNY



# A BETTER BALANCE

IN AN AGRICULTURAL SETTING, MANAGING WETLANDS CAN GET MURKY. THIS GRAD HELPS FARMERS ASSESS THE VALUE AND THE CHALLENGE

BY **UMAR SALIFOU**, '20 BA

➤ **John Pattison-Williams**, '06 BSc, '09 MSc, has two boys who are growing up and learning in much the same way he did: on a mixed family farm 16 kilometres north of Camrose, the same land on which he was raised. Farm life can be an amazing education for kids. In fact, Pattison-Williams recalls not wanting to go to school when it came time. "I wanted to stay on the farm," he says. "I wanted to be out with the animals in the bush and wetlands, to run around and ride horses." Despite his inclinations, Pattison-Williams not only went to school, but stayed there. He

graduated from the U of A's Augustana Campus and completed his master's at North Campus before venturing further afield (University of Greenwich) for a PhD in natural resource management with a focus on wetlands research.

After a series of international research positions, including a year working as an international development officer in Uganda where he met his partner, Pattison-Williams returned to his family farm, where he now strives to find balance as a father, adjunct professor and owner of a resource consulting business.

Pattison-Williams studies wetlands,

which are a valuable tool and in many places a disappearing resource in the mitigation of climate change. In his roles as an academic and a business owner he demonstrates a knack for creating common ground, working with such organizations as the Canadian Cattle Association, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, and the Nature Conservancy. It's in conversation and collaborative work with farmers that Pattison-Williams supports agricultural communities to better manage wetlands, and he teaches students and others why it matters.

## WHAT WETLANDS MEAN TO US ALL

A lot of us have seen a soggy depression or a small pond in a farmer's field. Pattison-Williams has a vested interest in them. Recently, he was awarded a \$500,000 grant from Environment and Climate Change Canada's Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund to conduct a socioeconomic analysis of prairie wetlands and climate change. He works to combine land-based research with academic expertise to navigate the complex world of resource management. It's something he couldn't do, he says, without reaching for commonalities with landowners.

Those ponds, swamps and marshes are wetlands that dot Canadian landscapes in a variety of forms. They sustain wildlife and can store carbon for centuries in the form of dead plants that don't fully decompose, creating large carbon sinks.

Wetlands also mimic sponges with their ability to soak up water and filter groundwater or runoff while slowly releasing moisture into nearby land during dry seasons. Wetland areas alleviate flooding, too, by storing water and slowing the flow. And they are home to an abundance of creatures large and small, including waterfowl who rely on their presence as stopovers in migration.

A complete inventory of Canada's wetlands does not exist, but extensive national monitoring work is undertaken by the conservation organization Ducks Unlimited Canada, on land owned by others and on the 300,000 acres it owns and maintains for the protection of waterfowl. The group estimates that 70 per cent of Canada's southern wetlands have disappeared.

## WETLANDS AND THE FARM

The disappearance of wetlands is due in part to climate change but also involves human intervention, notably urban sprawl. In rural areas, sometimes farmers will drain a wetland in an agricultural setting.

Decisions around the conservation of wetlands can be complex, especially in the context of agricultural land as farmers face rising operational costs of food production.

"I personally understand the challenges and that it would be great to save a wetland," says Pattison-Williams. He says it can be costly and time-consuming to deal with wetlands on a farm. They can damage equipment and add time. "You can get stuck, and you're driving around them all the time."

Pattison-Williams isn't alone in his concern for and about wetlands. Grain farmers **Maxine Anderson**, '79 BEd, and **Guy Anderson**, '78 BA, '79 BEd, also face financial factors that mix with other land management challenges like weather and unpredictable schedules.

"If a drop of rain falls on my farm I want it to stay on my farm," says Guy, who attended Augustana (then Camrose Lutheran College) for Grade 12 and his first year of university. "I believe in wetland retention, it keeps the water table higher, which leads to higher productivity."

Having a wetland area on a farm can be a boon in dry years. But during wet years, wetland conservation can sometimes penalize farmers, Guy explains. Excess water can flood croplands when the wetlands naturally expand. But the Andersons have managed to cultivate a wetland conservation ethic on their land, in part

due to their work with Pattison-Williams.

Shared preservation principles and family friendship brought Pattison-Williams to study wetlands on the Andersons' 2,100-acre property near Camrose, which serves as an ideal representative of a large prairie family farm. Field productivity can take many shapes for farmers like the Andersons, from how quickly they navigate over the acres to the yield they gain from cultivating. In an already tricky equation, wetlands present another variable.

A common narrative among farmers—driven by a focus on increasing productivity in crop farming—prioritizes wetland drainage for its potential economic benefits. That narrative claims that wetland retention leads to lost farmland and overlap of crop inputs. But research shows that clearing wetlands provides farmers uneven monetary benefit at best. Further, provincial wetland policies prioritize drainage avoidance.

For farmers, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Pattison-Williams says it's important to work closely with individual landowners to understand what drives their decisions. With the Andersons, his research took shape using aerial photography to capture the scope of their wetlands while discussing field productivity with Maxine and Guy on the ground.

"I think that personal story can be quite powerful," says Pattison-Williams.



*Pattison-Williams takes his students to agricultural areas to learn first-hand.*

## FIELD TO JOURNAL TO OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Pattison-Williams' consulting projects happen with the support of five employees. "Without them, I couldn't keep up," he says. "Our work helps add rigour to groups trying to make decisions."

As he has been gathering data that meets the bar for scientific journal quality, he also wrote a technical report about decisions in wetlands management, and published a paper in *Wetlands Ecology and Management*.

The pressure is cyclical. As a business owner and academic, Pattison-Williams is in a perpetual balancing act that can sometimes leave him scrambling to create opportunity. "I almost have to apply for new consulting jobs every few months, and with two small kids and a mortgage it's a challenge," he says. "That's the small business dream. We have independence, we can save, set things aside, but it's harder to do than you think."

But both the academic and entrepreneurial sides of Pattison-Williams' life revolve around conversations. He says his ability to relate to people — whether farmers on the land or students in the classroom — is due to his rural education, which introduced a diversity of thought and opinions he says he wouldn't have found elsewhere. And he makes sure his students get out of the classroom, too.

There's a fire pit located in a clearing near a cabin on the property of Pattison-Williams' extended family. He uses it often as a place to connect with students for good conversation at the start of the semester. "We walk around, look at the landscape and different land uses to talk about how humans shaped land, from Indigenous Peoples to settlers," he says. "And we talk about land use ethics."

The groups he takes out in the land are varied. "With the liberal arts programming at Augustana you get to know people across disciplines and perspectives, which equips you well to



*Student farm tours provide future policy makers with insight and experience.*

talk to people and builds confidence that you can take to larger settings," he says. It's something he sees in his students and what he experienced himself as an Augustana student. "To be exposed to lots of different thoughts and perspectives was wonderful."

### IN THE COMMUNITY

Pattison-Williams' expertise goes beyond wetlands, and he reaches more people by providing opportunities for community outreach. While he was still a grad student, Pattison-Williams worked with a marketing group that the Andersons were part of and secured an invitation to join the group's summer farm tours. (Kingman Marketing Group operated from the early 1990s to 2020 and comprised 15 farm families who shared and learned grain marketing skills.)

The farm tours still happen, attended by university students and professors who are unfamiliar with the demands of farming. And it can be eye-opening, according to Maxine.

"Consumers are largely disconnected from food sources and the reality it takes to make products," she says. "People have no idea about the 24/7 tasks that you are

doing on the farm that go towards the production of food."

In the summer when various crops are nearing maturity, the farm tours provide future policy makers with insight that's impossible to internalize without witnessing on-the-ground operations.

"When you show them how much of a crop a gopher colony can destroy," Maxine says, "you can see the reality of what we have to deal with setting in."

### BACK ON THE FARM

At the end of a long academic year, a long farming season and even a long day, agricultural work on the Pattison-Williams family farm isn't strictly about assessing efficiency and addressing difficulty. His boys continue to build a strong connection to the farm through morning rituals that start with an early breakfast before tending to their animals.

"Forking hay and picking up eggs can take a long time with young kids, so the flexibility of consulting and academic life means these mornings can be slow or fast," Pattison-Williams says. "That allows for a really great quality of life. We have a lot of special little memories here." 🍷



# VOICES

Cultural programming for Indigenous people in prison is controversial. Some say it helps incarcerated people grow and heal. Others say prisons only perpetuate colonial values. Researcher Justin Tetrault and his team wanted to hear what the experts had to say. So they asked them.

By **Anna Marie Sewell**, '91 BA(Spec)

# RARELY HEARD

*Illustrations by Taylor Callery*



# S

**STUDIES ON THE STATE OF OUR PENAL** system have gone on for generations. Some things change. A shocking number of things don't. Still, researchers return again and again to the struggle to make sense of our correctional system. After all, it is fundamental to a functioning society that we have an effective means of dealing with people who transgress the rules we have laid down for the public good. And, incarcerated or released, people who've done time are part of the fabric of our society.

**Justin Tetrault**, '21 PhD, is a criminology professor at Augustana and has been involved with the University of Alberta Prison Project since 2016, when he was a graduate student. The heart of his work has been trying to untangle the benefits and limits of Indigenous cultural programming.

Under the leadership of principal investigator Sandra Bucerius, the project conducts research in and about Canada's correctional institutions—our prisons.

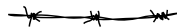
The goal of the project is to collect data on the experiences of Canadian prisoners and staff to make way for evidence-based changes. One of the most significant things the two have done is to interview, with their team, more than 600 people serving time in six men's and women's prisons across Western Canada.

The scope of this work is tremendous. Bucerius describes Correctional Service Canada, the government organization responsible for prisons, as "a black box," tasked with taking care of

a part of our society that most people don't know about, and generally don't seek to learn about. But unlocking this black box, according to both Bucerius and Tetrault, is vital for our well-being as a society.

They are not alone in their concern and academic interest. "The Prison Project started in 2016 as a mix of graduate students and professors," Tetrault says. "I started on the project as a grad student and now I'm a professor. Initial data collection included six or eight graduate students, plus two principal investigators. Today there are about four professors and roughly the same number of grad students." The U of A Prison Project is a broad-based investigation into experiences of inmates, and the team seeks to know the real-world impacts of programs designed not by but for the people most intimately involved.

One of the main focuses of Tetrault's work is the impact of Indigenous cultural programs and efforts to indigenize prison structures. His work is complex. Some people say prisons are for punishment, not cultural programming. Others hold that prisons are colonial structures and nothing short of wholesale abolition of them can undo the harms of a penal system that is rooted in racist, genocidal colonial goals. But right now, prisons aren't going anywhere. Tetrault says we must work within our present reality. He says that indigenizing the system is necessary for meeting the urgent needs and rights of imprisoned and marginalized Indigenous people.



**MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT** our prison system. Consider the scope

of Correctional Service Canada: a yearly budget of roughly \$3 billion spread over a range of remand centres and prisons that house roughly 38,000 inmates. In that system, Indigenous people are proportionally over-represented, about nine times higher than the population at large can account for. A 1990s Royal Commission On Aboriginal People identified three main reasons: colonialism, socio-economic marginalization and culture clash. Maybe so, but trying to untangle the intergenerational mess that underlies this over-representation is a task far beyond the scope of this article. Still, that context informs Tetrault's work, and that of his colleagues.

Some relevant background: since 1958, Indigenous advocates have been working to provide Indigenous inmates access to their own spiritual practices, which Canada holds to be a human right. Significantly, the Indian Act outlawed Indigenous cultural and spiritual practices in Canada until the act was revised in 1951. By the 1980s, some prisons allowed entry to elders to offer spiritual guidance and ceremonies to inmates, but what that looked like depended on the prison.

So, do cultural programs support cultural revival and Indigenous rights? Or, as prison abolitionists maintain, are these programs little more than a new form of cultural genocide, not unlike the residential school system?

Tetrault finds this debate onerous. There are no easy answers, but he is clear about a few things. "More research is needed on how prisons develop and implement cultural programming,"

he says, "but existing empirical works suggest that these initiatives, while flawed, support the dignity of incarcerated Indigenous Peoples."

An inmate named Irene (last names are excluded for privacy) spoke to the Prison Project team, and her comments are illustrative of Tetrault's findings. "I have been incarcerated each year since [I was 19]. I wasn't aware of much of my history, my Aboriginal social history," she told the project team. "I've only learned about all that this past year through the new incorporated programs here. I am Native, I am Cree, I am from Alberta. I have participated in

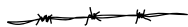
**"Existing empirical works suggest that these initiatives, while flawed, support the dignity of incarcerated Indigenous Peoples."**

**JUSTIN TETRAULT**





almost all the programs here. I've come from a high-risk lifestyle, violence, you name it—I've got nothing but guns and violence on my record. I completely turned my life around. I'm now in a traditional Pathways [indigenized] unit here living a traditional life [following cultural teachings]. I basically learned about my history and understood about colonization and residential schools and the impact thereof. I just needed to really understand how much [it impacted me] as a Native American and, um, I just don't wanna be defined by [my past]. So I made the choice to change my ways and sober up and leave all that behind."



**THE 600-PLUS INMATES OF MEN'S AND women's prisons interviewed by the Prison Project team represent less than 1½ per cent of all inmates in Canada.**

That matters because the project team has had unprecedented scale of access to carry out their research. That 1½ per cent is more than has ever been polled. It shows real-world information about the experiences of inmates who chose to be involved in the project. Six hundred inmates at six institutions can teach us quite a lot about their experience accessing Indigenous cultural programming.

Tetrault says that Irene's positive experience with these programs echoes the experiences of others. "The overwhelming majority of the prisoners we interviewed spoke of Indigenous cultural programming as valuable," Tetrault says. "If they had a complaint, it tended to be about experiencing barriers to access the programming."

Similarly, Bucierius says, "Almost every prisoner wanted to be involved,

because there is nothing else to do. It's a sad reflection on how few programs are being offered."

Even confining our focus to inmates' experiences of Indigenous cultural programming, we can see the underpinnings of interconnected issues and historical circumstances that make the project's 600 interviews seem like scratching the surface.

Tetrault is swift to point out, in person and in the publications to which he has contributed, that the work has to be understood in context: that indigenized prison programs are a human right, not a solution to mass incarceration of Indigenous Peoples.



**INDIGENIZED PROGRAMS CAN INCLUDE elders visiting incarcerated people, either as volunteers or, increasingly,**

as resource people on staff. They offer teachings drawn from traditional Indigenous spirituality.

Elders bring their own specific culture, which might be quite distinct from the ethnic heritage of the inmates participating. Even where indigenized programming is channeled specifically toward inmates who are Indigenous, that label encompasses a continent's worth of cultures and traditions; Haida and Maliseet culture are as distinct from each other as, say, English and Turkish; and Yellowknife to Cape Breton Island, N.S. is nearly as far as Paris to New Delhi. So "Indigenous programming" may not represent one's own culture. But it does represent something valuable.

And it's not only Indigenous prisoners who benefit from the programming. About 40 per cent of the incarcerated people Tetrault's team interviewed identified as Indigenous and the rest did not. Regardless of their own ethno-cultural backgrounds, interviewees spoke about how Indigenous programs — with their emphasis on healing, restorative justice and guidance from a spirituality rooted deeply in this land — make a

powerful difference in their lives.

An issue the Prison Project found is that these programs are not available to every prisoner. Services of elders are open to inmates who qualify, meaning they must be categorized as a low security risk. But an Indigenous person is more likely to be categorized as maximum security than a non-Indigenous person who commits the same crime. "The issue is that in every determining factor in moving toward their release, [Indigenous offenders] are at a distinct disadvantage," said Todd Sloan from the Office of the Correctional Investigator of Canada in a 2001 episode of *Big Picture*, a CBC documentary series on conditions in prisons. Here, we learned in the episode, were programs that helped. Why not have more of them? Why not change the criteria for entry?

Nearly 20 years on, an auditor general's report from 2019 found "disproportionately high numbers of Indigenous and Black offenders being placed in maximum security institutions." Furthermore, the report said prison staff were 13 per cent more likely to override risk rating and place

Indigenous men in higher security. The number rose to 23 per cent for Indigenous women.

Later still, in 2023, *APTN Investigates: Inside Corrections* interviewed correctional investigator Ivan Zinger, whose comments were similar: to take part in healing lodge programs, inmates must pass a security risk assessment. "Correctional outcomes for Indigenous people are absolutely terrible," he said. "There are systemic barriers and biases." These, he said, have a "detrimental impact on every single Indigenous person who is serving time in a federal penitentiary."

This leads to another web of interlocking issues that taxes criminologists and other scholars — and sometimes pushes prevailing scholarship of Indigenous people to the position of prison abolition.

Tetrault argues that the abolitionists, while not wrong in their assessment of the impact of colonial racism in criminalizing entire segments of society, are mistaken in dismissing indigenized programs as a problematic continuation of unjust colonial policy. He finds his work in tension between the abolitionists for whom nothing short of dismantling Canada's prison system is truly decolonial, and their opposites who see indigenized programs as pandering to people who should be punished.

A prison stay costs at least \$115,000 per prisoner per year. When inmates are denied access to healing lodges, the healing lodges lose operating and maintenance funding, due to under-enrolment. "It has implications for everything," Dominique Tremblay told *APTN Investigates: Inside Corrections*. Tremblay is the director general of Waseskun Healing Centre in Quebec, a healing lodge contracting with Correctional Service Canada for the rehabilitation of Indigenous men from penitentiaries and communities. "For example ... we have sacred fires every day. It's \$100 for a cord of wood, if it's 15 residents or 30 residents." Meanwhile, incarcerated people can wait up to two years for a place in Waseskun. Sometimes it looks like indigenized programs are set up to fail.

Against this, Tetrault and the Prison Program offer the testimony of participants.

Another respondent, Olivia, spoke to the team. "I didn't know nothing



about spirituality when I first came here. And now, like, I enjoy it. I wasn't raised in it [my culture] because I went from [foster] home to [foster] home, you know? And then living on the streets ... like, nobody's gonna be smudging while they're getting high," she said with a laugh. "It means working with an elder and being open to the elder's teachings, like, from their own perspective and stuff. You do a healing plan ... and smudging and being open to spirituality, praying and stuff. When I got out [of prison last time], I actually got my own smudge kit and everything. Yeah, I was that much into it!"

Irene and Olivia, and women like them, don't find these kinds of support and teachings before they run afoul of the law. The reasons for that are, again, a society underpinned by a complex web of failings in economic, social, religious and racial history that is not easy to confront, comprehend or repair. But this, too, is the work of the U of As Prison Project.



**LEAD RESEARCHER SANDRA BUCERIUS** speaks eloquently of our society's lack of provision for basic human needs for the most marginalized citizens, and says this lack has been expressed over and over by project participants. But here is a fact that breaks the heart: horrific though conditions in prisons might be, for the women Bucerius interviewed, prisons are sometimes the safest, best option available as living space.

Her 2020 TedX talk at the U of A, "Prison as a Temporary Refuge," details the stories of women who admit trying to get into prison. For them, even with the cockroaches, cell counts, bullies and all, prison offers the basic human needs they cannot find outside. Other women experience homelessness and use prison to escape deadly prairie winters. This needs to change. And the Prison Project is dedicated to being part of that change.

Says Tetrault, "As a researcher, what guides me is evidence to inform policy that helps system-involved people. As an Indigenous person, what guides me are the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The destination might be unclear, but as researchers and advocates, we have the tools and guidance to get there."

Critics are impatient.



**"CRITICS SAY THERE ARE UNINTENDED** consequences of providing Indigenous programs behind bars," said criminologist Vicki Chartrand in a recent episode of *APTN Investigates: Inside Corrections*. "You have things like healing lodges—so it's a prison, but it's a healing lodge. The idea then is, well, if there's all these programs for Indigenous people, and a judge is sentencing someone, they're like, 'maybe the best place for them is going to be a prison.'"

Senator Kim Pate agrees. "I think we've made ourselves feel better about more and more Indigenous people being in prison," she said in the same episode.

Pate also appeared on the CBC's *Big Picture* in 2001, speaking as an advocate with the Elizabeth Fry Society. "As we cut back social programs, health programs, educational programs, those people who fall through the cracks don't fall too far," she said. "They fall to the streets and

and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which call for more cultural support in prison and the increased use of Indigenous-led healing lodges.

At present, Tetrault, Bucerius and their colleagues on the Prison Project are at work investigating the challenges facing prisoners who have served their sentence, but who often face release with no useful, safe path in place for them to heal and be supported in their community. Tetrault says that, using their research findings, he and Bucerius hope to develop an Indigenous-led re-entry centre in downtown Edmonton, working closely with community partners.

"Getting the public to care about people in prison is challenging, especially with fears around public safety. As criminologists we try to show that people commit crimes as a response to their life circumstances, especially their environment and personal history," Tetrault says. "This is not to excuse the actions of people in prison, but to say that if we truly care about public safety and preventing crime, we should prioritize improving people's living conditions, including healing and rehabilitation, mental health supports and social services."

Maybe Tetrault is an optimist. He says Canadians increasingly see incarcerated people as people, especially as problems that were once considered strictly criminal, such as drug use, are reframed as public health issues, such as addiction. "I think as researchers we have to be optimistic that our findings will contribute to change, despite the challenges."

The more we know, the better decisions we might make. And that matters. We are all interconnected, part of the circle, to put it in terms

familiar to many Indigenous people. Therefore, we have to take honest stock of where we are, in order to be sure that we are making decisions for the good of the whole circle.

And that is ultimately the role of the U of A Prison Project, to remind us that, despite the fact that we may never see them while they serve their terms, incarcerated people are irrevocably part of our circle of relations, and improving outcomes for them ultimately improves all of our lives. ☺

## Six hundred inmates at six institutions can teach us quite a lot about their experience of access to Indigenous cultural programming.

their means of survival are criminalized."

Tetrault, Bucerius and the Prison Project team might agree with Pate's 2001 assessment, but not with her 2023 opinion that Indigenous programs serve to assuage guilt about colonial history and its knock-on impacts. Instead, they see cultural programming as an ongoing struggle to realize Indigenous rights inside Canada's colonial justice system. Pate's and Chartrand's comments also conflict with recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Some life decisions are easy.  
Sometimes you labour over them.  
Meet three grads who've  
made big changes

By Jennifer Allford, '84 BA

# SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

Illustrations by  
Jeannie Phan

**BACK IN 1982, MICK JONES OF THE CLASH BELTED** out “Should I stay, or should I go?” articulating a question that comes to all of us at some point or another. Jones insists the song isn’t about a romantic relationship or the Clash (he left the British band a couple of years later) but rather, an attempt to write a classic song.

He nailed it. The punk anthem and its soul-searching question endure, from plot twists in the Netflix show *Stranger Things* to playlists of young and old around the world. Should I stay in this job? This house? This situation? Or should I try something new? Take that opportunity? Give that new idea a shot?

Asking—or singing—the question is easy. Answering it can be another matter. How do you know when to go with the flow or change course? If indecision’s bugging you, we offer suggestions and personal reflections from three Augustana alumni who have faced their own forks in the road. —>





## Change Your Mind

► Medical doctor, podcaster and illusionist **Lalit Chawla**, '91 BSc, '01 MD, has had his own share of plot twists, from veering away from medical school to work as an illusionist and later, when his mom was dying of cancer, going back to school to become a doctor.

"When I was 20, I had a desire to go into medicine and, at the same time, I was doing magic as a hobby," says Chawla. He loved being an illusionist and enjoyed considerable success for several years. "There was a creative aspect, and a huge performance aspect. You're learning to move, you're learning to vocalize and address an audience."

But when his mom was diagnosed with breast cancer when he was 26, he found himself re-evaluating his career choice. "It reminded me why I was interested in medicine in the first place, and I thought, how am I contributing to making the world a better place? How am I helping?"

So Chawla followed his U of A Augustana science degree with a medical degree from the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry. Once he became a physician, he discovered he could use his skills as an illusionist to help his peers and their patients. "I started using magic as a tool to teach other doctors how you can use it in a clinical setting to make patients and children feel more comfortable," he says.

Reflecting on his own experience, Chawla suggests that contribution is the first thing to consider when one is contemplating a change. Sometimes, he says, people "just keep going on the same treadmill. They don't ever think, 'Am I enjoying this? Is this fuelling me?' People have a tremendous desire to grow and to contribute. And when people are not fulfilled in their lives, they are not growing or contributing."

Once you've examined how a change could boost your contribution to society, Chawla suggests tallying the amount of time it will take, and a great deal depends on what stage of life you are in, he says. "As you get older there are different demands and different ideas and desires."

Next, examine the energy it would take to stay put versus that of

**"Everywhere I go, when I'm speaking at conferences or whatever, the thing people want to know is, 'How do I get more energy?'"**

—LALIT CHAWLA



moving on. Ask yourself how much energy you may have to put into a new venture. "Everywhere I go — when I'm speaking at conferences or whatever — the biggest thing people want to know is, 'How do I get more energy?' Physically, mentally and spiritually. People want more energy to participate in life, in their relationships, in their career and hobbies."

Finally, examine the resources that changing things up will require, and of course think about your yearning to make a change. "If you have a tremendous desire, you can find time, you can find energy, you can find resources," he says. "Sometimes people want a change because whatever they're doing, they don't desire it anymore. It doesn't fulfill them. They may be contributing to themselves and other people, but it may have become so routine and boring that they desire something else that gives them more energy."

## Listen to Your Gut

► Last summer, veterinarian **Dayle Poitras-Oster** decided to leave a job she loved at a mixed animal clinic in Drayton Valley, Alta., to move to Edmonton to start a new role as an instructor teaching at NAIT. Poitras-Oster, a proud member of the Métis Nation of Alberta, studied science at the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus and graduated from the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) in 2021.

"My whole life was set up in Drayton Valley," she says. "I had a mortgage and a horse, and I thought maybe I shouldn't move because I have all these things. It's a pain, for lack of a better word, to uproot my life and move again. But my gut really told me that I wanted something different at this point in my life."

While she's all for "listening to your gut" and "trusting your feelings", she also cautions against getting carried away. "I would never recommend somebody go into millions of dollars of debt to go travel or something. Things need to make sense, and you can talk those through with people and come up with a bit of a plan and make sure it logistically works. But at the same time you have to be willing to be flexible and pursue what makes you happy."

From representing Indigenous students on the WCVM's Students' Association, and promoting Métis, First Nations and Inuit representation on different veterinary committees, to buying a beloved horse when she couldn't *really* afford it, Poitras-Oster has learned that change is constant — and she embraces it. "In our field we say, 'you have to learn how to get comfortable being uncomfortable,'" she says. "You're never going to be 100 per cent comfortable."

She's also learned to talk openly about her mental health and go to therapy regularly. "It's preventative medicine. You're preventing sadness. You're preventing depression. You're preventing stress and you're learning how to work through those things in a healthy way."

Now that she's settling into her new home and job, Poitras-Oster will continue her work advocating for Indigenous colleagues and encouraging other people from Indigenous communities to consider veterinary medicine.

"Growing up in rural Alberta, I didn't even know that I could be a veterinarian. I didn't even know that was really a job. I just assumed I would go and work in the oil field." Instead, she explored different interests at Augustana, including drama, sociology and Indigenous studies, and settled on biology before going off to veterinary school.

"I think it's important that, if you have the opportunity, you widen your scope, that you take those experiences and those chances to better yourself. You shouldn't let things stand in your way," she says. "You can always make changes in your life. The worst thing you can do is say 'no' to really good opportunities."

## Pay Attention to Your Dreams

► **Wassim Daoud**, '08 BSc, '18 MBA, says it takes him a long time to give up on something. The senior director of Global Software and Lifecycle Services at Honeywell has found that often, if he gives a problem a little more time, the solution is "right around the corner." Sometimes, he says, "persevering a little bit longer gets you the fruitful results you're hoping for and where you want to go."

But other times it's clear you have to switch it up. "It takes courage to change direction. Sometimes, you've been persevering for so long and eventually you realize this might be the wrong direction. Being a little bit more self-aware, you'll recognize that you need to change."

But how do you know? For Daoud, a dream he had one night helped him decide on a massive shift and symbolized what his next step should be. He was working as an electrical engineer and climbing the ranks at an automation company in his native Syria. He started as a project manager and moved up quickly to managing multimillion-dollar projects. But he soon realized that he had more potential, and he needed a change in order to grow. "I realized that I'll probably just plateau at a certain level within this particular field," he says.

He was wrestling with the idea of moving to Canada, studying computing science and merging that expertise with electrical engineering. But leaving his country, his family and his career was a "very tough call."

Until one night he dreamt he was dangling in a well and grasping on to the top. "I look down and it's dark and deep and I can't see anything. I can't even see the bottom of it," he says. "I look up past my hands holding on to the rim, and I see the light. All I have to do is lift myself up so I can

be within the light. Otherwise, if I keep hanging on I'm going to get tired and fall into the well. My subconscious was telling me the right answer."

When he woke up, he decided to leave Syria. Daoud, who says he "barely spoke English" emigrated to Canada, graduated with a BSc in computing science from Augustana Campus, and later did a MBA in strategic management and innovation at North Campus. "Merging both fields, I found a niche and it's working out very well for me in a way that's giving me an edge in the industry," he says.

Daoud has worked with Honeywell for 15 years, in increasingly more complex roles. Now living in Houston, Daoud has taken up triathlons and gourmet cooking, pursuits which underscore the need for perseverance — like pushing through the pain of a cramp to finish the race, or throwing in the towel and throwing out dinner when the meal doesn't quite work out.

"Ninety per cent of the dishes turn out exactly how I want them but sometimes it's, 'What the heck did I just create?' Then I have to draw the line and say that's enough trying. I've done my best and I need to stop. I'll have to change directions and focus on something else."

## Know That Things Have a Way of Working Out

► Sometimes you have to cope with someone else's decisions. The Clash fired lead guitarist Mick Jones in 1983. "We were just all fed up with each other," Jones told *Rolling Stone* magazine in 2013. "The bigger it got, the more difficult it became. We battled through constant issues ... We could have dealt with it better, in hindsight."

While precious few of us have played lead guitar in an iconic punk band, most of us have wished for the benefit of hindsight while grappling with or dealing with the aftermath of a decision. But here's the thing: most of the time, even if you make the "wrong call," things tend to work out.

For his part, Jones went on to make more music with loads of other bands after the Clash, and he's still working in the business. "We became friends again after the group broke up and continued that way for the rest of the time," he says. "That was more important to us than the band." 🍷



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# The common



## Milk and Cookies

Need we say more?

**THERE ARE PLENTY OF GOOD REASONS TO STUDY AT AUGUSTANA**, but the non-stop chocolate milk is the cherry on top. The sweet stuff has been on tap in the cafeteria since around 1989, fuelling countless study sessions, post-workout recoveries and late-night cravings. It's been the perfect pairing for Augustana's famous cookies — which can be found in the cafeteria and at many student and alumni events — and has even helped recruiters to pique the interest of prospective pupils. But that wasn't always the case. Before chocolate milk was bottomless, students were limited to one glass of plain milk per meal — a rule strictly enforced by cafeteria monitors of the day. Now that the floodgates have opened, it may be the sweetest reason to study on campus. —**LISA SZABO**, '16 BA

# And the Award Goes To...

Every year, Augustana celebrates three outstanding people who make our campus a better place. Meet the 2023 Alumni Award recipients who continue to enrich our community with their volunteer work, mentorship and support. Read the full stories at [uab.ca/augnews](http://uab.ca/augnews).

BY JORDAN WHITEHOUSE  
PHOTOS BY JOHN ULAN

Awarded to a non-alumnus or non-alumna of Augustana for their contributions to campus life.

## ALUMNI CITATION AWARD

### Dee Patriquin

'87 BSc(Spec), '91 MSc, '14 PhD  
*Collaboration has been at the core of her work as a volunteer, mentor and environmental scientist*

**DEE PATRIQUIN KNOWS A THING** or two about how to work with others—especially when it comes to solving big environmental problems. It's one of the reasons she is this year's recipient of the Alumni Citation Award.

For over 30 years, the environmental scientist and consultant has collaborated with people from diverse disciplines to find answers to some of the big environmental challenges facing our society. Whether in her current role as district environmental manager with

Flatiron Constructors Canada or in past projects involving government and industry partners, Patriquin has had a similar goal: Getting people to work together—some of whom might have vastly different views about how things should unfold.

It's a skill she has put to good use at Augustana both in and out of the classroom. As a professor, mentor and volunteer with initiatives like the Beaver Hills Biosphere, collaboration has been her North Star. She says the biggest challenge in fostering co-operation between people with different viewpoints is establishing trust between them. "You have to create a setting that allows them to talk about the problem from all those different perspectives and ask the questions that come up."

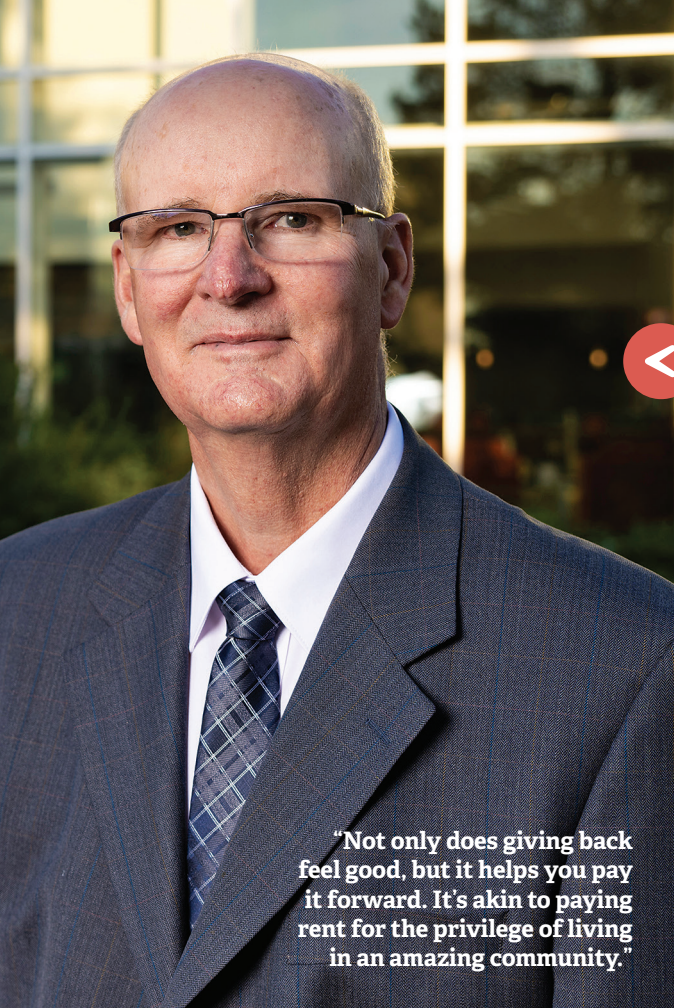
She stresses that no single discipline has the answer, but when we listen to one another, we can find our way through the woods. "Building the realization that everybody has a role to play in solving these complex environmental problems is really critical."



**"No matter what type of complex project you're working on, being open to learning from others is key. Everyone's contributions are vital to coming up with a robust solution."**



**"In the ceremonies I lead at Augustana, I always want to make them inclusive of everybody and create this reciprocity with the people. That reciprocity creates an environment of safety for people to connect with a different culture."**



**"Not only does giving back feel good, but it helps you pay it forward. It's akin to paying rent for the privilege of living in an amazing community."**

**Awarded to an alumnus or alumna for their contributions to the life of Augustana.**

**LOIS ASPENES AWARD**

## James Mayer

'83 BCom

*The support James Mayer received as a student has driven him to give back to Augustana for nearly 50 years*

**IT'S BEEN 44 YEARS SINCE JAMES MAYER FIRST SET FOOT ON THE CAMPUS** of Camrose Lutheran College — now Augustana Campus — but he can still remember the feeling of butterflies in his stomach as he lined up at the registrar's office. The small-town, 18-year-old kid from Camrose was in a completely new environment. "I was so intimidated," he remembers.

He quickly learned, however, that one of the advantages of attending a small school like Augustana is that people are more than willing to help. It was a lesson that Mayer would often think about as he moved on to North Campus to complete his degree and later join the family business in Camrose as an insurance broker. It was a lesson that made him want to give back to students, too.

His many contributions to the life of the campus make him this year's Lois Aspnes Award recipient. In the past four decades, Mayer has been a constant supporter of Augustana, volunteering his time and money to everything from establishing student scholarships to off-setting the cost of acquiring scientific and athletic equipment. Mayer has also been an avid proponent and board member of the Battle River Community Foundation, which has also supported Augustana in various ways through the years.

He says it's Augustana's support and involvement in the community that has made him want to stay involved all these years later. "Augustana is such a jewel, and I am so fortunate to be able to give back."



**Awarded to an alumnus or alumna for outstanding achievement in their vocation.**

**DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD**

## Elder John Crier

'99 BA

*Elder Crier's land-based teachings and leadership have affected the Augustana community and far beyond*

**ASK ELDER JOHN CRIER WHAT HE** remembers from his studies at Augustana, and he'll likely begin with the friendly atmosphere and down-to-earth instructors. But what also sticks with him are the memories of hiking, canoeing and exploring he did as part of his degree, which concentrated on Indigenous studies.

"We were out on the land, looking at the features, the topography," he says. "I went on to use a lot of that in the land-based teachings I led."

The member of the Samson Cree

Nation has retired from his day job — he spent 12 years as an elder at the Pê Sâkâstêw Correctional Centre and 11 years on the faculty of Maskwacis Cultural College — but continues his land-based teaching at the U of A and in cultural programs in and around Maskwacis, Alta. His community work and contributions to Augustana are some of the many reasons he is this year's Distinguished Alumni Award recipient. From developing a healing retreat centre to mentoring youth and adults alike, Elder Crier has used long-established teachings and traditions to help empower people and heal trauma. At Augustana his support of Indigenous programming, including providing guidance for round dances and leading ceremony for over a decade, have enriched the student experience and brought his love of land-based and traditional approaches full circle.

It's something Elder Crier says is needed now more than ever. "The way the world is going, we're creating a toxic environment, and we need to change that," he says. "We need to reconsider how we create the relationship with the land."

TALK TO US

# Class Notes

We'd love to hear what you're doing! Tell us about your new job, your latest volunteer activities, your recent vacation or your new pet. Celebrate a personal accomplishment or share your favourite campus memory. Submit your class note at [uab.ca/augnote](http://uab.ca/augnote). Notes will be edited for clarity, length and style.

COMPILED BY **MADISEN GEE**, '21 BA, '21 CERT(CSL)

## 1970s

'71 **Joanne Maynard (Hegge)** was inducted in June into the Pioneer Women exhibit at the Millet and District Museum for being a dedicated volunteer in the community. She works with several organizations, including Millet in Bloom and the Arts and Crafts Guild, and is the president of the Millet Seniors Club. Maynard was a nurse at the Wetaskiwin Hospital for more than 30 years before retiring in 2016. These days, she enjoys quilting and spending time with her two daughters and two granddaughters.

'76 **Brian Nelson** is living with his wife on a small farm east of Camrose, where he is working towards his life goal "of becoming an old hippie." They grow and raise their own food and heat their farm home using solar panels and firewood



▲ Carol Breitkreutz (Yamabe)



▲ Dorothy Ritz (Schmidt)

harvested from the land. Nelson has held many jobs over the years, including with the Camrose Association for Community Living, where he worked with people living with developmental disabilities. He is passionate about food security in the community and helps run a weekly free community supper. Nelson has a long history of volunteering and is on the board of directors for Sahakarini, a charity that funds community development projects around the world. He is also active with the Camrose United Church as chair of the social concerns committee. He is enjoying learning more about his Métis culture and history with help from the Métis Nation of Alberta.

'76 **Dorothy Ritz (Schmidt)** retired in 2019 from MacEwan University as director of careers and experience. In the same year, her husband, Randy, retired from Concordia University in Edmonton where he was chair of the Drama Department. The couple has three children: Talia, who teaches kindergarten and is completing her PhD in education; Eli, who works in communications with Service Alberta; and Duran, a musician who was nominated (with the band Rare Americans) at the 2023 Juno Awards.

'77 **Carol Breitkreutz (Yamabe)** moved to Montreal in April 2019 after retiring from a 28-year teaching career and five years as a school health promotion facilitator with Alberta Health Services. She is happy to be living in an apartment with her spouse, Dale, and cockapoo, Bowi. They live in the same building as their daughter, **Sara Breitkreutz**, '07 BA,

## The Gift of Comfort

The next time you visit the Augustana Chapel, your bottom will be delighted. The space was recently stocked with 400 new chairs thanks to the generosity of donors. The new seats replace ones that had been in use for more than 40 years, having cushioned countless backsides during worship, conferences, presentations, concerts and weddings. The new chairs will ensure students, staff, alumni and community members can sit back, relax and enjoy events in the chapel for many more decades to come.

and her family, so Carol gets to be a daily part of her grandchildren's lives. Carol and Dale's son, **Dylan Breitkreutz**, '12 BSc, lives and works in Toronto, close enough to visit. Carol spends her leisure time studying French, solving word puzzles, reading, sewing and sashiko stitching. She enjoys the diverse culture and vibrancy of their Mile End neighbourhood.

'79 **Gordon Jensen** retired from his position of academic dean and the William Hordern Chair of Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, where he taught for more than 20 years. He is the author of two books, *The Wittenberg Concord: Creating Space for Dialogue* (2018) and *Experiencing Gospel: The History and Creativity of Martin Luther's 1534 Bible Project* (2023). He is a proud father and grandfather, with two sons and one

granddaughter. He and his wife are celebrating 44 years of marriage this year.

### 1980s

'82 **Barbara Bickel** recently published a new book, *Art-Care Practices for Restoring the Communal: Education, Co-Inquiry and Healing*, which outlines ways to help people use art to connect to themselves and their communities. Bickel co-wrote the book with R. Michael Fisher.

'86 **Mark Radke** has been appointed deputy minister of justice and deputy attorney general for the Yukon government.

### 1990s

'94 **Sandeep K. Dhir**, BA, was named among Canada's leading litigators for the 11th straight year in the Benchmark Litigation annual ranking. Dhir is active in the community and has served on boards for the Edmonton Inner City Housing Society, the Edmonton Food Bank and the Theatre Network. He has been co-chair of the South Asian Bar Association's North American Litigation section since January 2022. In 2016 he was appointed Queen's Counsel (now King's Counsel) in recognition of his excellence as a lawyer and contributions to the community.

'97 **Deena Hinshaw**, BSc, received a Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Alberta for her work as chief medical officer of health during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

'98 **Shannon Mah (Stang); Tanin Behnke (Cooper)**, '00 BA; **Nikki Wakulchyk (Harmon)**, '00 BA; **Allyson Bendfeld**, '01 BA; **Carley Flaws (Humber)**, '01 BA; **Jennifer Gee (Dewey)**, '01 BSc; **Trisha Keetch**, '01 BA; **Alexis Sikora (Redlich)**, '01 BSc(Spec); and **Jenelle Plasko**, '02 BSc, met 25 years ago at Augustana and began a lifelong friendship they

## CLASS MEMORY

# Creative Teaching Makes for Lifelong Learning

**I HAVE VERY FOND MEMORIES** of my two years at Augustana. I barely passed high school and was so glad to leave all learning institutions. But after a year of really rotten jobs, I realized I was on a path that would not lead to much life satisfaction for me. So I decided to try a year at college.

During my first year at Augustana, I was inspired by the high quality of the professors and the exciting learning environment I found. To take the time to learn, study, discuss and immerse myself in a world of ideas was such a pleasure.

I particularly remember an English class with professor Ed Friesen. We were studying *The Canterbury Tales*, and were challenged to come up with a different way to examine the tales other than using printed words. I have always been a hands-on sort of guy, so I decided to build a multimedia presentation on various parts of the tales. Please keep in mind this was way back in the dark ages before computers (gasp), so there was no PowerPoint. I sketched 16 pictures on thin parchment paper and constructed four wire cubes to hold the sketches. I attached the cubes to a metal framework that used gears and

a small battery-operated motor from a toy car to rotate the whole mechanism as well as each cube independently. As each cube rotated, a light came on in the center, illuminating one of the parchment scenes. The whole thing was synchronized and moved in time with a cassette tape of selected readings and medieval music.

I know Professor Friesen was surprised when I walked into the class with the contraption, but he was very patient with me as I set it up. At the end all he said was "Well, that was interesting." I absolutely loved the way he opened up new ways of exploring English, encouraged experiential learning and recognized that many students learn in many ways other than just through printed words. That was a defining moment in my life. Instead of just reading the words, I examined the text for the essential meaning and tried to illustrate that essence in art, music, spoken word and print — all in an experiential manner. From dreading school, I went to absolutely loving learning. Those two years at Augustana changed my life. I have been a lifelong learner ever since. —'76 **BRIAN NELSON**

call the Augustana Sisterhood. The women have supported each other through life's ups and downs, including weddings, births of children, summer celebrations and their annual Santa photo get-togethers.

*Have you kept in touch with your friends from Augustana? Let us know at [uab.ca/augnote](http://uab.ca/augnote).*

### 2000s

'04 **Myranda Bolstad**, BA, completed a master's degree in creative writing at the University of Edinburgh in 2005. She works as a communications professional for the Government of Canada, has recently started editing books and in June of this year published her first

children's book, *If The Northern Lights Could Speak*, with her longtime best friend and fellow northerner, Sarah Kalnay-Watson. The book is a celebration of the beauty of the Northwest Territories and features the whimsical illustrations of Yellowknife artist,



▲ Publisher Lana de Bastiani, Sarah Kalnay-Watson, Kaylem Loomis and Myranda Bolstad with their children's book.

Kaylem Loomis. “We wrote the first draft nearly two decades ago on a Boston Pizza napkin. Sarah and I eventually had to rewrite it, because napkins make for terrible record-keeping,” Bolstad writes. “But ultimately, it led to this little love letter to the North, of which we are incredibly proud.”

'05 **Matthew Hebert**, BA, has wrapped up four years on the Alumni Council and is



working as an assistant deputy minister for the Alberta government.

**2010s**

'10 **Danielle Fostey**, BA, and her husband welcomed their first child, Noah, in July 2022. “Since then, I have been on the steepest learning curve I could imagine. Did you know babies can pee while you are already changing their diapers? He turns one in a month and I am already trying to convince him to go to Augustana. Seventeen more years to go!”

'10 **Paul Gauthier**, BA, and **Kendra Gauthier**, '11 BA, are travelling the Pan-American Highway. They began their trip south from Tuktoyaktuk, N.W.T. in August 2022, and by May, the pair had travelled 43,611 kilometres to Yaviza, Panama, which is the end of the northern part of the road. Their goal is to reach Tierra del Fuego, an archipelago off the southernmost tip of the South American mainland. You can follow their adventures on Instagram, @gogogauthiers.

'11 **Gordon Naylor**, BSc, became a University of Alberta senator in July. Naylor is the assistant principal at Maskwacis Cree High School and sits on Augustana's Indigenous Engagement Collective.

'13 **Mariah St. Germain** represented Augustana on the 2022-23 Indigenous Alumni Task Force. She moved to the Montreal area with her husband where she is the co-ordinator of Indigenous student success at Concordia University.

'14 **Annette Klevgaard** is celebrating the publication of her poetry collection, *The Wind and The Sky and everything else*, which explores our connection and disconnection to the Earth, ourselves



**CLASS MEMORY**

**Finding Fun**

My favourite memories from Augustana include spending time in wahkohtowin Lodge, playing recreational sports, attending basketball games, faculty follies and making memories with friends. My favourite class was chemistry with James Kariuki.

I loved my time at Augustana and I think being on a smaller campus helped me to be successful. I felt safe as an Indigenous student on campus, and my liberal arts education has made me a well-rounded veterinarian. I greatly valued the opportunity to take drama, Indigenous studies, history and sociology while still obtaining my science prerequisites. —'17 **DAYLE POITRAS-OSTER**

and each other. Most of the poems were written while Klevgaard “traversed the plains, foothills and Rocky Mountains, sleeping in a yellow tent beneath the stars and rediscovering wonder and awe.” The entire process, including editing, graphic design and printing, was completed with the support of Edmonton-based artisans and businesses, reflecting her commitment to supporting small businesses. Since its release last year, Klevgaard's collection, which she published under the name Annette Irene, has been featured in more than a dozen independent stores and is available online through Alpine Book Peddlers.



▲ Paul and Kendra Gauthier

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Camrose Lutheran College and Augustana yearbooks have been digitized on the Internet Archive website. Find your class or flip through yearbooks going back to 1941 to experience the history, hijinx and hairstyles from the past — just search “Camrose yearbooks” at [archive.org](https://archive.org).

'15 **Larissa Lindmark (Hepp)**, BMgt, graduated with a master's of public administration from the University of Victoria in 2022 and has been working for municipalities in rural Alberta for the past eight years.

'15 **Louise Omeasoo**, BA, and **Sarah Skinner**, '10 BA, participated in a panel event "Conversations on Water," featuring poet and activist Rita Wong. The events explored personal and community relationships with water and included a poetry reading by Wong.

'16 **Tonya Simpson**, BSc, teaches forensic anthropology on North Campus. She also works with the RCMP Missing Persons Unit and consults with police agencies to assist in identifying human remains. Simpson published a children's book in May 2023, *Forever Our Home / kâkikê kîkinaw*, described as a "lullaby of reconciliation and reclamation, celebrating the ancestral relationship between Indigenous children and the land."

'18 **Helaynea Croke (Moore)**, BSc, is proud to share that she graduated recently with a master's degree in adult education from St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. She writes that her undergraduate years at Augustana equipped her with strong foundational skills and the confidence



▲ Hannan Said Mohamud

to pursue lifelong learning. "It is the time that I spent at Augustana and the relationships I forged that led me to this success, and I am forever grateful," she says. "Life may not always lead you where you think you're meant to go, but it will always lead you where you're meant to be."

'18 **Carson Roche**, BA, is an events manager with Aboriginal Sports Circle Northwest Territories and was the



▲ Carson Roche

head organizer for the inaugural 2022 Indigenous Summer Games, in which more than 140 athletes competed in traditional games such as Dene wrestling and pole pushing. Roche led Team Northwest Territories in the 2023 North American Indigenous Games in Halifax, N.S. in July as its chef de mission. Outside of work, he is an avid traveller and recently spent a month in Japan.

'19 **Hannan Said Mohamud**, BA, graduated from the University of Ottawa with a degree in English common law earlier this year and was an elected member of the Board of Governors in her final academic year. Mohamud also received a Top 30 Under 30 award



**CLASS MEMORY**

**Two Degrees, One Diverse Education**

**MY TIME AT THE U OF A STARTED** with a bachelor's in psychology from Augustana and finished with a master's in speech-language pathology at North Campus. I will always be thankful for my time spent at the U of A for giving me so many wonderful opportunities, such as going to India, getting to present research in Ireland and Quebec while working as a research assistant, so many interesting learning experiences in labs and during in-house clinical placements, and friendships that have lasted for many years. -'18 **HAILEY SMITH**, BA, '18 CERT(COMMENTHEALTH)

# 200M

The number of stars you can see using the Hesje Observatory telescope located at the Augustana Miquelon Lake Research Station. The Observatory – named for 1966 alumnus **Brian Hesje**, who donated \$600,000 to the project – is open to viewers one night a week.

from the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation for her work promoting peaceful and equitable societies in 2021. She is now articling for prominent criminal lawyer Alan Gold in Toronto.

## 2020s

'21 **Kylie Peake**, BSc, completed a summer internship in northern Alberta through



▲ Kylie Peake

the Engage North program, where she worked with Beaver First Nation on a variety of community projects. She has also worked as a phlebotomist at Canadian Blood Services and recently finished her first year of medical school at the University of British Columbia's Northern Medical program. Sports play a large role in Peake's life—she coaches basketball, plays soccer and is now enjoying the beautiful running

trails in Prince George, B.C. "I am very grateful for the amazing professors, mentors, classmates and support staff at Augustana who each played a unique and important role in my education and personal development."

'23 **Jessica Leeson**, BA, graduated this spring and spent the summer working with Alberta Wildfire as a wildfire crew leader. She recently moved to Idaho, where she is attending law school.

'23 **Shelby Paulgaard**, BA, '23 Cert(Writing), began the master of media in journalism and communications program at Western University in London, Ont. During her time at Augustana, she worked with Stephanie Oliver to curate the visual exhibition of poetry, *immersed*, by Rita Wong. 🍷



## CLASS MEMORY

### The Augustana Experience

ALTHOUGH THE PAST FOUR YEARS have been anything but normal, I am so grateful to have had the advantage of the "Augustana Experience" along the way. From taking a first-year class about beer brewing to volunteering all over Camrose for Community-Service Learning experience, I have learned so much about myself and what I want to pursue after my time here.

I have made lifelong friends and have had the privilege of working with exceptional mentors who went

above and beyond to help me excel and find my path. Working as a research assistant and the editor-in-chief of *The Dagligtale*, Augustana's student paper, have given me vital experience in journalism and communications, and these experiences have pushed me to pursue my passion for writing and lifelong learning. I am so excited to take my experiences and all of the knowledge I've gained from Augustana with me, and I can't wait to find out where they will take me next! -'23 **SHELBY PAULGAARD**, BA, '23 CERT(WRITING)

# HOW TO TRAIN LIKE AN OILER

A former Vikings athlete shares pro tips from the NHL

By Lewis Kelly

When **Joel Jackson**, '11 BSc, '15 MSc, was growing up in Snow Lake, Man., he dreamed of a career in the NHL. In 2021, 10 years after graduating from Augustana, he finally joined the Oilers – though not in the way he first imagined. Jackson is a strength and conditioning coach who helps players get the most out of their bodies. Here are three of his tips for working out.

## 1 / Use the right data

Jackson uses many high-tech exercise tools to help professional athletes get





stronger, but his favourite tool doesn't build muscle. It collects data.

"My favourite is Catapult," he says. "It allows you to quantify the volume and intensity of the work the players do on the ice through a number of different metrics."

The players wear the tool on their shoulder pads during practice, and over time, the data builds a detailed portrait of a player's skating ability. If a player gets injured, the metrics serve as a baseline to determine when they're ready to play again.

While an amateur doesn't need Catapult-level stats, data can still come in handy. Running apps, GPS watches or a paper workout log can help you track your training — both to establish a touchstone in case of injury, or to chart your progress.

## 2/Keep it fresh and fun

One of the most powerful benefits of the cutting-edge tech Jackson uses in his job, he says, is also the simplest: novelty.

Like the rest of us, professional athletes can get bored of routine. Swapping out the squat cage for a

1080 Quantum smart pulley system can be a welcome change.

"It's good for players to be exposed to new tools," he says. "It keeps it fresh and keeps them excited."

The same goes for non-professionals. Introduce a little variety to your workout routine by changing up your running route, trying a new Peloton instructor or lifting at a different gym.

## 3/Don't skip strength

While Jackson's strength and conditioning work with the Oilers can boost the performance of players on the ice, its main benefit is for injury prevention and rehabilitation. This is just as true for the general population.

"As people age, one of the biggest causes of injury is falls," says Jackson. "When you lose your muscular power, you can't react as well to tripping or losing your footing. If you have more muscular power, there's a much better chance that things like that won't happen."

"Resistance training should be your number one injury prevention tool." 📌

## SADLY MISSED

# In Memoriam

Circle magazine notes with sorrow the passing of the following Augustana alumni, based on information we have received between January 2023 and August 2023.

'48 **Beatrice Ada Kvemshagen**  
in April 2023

'48 **Leif Gordon Stolee**, '52 BA, '54 BEd,  
'69 MA, in July 2023

'53 **Inez Margaret "Peggy" Mollerup (Broughton)**, '56 Dip(Nu),  
in January 2023

'58 **Otto LaVerne Streberg**  
in January 2023

'60 **Leonard Clifford Roger Schultz**,  
'65 BEd, '68 BSc, '83 Dip(Ed), in May 2022

'62 **Elaine Ruth Martin (Elford)**  
in April 2023

'65 **Rodney Edwin Soholt**, '68 BPE, '71 BEd,  
'73 MEd, in June 2023

'67 **David Charles Ayre**, '85 BCom,  
in July 2023

'73 **Betty Jane Schultz** in March 2023

'74 **Daniel Anthony Palamar**, '76 BA,  
'80 LLB, in July 2023

'74 **Gail Roxanne Reichert (Wilkes)**,  
'77 BSc(Spec), in May 2023

'76 **Darlene Joanne Gallinger**, '80 BEd,  
in August 2021

'77 **Valerie June Naslund** in March 2023

'03 **Allan Steven Reid**, BA,  
in October 2022

*If you've lost a loved one who was a University of Alberta grad, contact alumni records at [alumrec@ualberta.ca](mailto:alumrec@ualberta.ca), 780-492-3471 or 1-866-492-7516.*

We dug into the archives to find these two shots from what appear to be Girls' and Boys' Parties, though scarce records of the events make it hard to verify. Were you there? Let us know!



## It's Party Time

**THE GIRLS' PARTY FOR THE BOYS** and the Boys' Party for the Girls were Camrose Lutheran College and Augustana University College traditions that trace to the 1930s or earlier. The guys and girls would plan an afternoon or evening of extravagant entertainment, food and frivolity for the opposite sex—preferably about which all details were kept secret until the party started. Girls were known to plan the menu and even help cafeteria staff cook the boys' meals. (Whether the boys did the same is lost to history.) But the spirit of giving was not without the spirit of one-upmanship. Themes ranged from *Joyeux Paris* to Poseidon Under the Sea, with each party more



extravagant than the last. In the late 1970s, the boys built a Viking ship in the gymnasium, complete with a telephone-pole mast, sail and wooden frame made from borrowed timber. The parties carried on into the 1990s before becoming memories of a bygone era. Share your favourite party stories with us at [augalum@ualberta.ca](mailto:augalum@ualberta.ca) —**LISA SZABO**, '16 BA



"We met at Camrose Lutheran College in 1964 and our son and daughter are Augustana alumni. We're proud to support the campus through our endowed award. We know a planned gift from our estate will continue to benefit generations of Augustana students."

– David and Darlene Dahle



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