



# MARIAN UPDATE

Published by: St. Mary's University | [stmu.ca](http://stmu.ca)

SPRING 2015

## AN INCREDIBLE STORY

*St. Mary's University continues to punch above its weight, to deliver remarkable academic programs, to reach out to the community and to support its passionate cohort of students.*

“The St. Mary's University story is both compelling and remarkable. It's the story of a small, independent, Catholic university in the south of Calgary that has grown by almost 50% in the last three years alone; a university that is the fastest-growing of any of the twenty-six post-secondary institutions in Alberta. And although it is the lowest-funded by the provincial government of all these institutions, it continues to punch above its weight, to deliver remarkable academic programs, to reach out to the community and to support its passionate cohort of students.

This issue of the Marian Update makes it very clear why we are the university of choice for so many students and families. We are committed to academic excellence, with over 40% of our students winning President's Circle scholarships for students with outstanding academic results. We also believe that education is a right, not a privilege, and work hard to ensure comprehensive opportunities are provided through scholarships and bursaries for all learners. St. Mary's offers the incredible Humanities 101 program for Calgary's most economically disadvantaged citizens so that they can re-enter the educational world, supported by free tuition, food and transportation. The university also celebrates the importance of

giving back to the community, and we are proud to say that one-fifth of the university's staff and students volunteer in some capacity. In short, St. Mary's is a university with heart, committed to the development of the whole person: mind, body and spirit.

This issue of the Marian Update touches only the surface of the wide array of projects and successes that we have seen over the last few months ... and even then, we had to double the number of pages just to get a sample to you. I hope this newsletter inspires you to support the university and all the amazing things we do.”

~ Dr. Gerry Turcotte



# 'Education is the new buffalo'

## ST. MARY'S LAUNCHES FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT PARTNERSHIP

On March 4, 2015, St. Mary's University officially launched its First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Partnership—an initiative that will **nourish FNMI students in mind, body and spirit.**

Since early 2014, with the benefit of a significant grant from The Calgary Foundation and financial support from donors, the University has been working hard to develop the four foundational pillars for the partnership: the FNMI Advisory Council, Elders on Campus program, Scholars on Campus program and the FNMI Liaison Specialist.

"By integrating FNMI ways of knowing and being, we will make St. Mary's a better university for all learners," says FNMI

Liaison Specialist, Michelle Scott. "The partnership we are celebrating is built on respect, trust and a strong desire to move forward together."

St. Mary's is located on traditional Blackfoot territory. The partnership recognizes and honours this by creating paths for greater understanding of how to support FNMI students in their university studies.

There are currently 25 FNMI students at St. Mary's, and this number is expected to grow. The launch of the four foundational pillars paves the way for a learning environment that creates new opportunities for FNMI students' success. **Launching the FNMI partnership is both a celebration and a promise of what's to come.**



## Drumming in a New Partnership

It began with a grand entry of representatives from FNMI, St. Mary's and Calgary communities drummed in by the Tsuu T'ina Drum Group. Retired Chief Roy Fox offered an opening prayer. Representatives who were instrumental in developing the program gave remarks, including St. Mary's President, Dr. Gerry Turcotte, whose successful experience working with Aboriginal communities in Australia was the initial inspiration for this partnership.

A common message about a flourishing partnership was woven through the remarks, which emphasized the importance of listening, dialogue and providing an open and inclusive learning environment for all students. Elder Casey Eagle Speaker's words "education is the new buffalo" echoed throughout the event, affirming the importance of **education that develops the mind, body and spirit—the ideal at the heart of St. Mary's.**

## Buffalo Robe Transfer

A poignant moment was marked when Elder Eagle Speaker transferred his buffalo robe to St. Mary's University. For the Blackfoot people, the buffalo were their way of life for thousands of years and their hides were used for many purposes, the most sacred of which was in ceremony. Receiving a ceremonial buffalo robe from an elder is both an honour and a responsibility for St. Mary's.



# Social justice initiatives advocate for land and community

The St. Mary's community focuses on social awareness and giving back, and support for the Campus Ministry's various initiatives is reflected in active encouragement of balance among mind, body and spirit. On top of daily meditation, weekly Mass and monthly Good Food Boxes, Campus Ministry enables many students to find volunteer positions and their voice for social justice.



St. Mary's student volunteering at the Father Lacombe Care Centre

## How does St. Mary's make a difference?

Here are just a few examples:

- last year, students volunteered at L'Arche, an international federation dedicated to homes, programs, and support networks for people who have intellectual disabilities.
- 15 students have regular volunteer positions at the Father Lacombe Care Centre located close to the St. Mary's campus.
- volunteers worked at the Our Lady Queen of Peace Ranch Christmas Party for children and their families who may not have been able to experience Christmas. More than 80 students, staff, and faculty supported the event, ensuring hundreds of families received food, gifts and the opportunity to enjoy fun winter activities.

Campus Ministry also leads the social justice initiatives on campus and "land" was the 2014-2015 theme, inspiring the Students for Social Justice Club and many staff and faculty. The theme was reflected in the year's activities, including:

- a cultural potluck, a bake sale, a photography contest and nature walks that introduced students to advocating for land and raised funds for the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society and the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area.
- bringing the Sukkah (Hebrew for "booth") to campus during the Festival of Booths in October. Hosting discussion and collecting food for the Calgary Food Bank, the Sukkah saw Rabbi Osadchey of Beth Tzedec Congregation visit the campus. Dr. Michael Duggan, St. Mary's CWL Chair for Catholic Studies, notes, "The Sukkah reflects the commitment to social justice and interfaith collaboration, which are emblematic of St. Mary's."

*St. Mary's Campus Ministry fosters engagement with social justice initiatives. It supports students as they become active members of society. Donations to Campus Ministry have a direct impact on student involvement and growth. For more information about Campus Ministry, see [stmu.ca/campus-ministry](http://stmu.ca/campus-ministry).*

**1 in 5** ST. MARY'S  
STUDENTS, STAFF & FACULTY  
VOLUNTEER ON CAMPUS OR IN THE COMMUNITY.



Nancy Quan, Director of Campus Ministry, stands in the Sukkah with the food raised for the Calgary Food Bank

# LIGHTNING STRIKES with new confidence

SETTING NEW RECORDS WAS THE THEME FOR THE ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY LIGHTNING ATHLETICS PROGRAM THIS YEAR



## Cross-country races to impressive national finish

Literally starting the year off on the right foot was the cross-country running program, which competed in the Alberta Colleges Athletic Association (ACAC) for the first time. Early expectations were for student athletes to use this season to learn and develop, preparing to go into next season a stronger team. New St. Mary's head coach Stephen Adams, well-known on Calgary's cross-country running scene, and his four-member team had other ideas.

The team shattered expectations by qualifying for the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) Cross Country National Championships—the first time a team from St. Mary's has made an appearance in a CCAA National Championship.

"To say it was the experience of a lifetime would be an understatement," says team member Lucas Empey. "It was the experience of a generation and an experience that none of us will soon forget."



## Women's basketball team earns spot in playoffs

The Lightning women's basketball team also set a new record this year—qualifying for post-season playoffs for the first time since the team joined the ACAC in 2012. The season's 10-14 record earned them a coveted final playoff position.

The team made its playoff debut at the ACAC Provincial Championships at NAIT in Edmonton. While St. Mary's was not amongst the medalists, the experience alone was valuable to the players and the program.

The group's on-court accomplishments were matched by the players' strong academic performance, earning the team both "Lightning Team of the Year" and "Lightning Academic Team of the Year" honours at the Athletics Awards Banquet held March 22.



## Men's basketball set a new course to victory

It was a rebuilding year for the men's basketball team—which had two new coaches, only three returning players and eight talented rookies—scoring behind-the-scenes success that will set the team's future course. Last spring, head coach Dane Morris recruited one of the top players in the province, Charnjot Gill, who had a stellar year. Gill finished his rookie season consistently in the top-20 ACAC stats rankings and was a contender for overall ACAC rookie of the year, which also earned him the title of "Lightning Athletics Male Athlete of the Year". With the help of Gill and several other returning players from this year's team, the foundation has been laid for what promises to be an exciting and competitive 2015–16 season.

*"It was the experience of a generation and an experience that none of us will soon forget."*

## Setting new records thanks to great support

It is because of the generosity of committed donors and friends of St. Mary's that the Lightning Athletics Program has already been successful at reaching impressive goals. Financial support is building the foundation for players and teams to reach higher, go further and achieve even more.

Financial support enables Student Athletes to devote more time to training—academically and physically—to become better athletes and engaged and compassionate members of our community.

You too can have a positive impact on the lives of our student athletes and success of our teams. Find out how you can donate to the Adopt-a-Lightning program: visit [athletics.stmu.ca/sponsorsandpartners/](http://athletics.stmu.ca/sponsorsandpartners/) or contact **Chris Shoultz, Director of Athletics, 403-254-3728.**

# Understanding the impact of a fuzzy friend

## ST. MARY'S PROFESSORS STUDY THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY

Almost everyone knows how good it feels to get a dog's wet-nose nuzzle, hear the contented purr of a cat, or give an animal a pat on the head or a gentle scratch behind the ear. Two St. Mary's professors are looking into the science behind these good feelings.

For the past 18 months, St. Mary's professors Dr. Corinne Syrnyk and Dr. Alisa McArthur have been engaged in research closely related to Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) programs, such as PALS (Pet Access League Society) located in Calgary. Specifically, they're interested in the impact AAT has on people (including students, children and seniors), as well as the impact on the animals themselves. They're also looking into the characteristics and motivations of the PALS Animal-Assisted Therapy Volunteers (AATVs).

"For years there has been anecdotal evidence of the positive influence of pets on mental and physical health," says McArthur, who has had a dog all her life and believes they can provide a great deal of comfort and companionship. "However, research in the area has been somewhat lacking. When PALS came to St. Mary's campus last year, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to get involved in adding to the now growing body of research in this area."

Dr. Syrnyk seized on the opportunity at the same time. Growing up in rural Manitoba, she always had an affinity for animals. She completed her PhD in England, where she took part in one of the foremost international Human-Animal Intervention research teams, the Blue Dog Project.

"My work investigated why young children, who are more likely to be bitten by dogs, are usually bitten in the face and hands," Syrnyk explains. "So given my personal and academic history with dogs, when I learned about the good work organizations like PALS do, I was excited to learn more."

AAT is evidenced-based therapy originally developed for older

adults, wherein animals with gentle temperaments and sociability are brought to select groups of individuals for a designated period of animal-human interaction. Research has demonstrated the numerous benefits that physically healthy (and unhealthy) individuals experience as a result of their interaction with small animals.

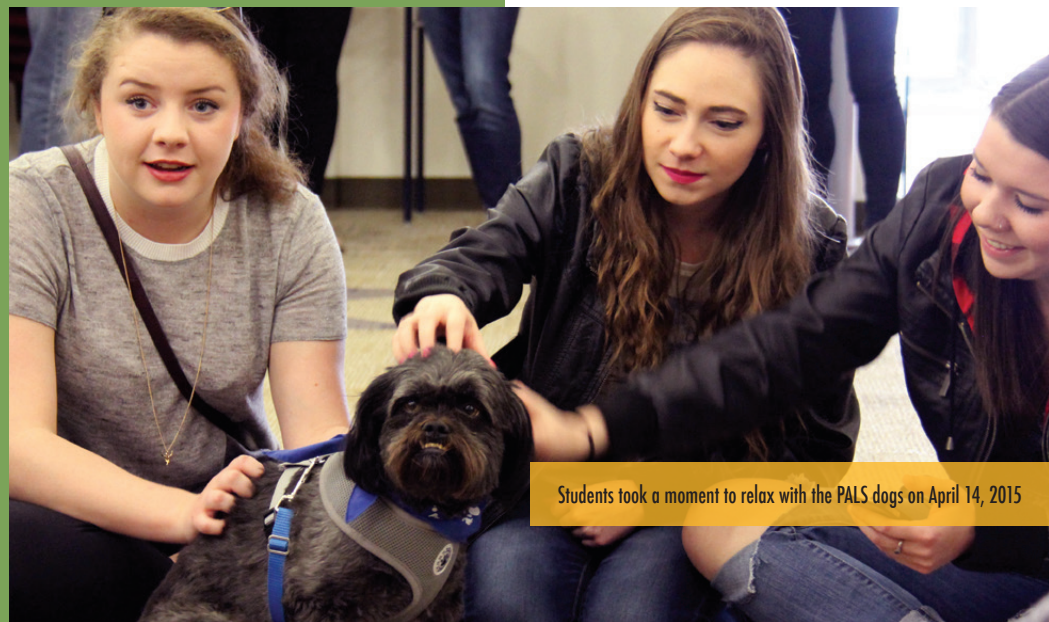
Drs. Syrnyk and McArthur received a St. Mary's Research Grant, with the majority of the grant going towards funding their student research assistant position, currently filled by a St. Mary's student in her fourth year of the Bachelor of Arts – Psychology program. "Lily Westall, has done a fantastic job for us ... she has set up our online survey for PALS volunteers and has been responding to participants," says Syrnyk. "She will soon begin analyzing the data and searching for a comparable volunteer group to study. She has been an absolute asset to us and the viability of this research. We hope to secure more funding so we can keep her and therefore continue our research."

Drs. Syrnyk and McArthur will submit the results of their research to peer-reviewed journals for publication, and have already presented their preliminary findings at the Association for Psychological Science in San Francisco in 2014. They hope to present at additional conferences where possible.



Dr. Syrnyk and Dr. McArthur with a PALS Dog

*"Research has demonstrated the numerous benefits that physically healthy (and unhealthy) individuals experience as a result of their interaction with small animals."*



Students took a moment to relax with the PALS dogs on April 14, 2015



## Performing arts welcome community to campus— and enrich Calgary culture

Sometimes classes are more than classes—and St. Mary's Choir and Drama programs prove the point: they're collaborative sessions that involve fun and theory.

And they do even more. They're unique to St. Mary's because they allow for partnership between students and community members—and that extends to the community of support that provides funding to keep these high-quality programs available to students and contributing to Calgary's vibrant culture.

This year, both programs decided to shake things up by incorporating new creative styles to their performances.

### Singing a new tune

It was a busy year for choir members who performed at the event celebrating the University's new name, Winter Choir Concert, President's Dinner and the popular (and treat for the ears and taste buds) Cabaret and Cabernet.

Director Malcolm Edwards made the creative decision to change the spring concert to Cabaret and Cabernet, an interactive evening where the Choir, food and music were the stars. The Choir performed a selection of songs ranging from *The Fellowship of the Ring* and Cabaret to *Godspell*. The show presented two different types of music, which were combined with small dramatic performances and storytelling. Loud and sustained applause for this unique performance reflected a dynamic evening that entertained and delighted guests.

### The play's the thing

The Drama program spent much of its year preparing for the stage adaptation of Barry Broadfoot's *Six War Years*. Enthralling vignettes capture the Canadian experience during the Second World War. With more than 25 students participating in the show, director Joe-Norman Shaw took the opportunity to challenge students to deliver these monologues with more than a single narrator. The process was a new experience for the cast who thoroughly enjoyed the creative control they were given. The show received excellent reviews and demonstrated an outstanding display of student talent.

# Leading the way in Catholic education

St. Mary's University continues to strengthen the roots of Catholic teacher formation in Canada—the University's Bachelor of Education program is gaining national recognition for excellence.

"Teachers recognize the significant influence they hold in the eyes of their students and it is particularly true when they role model the importance of faith formation and invite Christ to be a special part of their relationship," says Dr. Linda Dudar, Dean of Education at St. Mary's University. "Teachers recognize that they are able to nurture a teacher/student relationship more effectively through their faith as well as their experience and expertise as a teacher."

Thanks to generous donations that provide for scholarships and bursaries that inspire, motivate and reduce financial barriers, the graduates of St. Mary's two-year program acquire the knowledge and skills to put leadership

into practice every day—and young students will be blessed to have them as teachers.

"Many of the student teachers and educators who come to St. Mary's are looking to be more than just a teacher," says Dr. Dudar. "It is their desire to provide an understanding of the Catholic faith to the students they will teach as well as to journey in their own faith development. As a result, school districts (Catholic as well as non-Catholic) recognize the dedication and commitment to Catholic education and that it provides something 'more than just the basics.'"

St. Mary's University's Bachelor of Education program works closely with stakeholders throughout the province of Alberta and strives to support education by delivering leadership courses not only for student teachers, but also for teachers who aspire to become administrators.



"In addition to the Bachelor of Education program, the Graduate Certificate in Catholic Educational Leadership program offers summer courses for potential administrators that are delivered face-to-face during a one week time frame," says Dr. Dudar.

These courses are available to teachers for personal interest or for professional development. Credits earned may be applied to the Graduate Diploma in Religious Education (GDRE) or the new Graduate Certificate in Catholic Educational Leadership (GCCEL).

**Find out more about upcoming courses in the Catholic Educators Programs at [stmu.ca/catholiceducators](http://stmu.ca/catholiceducators).**



# Knights of Columbus enrich the campus environment

In March 2015, the Knights of Columbus successfully wrapped up another fundraising initiative for St. Mary's University. For the past two years, the Knights have been working hard to raise \$40,000 for two important projects:

1. A new altar, ambo and other liturgical furniture are now used in liturgies held at St. Mary's. The new altar and the ambo are an artistic pair symbolizing the unity between Word and Sacrament in the celebration of the liturgy.
2. The Saint John's Bible now has a climate-controlled storage case. The Saint John's Bible, the first handwritten and illuminated Bible in more than 500 years, was acquired by St. Mary's University in 2012, thanks to the generosity of several donors. It is one of only two in Canada and it has become a source of inspiration and attention for many people from all over the world.

St. Mary's University is committed to offering an unparalleled Liberal Arts and Sciences experience and fostering student engagement within the St. Mary's campus community and beyond. This is possible only with the guidance and continued commitment of our treasured supporters, such as the Knights of Columbus, to whom the University is profoundly grateful.



Most Reverend Bishop Frederick Henry uses the new altar, ambo and liturgical furniture at Mass



## *Remembering St. Mary's University's First President*

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of Dr. David Lawless. Dr. Lawless was appointed St. Mary's first President and Vice-Chancellor in 1996 and opened the doors to the first group of university-transfer students in 1997. He was instrumental in selecting the present site for the university campus, and was passionate about the importance of the role of the Catholic intellectual tradition in post-secondary education. As well as being the first president of St. Mary's, Dr. Lawless previously served as president of St. Francis Xavier University, Academic Vice-President of the University of Manitoba, and Rector of St. Paul's College.

Dr. Lawless loved St. Mary's and worked tirelessly to build and support our university and its mission. He was a scholar, a visionary and gentleman. To recognize all of these qualities, Dr. Lawless was named St. Mary's 2006 Honourary Fellow.

On behalf of the entire St. Mary's community we wish to express our deepest condolences to his family. His loss will be deeply felt.



# Growing academically and personally to follow life's passion

Thanks to her experience at St. Mary's, Audrey Lee is pursuing her dream to earn a PhD in Clinical Psychology.

Audrey graduated in 2014 with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. She's been a doctoral student in a unique and highly sought-after Clinical Psychology Graduate Program at Seattle Pacific University in Washington for the past year. Audrey is part of a research team called the Young Children's Self-Regulation Study examining the emotional recognition and development of empathy in children with Autism.

St. Mary's "was a positive experience and a place to find my voice," Audrey says, explaining that after completing courses at a larger university, the transition to St. Mary's was fulfilling due to the small-sized classes and personal educational experience.

Taking part in classes, seminars and group projects developed strong academic skills applicable to all her studies. An Abnormal Psychology course and the capstone Psychology research project cemented her interest in Neuro-Developmental Disorders—and set the path for her current PhD.

"It was an eye-opening and extremely positive research experience that helped me transition into my doctoral program," she says. The program allowed Audrey to focus her energy and field of study in a streamlined way and spend her last year in an accredited internship at an organization suited to her dissertation.

For Audrey, like so many other students, St. Mary's was a place to grow and develop both academically and personally. The sense of community fostered strong friendships and a support group.

During a recent visit to campus, Audrey offered some advice for current students: "Take advantage of the opportunities at St. Mary's, whether it is assisting in research or extracurricular activities, because it helps you become a well-rounded student—and it will help you identify with what you are interested in early on in your academic career."



Audrey Lee at St. Mary's University Convocation, June 2014

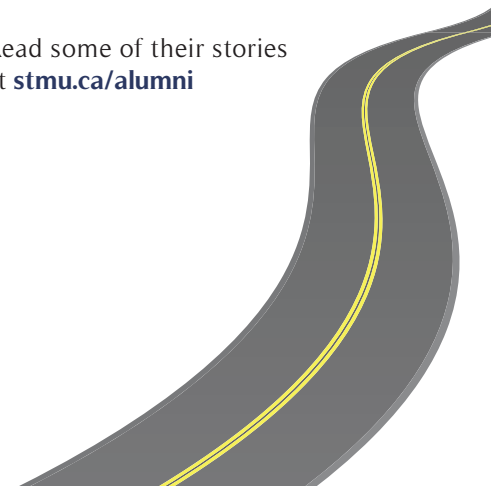
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## CHARTING SUCCESSFUL JOURNEYS

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St. Mary's alumni are travelling new and exciting roads.

Read some of their stories at [stmu.ca/alumni](http://stmu.ca/alumni)



# GRAZIE AMICI!

("thanks, friends")

Mille grazie to  
the Festa Italiana  
committee, chaired  
by Guy Blasetti,  
volunteers, donors  
and sponsors  
**LOBELLO**  
**MANUFACTURING**  
and  
**VARSITY ESTATES.**

Your efforts  
ensured the  
evening's success—  
and it would not  
have been possible  
without you.

## Celebrating academics and culture at the inaugural—and sold out—Festa Italiana

On Friday, Feb. 6, 2015, good food, good friends and good feelings were shared at St. Mary's first Festa Italiana at the Calgary Italian Cultural Centre.

The event was cooked up from modest beginnings, with hopes to connect St. Mary's to the city's Italian community as part of wider efforts to build relationships with communities throughout Calgary. Before St. Mary's knew it, the event was sold out and more than 200 people attended an evening celebrating academic excellence and Italian culture.

Ingredients included an authentic five-course Italian meal, headline performances from the Calgary Italian Folk Dancers and opera singer, Sophie Durante, and closing the evening with live entertainment and dancing was the band, Casino—all of which were savoured by guests. With humour, charisma and fluent Italian, Maria-Teresa Vecchio Romano kept guests captivated throughout the evening as the Master of Ceremonies.



Emcee, Maria-Teresa Vecchio Romano  
and Dr. Gerry Turcotte


The Italian community welcomed St. Mary's with open arms to promote and celebrate the University's exceptional student services, quality teaching and programs that support academic excellence. Guests generously supported scholarships and bursaries, which will enable students to pursue their academic dreams.

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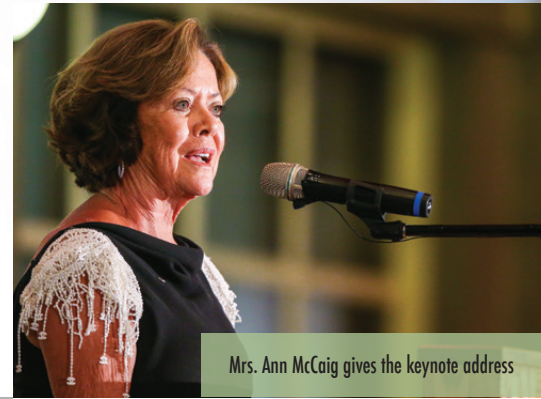
Calgary Italian Folk Dancers perform

# Celebrating a dinner 20 years in the making

## 20th Anniversary President's Dinner



St. Mary's University Choir performs for the guests



Mrs. Ann McCaig gives the keynote address

St. Mary's hosted an incredible and historic milestone on March 12, 2015: the 20th Anniversary of the President's Dinner. More than 200 guests celebrated academic excellence, heritage and growth at an event, chaired by Mr. John Cordeau, held appropriately at Heritage Park's Gasoline Alley.

Noted Calgary philanthropist Mrs. Ann McCaig was the keynote speaker, capturing St. Mary's heart and nature by talking about philanthropy as the "extra" in an "extraordinary University." Mrs. McCaig spoke about St. Mary's values and mission to provide quality education and the important role philanthropy plays in ensuring St. Mary's continues to contribute to higher learning and display genuine dedication to human welfare.

Guests were greeted by student and faculty ambassadors who shared their

personal enthusiasm for St. Mary's and spoke about how the University provides a unique educational experience. St. Mary's First Nations, Métis and Inuit, and Humanities 101 programs, recent name change to St. Mary's University, and academic distinction were highlights in conveying how St. Mary's is growing and continuing to serve the community.

The generous support received at this annual event ensures St. Mary's is able to continue offering a unique university experience that provides exceptional student service, quality teaching and academic excellence.

This event would not be possible without the support of our sponsors.

A special thank you to Bennett Jones, a President's Dinner sponsor for nine years.



Guests socialize during the reception



Master of Ceremonies Global News anchor, Linda Olsen

### THIS YEAR'S SPONSORS INCLUDE:



# Upcoming Events



## Convocation

June 12, 2015, 2:00pm  
St. Mary's Cathedral



## Stampede Breakfast

July 9, 2015  
St. Mary's University



## St. Mary's University Golf Tournament

September 10, 2015  
Silvertip Resort



## Opening Term Liturgy

September 16, 2015, 11:30am  
Fr. Michael J. McGivney Hall

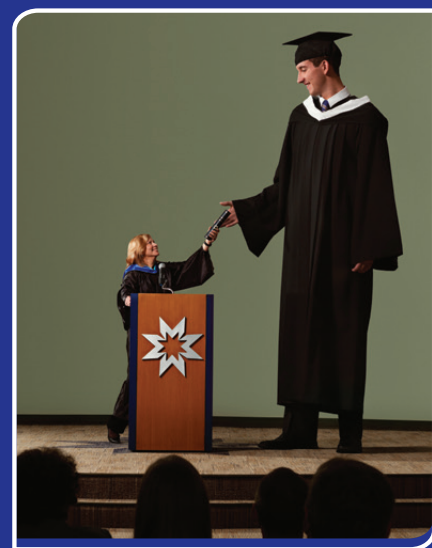


## Ghost Tour and Birthday Celebration

September 18, 2015  
St. Mary's University

# Our welcoming environment will encourage your growth

Still deciding which university to attend this Fall? St. Mary's University is still accepting applications for Fall 2015!



Learn more at [stmu.ca/grow](http://stmu.ca/grow)

## Strong Foundations to Bright Futures: SUPPORT ST. MARY'S TODAY

St. Mary's growth and excellence are set on a strong foundation of Catholic faith, comprehensive opportunities, academic achievement and community. Today, St. Mary's continues its dedication to augmenting programs, growing student awards, enriching the student experience and strengthening infrastructure. These are all key elements in creating a formative learning environment where strong foundations and opportunity and innovation meet for our students today.

The other key element is you. When you make a contribution in support of St. Mary's, together we shape the future of our university. Your support helps to ensure St. Mary's can offer the unique, exceptional and personal learning environment in which our students have—and will continue to—thrive. When you support St. Mary's, you are helping to continue this tradition of excellence.

To learn more about how you can contribute and make a difference at St. Mary's, please visit [stmu.ca/donate](http://stmu.ca/donate) or contact **Thérèse Takacs** at 403-254-3139.



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