

This issue

In this 30th Anniversary Spring issue we introduce you to some of the students, faculty and donors whose contributions celebrate learning, teaching and giving at St. Mary's. You can also find out more about some of the innovative programs at the heart of our commitment to educate every student: mind, body and spirit.

We begin by celebrating our newly opened Heritage Centre. This vibrant new space at the heart of our campus is already creating engaging new experiences for students, faculty and the community to come together to learn.

This issue spotlights St. Mary's innovative Humanities 101 program. Learn more about this program, why it is so important, and how you can support it. The incredible story of Levia Quequezana will inspire and motivate you.

Join us in celebrating the past, present and future of St. Mary's University.

Marian Update

PUBLISHED BY ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY

SPRING 2017

Heritage Centre

A vital place for developing the whole student – mind, body and spirit

In November 2016, St. Mary's University opened the doors to an exciting new facility right at the heart of our campus. The Heritage Centre maintains the sense of close community and accessibility that defines our campus while providing urgently needed capacity for students.

as a place to study, share and collaborate. The Heritage Centre is a success beyond even our own lofty aspirations."

The main lobby, side gallery and new link to the Le Fort Centre is a hub of activity and has been

well-utilized for student gatherings. During events and performances in the main gallery, these spaces transform into reception areas, accommodating pre- and post-function and intermission needs.

The Main Gallery is the perfect environment for campus and community events, performances and exhibitions. The Main Gallery meets the teaching and rehearsal needs of St. Mary's Drama and Choral programs as well as providing the perfect space for programs such as our Bachelor of Education (Elementary) degree — which utilizes the space to

configure multiple teaching scenarios.

Having a venue like the Heritage Centre enhances St. Mary's ability to welcome inspiring speakers and guests, to share knowledge and cultural experiences and to open the doors to innovation in teaching and learning. This would not have been possible without the generosity of donors who – believing in innovation and the future of St. Mary's – made the Heritage Centre a reality through the spirit of giving. Three milestone gifts from Stan and Marge Owerko, Frank and Jeanne Vetsch and Ed and Agnes Rewucki are at the heart of the creation of this new building on campus. All long-time friends and supporters of St. Mary's, their commitment and generosity over many years have collectively impacted St. Mary's in innumerable ways.



The Heritage Centre is the newest addition to the St. Mary's campus.

The new centre is a dynamic facility of integrated areas, offering the flexibility and adaptability to create an exceptional learning and teaching environment.

"Our Heritage Centre has become an integral part of the St. Mary's campus very quickly. We don't know how we managed without it," said St. Mary's University President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Gerry Turcotte. "Following the grand opening, we have used the centre for a number of purposes: it serves as a space for teaching, for research projects and theatrical performances, as well as to gather for celebrations."

"It truly is a multi-purpose space where we can come together as a community, and most exciting is that, from day one, students embraced the Centre

President's Message

Spring is a time of rejuvenation and renewal. We see this in every aspect of nature and celebrate it in the resurrection of Christ. At St. Mary's this is a time to honour our spiritual traditions and look toward the conclusion of the school term with renewed energy and focus.

As we celebrate our 30th Anniversary, St. Mary's has much to celebrate. Grounded in the Catholic intellectual tradition, we have grown by nurturing the development of new and innovative programs, projects and partnerships that refresh and renew our core mission and values. St. Mary's is thriving today because of the commitment and investments made by so many.

By offering the best of a Liberal Arts and Sciences education with a commitment to academic excellence, student success, ethics and social justice, St. Mary's is not only keeping pace with the times but looking to the future. We invest in initiatives that will enhance learning opportunities for all students while ensuring we maintain a culture that focuses on each student and their unique educational experience.



As our student numbers grow, our campus plan is working to maintain excellence and accommodate growing needs. Our new Heritage Centre is already making a difference in this direction. It is the first important step in a campus plan designed to meet the needs of our students well into the future.

St. Mary's focus on and commitment to social justice has inspired many initiatives on our campus that have had a far reaching effect. Our award-winning *Humanities 101* program demonstrates the importance of compassion, the value of education, and the power to make a difference. This program wouldn't be possible without the philanthropic contributions it has received.

Whether you are starting, continuing or renewing your support of St. Mary's, may the stories in this issue of the *Marion Update* inspire, educate and motivate you to make a gift in a way that's most meaningful to you. I hope you will join us.



Gerry Turcotte, PhD
President

Making a Difference

A commitment to investing in the educational experience lies at the heart of Jamie Mackie's gifts of support of St. Mary's programs, initiatives and overall growth. For well over a decade, Jamie's service to St. Mary's has extended beyond monetary donations, as demonstrated through his involvement on the St. Mary's President's Dinner Committee and the attendance at, and sponsorship of, various other events and initiatives. Well known in the Calgary business and finance sectors through Richardson GMP and the Mackie Wealth Group, Jamie's continual support of the educational experience at St. Mary's has opened the doors for students to pursue their academic dreams.

"I like to donate to institutions where I believe the money can make a difference," explained Jamie. "If people are looking broadly at where they can do the most good with their charitable dollar investment then I think St. Mary's is a great choice."

The support Jamie has provided helps to ensure that St. Mary's University remains open to all while continuing to provide the best possible opportunities for our students and focusing on the core values that separate St. Mary's from other schools.

"St. Mary's is on the human scale and is not a student factory like some of the larger universities tend to become. I think it's a really collegial environment at St. Mary's. The small student class sizes allow the students to go through university life and make really close friends while doing so."



President's Circle Scholarship award winner Felisha Reimer poses with Jamie Mackie at the 2017 President's Dinner.

Pursuit of academic excellence

At St. Mary's University we strive to create life-long learners, individuals whose pursuit of knowledge leads them down exciting new paths and opens the doors for new discoveries. Academic excellence is a cornerstone for students and faculty. Our faculty are leaders in their respective fields, undertaking significant projects while pursuing their own academic goals.

Dr. Jennifer Garrison, Associate Professor of English, received a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Insight Research Grant for her project *Confessing Masculinity: Gender, Penance, and Futurity in Medieval English Literature*. This grant will allow Dr. Garrison to explore new avenues of research and develop a new research project. As part of her grant, Dr. Garrison will employ a senior undergraduate student as a research assistant, providing a St. Mary's student with valuable research experience.

Published in February 2017, Dr. Garrison's new book, *Challenging Communion: The Eucharist and Middle English Literature* examines literary treatments of the Eucharist, the central symbol of later



Dr. Jennifer Garrison

medieval religious culture and the focus of increasingly dangerous political debates at the time.

The profound impact our faculty and staff make in their fields extends well beyond our own campus. This year Professor of Religious Studies, Dr. Michael Duggan, was elected as a Beaufort Visiting Scholar at St. John's College, University of Cambridge, England for the Lent term spanning January through March. The award for this prestigious offering was announced in June 2016 in a personal letter from Dr. Frank Salmon FSA, President of St. John's College. Since 2010, Dr. Duggan has also been the CWL Chair for Catholic Studies — the only donor-endowed Chair at St. Mary's.

When you contribute to St. Mary's University, you are creating opportunities. Your support provides the resources vital to reaching unprecedented excellence in academics and research and helps us continue to attract world-class faculty. Through the generosity of supportive community partners and donors, St. Mary's continues to develop both disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs that challenge, provoke and engage.

Lightning Athletes make their mark

Coming off of a phenomenal 2015 – 2016 season that saw the team capture the first ever medal in ACAC competition and a trip to the Collegiate Athletic Association National Championship tournament, the St. Mary's women's Lightning basketball team has continued to turn heads. The veteran squad featured seven players returning from last season and has once again led St. Mary's to a silver medal at this year's ACAC Championship. Fifth year forward Mary-Jean Ritchie, an ACAC South Conference All Star, rewrote the ACAC record book this season by becoming the all-time leading rebounder in the league's history.



Issac Amsing of the Lightning Men's basketball team.

It has been a season of transition for the men's basketball program during the 2016 – 2017 campaign, which saw the team hire a new coach, Nathan Ruff, at the end of April and the loss of more than 70 per cent of the men's players from the year before. The team has seen many peaks and valleys already this season, but armed with the goal to build and create a foundation for future success, the team has received commitments from multiple players to return next season.

In just the second season of competition in the ACAC, the cross-country running team experienced major growth and success. This year two runners from our men's team finished in the top ten and went on to compete at provincials and qualified for nationals.

With the hard work of the athletes and coaches, St. Mary's has presented an application to join the ACAC Indoor Track competition for the 2018 season. Needless to say, much credit needs to be given to cross-country and indoor track coach Donna Dixon and her assistant Chris Coy, as their tireless effort and vision have propelled this program to the national stage in just two short years.

Donors have a positive impact in the life of a student athlete when they support St. Mary's many initiatives, programs, scholarships and awards. Awards such as the Jim Look Memorial Scholarship, the Calgary Juventus Scholarships and the Calgary Italian Sportsman Dinner Association Scholarship help St. Mary's student athletes as they work to achieve their academic, athletic and personal goals.

Lightning Athletics is on the rise and the future is looking bright.

The award-winning Lightning women's basketball team getting some instruction from head coach Steve Shoults.



Award-winning Humanities 101 helping dreams come true

Since 2003, *Humanities 101* has been a major part of the fabric of St. Mary's University. Then called *Storefront 101*, the program operated in partnership with The Mustard Seed, University of Calgary and Nazarene University College. A lack of funding put the program on hiatus at the end of the 2009-2010 school year, but with a renewed commitment from St. Mary's and generous donor support, *Humanities 101* was re-launched in 2013.

The *Humanities 101* program is a strength-based educational program designed to help low-income adults who have experienced barriers to learning. St. Mary's teachers and tutors create a profoundly safe and inviting space where adults with a diverse range of life and educational experiences are welcomed and provided with the skills needed for a more hopeful future.

Poverty, immigration, depression and other hindrances to education are cast aside as students demonstrate first-hand their strength, courage and determination en route to completing this special program.

A mother of six children, Leiva Quequezana, first learned of the *Humanities 101* program while accessing resources at a women's service agency in Calgary. An accountant in Peru, Leiva struggled to overcome language barriers and adapt to a new community and new culture, while trying to raise her family. Her own dreams were set aside as she strived to give her children a better life.

For Leiva, the *Humanities 101* program helped her shed a sense of isolation and has helped her achieve some of her own personal goals.

"For the first time I fit in somewhere," said Leiva. "My peers and I in the *Humanities 101* program shared similar backgrounds, struggles and issues. I found myself part of a group where I could belong."

Though the program was very challenging, Leiva says that she was inspired by the professors at St. Mary's, most notably Dr. Tara Hyland-Russell, who instilled a sense of value in her.



Leiva Quequezana utilized *Humanities 101* to further her educational dreams.

Humanities 101 graduate Elizabeth Dop (centre) receives her certificate from Dr. Tara Hyland-Russell and Dr. Gerry Turcotte.



Humanities 101 graduate Eddie Al Sammarraie.

"She inspired me and I have great admiration for Dr. Hyland-Russell," said Leiva. "She found in us value, someone who finds value in you is something very special."

"Dr. Hyland-Russell was my mentor and she showed me how to excel in my writing and my studies."

Dr. Hyland-Russell was integral to the foundation of the *Humanities 101* program and in April of 2016 accepted the Calgary Learns "Life of Learning Award" (LOLA), for Learning Communities on behalf of St. Mary's. The award is presented annually to a learning program that stands out for innovation, effectiveness and breadth of reach into the adult foundational learning community. The *Humanities 101* program was chosen for its longstanding presence and impact in the community.

Having completed the *Humanities 101* program, Quequezana is now in her third year of studies at St. Mary's pursuing her psychology degree with the goal of entering the Bachelor of Education program after obtaining her degree. It was the tools and mindset provided to her during her time in the *Humanities 101* program that has continued to have a profound impact.



Dr. Tara-Hyland Russell celebrates with graduates during the Humanities 101 Celebration of Learning.

"*Humanities 101* made me believe in myself, and my self-esteem increased to the point that I thought I was able to pursue a career and I don't want to give up this dream," explained Leiva.

"If it wasn't for the *Humanities 101* program I wouldn't have been able to apply for university. Through *Humanities 101* I was given the confidence

to know that I belong and that I am prepared."

The support and guidance provided through the *Humanities 101* program has helped Leiva pursue her dreams and her personal goals. Indeed, the program has helped to transform countless lives, and it is only through the generosity of the community that this incredible initiative can continue. Donors for this award-winning program are desperately needed.

"The *Humanities 101* program empowered me and enabled me to find my purpose in life, what I was called to be in this world. For other people it was the way to achieve their own dreams, a way to find a new light in their path because they faced all different types of struggles. We all had struggles but we found a light in the *Humanities 101* program."



Humanities 101 students, in collaboration with United Active Living residents, create a newspaper sculpture as part of the Humanities 105 class: Different Stories, Different Meanings.



Humanities 101 students and United Active Living residents with their finished sculpture as part of the Humanities 105 class: Different Stories, Different Meanings.

Inspiring change through understanding and reconciliation

St. Mary's University's commitment to developing relationships founded in trust and reciprocity has been at the forefront of a year that has seen the implementation of Indigenous initiatives that have helped our university take steps forward that truly serve the community. We have established a First Nations, Métis and Inuit Advisory Council to guide our strategies and activities; Elders are on campus to share cultural and spiritual ways of knowing with all students, faculty and staff; and First Nations, Métis and Inuit scholars are on campus to offer Indigenous scholarship and knowledge in a culturally safe, relevant and educational manner.



Tipis were erected on campus as St. Mary's hosted a special "Elders Teachings" series with Vibrant Communities Calgary. Tipi design held by Dr. Reg Crowshoe and family.

Initiatives this year have included a Métis Week celebration, where one of our *Humanities 101* graduates was presented with her Métis sash and an Elders Teaching series that have helped to highlight our commitment to sharing knowledge and demonstrate that St. Mary's is coming from a place of one mind, one heart and one spirit.

Through an anonymous donor who has provided funding for Indigenous programming, St. Mary's has engaged Thomas Snow as an Indigenous Academic coach. Snow is an academic strategist who understands the struggles of the Indigenous population relating to intergenerational trauma and his lived experience on a reserve serves as a powerful resource for our Indigenous students on campus.

The Honourable Richard Feehan, Minister of Indigenous Relations also visited the St. Mary's campus this year upon the invitation of Graham Sucha, MLA for Calgary Shaw, to host a meeting with urban Indigenous service providers to have a dialogue about "how to" and "where to" connect with the urban Indigenous community. St. Mary's was honoured to sit at the table as the host tasked with providing a gathering space for such an important meeting.

Recently, St. Mary's hosted the second annual National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Education Roundtable, a gathering that addresses curriculum and teacher education that focuses on the history and legacy of



Attendees of the TRC National Education Roundtable.

Indian residential schools, reconciliation and the history and culture of Indigenous peoples of Canada. The monumental responsibility to host such an important meeting at St. Mary's was an honour and a reminder that the significant work being done on campus has gone a long way in creating a safe and welcoming place where discussions on truth and reconciliation can occur.

As a prelude to this gathering, we welcomed Dr. Wilton Littlechild to speak to a capacity crowd as part of our *Inspiring Conversations* series at St. Mary's, to share his story and recommendations on education and reconciliation. He helped to provide insight about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and what it means to

educators, learners and members of society. Dr. Littlechild has served as Commissioner with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and also represented North America for two three-year terms as the North American representative to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Rights. Dr. Littlechild's address encouraged everyone to

step forward and take action on the recommendations put forth by the TRC. It is our responsibility as an educational institution to help close the educational attainment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners.

"When I saw all the people I thought that this was indeed collaboration, this is coming together," said St. Mary's Elder on Campus Casey Eagle Speaker. "We are unifying each other as people who have a vested interest in changing our country's history into something vibrant and acknowledging that we do have a dark history but together we can overcome that."

St. Mary's strives to support all Indigenous students through community partnerships, celebrations of heritage and cultural practices, and the creation of an inclusive environment on campus to make Indigenous students welcome and show that St. Mary's will continue to build our Indigenous programming and initiatives.

Funding of Indigenous initiatives at St. Mary's supports projects on campus and enables us to become a leader in implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Through the creation of our Truth and Reconciliation Working Group, our goal is to foster relationships with Indigenous communities, built on trust and mutual respect, as we move together towards reconciliation. By integrating Indigenous learning initiatives and fostering intercultural understanding and respect, all students benefit as they become lifelong learners, engaged citizens and compassionate members of society with a strong sense of social justice.

Expanding Opportunities on Campus

It's been an exciting year for St. Mary's University with new and generous support that is helping our University to build and grow—providing our students and the community with the best possible facilities and resources.

St. Mary's recently received funding from the federal government as part of the Government of Canada's Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund. An investment of \$395,525 was awarded to St. Mary's to benefit two major areas on our campus—the Library and Science labs—to help better equip our students with the skills and training necessary to be leaders of tomorrow.

St. Mary's was also one of 13 organizations in Calgary chosen to receive funding as part of Canada 150 Celebrates—the government's celebration of our country's 150th anniversary of Confederation—and the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program. St. Mary's received \$24,100 to put towards our project to upgrade the HVAC system in our Fitness Centre. This grant was provided to organizations with projects to better the well-being of the local community. At St. Mary's we believe post-secondary education goes beyond the classroom and encompasses the whole student: mind, body and spirit. By upgrading the HVAC system in our Fitness Centre, we are providing an even safer and more comfortable learning facility, supporting strong, healthy communities, and creating an environment for individuals to live an active lifestyle.

St. Mary's was honoured to host the Honourable Kent Hehr, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, who attended on behalf of the Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, and to share with him the plans for the allocation of this funding. The structural upgrades to the Biology and Chemistry labs will significantly increase



The Fitness Centre on campus will also be receiving upgrades.



Funding has made upgrades to the science labs possible.



Students will benefit from improvements to campus labs.



The library will be adding a new Reading Room for special collections.

the scope and robustness of research and teaching on campus, and the installation of mobile shelving in the Library and the creation of a new Reading Room for special collections will maximize space for collaborative learning, research and teaching.

Our science students are also benefitting from a generous donation of 2,350 plant specimens from Mr. Ian Macdonald—an accomplished botanist specializing in vascular plants. These high quality specimens are a valued addition to our herbarium at St. Mary's. Other herbaria in our province include the University of Calgary and the Royal Alberta Museum. This extensive donation provides our students with the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the diversity of specimens. Not only will classes, students and collaborators with St. Mary's benefit from this new collection, Mr. Macdonald's donation has made it possible for St. Mary's to register our herbarium in the International Association of Herbaria along with 19 other herbaria in Canada. Registration requires a minimum of 5,000 specimens and thanks to this generous gift, the total number of specimens in St. Mary's collection is now an impressive 5,222.



St. Mary's Board Vice Chair Georgine Ulmer welcomes attendees to the SIF funding announcement.

Nurturing the Student Experience

Haley Himsl is one of many students at St. Mary's University who has received support through scholarship funding. Thanks to donors Paul and Carol Hill, Haley received a unique scholarship that supported her while she completed her Bachelor of Arts degree and that continues to support her studies towards a Bachelor of Education degree.

Haley considers herself a student who does more than attend university and from day one has seized every opportunity to get involved at St. Mary's. She made it a personal goal to get the most of her university experience.

Haley sings in the St. Mary's choir and reads at the weekly campus mass. She has served as a member of the Student Legislative Council, participated in a number of events and committees, and volunteers with an organization that benefits children.

"I can't begin to tell you how much Paul and Carol Hill have done for me and my education. Because of their generosity, I have been able to focus my efforts on various aspects of the student experience. I feel so lucky and fortunate I don't have to worry about working and focusing on my studies at the same time."

Receiving the scholarship from the Hill family requires that Haley maintain a superior grade point average and volunteer with children



Haley Himsl (centre) poses with Dr. Gerry Turcotte and Dean of Education Dr. Linda Dudar.

in a way that matters to her. She volunteers with Calgary Reads, a program that allows her to help children who are in kindergarten, grade one and grade two who read slightly below grade level, spending time twice a week to coach children while they read.

"I've got hands-on experience with children to practice my teaching skills and strategies to help them feel confident in their reading abilities," she says.

"I am currently in the education program and this experience has allowed me to watch these students blossom over the time I have spent with them. I can really see a difference from start to finish, particularly with fluency and expression."

Haley credits the Hill family for freeing up time she would have otherwise had to spend working to pay for her education, and using this time instead to invest in growing as a person in all areas: mind, body and spirit.

The Hill family has made post-secondary education worry-free for a number of St. Mary's students over the years. We are thankful that our donors invest, support and believe in our students and that offering scholarships and bursaries is made possible by their on-going generosity.

Coming Events



1 **Choir Performance: Unclouded Day**

Bella Concert Hall –
Mount Royal University
Sunday, April 9
7:00 p.m.
Tickets: tickets.mru.ca

2 **Open House**

St. Mary's University
Wednesday, May 10

3 **Convocation**

St. Mary's Cathedral
Friday, June 9

4 **Stampede Breakfast**

St. Mary's University
Thursday, July 13

5 **Golf Tournament**

Silvertip Golf Course, Canmore
Friday, August 25

The *Marian Update* is published by St. Mary's University and distributed to alumni, friends and supporters to celebrate University accomplishments and share news and information throughout the St. Mary's community.

Managing Editor:

Thérèse Takacs, Vice-President, Advancement Tel. 403.254.3139 therese.takacs@stmu.ca