

# FISSSH TALES

Faculty of Indigenous Studies,  
Social Sciences and Humanities

## NEWSLETTER

*The UNBC Faculty of Indigenous Studies, Social Sciences and Humanities is grateful to work and learn on the traditional and unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation. We take seriously our responsibility to live in good relation with the original occupants of this land.*

*We recognize that racism, white supremacy, anti-semitism, Islamophobia, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, and many other systemic barriers to learning and career progression unfortunately exist in academia. As such, we place high value on learning, teaching, research, and service that work to expose, record, and address equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) issues in our disciplines and communities. The Faculty is committed to creating safe spaces for faculty, staff, and students who face systemic barriers. For more information and to access resources available at UNBC, please visit <https://www2.unbc.ca/positive-environment>*

## DEAN'S WELCOME



*Dr. Kriston Rennie*

As this newsletter goes to press, the Winter 2022 semester is truly underway. And by all accounts, things are going well. The turn of another calendar year brings welcome pause for reflection on our many strengths and successes as a new Faculty. A lot has happened since our inaugural issue was released. It is truly inspiring to see and support the many creative endeavours being carried out by our colleagues and our students, rich contributions on many levels to the life and culture of our classrooms, departments, and Faculty.

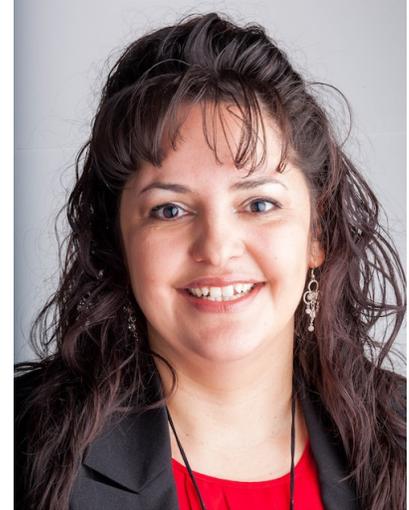
As the following articles and stories in this newsletter make evident, there is a lot to acknowledge and celebrate: our welcoming of new students and colleagues, ongoing and upcoming cultural and intellectual events, innovative and inspiring pedagogical practices, not to mention a slew of publications and other individual and collaborative achievements. In short, there's a lot to look forward to and be excited about as we continue our important work in Indigenous Studies, Social Sciences, and Humanities. Happy reading!

# GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: CHERI BROWN

MA First Nations Studies

## Tell us about yourself and your background?

I am Cheri Brown, Hlgu K'andox, citizen of the Nisga'a First Nation. My mother originates from the Nisga'a Village of Laxgalts'ap, in the Nass Valley of BC, our traditional lands from time immemorial. Our family line is Gisk'aast, the Killer Whale Clan, and the Wilp, or House of Niisyuus. I currently live in Langley, BC on Kwantlen and Stol:o traditional territory.



*Cheri Brown*

## Tell us about your academic background?

I did my BA at Trinity Western University in Langley, BC, double majored in Communications and Psychology, minored in French, and graduated in 2014. I was member of the Indigenous Partnership Council, student leader for New Student Orientation, and I wrote for my university newspaper. I went on to my MA/PhD in Communication at the University of Washington in Seattle from 2014-2020 on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish peoples. I studied different forms of social interaction such as interpersonal and relational communication, nonverbal communication, supportive communication, and active-empathic listening. I was enrolled in the first cohort of the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Graduate Certificate. I worked as Teaching Assistant, Instructor, and Research Assistant in my department. Due to health issues and the pandemic I returned home to Canada in 2020 and began my MA in First Nations Studies at UNBC in 2021.

"The Nisga'a lands are my ancestral home, but I already fondly consider Prince George as my second adopted home."

## Why did you choose UNBC?

UNBC was the first university in Canada to offer a BA and MA in First Nations Studies and also has established ties to the Nisga'a through the WWNI, professors, guest speakers, offering of Nisga'a language and culture classes, and so on. The university mission statement says that being a university of the North for the North and honouring ties to surrounding Indigenous communities was foundational since inception. The Indigenous student enrollment rate at 12% is higher than national average.

I was also born in Prince George, but I was last there as a newborn baby. I was planning to visit UNBC campus for the first time in January 2022 but postponed due to Omicron. If you think about the importance of physical place and connection to the land in Indigenous culture, you can understand why it means so much to me. I plan to connect with the Lheidli T'enneh elders to find out if there is any special cultural significance of a member of a neighbouring First Nation being born on their lands. The Nisga'a lands are my ancestral home, but I already fondly consider Prince George as my second adopted home.

## Tell us about your graduate research?

I focus on the lived experience of Indigenous post-secondary students. I first examined faculty-student interaction and its potential impact on students when Indigenous culture places instructors in an elder or honorary elder role with significant implications on the relationship building and learning process.

I am now looking at how post-secondary students mobilize social support and strategies to navigate the university experience, possibly including resistance and alignment with culture and identity, and applying critical theory and a story-telling conceptual framework.

**You focus on Indigenous education experience in your research. Can you share about your own academic journey as an Indigenous student?**

As a child I attended schools that had no presence of Indigenous culture or teachings. At home, my parents did not stress education or become involved in our schoolwork at all. My mom never spoke of our Nisga'a heritage. In later years, I realized because of intergenerational trauma from residential schools and my mom's own painful experience of boarding with a church family in Vancouver for high school, she must have had negative connotations about education.

As much as I loved school and was an Honour Roll student, I never considered attending university because it was out of my reach. It was something I saw in movies; it was something other people did. I lived on my own and supported myself since the age of 18 years onward, so I was working just to survive and support myself. Eventually, I found a way to earn enough scholarships to attend university. Just to set foot on a university campus as an enrolled student, I have had to overcome so much. This is part of the problem of academia as a colonized structure. It is designed as a place of privilege for privileged people to attend.

When I graduated my BA in 2014, I wore a red and black vest embroidered with Killer Whale crests that had been sewn for me by a seamstress on the Nisga'a lands and gifted to me for graduation. Even though it was against the rules to alter our graduation regalia, it was important to me for everyone to see a First Nations person graduating. This may have been my first act of resistance, although I did not have the language for it then.

At this time, I also received my Nisga'a name, a modified version of my grandmother's name. In the Nisga'a naming traditions, it is my cultural responsibility to bring strength to the name during my lifetime so it is strong when it is returned and reissued to the next person. I never met my Nisga'a grandmother, as she passed way before I was born but I always felt close to her. I fight every day to bring strength to our shared name and have dedicated my graduate studies to her.

**What impact do you hope for your research to have?**

I hope that telling the story of Indigenous university students will change the system going forward. Decolonization of educational and other spaces is needed in order to provide a culturally sensitive, safe learning environment in which Indigenous students can participate in ways most natural to them and thrive in the process. Potential post-study intervention areas include curriculum reform, student outreach, recruitment, funding, strategies to build cultural awareness on campuses, and many more. In working to build supports for Indigenous students I am also working toward the broader goal of social justice and equitable treatment of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.



"When I graduated my BA in 2014, I wore a red and black vest embroidered with Killer Whale crest...This may have been my first act of resistance"

## **What is it like being an Indigenous individual doing Indigenous research?**

It is a huge responsibility. With Canada's difficult and in many ways painful history (and present) for Indigenous peoples, working with this subject matter is at times very heavy emotionally for me. When I get overwhelmed in that sense, I remind myself that if my ancestors had the courage to live through these unimaginably challenging circumstances, then I can surely study and write about it. Their part was by far the more difficult compared to mine. I feel called to try to bring about healing through my community engagement and research. I am honoured to do this as my contribution to my people who have suffered so much but who are fighting and overcoming.

## **What have you been working on this year in your graduate studies?**

We have been learning about how to conduct research with Indigenous communities and individuals in culturally respectful ways. The focus is on formation of partnerships, respect for Indigenous culture and knowledges, identifying and following protocols and best practices, and the importance of reciprocal relationships, which means that researchers and participants are envisioned as equal co-participants and the research is generally co-designed and tailored to be of benefit to the community under study, not solely the academy. Essentially, we are decolonizing and Indigenizing research.

We have also learned how to integrate our positionality to an extent that you do not often see in academic research contexts. Indigenous research, whether conducted by Indigenous individuals or allies, requires a sharing of one's personal story and motivations, ancestry, family and life experience, worldview, and things of this nature. We weave this into our research projects because it acknowledges Indigenous values about the researcher as an inseparable part of the unfolding story of the research.

## **How have you gotten involved so far at UNBC?**

I have been made so welcome at UNBC by professors, staff, students, and many others. When I have told people that after just a couple of months at UNBC, I have started student leadership roles, serving on committees and councils, and even being mentored by the Dean, they are quite astonished. I guess I kind of am too! It speaks to the community mindedness of the culture of the university and in particular, within our Faculty. It also speaks to the importance of taking initiative to be part of the university happenings and conversations. Thinking back to the three universities I have attended I have been fortunate to have had multiple mentors at each institution; both formal and informal. In all cases, I met professors and others in passing because I made a point to attend events, circulate, and talk to people. In these settings, some felt I spoke and presented myself well and had a lot of potential and were then generous enough to offer their time to work with me.

## **Can you give examples of this?**

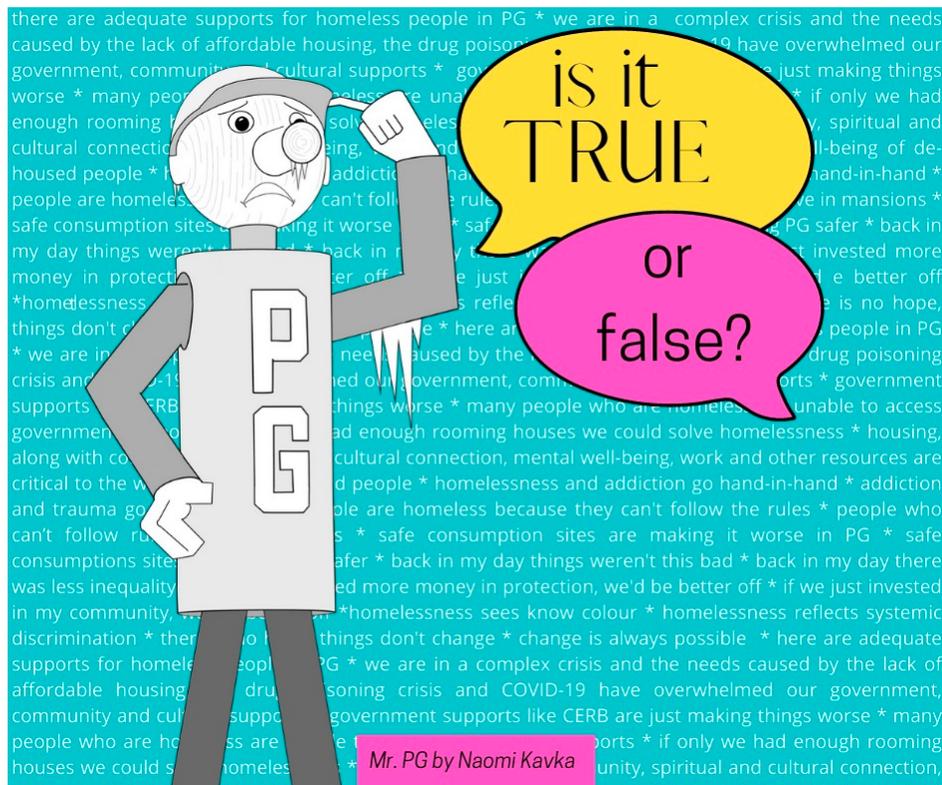
I actually started guest lecturing and other speaking engagements as an undergraduate student at TWU, simply because a professor in the Education department believed in me and kept finding ways of putting me in front of people. At UNBC I have been working with our new Dean of FISSSH, Dr. Kriston Rennie. After meeting on a Zoom call, he took the time to give me positive feedback and to find ways to help with my academic development including inviting me to join his Dean's Council. After observing him and speaking with him more, it is evident that he has such a gift of seeing the best in people and bringing it out in them. Working with mentors like Kriston and others has been one of the highlights of my time in university. This is why I encourage everyone to push past feeling shy or awkward to talk to and connect with those who will help you in your education journey and enhance your experience. Start small – go to your professor's office hours, be inquisitive, ask about their research and academic discipline.

# TEACHING AND LEARNING SPOTLIGHT: PRACTICING ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTH 310 students in the Fall 2021 semester had the opportunity to learn about housing insecurity in Prince George for a class research project led by Dr. Tara Joly.

Using publicly available documents and literature, students in ANTH 310 - Practicing Anthropology worked as a class to address the current state of homelessness in Prince George. They conducted a needs assessment, utilizing and learning methods including historical analysis, case study comparative analysis, narrative analysis, and policy analysis to varying degrees.

The project provided knowledge syntheses and recommendations that may be used by the City, advocacy groups, and support organization to guide planning, policy, and supports for the dehousing community in Prince George.



Students addressed four related themes: (1) how the urban history of Prince George contributed to social issues related to homelessness; (2) previous documentation of needs and engagement with people experiencing homelessness in Prince George; (3) an analysis of public narratives surrounding homelessness in the City; (4) a comparison of Prince George to other municipalities that have implemented best practices and provided evidence of efficacy addressing homelessness.

Students presented their findings to the public on December 1, 2021, which was attended by advocates, City Councillors, and individuals working in community organizations.

Several students in the class also opted-in to a Working2Learn Non-Profits partnership with Together We Stand (TWS), a grassroots advocacy group for the dehousing in Prince George. On January 30, 2022, these students hosted an information session and discussion called "10 Myths about Homelessness in PG", during which they shared a synthesized version of their findings to TWS.

This project allowed students to gain practical research experience, expand their professional networks, and give back to the wider Prince George community.

To read the final reports, please visit <https://tarajoly.com/homelessness-in-prince-george-student-project/>.



## FACULTY UPDATES

Congratulations to **Ami Hagiwara**, **Jason Lacharite** and **Farid Rahemtulla** for their promotions to Senior Instructor III; to **Jacqueline Holler** and **Dana Wessell-Lightfoot** for their promotions to Full Professor; and to **Lianne Tripp** for her successful tenure application.

**Dr. Margo Greenwood** appointed as an Officer of the Order of Canada (O.C.).

**Dr. Rheanna Robinson** appointed to newly created Provincial Accessibility Committee.

**Dr. Gary Wilson** finished his second two-year term as President of the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS) and ended a 12-year stint on the Executive/Board.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

### Dr. Paul Bowles

Bowles, Paul and McPhail, Fiona *Fractured alliance: state-corporate actions and fossil fuel resistance in Northwest British Columbia, Canada*, *Journal of Political Ecology* 28(1), p.488-510

Bowles, Paul and Veltmeyer, Henry *The Essential Guide to Critical Development Studies* 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2021)

### Dr. Rob Budde

Budde, Rob and Transken, Si *the answer to everything: Selected Poems of Ken Belford* (Caitlin Press, 2021)

### Dr. Kriston Rennie

Kriston R. Rennie, 'San Michele della Chiusa and the Limits of Monastic Protection,' *Revue Bénédictine* 131 (2021), pp. 428-49

### Dr. Gary Wilson

Nadine C. Fabbi and Gary N. Wilson (2022). "Inuit Nunangat: The Development of a Common Inuit Territorial and Policy Space in Canada." In Pamela Stern (ed). *The Inuit World*. London: Routledge: 321-339

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## Global Fridays

**March 4, 2022 (12:00-1:30pm)**

Dr. Ethel Tungohan, York University

*Feminist Politics in Turbulent Times: Subversion and Structural Change through Dissident Friendships*

For more Global Friday events visit: <https://www2.unbc.ca/global-international-studies/global-friday-speakers-series>



## First Nations Studies Speaker Series

**March 9, 2022 (12:00-1:00pm)**

Dr. Bastien Francois

## Anthropology in Our Backyards

**March 30, 2022 (12:00-1:30PM)**

Dr. Beatriz Juárez-Rodríguez, Carleton University

TBD

For more Anthropology in Our Backyards events visit:

<https://www2.unbc.ca/anthropology/anthropology-in-our-backyards>



**ANTHROPOLOGY  
IN OUR  
BACKYARDS**

## FISSSH Presentations at Research Week,

Feb. 28-March 4, 2022

*Competing Conceptions of Modernization in British Columbia, 1950s-1990s*

Claudette Gouger, Dr. Ben Bradley, Dr. Daniel Sims

Zoom link: [https://unbc.zoom.us/j/62813823314?](https://unbc.zoom.us/j/62813823314?pwd=N2paSFVwaG1QUitNa1pGZjg3dFU4Zz09)

[pwd=N2paSFVwaG1QUitNa1pGZjg3dFU4Zz09](https://unbc.zoom.us/j/62813823314?pwd=N2paSFVwaG1QUitNa1pGZjg3dFU4Zz09)

Passcode: 328661

*The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*

Dr. Fiona MacDonald, Ami Hagiwara, Dr. Peter D. McMillan, Cheri Brown, Dr. Lisa Dickson

Zoom link: [https://unbc.zoom.us/j/65481019184?pw](https://unbc.zoom.us/j/65481019184?pwd=bytVd1lGbmGxZTITQVI0Y3ZKZ2hjdz09)

[d=bytVd1lGbmGxZTITQVI0Y3ZKZ2hjdz09](https://unbc.zoom.us/j/65481019184?pwd=bytVd1lGbmGxZTITQVI0Y3ZKZ2hjdz09) Passcode: 426356

Find the full schedule, including presentations from other FISSSH Researchers, [here](#).

## NEW MA STUDENTS

We welcomed these 29 students into our MA programs this academic year:

- Ronja Frank, MA English
- Levi Black-Amstutz, MA First Nations Studies
- Cheri Brown, MA First Nation Studies
- Fidel Maza Gutierrez, MA First Nation Studies
- Marco Medina, MA First Nation Studies
- Vanessa Shin, MA First Nation Studies
- Alexandre Sousa, MA First Nation Studies
- Chinedum Adebomi, MA Gender Studies
- Maliheh Sadat Hosseini, MA Gender Studies
- Victoria Awodele, MA Gender Studies
- Piumi Denagamage, MA Gender Studies
- Aleesha Igobwa, MA Gender Studies
- Vibusha Madanayake, MA Gender Studies
- Sahar Tamadoni Asefabad, MA Gender Studies
- Courtney Castle, MA History
- Nolan Thiffault, MA History
- Kelsey Chamberlin, MA Interdisciplinary Studies
- Maryam Sarfjoo Kasmaei, MA Interdisciplinary Studies
- Mohammed Adam, MA International Studies
- Steven Von Cuevas, MA International Studies
- Erin McPhail, MA International Studies



**CALL FOR STUDENT WRITERS!**

**BE PUBLISHED IN THE UNBC 2022 STUDENT ANTHOLOGY**

POETRY, FICTION, NON-FICTION, SONG LYRICS, & VISUAL ART	TO SUBMIT: SEND AS PDF WITH TITLES AND YOUR NAME ATTACHED IN THE EMAIL	MAXIMUM OF 5 POEMS, 2 STORIES UNDER 1500 WORDS, OR 4 VISUAL ART PIECES
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CONTACT  
WRITEUNBC@GMAIL.COM FOR ALL SUBMISSIONS & INQUIRIES

**DEADLINE MARCH 7TH**

SPONSORED BY UNBC ARTS COUNCIL

- Priyanka Murugan, MA International Studies
- Oliveth Orjiocha, MA International Studies
- Diontae Simmons, MA International Studies
- Stephen Owusu-Serbeh, MA International Studies
- Lucas Wanderley Rigamont Braganca, MA International Studies
- Angelika Traverso, MA International Studies
- Barbara Oke, MA Political Science
- Nicole Fraser, MA Political Science

# STAY IN TOUCH



We are located at:

3rd Floor, Administrative Building /  
Charles McCaffray Hall

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General Contact: [fisssh@unbc.ca](mailto:fisssh@unbc.ca)

[FISSSH Website](#)



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**Indigenous Studies,  
Social Sciences and  
Humanities**

## Department Websites:

[Anthropology](#)

[English](#)

[First Nations Studies](#)

[History](#)

[Global and International Studies](#)

[Northern Studies](#)

[Political Science](#)

[Women's & Gender Studies](#)

[Interdisciplinary Studies \(IDIS\)](#)