

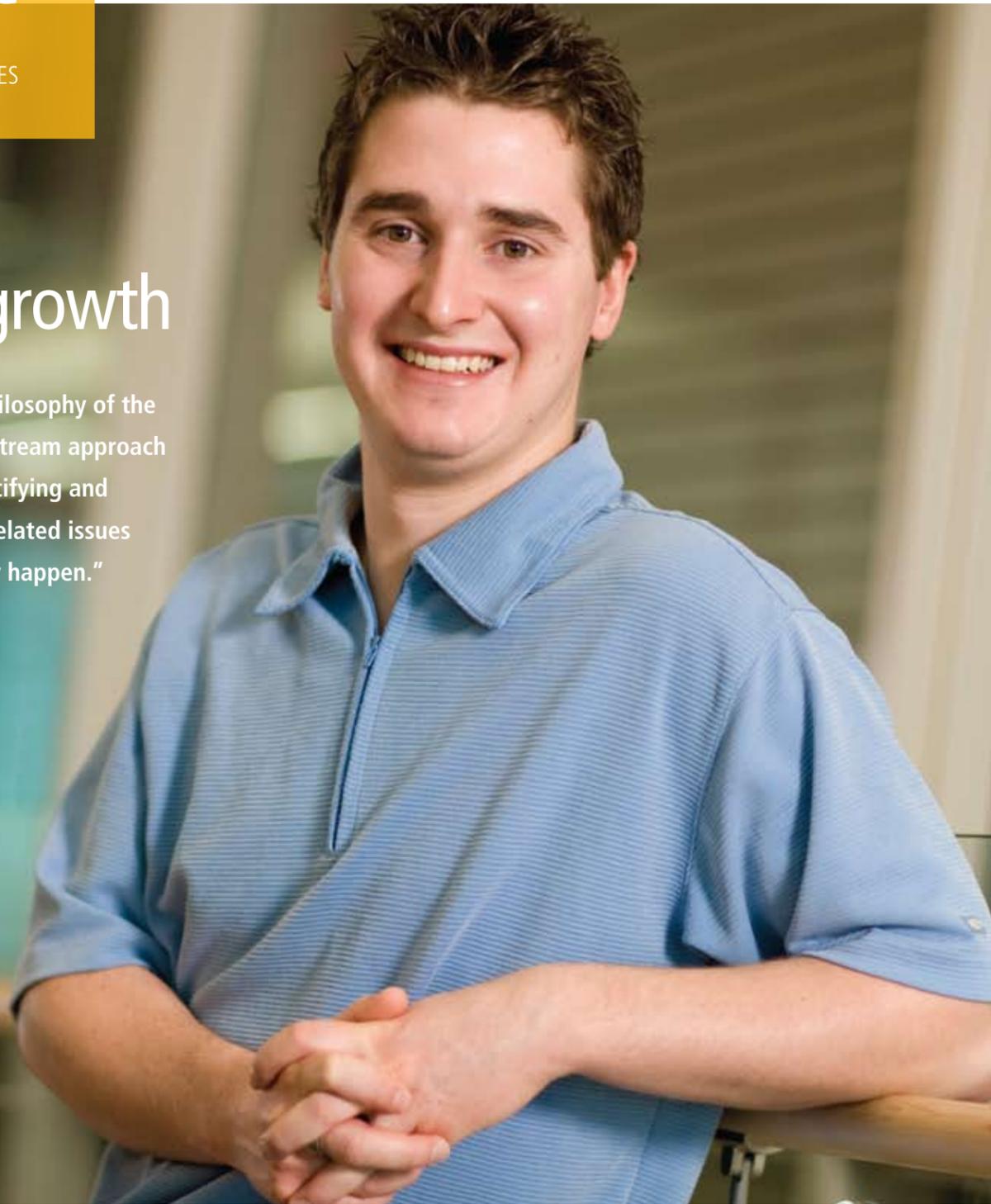
snapshot

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Healthy growth

"I like the entire philosophy of the program. It's an upstream approach to health care, identifying and preventing health-related issues before they actually happen."

Matt Mitschke
U of L public health student



The U of L introduced a new public health degree in 2008 – the only baccalaureate program of its kind in Alberta

Matt Mitschke remembers when he heard about the new Bachelor of Health Sciences in Public Health degree program at the University of Lethbridge. Until then, he wasn't entirely sure what he wanted to study, or the kind of career he wanted to pursue. But after looking into the program and realizing that he would be taking a wide range of interesting classes that would in turn open a lot of doors at the end of four years, he knew he'd found something exciting.

Mitschke enrolled in the program's very first semester, which began in fall 2008, joining a small but eager group of new students in the School of Health Sciences.

"I like the entire philosophy of the program," Mitschke says. "It's an upstream approach to health care, identifying and preventing health-related issues before they actually happen."

The Bachelor of Health Sciences in Public Health degree is the only baccalaureate program of its kind in Alberta. Students in this non-clinical program choose between three broad areas of study: applied public health practice, health policy and promotion, and public health promotion.

In keeping with the tradition of liberal education at the University of Lethbridge, the program requires students to take a breadth of classes in different disciplines – ranging from sociology and psychology to anthropology and kinesiology. The School of Health Sciences

developed the program in conjunction with the Faculty of Arts and Science as well as the Faculty of Management to ensure graduates would emerge as critical thinkers in the field of health care, educated in a variety of disciplines and therefore equipped to approach public health issues in a comprehensive way.

"The program is unique in that it focuses on public health promotion, research and management rather than clinical aspects of health care," says **Dr. Chris Hosgood**, dean of the School of Health Sciences. "It combines social science disciplines with the concepts of public health and gives the School of Health Sciences greater diversity. The program allows us to collaborate with very respected Faculties at the U of L and has brought us much closer to the centre of academic life on campus."

The School of Health Sciences will officially become a Faculty at the U of L on May 1, 2009.

Sharon Yanicki, public health program coordinator, believes the program will create awareness about what public health actually is, ease staff shortages within the current health-care system and help to improve the overall health of many people.

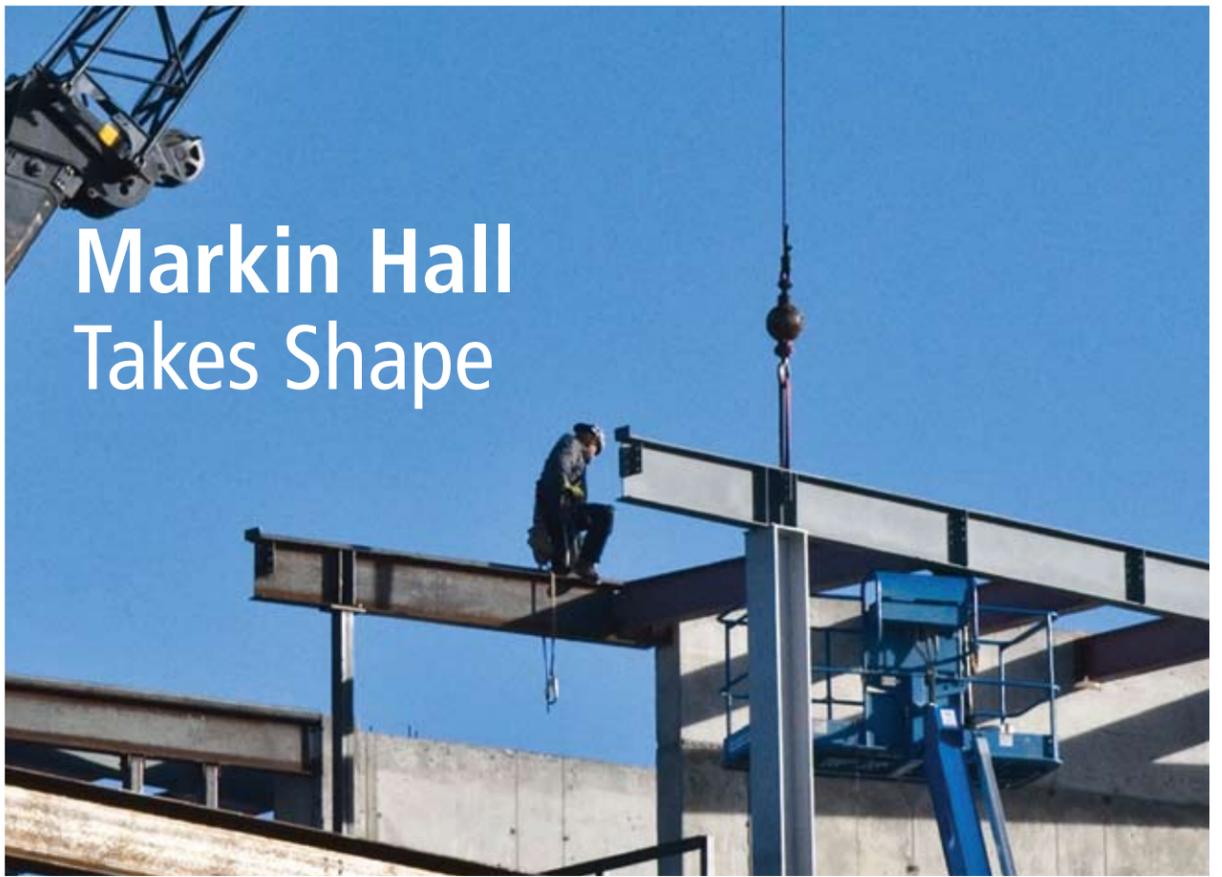
"This degree is filling a niche," Yanicki says. "The majority of people working in the field of public health right now are nurses, who are in very short supply. We expect the program to fill non-clinical positions in public health in a way that better supports the health-care system."

Public health workers are employed in a variety of areas: monitoring health trends, managing community projects and working with community partners to create healthy active communities. A public health worker might focus on healthy aging, healthy food choices in schools, community partnerships to reduce child poverty or preventing chronic disease in a particular ethnic group.

Although the field of public health isn't new, it's an area that isn't all that well known or understood. The program aims to change that, and provide a new type of health-care worker who will work both on the frontlines and behind the scenes to help people make healthy choices easier and create healthier populations.

"The determinants of good health are varied and complex," Yanicki says. "The Public Health degree program educates students on the range of factors that impact health and addresses the need for trained public health workers in emerging areas, such as population health promotion, community development and surveillance and analysis of health and socio-demographic data."

To kick off the program, a scholarship fund was established that provides \$4,000 to each newly accepted full-time student. An additional \$2,000 is also available to students who qualify. The first group of graduates will receive their bachelor's degree in public health in the spring of 2011.



Markin Hall Takes Shape

A construction worker balances on cross beams as construction of Markin Hall, the future home of the School of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Management, continues. The \$65-million project has seen significant progress and is on target for a fall 2010 opening.

Welcome to the 2008/2009 "Snapshot" of life in the School of Health Sciences.

We have much to be excited about, including our emergence as the Faculty of Health Sciences on May 1, 2009. Also, we have ringside seats as our new home, Markin Hall, rises out of the old playing field next to Anderson Hall. It is fair to say that we are all eagerly anticipating the fall 2010 completion date!

Over the past few years our undergraduate programs have grown significantly to meet the demand for health-care professionals in Canada. In collaboration with our colleagues at Lethbridge College, we have increased the number of seats in our Nursing Education in Southwestern Alberta (NESA) program: in 2008 we accepted 187 students into the first year of the program. We have also developed a new nursing program for students who already possess a baccalaureate degree. The BN After Degree, to be launched in September 2009, is an accelerated program that allows students to graduate after 23 months of continuous study.

Our Support Program for Aboriginal Nursing Students (SPANS) initiative, reported last year, has been a great success. I am delighted to announce that we received a substantial endowment from AstraZeneca Canada Inc. to enable Aboriginal students to return to their communities for some of their clinical education.

The Addictions Counselling program remains an integral part of School life, preparing students for challenging and rewarding counselling careers.

Finally, we are extremely excited about our new Bachelor of Health Sciences in Public Health program. This new non-clinical degree will provide graduates with strengths in three areas of concentration including: applied public health practice, health policy and promotion, and public health promotion.

Significantly, as befits a comprehensive university, we continue to develop graduate school opportunities. We were extremely fortunate to receive the Dr. Edward McNally scholarships for all graduate students in nursing; Dr. McNally supports our goal of educating a new generation of nurse educators in Alberta.

I am extremely proud of the many accomplishments of my colleagues in the School. As this edition of "Snapshot" illustrates, we have a remarkable group of imaginative and successful scholars, instructors, health professionals and staff in our midst. Ultimately our emergence as the Faculty of Health Sciences speaks to their dedication to academic excellence.

Best wishes,

Chris Hosgood, PhD
Dean, School of Health Sciences

The 2008/2009 Snapshot is produced by the School of Health Sciences in conjunction with the Office of Communications at the University of Lethbridge. Correspondence should be addressed to:
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AstraZeneca Supports SPANS

In early 2008, representatives from AstraZeneca Canada Inc., a leading pharmaceutical company, announced a \$230,000 gift to the Support Program for Aboriginal Nursing Students (SPANS), a pre-Nursing program that assists Aboriginal students in being admitted to the Nursing Education in Southwestern Alberta (NESA) program.

The funding allows for an endowment to sustain the program, clinical

rotations in remote and northern communities, and for a research and evaluation component.

"There is a shortage of health professionals throughout the country, but that is particularly the case in rural and Aboriginal communities, so this gift from AstraZeneca Canada Inc. is particularly critical to ensure the success of this program," say Chris Hosgood, dean, School of Health Sciences.

Big Rock Brewery Founder Ed McNally Surprises Every U of L Graduate Student in Nursing

In honour of his mother, who was on the front lines of nursing during the First World War, Big Rock Brewery founder **Dr. Ed McNally (LLD '05)** strongly supports the next generation of health professionals. This fall, his generosity provided a scholarship for every graduate nursing student at the U of L.

"I wanted to support promising young students pursuing advanced nursing studies. I'm amazed at how bright the students are and how diverse their thinking is. With so many new directions in medicine and health care, they have such a wide, diverse future ahead of them," says McNally.

Coming Together to Learn

In October, students in the U of L Health Sciences Undergraduate Association hosted the Western/Prairie CNSA (Canadian Nursing Students' Association) Regional Conference. In a spirit of collegiality, nursing students from four western provinces came together to share and learn. The theme of the conference was "Interprofessionalism: Putting the Client First" and 75 nursing students attended.

AADAC Establishes a Bursary for FNMI Students

Understanding the need for increased health-care professionals, Alberta Health Services AADAC contributed \$100,000 to establish a bursary for First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students in the Addictions Counselling degree program. The endowment will support three \$2,500 First Nations bursaries as well as one for a mature student on an annual basis.

The Snack Shack



Three fourth-year U of L nursing students have been working with Chinook Health and the Healthy Weights Initiative of Alberta to create the Snack Shack.

The goal of the Snack Shack is to increase access to healthy food at a reasonable price in schools. U of L nursing students **Abby Dawson, Melanie Fersovitch and Britney Simon** have been following the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth to create the menu items including smoothies, fruit kabobs, veggie bags and

fruit sushi for the Snack Shack.

The Snack Shack is a promotional tool that schools can sign out to use for either lunches or community/school events. It contains a Snack Shack manual and pop-up tent that assist school volunteers and students to choose, prepare and sell low-cost healthy snacks to peers. The Snack Shack also teaches kids how to run a small business, how to handle money and learn other work-related skills as well. While students are gaining important skills, the main goal of the Snack Shack is to help prevent and decrease childhood obesity, so as to help reduce chances of chronic illnesses and disease.

Over the past 25 years, the percentage of overweight people has doubled, and obesity rates tripled. Almost 30 per cent of children in Chinook Health are overweight.



New Skills Lab



Peter Kellett, an academic assistant in the nursing program, with U of L nursing students in the new skills lab.

The School of Health Sciences recently opened a new eight-bed nursing skills laboratory.

The new lab supports the learning needs of the growing number of nursing students within the current Nursing Education in Southwestern Alberta (NESA) program and the upcoming after degree nursing program that will start in fall 2009.

The nursing skills lab complements students' clinical practice courses and provides increased opportunities for nursing students to acquire nursing skills and maintain clinical practice competence. The opportunity to practise nursing competencies in a laboratory setting also enables students to hone valuable professional skills in a safe, controlled and supportive environment.

The new skills lab has been funded by the Alberta government as part of the new after degree nursing program funding, however all nursing students at the University of Lethbridge will benefit from this excellent learning resource.

Program Updates

Addictions Counselling

- In 2008, the program celebrated its 12th anniversary. The program has grown from just over 20 students to 137 students.
- Two years ago, the program went through a highly successful external quality review, and this year, through the Enrolment Planning Envelope, received additional funds from the provincial government for program expansion.
- Fourth-year students complete a 13-week full-time internship in the fall term. Students with good academic standing (over 3.0 grade point average) and a solid track record of previous success in supervisory situations, such as their junior internship and work situations, can pursue a placement either out of the province within Canada or an international placement outside of Canada.
- In 2008, U of L students placed at agencies in Boston; London, England; as well as at the

Meadows Treatment Centre in Arizona, the world-renowned sex addiction treatment facility; and at Crossroads, the treatment centre Eric Clapton founded in Antigua.

- More than 200 U of L addictions counselling graduates are now working in outpatient and residential treatment addictions counselling, youth and family centres, women shelters, schools and mental health agencies. Many others have gone on to do a master's degree in counselling and related fields.

The Nursing Education for Southwestern Alberta (NESA) Program

- NESA, a collaborative venture between Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge, now has nearly 600 students.
- In response to the unprecedented growth within the student population and faculty complement, the School of Health Sciences is currently reviewing the NESA program philosophy, a process that will seek input from all of our stakeholders (e.g., students, faculty, institutional and community partners).
- Following the submission of lengthy documentation in the early fall of 2008, the NESA program recently received notification of program approval for five years from the Nursing Education Program Approval Board.
- The new Bachelor of Nursing After Degree program, scheduled to commence in September 2009, is now accepting applications.

Support Program for Aboriginal Nursing Students (SPANS)

- SPANS welcomed 10 Aboriginal students into the first year of the nursing program. There are now a total of 15 Aboriginal students across all four years of the nursing program.
- The Aboriginal students have been invited to attend the Blackfoot culture course offered by faculty and elders of Red Crow Community College. These monthly events have included discussion about traditional values and their impact on nursing care.
- The nursing faculty have participated in a Blackfoot culture orientation workshop. Faculty who attended found that the workshop increased their understanding of Blackfoot beliefs and practices; they can use the information when interacting with our Aboriginal nursing students.
- A mentoring workshop was held in November for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal registered nurses working with the Blood Tribe Department of Health and Piikani Health Services. These individuals have agreed to be mentors for our Aboriginal nursing students. The mentor workshop focused on the benefits of being a mentor; the next stage is to have activities to connect the mentors with their mentees.

MSc Program

There continues to be a strong demand for the Master of Science in Health Sciences program. Last year, there were more applicants than available seats. Moreover, the calibre of students continues to be validated through local, provincial and national scholarships and awards.

Currently, 20 students with a background in nursing, addictions counselling or health sciences are enrolled in the program. The program is attracting prospective graduate students not only from southern Alberta, but from throughout Alberta and from across Canada.

Men in Nursing



U of L nursing student Jason Wengel

Changing long-entrenched attitudes can often be a slow and gradual process.

Peter Kellett, an academic assistant in the University of Lethbridge's Nursing program, is attempting to give that process a nudge.

Kellett and the School of Health Sciences held a Men in Nursing Recruitment Day on Feb. 13, 2009, where they showed men that nursing is not only a viable career option but it should be a desirable one as well.

"The primary challenge of attracting men to nursing is the general public views nursing as a woman's profession," Kellett, who has been a nurse for 14 years, says. "What I'm really hoping to do is to help men realize that this is not just a profession for women."

Drawn to nursing because of an interest in the medical field and a mother who worked as a nurse, Kellett says there exist many false impressions about the profession that seem to steer men away.

"I think one of the misconceptions is that nursing is somehow a lower profession, but it is not. Nursing is very much a dynamic and challenging career and very worthwhile to be part of – you make a difference every day," Kellett says.

"I had considered other health-care professions but what attracted me to nursing is that nurses are the people who have a long-term relationship with the patients. I think the bond between nurse and patient is like no other in the health-care field."

While the number of male nurses is growing in Canada, with men accounting for just six per cent of all nurses, there's much room for improvement. Now is also the perfect time to get into the field, Kellett explains. With many nurses from the baby boomer era expected to retire in the coming years, he cites the Canadian Nurses Association as predicting a shortfall of 113,000 registered nurses by 2016.

U NEWS

To stay up-to-date on what's happening with the U of L and the School of Health Sciences throughout the year, visit:

www.uleth.ca/unews

For more information on all the programs offered at the University of Lethbridge, visit:

> DISCOVER.ulethbridge.ca



Rural Nursing

Nursing students' sense of belonging is key to success in rural placements



“Becoming a professional, registered nurse is as much about joining that community of registered nurses as it is about learning the technical skills of what nurses do.” Dr. Monique Sedgwick

In rural hospitals, nurses must be “expert generalists” who can adjust to diverse medical situations in a pinch, unlike their urban counterparts who are often working within a single ward.

For fourth-year students completing their preceptorship – in which they work side-by-side with a registered nurse – working in a rural hospital offers a steep learning curve, as well as a unique opportunity to be part of a tightly knit health-care team. Rural hospitals often lack specialized medical resources, requiring all health-care practitioners to band together to offer patients the best care possible, explains **Dr. Monique Sedgwick**, who began her tenure as an assistant professor in the School of Health Sciences in July 2008.

Surprised at the lack of nursing research on the experience of students in the rural hospital setting, Sedgwick decided to fill in the gap with

her own dissertation research. Participants in her study were located over a 640,000 sq. km area throughout central and northern Alberta, northern British Columbia and the Yukon.

Students’ feeling of belonging has emerged as a cultural theme from the data she’s already collected and appears to be a key ingredient to their success in the preceptorship. This doesn’t surprise Sedgwick, as it’s important for all nurses.

“Becoming a professional, registered nurse is as much about joining that community of registered nurses as it is about learning the technical skills of what nurses do,” she says. “Sometimes, I think we assume that nurses only do the technical things, and if you’re good at that, you’re a good nurse. But, I think my research points to the fact that it’s more than that.”

In any nursing situation – whether in a hospital or other health-care facility – nurses seldom work autonomously. Treating patients

requires communicating with a wide range of other health-care professionals.

“I think it becomes very important for nurses to connect with each other and with all members of the team – from the physicians, physiotherapists, social workers, emergency-care providers like paramedics, administrative support workers, housekeeping, and dietary and records keeping personnel,” she says. “It’s a very stressful job, and we need to be able to confer with each other, and consult with each other so the best patient care is provided.”

Ultimately, Sedgwick hopes her work will benefit students, and she’s excited about two upcoming projects.

“My goal is to explore the student experience so that as educators, we can bring forward that information to help students better prepare for that clinical setting.”

Community Resiliency and Disaster Response: What are the connections?

Dr. Judith Kulig is assessing whether a community’s ability to deal with adversity is enhanced by disasters



“My wife and I were across the river watching the fire. I can remember distinctively the power poles burning and the transformers blowing up...After a bit of discussion it was determined that the highway had to be closed off and that we needed to start evacuating.”

These are the words of a community member who experienced the worst fire season of British Columbia’s history.

The Barriere McLure Fire destroyed 70 homes and more than 90 outbuildings; 26,420 hectares burnt and well over \$31 million was needed before the fire was declared under control. How do communities deal with disasters such as wildfires? What are the long-term social and health effects?

A SSHRC-funded study led by U of L nursing professor **Dr. Judith Kulig** is attempting to answer these and other questions.

“We chose two communities, Barriere, BC, and La Ronge, Sask., for the study because they had both experienced wildfires that led to evacuations and property losses,” explains Kulig.

The study has included 57 interviews (30 in Barriere and 27 in La Ronge), which are still being analyzed, and a household survey will commence in both communities this year. All of the information will be compiled to help

find out if a community’s resiliency (or ability to deal with adversity) is enhanced by disasters.

“Such information is useful for disaster management and mitigation particularly because disasters have increased around the world and more than 250 communities in Canada are affected by wildfires every year. The community-based advisory team who are an integral part of the study will help make sure that the information will be put to good use,” Kulig says.

Co-investigators from the University of Lethbridge and other universities across the country are helping to ensure a multidisciplinary perspective is achieved in the investigation. The project has also enlisted the help of undergraduates like fourth-year nursing student **Ambra Gullacher**, who has been working as the project coordinator for the research since her third year.

Gullacher says the research experience has taught her that health isn’t just a matter of physical well-being; it’s impacted greatly by how a community affects people emotionally and socially.

“Being able to see how a community works together, and how it acts as its own little organism gives me a better perspective,” she says. For more information, visit: ruralwildfire.ca



Against the Odds

Dr. Bonnie Lee believes repairing marriage bonds can bolster recovery from gambling addiction

Problem gambling can shake every aspect of one's life – particularly a marriage, which can crumble under the weight of financial stress and betrayal. But **Dr. Bonnie Lee** says the relationship between gambling and marital stress isn't as straightforward as many assume.

"Most people think linearly, 'Look what problem gambling did,'" argues the assistant professor in the Addictions Counselling program in the School of Health Sciences. "They're less aware that maybe those problems were there in the first place."

Lee, who uses marriage counselling to treat gambling addiction and other mental health symptoms, is researching the complex relationship between clinical problems such as gambling, depression and couple intimacy. There are many causes of addiction, but difficulties in one's relationships figure prominently. After the addictive behaviour develops, Lee explains that the addiction exacerbates relationship difficulties, and relationship conflicts worsen the addiction, creating "a vicious and defeating circle of cause-and-effect."

Her recent research substantiates this. With the assistance of three undergraduate students interested in clinical research, Lee analyzed transcripts from couple therapy sessions during the summer. "These couples had

problems in their relationships – I call them 'fault lines' – far before the gambling problems began." The limited depth and range of their conversations precluded intimacy and their problems from being resolved.

The emotional distance between spouses ultimately creates lives of secrecy, of which gambling was an instance.

Without spousal support, a pressure point – usually a life transition like retirement, the birth of a child or job loss – could precipitate a gambling problem. Because the loss and deception only deepen the divide between spouses, the residual anger and lack of trust in the relationship can lead to relapse.

Lee thinks helping gamblers and depressed individuals in the context of couple therapy can pay huge dividends. By repairing the foundation of a couple's relationship, one makes available to both partners an invaluable life resource in support and understanding that bolsters recovery. However, success hinges on the willingness of both spouses to take part in counselling, and Lee is developing a way of recruiting the fearful spouse, a strategy that seems to be working well.

"Couple work is better done sooner than later before the marriage reaches the point of no return."



(l-r) Dr. Brad Hagen, Krystal Kingston and Dr. Gary Nixon

Drs. Gary Nixon and Brad Hagen uncover stories of healing and personal growth from people with psychosis

Transforming Discoveries

U of L health sciences professors **Dr. Gary Nixon** and **Dr. Brad Hagen** are aware of the potential stigma and suffering associated with psychosis. Both having worked in the field of mental health (Nixon as a psychologist and Hagen as both a registered nurse and a provisional psychologist), they've seen firsthand how people with psychosis struggle not only with their conditions, but also with feelings of isolation and the side-effects of the psychotropic drugs they're often prescribed.

"People with psychosis very seldom say they receive messages of hope through the mental health system," says Nixon. "They may be told that this is the way they'll be for the rest of their lives, and there's not much that can be done about it other than to take medication. After diagnosis people can lower their expectations."

During a two-year research project involving people with psychosis, however, Nixon and

Hagen spoke with participants who claimed that their psychotic episodes, although troubling at the time, subsequently proved to be transformative in nature, often leading to significant spiritual or psychological growth.

"The entire concept of psychosis is always seen as very negative," says Hagen. "We're not trying to downplay how disturbing and crippling psychosis can be for many individuals, but our research suggests that there may be a significant number of people who describe their psychosis as a kind of spiritual or psychological awakening. We wanted to get those stories out there."

Nixon and Hagen, together with research assistant **Krystal Kingston** (BSc '07), a second-year master of education student, interviewed 30 people in Western Canada who felt their psychosis had resulted in a kind of personal growth or transformation. One important

finding of the study is that this group of people – or "transformers," as the researchers have called them – found alternative ways to deal with their delusions and/or hallucinations, after finding that traditional treatments were not helpful. Transformers reported success in managing their symptoms in a variety of ways, most often associated with meditation or other forms of spiritual practice. Successful transformers felt their journey through psychosis, although initially difficult, was eventually a path to greater inner peace and calm.

"We're certainly not saying that this approach works for everyone, but our research suggests that for some individuals, it does," Hagen says.

Hagen and Nixon are in the final stages of their study, and are presently writing several manuscripts describing their findings.

"Our research suggests that there may be a significant number of people who describe their psychosis as a kind of spiritual or psychological awakening." Dr. Brad Hagen



(l-r) Jean Harrowing and Anuva Pradhan

Global Learning

U of L students travel to Africa to teach the Malawi people about health and disease prevention

“The students talked about it as a life-changing event.”

Jean Harrowing

Anuva Pradhan had almost forgotten what it’s like to live in a developing country. Born in Nepal, Pradhan immigrated to Canada at the age of 15. But when she first set foot on African soil in May 2008, joining a multidisciplinary group of other U of L students who travelled to Malawi to conduct health promotion programs through the School of Health Sciences, a flood of memories washed over her.

“I had quite a flashback. The smells, the way of living, day-to-day things; it triggered a flashback of my home country and what it was like to live there,” Pradhan says. “We are extremely lucky here in Canada.”

Pradhan, now a fourth-year nursing student in the School of Health Sciences, was one of 12 students selected to go on the 24-day field study to Malawi, along with U of L faculty members **Jean Harrowing** (Health Sciences) and **Lisa Doolittle** (Fine Arts). The objective: to conduct culturally relevant health promotion activities in Malawi in relation to the diseases of malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, and to explore the complexities that arise in such an endeavour due to cultural differences, traditional practices and societal beliefs.

While the course (the first of its kind at the U of L) was deemed a tremendous success in terms of its impact on the people of Malawi, the consensus among the group was that they got a lot more than they gave.

“The students talked about it as a life-changing event,” says Harrowing, who has conducted health-related research both in Canada and abroad, and played an instrumental role in organizing the Malawi trip. “They knew that they’d never look at their lives the same way again, or take things for granted the way they had in the past.”

The group went to eight different primary schools in rural areas of Malawi over the course of the trip, meeting with Grade 7 students each morning to find out what they knew about their country’s most prevalent diseases and find effective ways to share information on prevention and treatment. Classes were inevitably large, ranging in size from 50 to 200 students or more. Teaching strategies had to be creative.

“We divided into groups and gave each group a topic,” Pradhan recalls. “If we were discussing malaria, topics could include things like naming the different parts of a mosquito, or identifying areas where mosquitoes breed



and how to interrupt their cycle. Each group had to come up with a way to teach the rest of the class about their topic, so we used the kids’ ideas on creative ways to share the material.”

Every afternoon, the greater community was invited to come and participate in a kind of cultural exchange – an invitation that was always met with overwhelming enthusiasm. Elders, traditional healers, parents and dozens of students from surrounding areas would come from far and wide to “see the Canadians” and take part in plays, skits and dances aimed at health promotion and disease prevention.

“It was a very reciprocal experience,” says Harrowing. “The Malawi people were very honoured to have us there, and they were educating us as well – teaching us about their values and needs, but also about their

strengths. We tend to focus on what people lack. This was a good reminder to focus on what people have and to build on those assets.”

Plans are in the works for another field study course in Malawi with a new group of U of L students in 2010. Harrowing expects even greater interest the second time around, given the great word of mouth campaign induced by the first trip and a growing societal commitment to improving global health conditions.

“People are beginning to understand that we all have to reach a certain standard of health in order to consider ourselves a healthy society,” Harrowing says. “The key is to help people develop their skills, knowledge and abilities so they can address their own health care needs effectively.”



Rx

Addiction: The Story the Tabloids Don't Tell

Amy Danylchuk travels to Arizona for her senior practicum at the renowned Meadows Treatment Centre

This fall, during her senior practicum at Meadows Treatment Center in Arizona, U of L addictions counselling student **Amy Danylchuk** learned more than how to conduct group therapy and manage individual sessions.

She also learned when helping others with addictions treatment, you need to take a hard, honest look at yourself.

"I remember I went into my supervisor's office after one session, and I just broke down and cried," she recalls. "When I asked how he could hire me, as crying didn't seem professional, he said he wouldn't hire me if I couldn't express my own pain."

At Meadows, Danylchuk worked on a five-week program. After an introductory week, patients work through individual therapy and detoxification before moving into group work. Next, their families arrive for a week of counselling before the program ends with a thorough recovery plan.

Addiction, Danylchuk explains, is a misunderstood issue, given its high profile in tabloid magazines and television shows. Danylchuk says

she worked with celebrities at Meadows, but immediately recognized them as real people, with real problems: an understanding rarely conveyed in exploitative media.

"The tabloids don't portray how hard it is to commit to and complete treatment and ongoing therapy," she says. "The people they write about are struggling. Even if they are celebrities, they are people too and deserve respect. I've learned that people aren't 'bad,' it's their behaviour that's bad. This is what leads to dysfunction in the system of their lives."

The practicum almost didn't happen, since Meadows has never accepted undergraduate students. However, after the centre initially rejected Danylchuk's application, **Dr. Steven Thibodeau**, an assistant professor in the School of Health Sciences, persuaded them to take her on by explaining the unique aspects of the U of L's addictions counselling program, such as hands-on experience and lab work. As it turns out, the centre was happily surprised and is planning to take on four additional U of L interns next fall.



"I've learned that people aren't 'bad,' it's their behaviour that's bad."



Connecting Profession with Heritage

Nursing student Rochelle Johnson views her future profession as a way to connect with the community and give back

At a recent Halifax conference, nursing student **Rochelle Johnson** gained insight into her chosen career and its connection to her Aboriginal heritage.

Johnson, who is a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta, received a sponsorship to attend the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada's 32nd annual conference. She was particularly struck by keynote speaker Diane Longboat, a member of the Mohawk Nation who spoke of incorporating indigenous knowledge into the healing process.

"I can't describe what it was like hearing her – if only I could have tape-recorded it," recalls Johnson. "She had such powerful messages about the importance of Aboriginal knowledge to nursing, and she completely captivated the audience."

Now back home in Lethbridge preparing a presentation on the conference, Johnson reflected on her experiences with the U of L's Support Program for Aboriginal Nursing Students (SPANS). There are some 1,200 Aboriginal nurses across Canada, and SPANS works to increase their numbers through a one-year pre-nursing program, ongoing support,

mentorship programs, funding and a class on Blackfoot culture taught by community elders. The aim is to help address Aboriginal communities with their unique health-care challenges, such as remote locations that make it difficult to access services.

Johnson became interested in nursing while volunteering at a hospital during high school. She chose the U of L for its intimate class sizes and welcoming environment, and is now exploring the different aspects of the field, from maternity to surgery.

She says her Métis Nation heritage provided her with educational opportunities through sponsorships and bursaries, like the School of Health Sciences financial sponsorship, and views nursing as a way to connect with the community and give something back.

"My parents always encouraged us to go to post-secondary education, but I struggled with what I wanted to be," she says. "I talked to my family doctor about my career choices, and he suggested nursing because it's so versatile – I never realized just how much you can do with it."

Practical Learning

During her mental health nursing practicum, U of L student Ceejay Byam faced the unknown

Ceejay Byam was working at a practicum in rural Alberta with a client who had both schizophrenia and diabetes. The patient, suffering from hallucinations, rang her call bell more frequently at night and only felt safe when someone was beside her.

"She wouldn't eat supper, and she had signs of auditory hallucinations," Byam recalls. "I was upset because I wanted to help her but didn't know how."

After reflecting on her clinical experience, researching her observations and digging through the case files, Byam e-mailed her supervisor, noting she thought the symptoms might be due to a lack of eating. Her supervisor encouraged her to consider the possibility that there may be a relationship between schizophrenia and diabetes, but Byam found nothing that matched her situation.

"When I couldn't find anything, I worked with my supervisor and after talking to the client, we worked out a plan to get her to eat,"

she says. "Her symptoms eased, and it felt good to help."

Byam decided to become a nurse as a child, after her father suffered kidney failure. She enrolled at the U of L, but at first wasn't sure about the program, since she enjoys guided hands-on learning rather than theory. But after taking clinical classes, she quickly developed an interest in the field and connected with instructors like Michelle Cullen, who notes the importance of practical learning for students.

"I think the clinical component of the nursing program is essential to develop competent nurses who are able to weave together their knowledge and experience to provide the best possible patient care," says Cullen. "For many students, the clinical experience is the first time they assume responsibility for a real person, and the student's desire to help is a strong motivator to use all of their resources and knowledge."



(l-r) Michelle Cullen and Ceejay Byam

An Elevated Perspective

For Bill McKay, it was a long journey from working on the roof of Anderson Hall to studying inside



Bill McKay with fellow graduate nursing students

From **Bill McKay's** (BN '06) vantage point high above the University of Lethbridge campus, the journeyman roofer decided to go back to school.

"I remember watching students going in and out of classes, and the atmosphere of learning interested me," he says. "Roofing is seasonal employment, and it is very hard on your body. I knew I wanted a new career."

It was a tough decision to walk away from the job, but McKay sold his possessions – including a new car – and started working towards a degree in nursing.

"I didn't pursue post-secondary education until eight years after high school, when I was 26, and I thought I might be too old to start. But it's never too late for a career change if you find something you really enjoy."

Drawn to nursing because of the field's depth and variety, McKay is continually surprised by the opportunities, from occupational health and acute care to geriatrics and mental health.

He completed his bachelor of nursing at the U of L in 2006. After a year of nursing at the Chinook Regional Hospital, McKay returned to the University as an academic assistant in the nursing program. Now on a one-year education

leave, he is pursuing his master of science in nursing, and once complete, plans to return to teaching.

For his thesis, McKay hopes to examine depression and treatment options among university students – a situation due in part to factors like settling into life away from home, lack of sleep and financial burdens.

"Mental health can affect us all. Learning how mental-health issues can stem from the stresses of daily life helped me get over that stigma," he explains. "I had an instructor who helped me realize that, and I wanted to guide others in making that connection."

McKay believes having his master's degree will provide him the opportunity to critique and analyze current nursing knowledge, something that in the long-term will both increase his own practical knowledge base and help develop his leadership skills as a clinical instructor.

Bill McKay is one of the students who benefited from the generosity of Big Rock Brewery founder **Dr. Ed McNally (LLD '05)**. This fall, McNally established a scholarship that provided \$4,000 to every graduate-level nursing student at the U of L.

A Master's Achievement

Carla Ginn has something big to celebrate – but she also has a lot of work to do



In July 2008, **Carla Ginn** became the first student from the U of L School of Health Sciences to ever receive the Frederick Banting and Charles Best Canada Graduate Scholarships Master's Award, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Created to provide recognition and support for graduate students in health-related fields, the award is granted once a year to applicants from across the country who show exceptionally high potential for future research achievement and productivity.

"When I was in my first year of graduate study, one of my instructors suggested that I apply for the funding because the thesis topic I had chosen was very applicable," Ginn recalls. "There were between 300 and 400 applicants from across Canada, so I was very happy and surprised to find out I was a recipient."

Ginn's thesis, *Urban Aboriginal Grandmothers: Health Promotion Roles in*

Family and Community, grew out of her 25-year career as a registered nurse. Having worked with Aboriginal women in various health-care settings, Ginn knew early on that she wanted to make Aboriginal women the focus of her graduate study.

"Aboriginal women are resilient, but they aren't always acknowledged or able to speak up within the health-care system. I want to give them a voice. I want to let them tell us what the important topics are for them."

Ginn will utilize participatory action research to gather information for her thesis, interviewing Aboriginal grandmothers to find out what health means to them, to their communities and how they work to promote health within their own families.

"Aboriginal grandmothers are in a unique position to define and promote health because of their positions of respect in their families and communities," she says.

www.ulethbridge.ca



Alumni Dinner & Lecture with Stephen Lewis

Global Health: Hope or Deterioration



Health Sciences alumni are invited to reconnect with the University of Lethbridge and your fellow classmates this fall at an alumni dinner.

Dinner will be followed by a public lecture, held in conjunction with the U of L Speaker Series, featuring veteran Canadian Diplomat Stephen Lewis.

September 17, 2009

Dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Lecture at 7 p.m.

Stephen Lewis is the co-founder and co-director of AIDS-Free World (www.aids-freeworld.org), a new international AIDS advocacy organization based in the United States. He is the Chair of the board of the Stephen Lewis Foundation in Canada (www.stephenlewisfoundation.org) and is a professor in global health in the Faculty of Social Sciences at McMaster University.

More information will be provided.

For ticket information, please contact the School of Health Sciences at 403-329-2699 or 403-382-7186.

