

**NEWS
RELEASE**



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UCN Researchers Receive SSHRC Institution Connection Grant to Support MacKay Indian Residential School Reconciliation Project

University College of the North (UCN) is pleased to announce that Dr. Jennie Wastesicoot, a researcher in UCN's Faculty of Arts, Business and Science, and Dr. Andrea Walsh of the University of Victoria, have received an Institute Connection Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to support a reconciliation project whereby art created in 1960 at the MacKay Indian Residential School (MacKay IRS) in Dauphin, Manitoba will ultimately be returned to the students or to the families of the students who created that art.

The Institution Connection Grant is valued at \$24,938. The grant's value has been increased by \$33,186 in cash and in-kind contributions from partners, including UCN, Keewatin Tribal Council, and the University of Manitoba. The total resources available to support the project is \$58,124.

"The Institution Connection Grant received by UCN is the first time that a UCN researcher has been the Principal Investigator for a project supported by a Tri-Agency grant," said Linda Melnick, Dean of Research and Innovation at UCN. "UCN researchers have been collaborators with researchers in partnership with other institutions for many other research projects. Dr. Wastesicoot's success in receiving this grant represents an important milestone in UCN's development to becoming a more research-active institution."

The Institutional Connection Grant received by Dr. Wastesicoot will support a conference called *Coming Home - Survival and Resiliency Through Art. MacKay Indian Residential School Childhood Memories*. This three-day event will consist of two days of closed sessions with Survivors of the MacKay IRS, UCN, and the University of Victoria, in dialogue about appropriate strategies to repatriate a collection of 59 paintings created by children who attended the MacKay IRS, and Survivor led research projects in collaboration with academic or cultural institutions/archives. The third day will include a workshop that identifies culturally appropriate protocols and strategies for repatriation and future collaborations that have been developed through Survivor dialogue. The conference will also provide an opportunity for the general public to see the artwork on display and to share Survivors' stories as reflected through art.

"UCN is deeply committed to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples," said Doug Lauvstad, President and Vice-Chancellor at UCN. "This project represents an important step in that direction, and UCN is proud to be taking a leading role with the University of Victoria on the repatriation of paintings to the Survivors of the MacKay Indian Residential School."

The origins of this important project were a 2008 gift to the University of Victoria (UVic) of more than 700 paintings created by Indigenous children in Canada by the family of the late Robert Aller who was a painter

who lived on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. During the mid to late 1960s Mr. Aller volunteered to teach Indigenous children art lessons in two residential schools, the Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS) in Alberni, B.C., and the MacKay Indian Residential School (MIRS) in Dauphin, Manitoba. Aller also offered summer art camps in Ojibway, Anishnaabe, and Algonquin communities in the early 1970s.

In 2012 the UVic's Legacy Art Gallery staff along with Dr. Andrea Walsh and her team of Elders, Survivors, faculty members and students set out to begin a long-term national project to locate the Survivors who created the paintings as children as part of the repatriation of those paintings. Individuals at UVic noted that the return of the children's paintings to Survivors is a form of institutional reconciliation and helps to recognize the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Initial work to locate and work with Survivors to return artworks was carried out with Survivors from the Alberni IRS between 2012 and 2013, provided a strong foundation for the *Coming Home* gathering to focus on planning for the return of paintings to Survivors of the Mackay IRS. More information about the MacKay IRS and the project, as well as some of the artwork from the MacKay IRS can be viewed [here](#), along with commentary from the students/artists.

The *Coming Home* gathering, which will be held at the Thompson Campus of UCN in fall 2018, is expected to include 50 people, including 40 Survivors travelling from various First Nations communities. This event demonstrates the commitment by Survivors, UVic, UCN, and other partners, to work together towards reconciliation.



The photo shows Dr. Jennie Wastesicoot (left) and Dr. Andrea Walsh (right) at a session introducing the MacKay IRS project and showing a copy of artwork by MacKay IRS student/artist, Mr. James Wastasecoot of Peguis, at UCN's Truth and Reconciliation Conference, held in Thompson, Manitoba in March 2018.

For more information, please contact:

Jim Scott,
Director
Communications Department
University College of the North
P: 204-627-8244
E: jscott@ucn.ca