

WINTER 2019

# new trail

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
ALUMNI MAGAZINE

# The BAKING OF A LEGEND







UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
**ALUMNI**

## No surprise, most of us won't celebrate this many.

It might surprise you to learn that in 2016, there were over 8,000 centenarians in Canada\*. As Canadians, we're fortunate to enjoy a high life expectancy, yet no one ever really knows what the future will bring.

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\* Source: The Star, 100-Year Old Canadians Fastest-Growing Age Group In The Country, 2017.

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### ON THE COVER

For decades, the U of A cinnamon bun fuelled many a study session, and even a few daydreams and doodles. Curtis Gillespie pays homage to this yeasty legend. Page 18. *Illustration by Hylton Warburton; photos this page and cover by John Ulan; cinnamon buns by Lorraine Huntley*



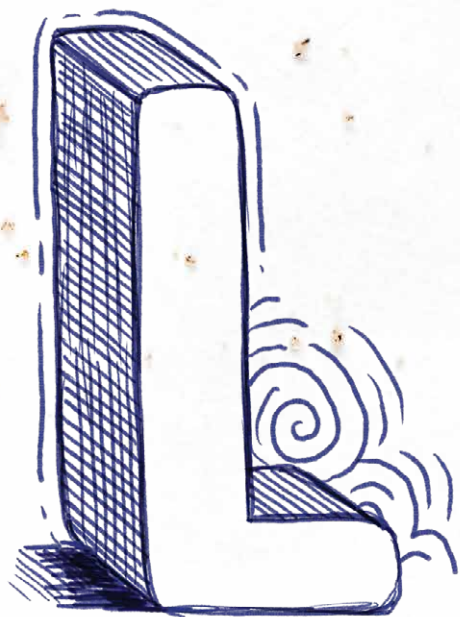
BUNS. KNOTS. WHATEVER YOU CALL THEM,  
THESE TREATS FUELLED THE STUDIES  
OF U OF A STUDENTS FOR DECADES.  
THE SLIGHTEST MENTION  
ELICITS AN OUTPOURING OF  
**MOUTH-WATERING MEMORIES.**  
WHAT'S BEHIND THEIR  
**LEGENDARY STATUS?**  
WE INVESTIGATE...

# The TWISTS AND TURNS OF THE CINNAMON ROLL TRAIL

BY CURTIS GILLESPIE, '85 BA(SPEC)  
PHOTOS BY JOHN ULAN  
ILLUSTRATION BY HYLTON WARBURTON







**LORRAINE HUNTLEY WAS FRESH OUT OF COOKING SCHOOL** in 1977 when she was offered a job by the iconic University of Alberta food services manager, Joyce Kerr. Without knowing what a fervent house of worship she was entering, Huntley took the job and was soon doing well enough under Kerr's exacting eye that she was elevated to the role of Holy Knot-Maker. The cathedral — the Central Academic Building, or CAB — had been serving its sacred cinnamon buns since 1971 in the basement cafeteria. Every day, working in the sepulchral depths of the temple where the buns were produced and sold, Huntley got a good look at the people for whom she was tying the knot: hordes of students so desperate for a bun that it was as if that baked knot of dough, sugar and cinnamon was all that separated pass from fail. (And as she gently reminds me when we talk, they were technically knots, not buns nor rolls.) Huntley recalls that they were delicious, huge and cheap. For a quarter, a student on a tight budget would get enough calories to last the day.

Some days it must have seemed as if every soul on campus was in line. Depending on the day of the week, Kerr, Huntley and the third Sister of the Order of the Holy Dough, Shirley Kaminski, would bake upwards of 50 dozen buns. The pans were empty by noon. "There would be lineups!" Huntley recalls with a laugh. "We sold so many of them that Mrs. Kerr told us once that those buns paid our wages." The rush sometimes induced a state of near panic in the front counter staff. "We'd be working away in the kitchen and every so often one of the girls from the front counter would yell back into the kitchen, 'Are they ready yet? Are they ready?! Are they done?!'"

Not that they rushed. Kerr was old school and it rubbed off on her staff, says Huntley. Kerr perfected recipes. She ran a fastidiously clean and organized kitchen. And nothing got wasted, ever, an ethos that her staff adopted to varying degrees. One time, Huntley recalls, there was a bomb scare and the building was evacuated. Outside, Kaminski began to get nervous. She had 16 dozen buns in the oven. Huntley was standing beside her.

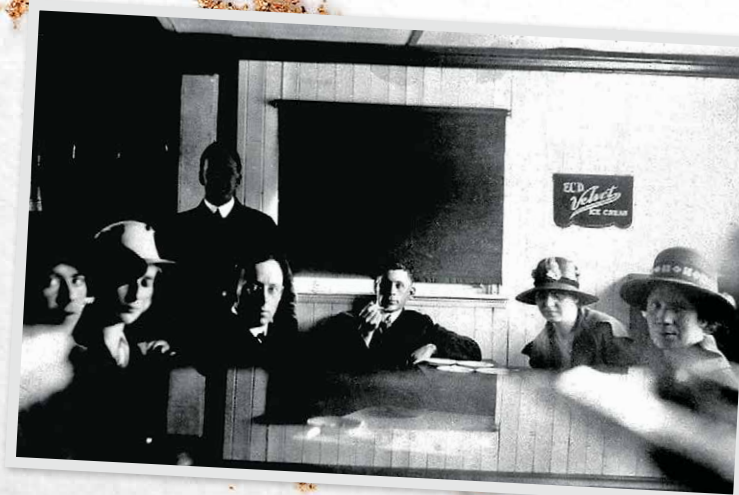
"She started to go back inside, and I said, 'Shirley, let them burn,' and she said, 'There's no way I'm letting 16 dozen buns burn.' And so she went back



**Above, Joyce Kerr serves cinnamon buns to hungry students in CAB. Staff would bake upwards of 50 dozen buns a day and the pans would be empty by noon. Though the recipe's origins are lost in time, the buns' name comes from the Tuck Shop, shown below and right in the 1910s.**

**"There would be lineups! We sold so many of them that Mrs. Kerr told us once that those buns paid our wages."**

— LORRAINE HUNTLEY



in while the alarm was still going, pulled the buns out of the oven and came back outside."

If Kaminski hadn't gone back in — a brave culinary marine determined to leave no buns behind — a student probably would have done so in her place. Former students remember the cinnamon buns with the kind of passion normally reserved for first loves. Edmonton writer **Marty Chan**, '90 BA(Spec), penned an ode to the CAB buns in the Autumn 2017 issue of *New Trail*, in which he wrote that the buns "changed my life" when he realized he was organizing his days around the buns and, as a result, failing his engineering classes. Using his devotion to the buns as his inspiration, he switched to English and soared.

Over the years, grads have shared many a bun memory in *New Trail*. "Those buns got me through six years of early-morning lectures," reminisced **Tom Fan**, '81 BSc(MechEng), '83 MSc. Wrote **Katherine Orrell**, '81 BA: "I worked in campus mail during the summer and I would take a break between my rounds and grab one ... the most delicious buns ever!" **Teri Nichol**, '87 BEd, became "instantly addicted" after her first bun and said, living in New Zealand, that thoughts of the buns made her homesick. "Just the smell of them made me feel able to cope with the full workload I had."

**THE ORIGINS OF THE ICONIC TREAT** stretch back much further than the CAB cafeteria to the Tuck Shop, a café/corner store on the eastern edge of university campus originally set up in 1917. Tuck, as it was colloquially known, had a colourful history. It had been privately owned by an assortment of bookmakers and undertakers. According to reports through the years, Tuck at various times





## Why is this simple cinnamon bun so powerful, exactly? Well, because it functions on so many levels. Obviously, they are delicious. But they are also symbolic.

housed a basement dance hall, a chicken coop inside the building proper and a set of old streetcar rails that stuck out from the north side of the building. Over many decades and through multiple transformations, the Tuck Shop was the main student hangout on campus.

"It was the centre of everything," **Hugh Morrison**, '30 BA, recalled of the Tuck Shop in the 2001-02 Winter issue of *New Trail*. He actually took a class in Tuck. "There were only four of us, and we would meet with our professor — who was young, himself — at Tuck."

The buns were a definite draw. **Joseph Rapaich**, '67 BSc(MechEng), told *New Trail* in 2018: "While attending U of A, a group of us lived two doors down from the Tuck Shop and enjoyed many, many, many of those famous buns."

Tuck even played a role in the writing of our provincial history. **Peter Lougheed**, '51 BA, '52 LLB, '86 LLD (Honorary), was apparently besotted with a young lady who appeared on the cover of the U of A phone directory one year. Her name was **Jeanne Rogers**, '51 BA. They had a mutual friend named Dunc Stockwell, who arranged a meeting between the two at (where else?) the Tuck Shop. They would, of course, go on to get married and play a dynamic role as a couple in shaping what Alberta is today.

The U of A took over running the Tuck Shop in 1968. When the building was demolished in 1970 to make way for the Fine Arts Building, two things survived. One, thankfully, was Kerr, who ran the Tuck Shop in her role as food services majordomo. The second,

thanks to Kerr, was its iconic bun. As *New Trail* reported in 1982, Kerr was the right person in the right place at the right time to save Tuck's buns, as it were. In 1968, when the university had acquired the Tuck Shop, Kerr became manager of the lunch counter. "And there the fateful meeting took place.... She perfected and standardized the bun recipe, and when the Tuck Shop closed she ensured it would have a legacy by making the Tuck Shop Cinnamon Buns a feature of the new CAB Cafeteria," the story notes. While the provenance of the original bun recipe is lost in the yeasty mists of time, it was Kerr — who ran a test kitchen in SUB that developed and tested recipes for all campus food operations — who created the recipe for the CAB buns that alumni came to know.

Like many iconic cultural signifiers of past and present that we tend to accept without ever truly unpacking the why and how of their hold on us — Elvis, the Cold War, the Kardashians — the Tuck Shop bun is shrouded in mystery, beset by persistent rumour, subject to misinterpretation and even misattribution, and even sometimes challenged by pretenders to the throne. **Michael Hinz**, '64 BEd, remembers an outlet called Hot Caf, roughly where the west end of CAB is today, where his mother worked as a baker. "One of the major attractions was the cinnamon buns that came out of the oven at 10 a.m. Students lined up for them!" Hinz recalls them as being very different from the Tuck Shop buns — they had raisins and were buttery. There is no record of cross-fertilization between Tuck and Hot Caf.

Java Jive in HUB also served an impressive cinnamon bun, supplied by Dagmar Kuehn,

who ran the Sugarplum Pantry from 1982 to 1997. Kuehn notes that she loved the Tuck Shop buns but used a slightly different recipe. (I can verify that the buns were rabidly consumed, as those were roughly the years I attended the U of A and, being an arts student, I tended to hang out in HUB rather than CAB.)

As for conspiracy theories, perhaps the most persistent still in play today is that the Tuck recipe was somehow airlifted, stolen, put on microfilm and probably put on CinnaLeaks by Edward Snowden expressly for use by the Highlevel Diner and the Sugarbowl, which sit close together just east of campus. Some have said that the cinnamon buns are, if not outright copies of the Tuck bun, at least its progeny.

Not so, says Kim Franklin, co-owner of the Highlevel Diner. "In fact," she tells me via email, "there is no truth to the story that our recipe comes from the Tuck Shop on campus. Our buns have nostalgically been compared to them but it is not the same recipe." Their recipe came from Toronto along with their first baker, she says.

It would seem logical to connect the two, given that the Diner bun and the Tuck bun share a certain girth and knottiness. But no, says Franklin. Pure happenstance.

Which would also then apply to the Sugarbowl bun, since it's derived from the same Diner recipe. Abel Shiferaw owns the Sugarbowl and tells me, over a Bowl bun and a coffee, that a Highlevel Diner employee brought the recipe with him when he reopened the Sugarbowl in 1988, though it was modified slightly over the years.

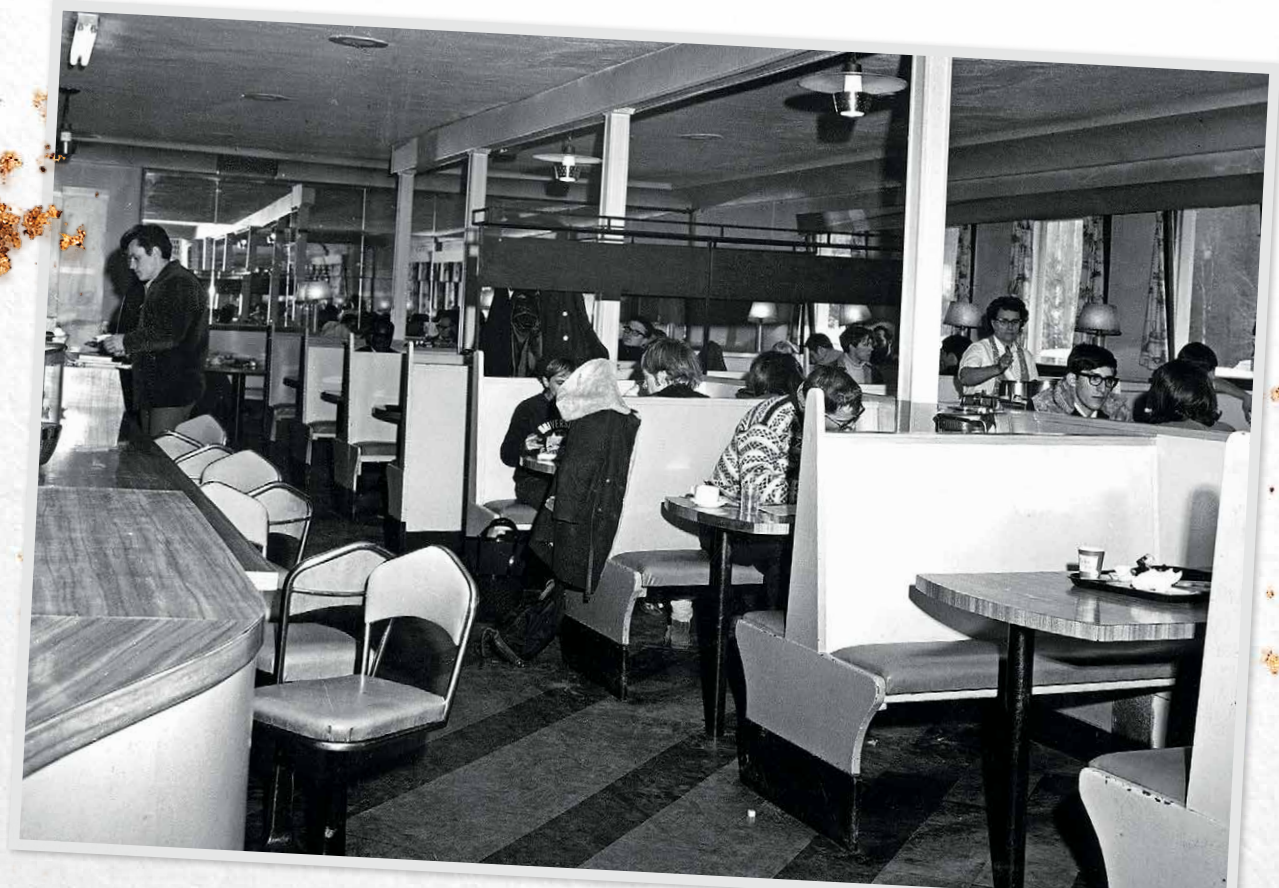
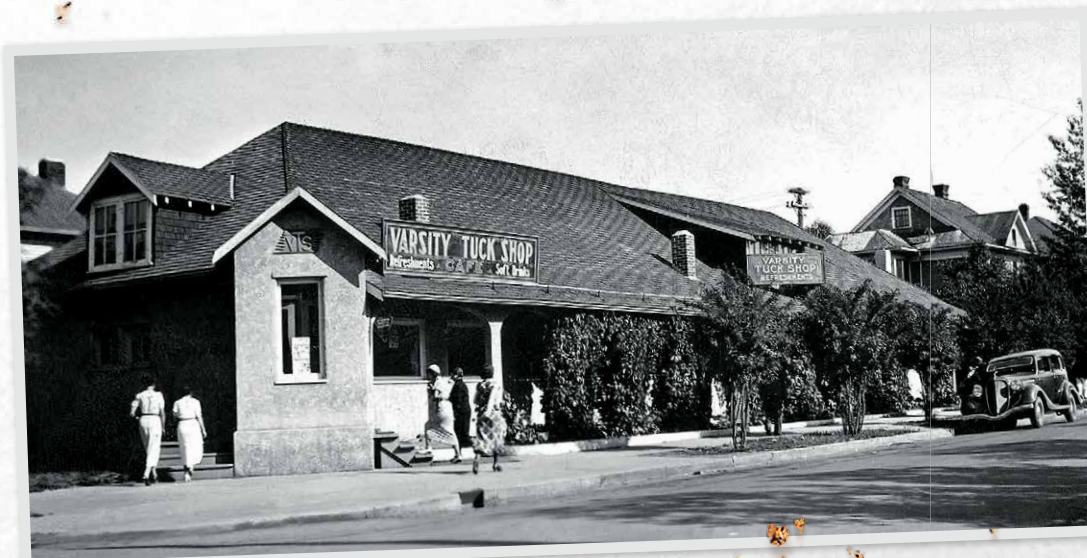
Decades of investigative reporting on this subject have demonstrated that the Highlevel Diner bun and Sugarbowl bun are Tuck-worthy representatives of the art, yet different even from each other, the

Sugarbowl bun being denser and more buttery. Which illustrates just how different buns can be, even when they use the same basic ingredients and originate from the same recipe.

**AND HERE WE COME TO THE KNOTTY** side of the story. In theory, it doesn't seem that complicated to make or eat a cinnamon bun (follow a recipe, open your mouth), until you stop to think about the individual histories and memories that every bun seems to carry along with it: the stories, recipes, myths, rumours and reminiscences. Why is the Tuck Shop bun so powerful, exactly? Well, because it functions on so many levels. Obviously, they are delicious. But they are also symbolic. They are a shorthand reference that allows us to communicate with our past and present — the scent of the stories we tell about ourselves.

Yet as much as we might wax poetic, it turns out that it's not nostalgia that brings on a rush of fond memories when we smell a cinnamon bun like the ones

The Varsity Tuck Shop went through various iterations over the decades. Below, Tuck in the 1930s. Right, Tuck with a '60s vibe.





## If collective memory can be transmitted in a scent, then the Tuck Shop bun was considerably more than a hunk of dough, sugar and cinnamon.

we ate as university students. It's biology.

I spoke with U of A researcher Clayton Dickson about what is actually happening inside our brains when we get a whiff of a scent reminiscent of one of those old Tuck Shop buns. Dickson is a professor in the departments of psychology and physiology and a member of the U of A's Neuroscience and Mental Health Institute.

Smells can call up deeply rooted memories from our past, he says. Smell is one of our most powerful senses and has even followed a different evolutionary path than our other senses.

To condense decades of brain research into a few paragraphs: sight, sound and touch are all processed through various specialized pathways before they can check in at the brain. But smells, says Dickson, go straight to our olfactory bulb, which essentially has two projections emanating from it. One goes to the olfactory cortex to download smells. The other, incredibly, drives straight into one of the older parts of our brain, the entorhinal cortex, which is one of the front doors to the hippocampus and the two medial temporal lobe regions that have evolved to hold episodic memory.

In other words, our olfactory bulb connects to parts of the brain that

process sensation and also to the parts that house memory. Which is why powerful scents can so instantaneously transport us across decades and continents to scenes so vivid they could be happening right in front of us. Other senses take gravel roads to get to the brain, but smells take the neural autobahn to the temporal lobe cortex, registering as both sense and memory.

It's even more amazing and mysterious than that. Dickson tells me researchers are conducting experiments on the connection between scent and memory in which people are given a task while, unbeknownst to them, a positive scent is pumped into the room. Later, while asleep and hooked up to brain monitoring machines, the scent is pumped into the room, at which point their hippocampus activates. The next morning, the subjects typically have better recall of the previous day's task.

"Our brain is screening the movie over again, in our memories, activated by a simple scent," says Dickson.

Which is why the smell of cinnamon and sugar and yeast so deliciously combined can not only make somebody hungry, it can also whisk them back decades to their lives as students, waiting anxiously in line in CAB: *I am so hungry I might pass out, when are the buns going to be ready? I might cry if they run out, man, I am so late for class, is that actually snow falling out there, I wonder if Suzy will acknowledge my existence today, I need to get those overdue library books returned, oh, here come the buns!* Memories ignited with dizzying immediacy and a microscopic attention to detail that is both soul-filling and a bit spooky.

And you thought this story was just about cinnamon buns.

**THE TUCK SHOP BUN WAS SERVED IN CAB UNTIL 1994**, when food services on campus were privatized, says Huntley. Kerr had retired by then and Huntley had moved to a different department. The Tuck bun was made no longer, but it hardly faded from memory. Huntley still gets wistful inquiries a few times a year from alumni waxing nostalgic, and she still makes the buns occasionally on special request (including for Alumni Weekend 2019 this past September). Students who swarmed CAB may never have set foot in the original Tuck Shop, but the Tuck legacy and a vital strand of U of A history lived on in their mouths and nostrils. And, as alumni, in their memories.

Kerr died in 2012. Her granddaughter, Melissa Wolski, has fond memories of spending the day with her grandmother making cinnamon buns. She and Huntley remain among the few who can say they've had a hands-on demonstration from Kerr. At a conservative estimate, Huntley has tied more than a million knots over the years. (She even made the buns photographed for this story.) "They have to be hand-cut and hand-tied. And if they aren't made right, they're not Tuck Shop cinnamon buns," she says. It's the kind of knowledge that seems almost inconsequential upon first brush, but the closer we get to losing it, the more it takes on an aura of profound learning. Who is going to have it in their hands to make the Tuck Shop bun once Wolski and Huntley no longer feel the knead?

If collective memory can be transmitted in a scent, then the Tuck Shop bun was considerably more than a hunk of dough, sugar and cinnamon. It represents a time of life that memory and nostalgia tend to airbrush ever so slightly; a time that, for many, was particularly meaningful. The thrilling intellectual discoveries of a university education. The first blushes of young love. The excitement of becoming who we are meant to become.

What could possibly capture the intellectual and emotional content of such an important stage of life? Books? Music? Friends made and lost? Yes, all of these.

But in the end, perhaps it would be best to simply follow our noses. ■



## Tuck Shop Cinnamon Buns

This version of the original recipe was adapted for home kitchens by Joyce Kerr, former U of A food services manager, and published in *New Trail* in 1982.

**Soften** 2 packages instant yeast  
**OR (not both)** 1 oz Fleischmann's fresh yeast  
**In** ½ cup warm water  
**And** 2 tbsp sugar

Let this mixture set until the yeast is dissolved (about 10 minutes).

**In a large bowl put** 2 cups boiling water  
**Add** 3 tbsp margarine  
2 tsp salt  
**And** 3 tbsp sugar

Let the margarine melt and the mixture cool a bit.

**Then add** 2 cups all-purpose flour

Beat this mixture hard until very smooth and creamy (about 5 minutes).

**Then add** softened yeast mixture  
3 eggs  
**And** ¾ cups more flour

Continue beating until dough is very smooth. (It should be a very soft dough.) Cover and let stand in a warm place to rise until the dough is doubled in bulk (about 1 hour).

While the dough is rising:

**In a flat pan melt** ½ cup margarine

Set aside to cool.

**In a flat dish, mix** 1 cup white sugar  
**And** 1½ tsp cinnamon

Turn the raised dough onto a lightly floured work surface. Let the dough set 5 to 10 minutes to "firm up." Cut the dough into pieces about the size of an orange. Dip each piece of dough first into the melted margarine, then coat it well in the cinnamon-sugar mixture. Stretch the dough piece until it is 4 to 5 inches long and form it into a simple knot.

Place the knots side by side in a 9" x 12" x 2" pan. (Be sure the pan is 2" deep and allow a 3" square for each bun.) Let the finished buns rise for about 45 minutes. Bake at 375 F for 30 minutes. This recipe makes 18 good-sized buns.

**Note: An electric mixer is needed for this recipe as it requires a lot of beating. If the dough is too soft to handle, add a bit more flour. However, the less flour used the better the buns will be.**



SPORTS WALL  
OF FAME

**Serge Lajoie,**  
'93 BEd, '11 MA

Lajoie played hockey for the Golden Bears from 1988 to 1993 and won national championships as a player, assistant coach and head coach. He now coaches players from young kids to Western Hockey League athletes.

SPORTS WALL  
OF FAME

**Jane Cox  
Kolodnicki,**  
'91 BEd

While attending Campus Saint-Jean from 1989 to 1991, Kolodnicki was among Canada's best student-athletes in long jump and sprints. She now teaches in Calgary and coaches high school and university athletes.



Brian Wildcat visits with students in the Grade 1 classroom in Ermineskin Elementary School in Maskwacis, Alta. His daughter, **Devon Wildcat**, '16 BEd, is the classroom teacher. The phrase *Nehiyaw Niya*, visible on the bulletin board, translates to "I am Cree."

ALUMNI AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

## For transforming education in four Alberta First Nations

**Brian Wildcat,** '95 MEd  
Educator and collaborator

Every discussion on the three-year path to the new education system in Maskwacis, Alta., came back to one question: What is best for the children? Guiding the process was Wildcat, superintendent of the Maskwacis Education Schools Commission.

Wildcat grew up in the central Alberta community

and, throughout his life, his mother, a teacher, and his dad, operator of the community's first school bus service, reinforced the importance of education. Today, Wildcat runs the schools commission, an authority that oversees 11 schools and 2,100 students from four neighbouring Cree Nations: Ermineskin, Louis Bull, Montana and Samson.

PHOTO BY JOHN ULAN

Wildcat saw potential for the four nations to be a strong united force so, in 2015, when he was superintendent of Ermineskin Schools, he began to work in earnest to create a collaborative system with a curriculum built around *Nehiyawatisowin* — Cree character — and improved student outcomes. As superintendent, Wildcat

keeps his eyes on future opportunities and day-to-day realities. "Sometimes it can be a tough job, but what keeps me going is the future — the sense of hope for the future," Wildcat says. "If we do our job right, not only are we affecting the lives of those kids today, we're affecting and changing future generations."  
—SCOTT LINGLEY, '92 BA

ALUMNI HONOUR AWARD

## FOR GIVING LUNG CANCER PATIENTS LONGER AND BETTER LIVES

**Tony Mok,** '82 BMedSc, '84 MD

Lung cancer researcher

In 1996, when Mok started his new job at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, lung cancer's deadly reach was well-known, but few efforts were being made to understand it better. China was home to one-third of the world's smokers and an inordinately high number of lung cancer diagnoses among female non-smokers. Mok opted to specialize in lung cancer — and that decision has changed the lives of innumerable patients who have benefited from his pioneering strategies. His dedication means that one day some lung cancers might be treated as a chronic condition rather than a death sentence.

Deaths in  
2018 from  
lung cancer

# 1.8 million

# 2004

Year that researchers from Harvard discovered a mutation in the epidermal growth factor receptor of some non-small-cell lung carcinoma (NSCLC), which sustains the cancer cell. By stopping the growth signal of this receptor, lung cancer cells cease to survive.

# 23%

Rate of NSCLC patients today who will survive for five years after diagnosis, up from 15 per cent in 2001.

# #1

Knowing the higher prevalence of this mutation in Asia, Mok and his team built upon the Harvard discovery. They became the first to demonstrate how molecular targeted therapy — now known as EGFR tyrosine kinase inhibitor — was superior to standard chemotherapy in patients with the mutation's biomarker. The research, published in a 2009 journal article, showed that testing patients for the mutation and adapting treatment accordingly could result in longer life and better quality of life.

ALUMNI SERVICE AWARD

## For going the distance for engineering students

**K. Steven Knudsen,** '84 BSc(CompEng), '87 MSc, Entrepreneur, mentor

When it comes to sharing his excitement for discovery and problem-solving, Knudsen goes the distance for engineering students. He drives thousands of kilometres, shares his experience as a mentor in the Pod — a maker community for students that he was instrumental in setting up — and helped create the Peer of Peers Award, allowing classmates to honour one of their own.

"The Peer of Peers Award is a really meaningful recognition; it means our efforts to engage in the community and share our enthusiasm and expertise didn't go unnoticed. It is even more of an honour because it involves fellow students in the nomination process."

*Ranek Kiil, '15 BSc(CompEng), a software engineer at Apple and a recipient of the Peer of Peers Award*

**"The work I did in the Pod and the conversations that I had with Steven led me to start seeing the beauty and creativity behind everything engineers produce. School became less about getting through homework and more about learning to do cool things."**

*Portia Rayner, a second-year engineering student working on a bionic prosthetic hand with human-like intuition*

"Sometimes, you go to Google and you don't even know which keywords to type in. It's hugely valuable to be able to reach out to Steven and say, 'Hey, I want to program 10 different LEDs to do something. Do you have any ideas?' And he'd usually come back with a few options."

*Fred Drury, '19 BSc(CompEng), was a regular participant in the HackED hackathons and one of the first members of the Pod startup incubator. He is now a software engineer for Cyberrius Medical.*





▼ DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

## FOR HELPING CONTROL TB AROUND THE WORLD

**Donald Enarson**, '69 BSc, '70 MD  
Scientist, professor and medical doctor

➡ Over the course of his career, Enarson helped revolutionize the control of tuberculosis. Here are some of his thoughts on the past and present states of tuberculosis and lung disease.

► **Disease of the poor:** Tuberculosis is a curable bacterial disease that is spread through the air. Enarson's work helped make the connection between TB and poverty. The industrial age of the early 1900s was

accompanied by the rise of tuberculosis. It was tied to people moving into urban centres, "then settling in a two-room shack ... shut in together for months at a time," Enarson says. Similarly, TB in Canada was

a product of colonization and exacerbated by residential schools. "The way to eliminate TB is to eliminate poverty," he says. "But in the meantime, let's treat the TB patient."

► **TB in Canada today:** In 2017, Canada had the world's second-lowest rate of active TB. The worrying statistic, Enarson says, is that among Inuit communities the rate is almost 300 times higher than that of the non-Indigenous, Canadian-born population. "Canada should do better. Canada should always do better."

► **A retirement speech with impact:** When Enarson's mentor, Karel Styblo, retired, Enarson summarized his mentor's work in a speech. That speech grew into the five components of the DOTS (Directly Observed Therapy, Short-course) strategy, which was adopted by the World Health Organization in 1994 and became policy around the world.

► **Empowering the people:** In Nicaragua, a clinic worker following the five-point protocol decided to travel to a patient's home, says Enarson. En route, her Land Rover ended up between two warring factions. She waited on the floor until the bullets stopped, plus another hour for good measure, then carried on to her patient's home. "There was somebody who was incredibly proud of what she was doing and committed — with her life — to doing it. That's the person that should have gotten the [alumni] award."

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT CARTER

▼ ALUMNI HONOUR AWARD

## For bringing Canada's Indigenous stories to the stage

**Kenneth T. Williams**, '90 BA(Spec), '92 MFA

Playwright, assistant professor

Williams' path to becoming a renowned Indigenous playwright has included being a bartender, door-to-door encyclopedia salesman and journalist, along with earning a half-star review for his play *Thunderstick*. Known for his wicked sense of humour, onstage and off, Williams now has several acclaimed plays, which address uncomfortable subjects and portray his Indigenous characters as multi-dimensional and complex, reflecting the world they inhabit. He was the U of A's first Indigenous student to earn a master's in playwriting and he has returned as a professor, mentoring young artists to become future storytellers.

▼ ALUMNI INNOVATION AWARD

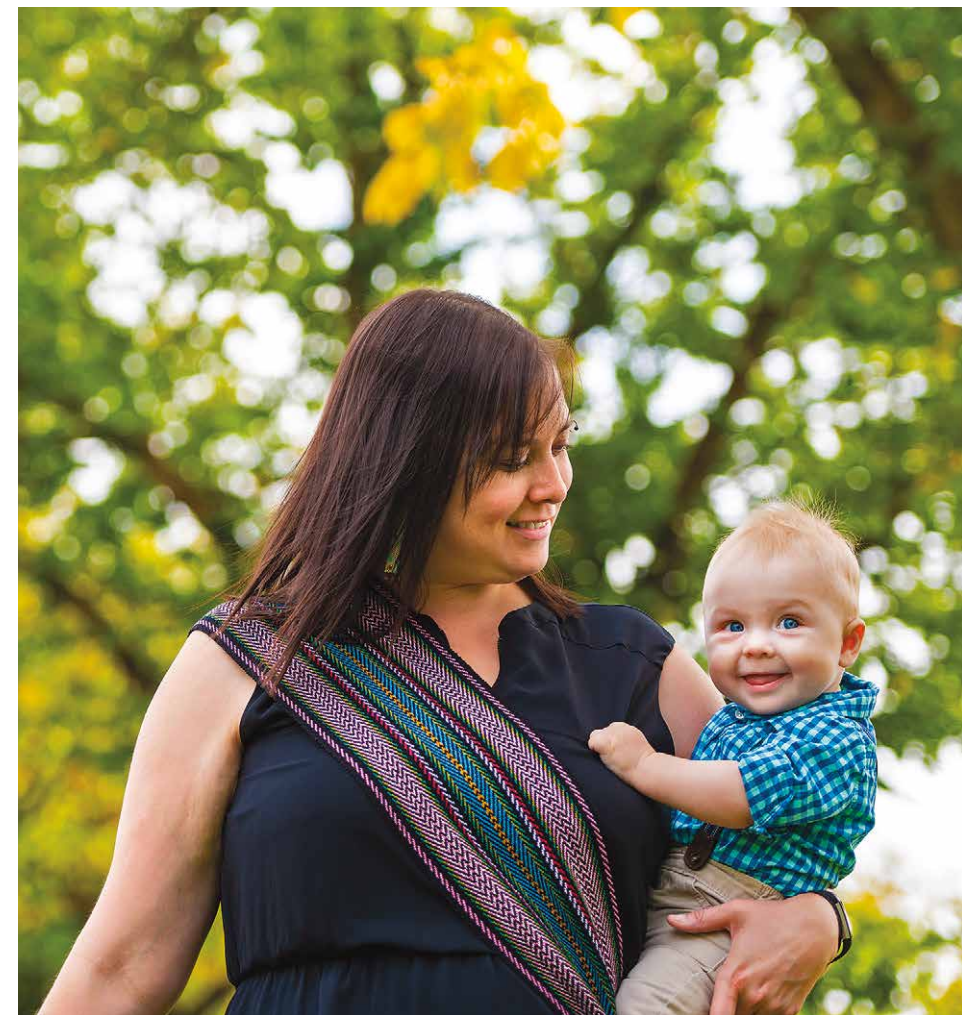
## For opening new doors to fitness and health

**Tim Gourlay**, '09 BCom, '18 MBA

Entrepreneur, fitness fanatic

It took five years of building the nerve to start his fitness enterprise. Now, Gourlay offers some "pool-side" wisdom that he wishes he had taken at the outset. "Go for it," says Gourlay, a former volleyball athlete. "Jump in and figure out how to swim afterwards." Fitset, an app that acts as an on-demand membership pass to 86 Edmonton exercise studios, staves off ennui by connecting users to yoga, spin classes, climbing centres, and, yes, even swimming pools. Once Gourlay took the entrepreneurial plunge, the only obstacles between him and his next venture were the ones designed for his Fitset Ninja gym facility, which opened in 2018. Gourlay received guidance from the ThresholdImpact University of Alberta Venture Mentoring Service and he continues to offer inspiration to members of the university's entrepreneurship centre, eHUB. "He gets his energy from deeply held values rather than from extrinsic motivators such as money or recognition," says mentor **Tom Viinikka**, '04 BA, '15 MBA. "Those deeply held values are loves for fitness and health — not just for himself but for everyone."

PHOTO BY JOHN ULAN



▼ ALUMNI INNOVATION AWARD

## FOR HELPING NORTHERN TEENS BECOME FUTURE LEADERS

**Candice Lys**, '06 BA(Hons)

Founder of FOXY (Fostering Open eXpression among Youth) and SMASH (Strength, Masculinities, and Sexual Health)

Motherhood was a turning point in Lys's understanding of the impact of residential schools, which took away cultural values, ceremonies — and little children, just like her son, Luca (pictured above).

"I can't imagine the idea that somebody would come and take my baby," she says. "The fact that residential schools haven't had an even greater impact, that really speaks to the resilience of Indigenous Peoples."

Lys has tapped into that resilience with FOXY and SMASH, organizations she co-founded that are working to help northern teens grow into "more able-to-cope-with-the-world" people.

With arts-based school workshops and summer on-the-land retreats for peer leaders, teens learn about sexual health and making good decisions in an environment rooted in traditional ways and healing ceremonies.

"The way we look at it is that sexual and mental health are so intricately entwined. You can't have one without the other," she says.

Luca went to the retreats this year, along with Lys's mom, **Julie Lys**, '00 BScN. "The relationship between the three of us — to see that support, what that looks like across generations — I think that's really special and important for young folks to see."



#### Jenna Broomfield

'14 BA(NativeStu),  
'14 Cert(AborGov/Ptnshp), '17 JD  
**Lawyer, throat singer  
and member of  
Inuit Edmontonmiut**

There's such a large representation of First Nations and Métis in the Treaty Six territory but oftentimes there is not a connection with Inuit communities. [Bearhead] wanted to ensure that our voices were also being heard. If she was at a table where she realized that we weren't there, then she made sure that there was a seat at that table for someone from our community.

#### Seneca Crowe

**National Education  
Strategist for the  
Moose Hide Campaign**

She's never one that really wants to take any credit for the work that she does. She's always been like that. ... When she does a project, it's like, well, I didn't really do it. It was everybody else in the room. She can't really say it's anybody else this time. I think it is awesome that she is getting recognized for the work that she has done.

#### Layla Dumont

**Indigenous Relations  
Co-ordinator, Alberta  
School Boards Association**

I carried so much guilt and shame ... It was never acceptable for me to just be who I was until I met [Bearhead] and she told me this history and got me connected, and she just had this never-ending belief in me and what I could do. So if I didn't meet her, I honestly don't know where I would be.

#### Danielle Powder

**Manager, Indigenous  
Knowledge & Research  
Centre, Concordia  
University**

I definitely see her influence in the way that I work with students, with people in general. I'm just trying to follow her teachings of love, kindness and patience. Whenever I am getting frustrated, I can go to her. And she always says something like, "It might be frustrating that we're not moving as quickly as we should, but at least we're on the path!"



ALUMNI HONOUR AWARD

## FOR HELPING CANADIANS WITH RECONCILIATION

**Charlene Bearhead, '85 BEd**

Educator, advocate

Bearhead (pictured centre, above) has been behind the scenes of some of the most important educational efforts helping Canadians learn about reconciliation and Indigenous history. But only a privileged few see the work she does on a personal level. A few of these women talk about how her encouragement, kindness and willingness to listen has helped in their own work.

PHOTO BY JOHN ULAN

ALUMNI HONOUR AWARD

## For a 'do the math' approach to cleaning dirty dirt

**Bruce C.W. McGee,**

'80 BSc(ElecEng), '84 MEng, '98 PhD

President and CEO, McMillan-McGee

Tell it with data, math and analysis. Then sell it with a story.

For McGee, founder of a company that has remediated more than 120 of the world's most chemically contaminated sites, the story is simple: clean "dirty dirt" at heavily polluted sites and protect clean water resources for future generations.

To do this, employees of McMillan-McGee send electricity to custom-made electrodes buried deep in the ground and inject water to help conduct electrical currents between the electrodes. As the ground temperature rises, trapped chemicals become a vapour that is vacuum-extracted for safe disposal.

But the key to success, according to McGee, is math and data — constant numerical modelling that monitors and adjusts for the electrical, thermal and chemical changes taking place in the ground.

McGee developed the core technology while a graduate student in the electrical engineering department, creating an industry that didn't exist even 25 years ago. "We are privileged to live in a free society and culture that supports and embraces entrepreneurship," he says. "Love it and live it."



BOTTOM ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM CRUFT; TOP ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTY LUNDY



ALUMNI AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

## For giving words to a refugee and his story

**Winnie Yeung, '04 BEd**

Teacher, author

As the daughter of Chinese immigrants, Yeung knew stories of her family's grief at having left their home for a better life. As a young teacher in Japan, she experienced the exhaustion and feelings of being "underwater" during two homesickness-filled years in a strange land.

The first-time author drew on those emotions in writing *Homes: A Refugee Story*, which chronicles the life of Abu Bakr al Rabeeah, a 14-year-old Iraqi citizen who was

the first Syrian refugee student at Highlands junior high school in Edmonton, where Yeung teaches.

"Everything is just a little bit harder," Yeung says. "It's an ebb and flow; it doesn't go away after three magical months. Those waves of homesickness kind of hit every so often."

In *Homes*, Yeung shares the efforts made at the school to make Abu Bakr feel at home, such as halal food in the cafeteria, a private prayer space and soccer. "Our secretaries learned to say hello in Arabic. It's those little touchstones that make you feel less like an outsider."

When Yeung suggested the book's title, Abu Bakr was enthusiastic, instantly relating it to Homs, the city in Syria where he'd lived.

"Then I explained homes," Yeung says. "It's not like a house. It's where our heart feels the most at ease."

ALUMNI HONOUR AWARD

## FOR HONEST WORDS ABOUT THE STORY OF THE MÉTIS IDENTITY

**Marilyn Dumont, '90 BA**

Poet, teacher

Dumont's poetry is graceful, dignified and brutally honest as it speaks to the Métis identity and people. From school textbooks to her award-winning collections, the imagery in Dumont's writing is painfully vivid as she explores how the legacy of Canada's colonial history is still a reality for First Nations and Métis communities. This poem comes from her collection, *A Really Good Brown Girl*, which has been reprinted 15 times since its original release in 1996. The poem is part of the English 12 First Peoples course in the British Columbia curriculum.

**Leather and Naughahyde**

BY MARILYN DUMONT

So, I'm having coffee with this treaty guy from up north and we're laughing at how crazy 'the mooniyaw' are in the city and the conversation comes around to where I'm from, as it does in underground languages, in the oblique way it does to find out someone's status without actually asking, and knowing this, I say I'm Métis like it's an apology and he says, 'mmh,' like he forgives me, like he's got a big heart and mine's pumping diluted blood and his voice has sounded well-fed up till this point, but now it goes thin like he's across the room taking another look and when he returns he's got 'this look,' that says he's leather and I'm naughahyde.





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ALUMNI SERVICE AWARD

## FOR KEEPING BOTH THE PAST AND THE FUTURE ALIVE

**Ronald Grant McCullough**, '54 BSc(Ag)

Businessman, volunteer and rancher

To McCullough, being true to your school means nurturing those past relationships and building for the future. In the 65 years since graduating, McCullough has kept his grad class connected with a periodic newsletter and by organizing class reunions. One favourite: the 1994 Midnite Sun Saggy Aggie Skinny Dip in the Pelly River north of Whitehorse. McCullough has also been part of many initiatives to improve student opportunities in the Faculty of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences. Like in 2015, when McCullough suggested a "Centennial Club" be established to celebrate the faculty's 100th year and encourage grads to give back. He bought the first "membership" and helped fund the McCullough ALES Centennial Dutch Fund, which allows students to study in the Netherlands to learn Dutch high-tech agricultural techniques. He and his wife, **Brenda McCullough**, '74 BEd, '03 MBA, have also sponsored the Lilian McCullough Breast Cancer Research Chair. "Keep close contact with your alma mater," he says. "And be ready to give back."

▼  
DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

## For safeguarding human health while valuing education

**Ram Deva Mehta**, '72 PhD

Leader in genetic toxicology

➡ Humans come into contact with thousands of chemicals each day. Since 1984, Mehta has been a leader in the science of finding the substances that could be hazardous to our health, analyzing everything from food, pharmaceuticals and chemical products to water and air quality.

His PBR Laboratories was one of the first private-sector ventures in Canada to develop and employ genetic toxicology tests, with an innovative process that used bacteria, yeast and animal-derived cell lines instead of live animals. "Genetic toxicology provides the simplest way to exclude a number of potential cancer-causing chemicals before going to animal and clinical studies," he says. By 1997, PBR had become the first Canadian laboratory to earn an international quality assurance designation that allowed its results to be accepted around the world.

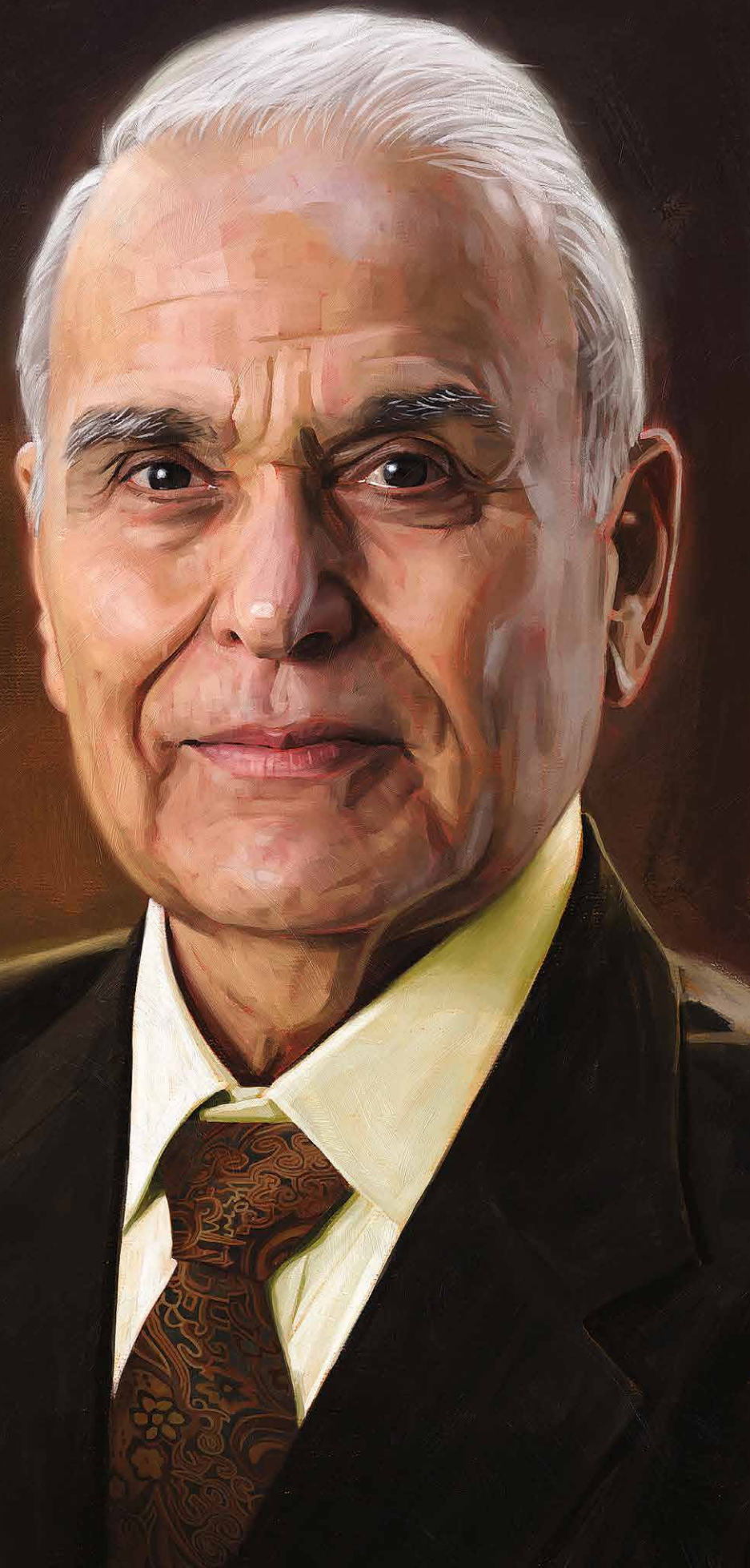
Mehta says he is humbled and conscious that his achievements have been possible thanks to the great gift he received as a child in India, when he became the first of his siblings to be allowed to attend the village school. Mehta's gratitude fuels his other passion: to make education a basic right.

He is co-founder of three charities that make education accessible to children in Nepal, India and Canada. He notes with pride that today the literacy rate in his former village is 90 per cent; 60 years ago it was less than 10 per cent.

Mehta and his company have also helped students gain hands-on experience, through mentoring and opportunities to work on various R&D projects at PBR. Some projects have even had real-life impact, such as the high school test of air quality in a school portable. When students found worryingly high levels of mould spores, it led to the portable being closed.

"Education has become a paramount thing in my mind," he says. "Everybody must get educated."

PHOTO BY JOHN ULAN; ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT CARTER



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ALUMNI HONOUR AWARD

## For pioneering a microsurgery that has macro impact

**Gary L.W. Lobay**, '68 MD

Plastic surgeon, medical pioneer

Microsurgery involves repairing tiny blood vessels, nerves and tendons and offers enormous benefits to people whose limbs or digits have been severed through trauma. Lobay is an innovator who led the field's evolution in Western Canada. A few highlights:

► **An accident and an opportunity.** Lobay had spent six months learning from the world's top microsurgeons when, in 1974, he returned to Alberta and made history. He used his new skills (along with specialized sutures he'd recently brought back in his pocket) in a groundbreaking surgery to replant (a term that means to surgically reattach) the severed arm of a three-year-old farm girl. The child's arm function was restored — and Lobay's career path was set.

► **New frontiers, exciting challenges.** In the next four decades, Lobay had more firsts, including being the University of Alberta's first microsurgeon and conducting Canada's first series of thumb replants, in which full function was restored.

► **A doctor and a gentleman.** Renowned for his bedside manner and his ability to connect with patients, Lobay is also lauded for his humility: working with the team, sharing the credit and persevering until the job is done.

► **Shaping the future.** Lobay took pride in helping hundreds of medical trainees develop their surgical skills. His former students are equally grateful for his lessons on how to be a good doctor — one who listens and cares about all aspects of a patient's needs.