



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

# Our Voices

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

Winter 2020

# How our individual and cultural past play a role in shaping current and future career pursuits



Provisional registered psychologist Randi Sager finds her cultural roots are the reason she is where she is professionally.

“When I embarked on my healing journey and went through the western mental health system, it did not work well for me. I felt like something was missing and holding me back,” she says. “It was not until I met Elder Kerrie Moore that I realized my Indigenous identity and culture was missing in my life, and when I engaged in my culture, it made a large



impact in my healing journey.”

Sager had initially pursued a degree in business, but it didn’t feel fulfilling. She had come to realize the importance of culture on her personal healing journey and questioned why culture as treatment was not being offered to the Indigenous population. To answer that question, Sager set out to provide culture as treatment as an Indigenous psychologist and notes how this has shaped her profession.

“I work from an Indigenous perspective while standing in both worlds, the Indigenous world and western world,” she says.

Sager believes it is important to be allies, wherever one may find themselves professionally, and help support incorporating traditional methods, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members into our society’s systems.

Victoria Bouvier, a PhD candidate at Werklund School of Education and assistant professor in Indigenous Studies at Mount Royal University, believes her life experiences and subsequent decisions have been grounded in one question.

“What will allow and promote a ‘good life?’ My upbringing infiltrates that question because it contributes to how I define what a good life is,” she says.

Bouvier learned from her parents, grandparents and kinship that a good life is being connected to everything — to live a life of health and vitality that is rich in relationships. It is this sensibility that has moved her in to the profession of education.

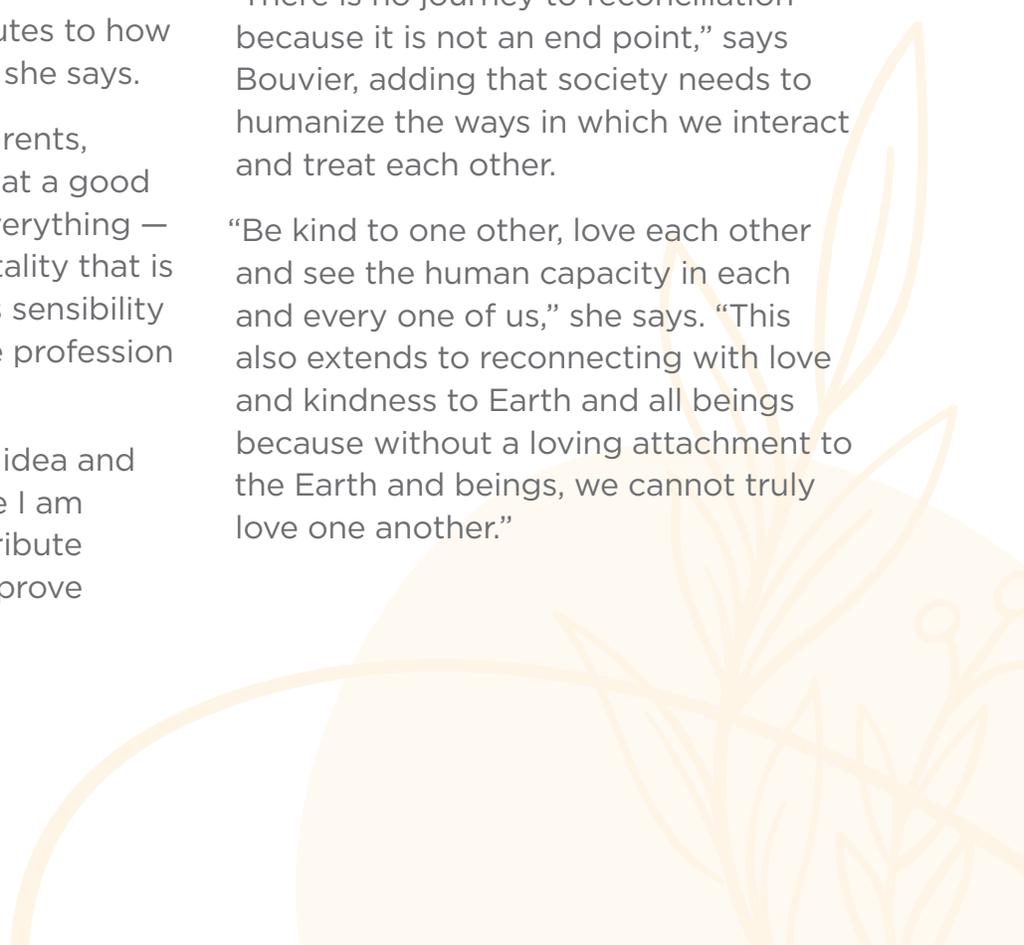
“I have always held onto the idea and belief, that regardless of role I am in, I want to be able to contribute in meaningful ways as to improve

circumstances so we can all live good lives,” she says. “It just so happens that I find myself in higher education, specifically Indigenous studies, with the hopes of inducing change to circumstances and systems that have harmed my people and impacted their ability to live good lives. I believe education is a tool that can promote health and wellness to live a good life.”

Learning about Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, Doing, and Connecting allows us to confront our collective past and engage in reconciliation in a more meaningful way. Since histories and stories have great meaning, with the power to uplift, affirm, but also harm and destroy, it is important to share the stories that focus on humanity, love and kindness when discussing reconciliation.

“There is no journey to reconciliation because it is not an end point,” says Bouvier, adding that society needs to humanize the ways in which we interact and treat each other.

“Be kind to one other, love each other and see the human capacity in each and every one of us,” she says. “This also extends to reconnecting with love and kindness to Earth and all beings because without a loving attachment to the Earth and beings, we cannot truly love one another.”



# 2020 WRC AWARD RECIPIENTS

## **WRC Distinguished Undergraduate Student**

### **MANPREET DEOL**

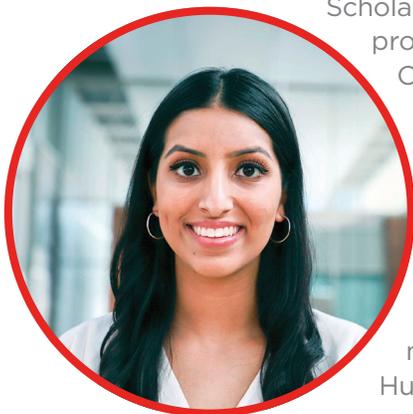
Manpreet Deol is a fourth-year Schulich School of Engineering student where she is studying mechanical and biomedical engineering.

Deol is a recipient of the Schulich Leaders scholarship and is a member of Scholars Academy.

She spent a year as an intern with Garmin as part of their innovation team creating fitness wearables to allow people to take control over their health, embarked on two study abroad terms, has held four leadership positions with engineering clubs, and competed in 10 national and international engineering competitions.

Deol also has a strong sense of community and is committed to issues affecting women. She has mentored other students through the Women in Science and Engineering Club, Special Olympics and Best Buddies. As a Students' Union engineering representative, she was part of the Engineering Diversity Inclusion Action Committee, which is designed to ensure engineering is inclusive to underrepresented groups, and was a delegate at the YWCA Canada's Young Women's National Leadership Summit.

She has worked with her peers in a series of Scholars Academy service projects including Outrun the Stigma Media Optimization, where she helped improve accessibility of online information and media awareness about mental health; Human Connection



Series where in collaboration with Humans of UCalgary, brought people together through face-to-face storytelling, and the Telus Spark Volunteer Recruitment Strategy where she helped optimize volunteer recruitment and retention, as well as build a volunteer database which reflected a diverse demographic.

When she graduates from UCalgary in June, Deol is headed to the University of Oxford in the fall as one of two Rhodes Scholars. She intends to pursue a DPhil in Computer Science with the Human Centred Computing research group.

## **WRC Distinguished Graduate Student**

### **CINDY KALENGA**

Cindy Kalenga is an emerging leader in women's cardiovascular health. She is currently a PhD candidate with Cumming School of Medicine (CSM) where she is exploring how estrogen hormones in the form of contraceptives and postmenopausal hormone therapy are associated with cardiovascular risk in women.

Kalenga is widely recognized in the research community as she was recently awarded the Libin Cardiovascular Institute of Alberta's highly competitive doctoral scholarship in Women's Cardiovascular Health. She also received the Alberta Graduate Award and UCalgary chose her application for the Canadian Institute of Health Research's Doctoral Scholarship to advance to the national competition, an accomplishment only few graduate students will experience. Kalenga is highly sought after as a speaker at both national and internationally conferences.



Kalenga is highly committed to supporting women and vowed to optimize the participation of minorities into research to impact the health of all Canadians regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, or gender. As lead of the Canadian Institute of Health Research's Sex and Gender Trainee Network at UCalgary, she is working to build awareness and capacity in sex- and gender-based considerations among trainees conducting health research in Canada alongside 18 other universities across the country. In her spare time, she tutors high school and undergraduate students.

Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo during a time of great civil unrest, her family relocated to South Africa at the height of apartheid where she experienced challenges due to severe racial tension. Her family later immigrated to Canada, where she yet again needed to adapt to a new environment. Kalenga's diverse cultural experiences have provided her with a high degree of adaptability and resiliency.

Kalenga is currently working on her thesis which she hopes to complete by 2021.

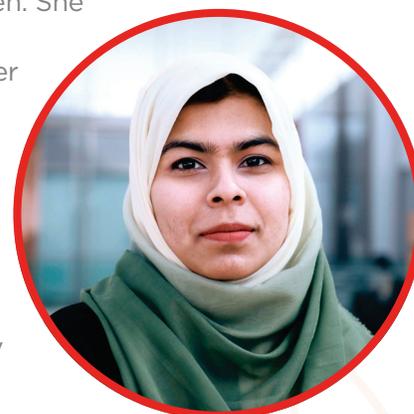
## **WRC Distinguished Alumna**

### **ARSHIYA SHAREEF**

Arshiya Shareef is an epidemiology researcher with Alberta Health Services. She graduated from UCalgary with a biological sciences degree with distinction in 2018. Her work as a researcher led her to discover that despite the policies in place, Canadians were still being exposed to cancerous drugs. With this new knowledge of the Canadian system, she expanded her research to occupational policies around the world to help reform Canadian policies and guidelines. Shareef has co-authored a research paper on the topic which led to three provinces initiating changes to occupational safety. Her work has also been presented nationally.

Shareef grew up in a small town in India where girls are discouraged from getting an education. She was also part of a religious minority in her community which led to further difficulty. This didn't deter her however, and Shareef kept up with her studies and ensured she sat her exams at the end of each year. She even graduated high school at the top of her class. She also managed to secure scholarships so she could study in Canada.

Shareef is passionate about community and helping other women. She started an initiative, TruBeau, to empower young women by promoting body positivity as an act of self-care. As another way of giving back to her community, she has successfully tutored seven girls in India for English language proficiency tests and all enrolled in post-secondary in the United States, Sri Lanka and Singapore.



Locally, Shareef has done a lot of work for Syrian refugees including co-leading a youth group, hosting community events and conducting workshops to educate them on topics such as youth employment and post-secondary education. She is also a blood drive organizer for the Muslim Association of Canada's Calgary chapter and hosted drives during low donation times — Christmas, New Year and over the summer months — to cover blood shortages.

Shareef is hoping to pursue medical school.

## Sheila O'Brien Award for Excellence in Leadership



### **NICOLE MFOAFO-M'CARTHY**

Nicole Mfoafo-M'Carthy is a fourth-year health and society student at Cumming School of Medicine (CSM) with a concentration in anthropology. Throughout her time at UCalgary, Mfoafo-M'Carthy has been working on a thesis on gender at work and the factors and practices that impact employees' experiences with mental health in masculinized workplaces compared to feminized ones. She also assesses current mental health policies in order to suggest gender responsive policies that account for intersectionality and diversity in the workplace. Mfoafo-M'Carthy is part of this year's Scholars Academy cohort as well.

Alongside her academic pursuits, Mfoafo-M'Carthy's contribution to and presence at the Women's Resource Centre have made an immense impact on both visitors and fellow volunteers since she joined in fall 2017. She started off as part of the WRC's volunteer engagement and development team and is now in a leadership role for the events and education team.

Mfoafo-M'Carthy created meaningful volunteer experiences and invaluable learning, notably by hosting Critical Lens, where attendees

watch an episode from a popular TV show and discuss different themes and issues, as well as coordinating the screening of the documentary, *Black Hair*. She was able to create a safe space for individuals to be vulnerable about their experiences, as well as room for allies to learn about their role in supporting others. It was important for Mfoafo-M'Carthy to celebrate her blackness openly and honestly and is grateful for places like the WRC that allow her to do so.

Volunteering at the WRC has allowed Mfoafo-M'Carthy to fully express and be her authentic self while fostering a passion for serving others and becoming a lifelong learner. Her time at the WRC has allowed her to become comfortable with being corrected and hearing other's perspectives. She credits her experience at the WRC and the people she has met there for a lot of her personal and professional growth.

Mfoafo-M'Carthy was selected by her WRC volunteer peers to be recognized for her commitment to fostering an inclusive, compassionate and supportive atmosphere that allows everyone to thrive.

# University of Calgary Address

## FLORENTINE STRZELCZYK, Deputy Provost



Dr. Florentine Strzelczyk was appointed as the Deputy Provost on July 1, 2018 and is a professor in the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures. She earned her PhD at the University of British Columbia, and her MA and Staatsexamen from the University of Göttingen. Her research focus is on German literature, culture, and film.

Dr. Strzelczyk joined the University of Calgary in 1997 and during her time at our institution has previously served in a variety of leadership roles including director of the Language Research Centre and as department head of three different units within the Faculty of Arts.

In her most recent role as vice-dean, Dr. Strzelczyk led a number of initiatives in the Faculty of Arts, including a major internal restructuring, the development of both the Faculty of Arts' Strategic Plan (Energizing Arts 2017-22) and Internationalization Strategy (Engaged Citizenship in a Changing World 2017-22), as well as a task force on Indigenous initiatives that resulted in the hiring of a cluster of Indigenous scholars into the Faculty of Arts.

Dr. Strzelczyk has also led and participated in several institutional strategic initiatives such as the Indigenous Strategy Steering Committee and the Cross-Cultural Competencies Task Force.

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