

# cornerstone

CELEBRATING PHILANTHROPY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

AUTUMN/WINTER 2016





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**On the cover:**

*J'Vin Bull (right) and friends pick medicines at  
Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation  
Area in Alberta, July 2016.*

*Photo by John Ulan*





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*Life hasn't been easy for Miguel Rodriguez, who has faced years of serious health issues and the ongoing challenges of autism. He feels like a normal kid at Free2BMe, an adaptive physical education therapy program. Rollerblading is his favourite activity — from where Miguel stands now, nothing can get in his way (page 10).*

*Photo by John Ulan*



BY THE NUMBERS: GIVING TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Gifts to the University of Alberta today make tomorrow a better place. Here are a few ways UAlberta programs and people are changing lives.

5 finalists for global student entrepreneurship awards from the Alberta School of Business between 2014 and 2016	15,000+ participants in Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science and Technology programming since 1982
4 worldwide ranking of the Faculty of Nursing based on its academic reputation and teaching and research impact	12 teachers who graduate each year from the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program, which provides training for specialized education in Aboriginal communities
95 per cent survival rate for unborn babies with supraventricular tachycardia, an abnormally fast heart rate, thanks to research at the Women and Children's Health Research Institute	
1,200+ evacuees from Alberta's Wood Buffalo region who found refuge at Lister Centre on UAlberta's North Campus	2 hospitals in Uganda already using a new solar-powered oxygen delivery system developed by a UAlberta pediatrics professor to help save the lives of children suffering from severe pneumonia
2,000 young people who have attended Camp fYrefly — the Faculty of Education's pioneering national leadership retreat for LGBTQ and allied youth — since it started in 2004	

To support UAlberta's ongoing success, visit [ualberta.ca/giving](http://ualberta.ca/giving) or call 1-888-799-9899.

Long-Term Good



When you meet Maiya Bull on page six, the first thing that will strike you is her smile. The second thing that will strike you is just how close she and her mother came to not making it through the pregnancy.

Maiya was diagnosed in-utero with complete heart block, a disorder of the cardiac rhythm. Without intervention, she would have died. She and her mother, Rosa, were treated by Lisa Hornberger, a UAlberta professor of pediatric medicine and the Stollery Children's Hospital's director of fetal and neonatal cardiology. Now Rosa is healthy and Maiya is a happy baby who just happens to have a pacemaker. We don't know yet the things Maiya will accomplish as she grows up but we do know that her future is wide open thanks to research that happened well before she was conceived.

Two of our Edmonton-based community partners have chosen to support Hornberger's work and the other remarkable research advanced by the Women & Children's Health Research Institute. This past June they invested in WCHRI's future discoveries with a combined \$54.5-million donation — \$14.5 million from the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation and \$40 million from the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation, the largest single gift in the university's history.

This investment has a direct impact today for families everywhere while also creating ripples that will reach generations into the future.

This is the real power of the university and our partners — we work together to improve the lives of the people around us today but we also tackle the intractable problems that can't be solved in a year, or two, or even decades. We understand that the work we support now will create a future that is wide open for the next generation. ↴

David H. Turpin, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Alberta

The work of building a great and enduring institution can only be accomplished with our university community. To learn more about supporting excellence in teaching and research at the University of Alberta, turn to page 50.





## Open Hearts

STORY BY MIFI PURVIS | PHOTOS BY JOHN ULAN

A happy baby. A healthy mother. An investment in women and children's health pays off

Maiya Bull, age three months, is wearing a pink striped onesie and lying on a baby mat, her dark eyes fixed on toys dangling from the mobile play tent above her. At the kitchen table, her eight-year-old brother, Ethan, sets aside his latest art project and darts into the living room to give her a soft tickle on the sides of her ribs. His face looms over hers briefly, smiling. Maiya exhales rhythmically three or four times in the classic chortle of a happy infant. Her heart is beating at a steady 110. This wasn't always the case.

Months earlier, when Rosa Bull was 24 weeks pregnant with Maiya, she watched her obstetrician's brow furrow during a routine prenatal appointment. The doctor said the baby's heart didn't sound right and another examination revealed it was beating at just 46 beats per minute, rather than the usual gestational rate of 120 to 150. Dread began to gnaw at Bull and she found herself impatient for answers. Her doctor sent her

to the Lois Hole Hospital for Women for further tests.

The Lois Hole hospital in Edmonton is the research and clinical home for Western Canada's highest-risk pregnancies. It houses a neonatal branch of the Stollery Children's Hospital and receives funding from the University of Alberta's Women and Children's Health Research Institute. The institute exists in response to the relative dearth of research into the health of these groups, and helps researchers innovate and address the gaps.

"They couldn't find a steady heartbeat," Bull says of her first fetal heart test at the Lois Hole hospital. "It was all over the place, sometimes disappearing altogether." Later that day, she learned that fluid was collecting around the baby's heart and lungs. Unless they could speed up the tiny heart and improve its function, the baby would die in utero. Bull and her baby were placed under the care of Lisa Hornberger, a UAlberta



professor of pediatric medicine and the Stollery's director of fetal and neonatal cardiology. "Dr. Hornberger found that Maiya had complete heart block," Bull says.

Heart block is a disorder of the cardiac rhythm that, in newborn and unborn babies, is often associated with the presence of an autoimmune disease in the mother. (Bull is being investigated for one such disease: lupus.) As part of a clinical trial, Hornberger gave Bull a finely tuned balance of medications to quicken the baby's heart and reduce damage without creating serious problems for Mom. Treatment boosted the baby's heart rate into the 50s and corrected the fluid buildup, which took her out of danger. It sped up Bull's heart, too. "I didn't get a lot of sleep," she says. An understatement, says her husband, Dave.

But the couple knew they had landed in the right place. Hornberger's research, like that of many investigators studying the health of women and children, is supported by the Women and Children's Health Research Institute. Hornberger's work has provided better care for worried moms and increased the survival rate of unborn babies with some cardiac conditions from 45 per cent

to more than 95 per cent. Recently, the institute received a gift of \$54.5 million over 10 years, including \$14.5 million from the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation and \$40 million from the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation — the largest donation in UAlberta's history.

Bull delivered Maiya at 37 weeks at the Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute, an unusual place to have a baby but necessary because there was a possibility the baby would have cardiac complications shortly after birth.

After delivery, Bull was transferred to the Lois Hole Hospital for Women for her own postpartum health and Dave stayed with Maiya, who was born pink and perfect. But as the day wore on, the infant's limbs started to darken as her heart slowed down. Less than 24 hours after birth, Maiya was wheeled into surgery to receive a pacemaker. Because of her tiny size, it's a simpler device, but when she's bigger she'll get a more sophisticated one that allows a natural range of heart rates.

Until then, Maiya's heart beats at a steady 110, whether she's sleeping, giggling with her brother or watching the world with delight. ♫

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*Research like the kind that saved Maiya's life will continue for at least another decade, thanks to the Women and Children's Health Research Institute and the generous support of donors. To learn more, turn to page 50.*







## Set Free

STORY BY SARAH PRATT | PHOTOS BY JOHN ULAN

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After years of serious health issues, Miguel Rodriguez, with the help of Free2BMe, is a confident, active teenager who loves Elvis and Rollerblading



At first glance, Miguel Rodriguez looks like any other uninterested teenager. He is 13 years old with a shadow of a moustache and the careless gait often associated with youth. As I approach to say hello, he gazes off into the distance. His lack of eye contact reminds me to go slow. From conversations with his mother, Perla, I know that Miguel's autism means he doesn't speak and avoids touch with people he doesn't know, so I just smile and keep a respectful distance.

It's 3:30 on a sunny Friday afternoon, and Perla is gently guiding Miguel across the parking lot of the University of Alberta's Van Vliet Complex and into the Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement for his weekly session at Free2BMe. The program is offered to children and youth who live with all manner of physical, sensory or developmental impairments.

Miguel's coach today, Alexandra Schaefer, is waiting inside the doors. While Perla introduces us, Miguel stands off to the side, head down and ears plugged to tune out the noise of our conversation. Schaefer, an adapted physical activity instructor, leads him to the training room, where a series of photographs is posted on the wall — today's exercises. Miguel indicates his choice by pointing to the treadmill photo, and off they go.

After they leave, Perla sits down with a sigh. She is a nurturing, protective mother but her fatigue shows through her warm smile. "This

hour is my only respite," she says. She rests her cheek on her hand and recounts all the time her son has spent in hospital since he was born.

Miguel lives with diabetes. He takes medication to combat seizures. He has had part of his bowel removed, which led to multiple blood transfusions and surgeries. There is also the non-verbal autism and its array of challenges, as well as endless doctors' appointments and hospital visits. All of this left Miguel very few opportunities to learn how to play — not just the physical nature of play but also the social aspects so important for children with autism to learn at a young age.

"I didn't even know how to teach him things like sports," says Perla.

She searched for a program to help Miguel be active and socialize but couldn't find one that fit his complex needs. She desperately wanted — needed — someone to believe in him. After years of dead ends, someone recommended Free2BMe. Perla decided to give it a try but had little hope that the program would be any different.

The centre welcomed six-year-old Miguel without hesitation.

He was starting at the beginning, says Perla. When a coach gave Miguel a ball, the boy would cry with frustration. He didn't know what to do with it.

Today, Miguel knows exactly what to do when he comes to the centre. He runs on the treadmill. He trains with weights. His favourite activity is Rollerblading — something that terrified Perla at









first. She covers her eyes at the memory. Most importantly, Miguel also interacts with his coaches — a critical step forward.

Each advance for Miguel represented a critical step forward for Perla, too. She has gone through the full spectrum of emotions in the years since Miguel began at the centre: gratitude, fear, pride, even relief at being able to sit down for an hour and read or talk to other parents — people who understood her journey and could give her advice. Now when Perla goes to the centre, she doesn't feel as if she has a child with special needs.

"The people here don't see the disability with Miguel," says Perla as we watch him on his Rollerblades. "He changes when he walks through the door. He is trusting, he feels safe and OK to be in contact with someone and express his feelings." Miguel coasts by, a proud expression on his face, as Schaefer runs to keep up.

"Nobody believed in his potential, but these guys do — sometimes even more than I do, it seems," Perla says.

In 2015, Free2BMe helped more than 600 children and youth in individual and group training programs. Perla wishes Miguel could train more often but with only three full-time and two part-time employees, the non-profit program doesn't have enough staff. They certainly have enough clients and university student volunteers — there's a wait-list for both — but it's essential that the centre also has qualified coaches to work with the kids.

All too soon the hour is up and Miguel is ready to go home. As we make our way toward the parking lot, he wraps an arm around me while looking in the other direction. I'm surprised by this unexpected hug — and honoured. Miguel has come so far. But then again, so has Perla. They're on this journey together, facing challenges and relying on the compassion and expertise offered by Free2BMe. When Miguel pushes off on his Rollerblades with a smooth path ahead of him and smiling caregivers behind him, he is truly free to be himself. [↙](#)

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*For more than 10 years, Free2BMe, through the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, has empowered children and teens who experience disability to become physically fit, healthy and strong, and to feel good about themselves. To learn more, turn to page 50.*





A man wearing a white baseball cap with a logo, a camouflage jacket, and black overalls is fishing on a frozen lake. He is holding a fishing rod with a reel. The background shows a vast, flat, icy landscape under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The man's overalls have a "DAKOTA" brand label.

## Days in the Sun

STORY BY OMAR MOUALLEM | PHOTOS BY JOHN ULAN

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Brad Mates, best known for the song *Moments*, has had his share. But through the highs and lows of the music business, he has always stayed connected to home



Country music star Brad Mates hasn't lived in Canada for close to 20 years, but whenever someone asks him "Where's home?" he responds without fail: Grande Prairie, Alta.

The rapidly growing northern city hardly resembles the one in which he cut his teeth during the 1990s. The radio stations are more partial to Bieber than Brooks these days, and the dance halls that once hosted nightly bands have replaced them with playlists. But Mates, front man of chart-toppers Emerson Drive, can't help but feel like "G.P." still owns a piece of him.

That's true, in a way: two years ago, the city renamed the park beside his childhood home in his honour. But long before that, Mates had been finding ways to reconnect with home from Leeds, Maine, where he lives with his American-born wife, Jana, and two children. He organized a series of golf tournaments in Grande Prairie that raised money for Parkinson's disease research at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry. Mates's support has made a big difference to the many Albertans each year who come to the university hospital to have their movement disorders assessed and treated. People like his father, Don Mates, who lives with Parkinson's.

"He taught me my first few chords," says Brad, 38, who cherished their time together at the family cabin in Sturgeon Lake, Alta. His father — sheet metal mechanic by day, amateur musician by night — would follow a day of hunting and fishing with campfire songs, sometimes playing the guitar for three hours straight.

At the time, young Mates was a hockey player. He showed little interest in music — until high school. That's when five of his buddies coerced

him into singing lead vocals in a high school talent show. "Everybody was amazed at how good these teenagers sounded," recalls his mother, Shirley, who works for the City of Grande Prairie and helps organize the annual golf tournament. "He had a God-given talent."

With that, the band was born. And the entire community was behind them. Teachers even excused the boys from Friday classes so they could play three consecutive nights in a seedy saloon three hours away. Back then, every town in the Peace Country region wanted to book them. When a country music festival invited them to do a set the day after high school graduation, Mates and the group chose to leave grad celebrations early so they were well-rested and prepped for 5,000 concertgoers the next day. "My parents told me, 'If you're determined to do something, do it,'" says Mates.

And they did — with one-way tickets to Nashville, Tenn. "We found out within minutes that it was going to be a grind." First off, the band's name, 12 Gauge, infringed on a rap group's copyright, so the band renamed itself Emerson Drive as a tribute to a road back home. More jarringly, the stars of Peace Country felt like grains of sand in Music City, where everyone they met was there for one reason — to get signed. Record label executives said the band was far from ready. "I'm glad it happened the way it did," says Mates. "That's when we started getting on the road 300 days a year, when we were becoming a band that was very tight and very good live."

In 2001, after five years of toiling on stages, the group signed with DreamWorks Records, becoming label mates with Toby Keith and





Randy Travis, but was soon dropped, shortly before the label folded. The band bounced around record companies and struggled to find a major following in the U.S. The support and success they had found at home seemed ever-farther away. But then, in 2007, as Mates was starting to wonder if the window of opportunity was closing, Emerson Drive had its biggest success to that point when it became the first Canadian country band to have a song reach No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Hot Country Songs chart. *Moments* was a milestone achievement in Mates's career (it went on to be nominated for a Grammy award) but also a source of bittersweet memories. The release of the song, which is about a man contemplating suicide, was followed by the suicide of the band's former bassist Patrick Bourque. "Every time I sing that song, my mind slips back to a moment when we had Patrick," he says.

Mates remains the only original member of Emerson Drive. Over the years, he has dedicated so much of himself to music and the road that he didn't see his father's declining health — until it was impossible to ignore. "My sister and mother were able to notice it on a week-to-week basis," he says, "but because I was gone longer, I would see the bigger changes."

After being diagnosed with Parkinson's at 50, Don Mates retired early. A neurodegenerative brain disorder — the second most common after Alzheimer's — Parkinson's limits the ability to regulate one's body, resulting in hand tremors, muscle stiffness and balance problems. It was

often hard for Don to physically get out of bed. "He is a lean, strong man, a blue-collar worker," Brad says. "I know it bothers him when he needs help." Once, while the family was on vacation, side-effects from Don's new medication kept him bedridden. With the help of UAlberta doctors, he has found the right dosage, and the last four years have been some of the most stable since his diagnosis 15 years ago. And he can once again pick up a guitar.

The younger Mates's donation will help further Parkinson's research at UAlberta's Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry. The faculty's Movement Disorders Program, the only one of its kind in northern Alberta, researches deep-brain stimulation, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) biomarkers, gait and balance changes, and palliative care models for Parkinson's patients, 800 of whom are diagnosed in the province each year.

Mates, whose band released its ninth album last year — exactly two decades since its high school debut — is grateful to have a career and a name that can help raise money and awareness for Parkinson's research. Connecting with his father through music has been an even bigger reward. "It makes me want to strive to do this for another five or 10 years," he says.

When he's not on the road touring, Mates spends time on his acreage in Maine with his six-year-old son and three-year-old daughter. They fish, skate, play hockey and do a lot of the stuff he left behind for a whirlwind musical career. "This place reminds me a lot of home." 📌

*The Movement Disorders Program, a joint initiative of UAlberta's Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry and Alberta Health Services, provides expert medical care and undertakes clinical research in Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease and other neurodegenerative disorders. To learn more, turn to page 50.*







# From Strength to Strength

STORY BY AMIE FILKOW | PHOTOS BY JOHN ULAN

Elexis and Eric Schloss are citizens of the world, but they are also committed to strengthening the place they came from



On a wall in the Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, Israel, 10,000 kilometres from Alberta, is a 1950s black and white photo of smiling schoolchildren. Visiting the museum in 1990, Elexis and Eric Schloss discovered that the photo, an image of early western Canadian Jewry, showed the tiny synagogue school that Elexis attended as a child in Medicine Hat, Alta.

Today, the couple sits beneath another image — a five-metre-wide painting of the Fathers of Confederation, hung high in the lounge of the Fairmont Hotel Macdonald in downtown Edmonton.

This space is a familiar one for Eric, who spent countless Sundays here as a child. His parents, owners of Lawrence's department store in Camrose, Alta., made buying trips to Edmonton every week and visited sample rooms throughout this hotel. Eric and his brother would wait for their parents in the library-style lounge, its oak shelves filled with books, where they read comics and stared at the giant painting. When they got bored, the boys would run around the hotel. Before long they knew everyone — and even started bringing their dog.

"I feel like I grew up in this room," Eric says over a lunch of soup and sandwiches.

What began in the hotel library reading *Bomba: the Jungle Boy*, The Hardy Boys and classic comics like Batman, Superman and Captain Marvel turned into an enduring passion for books and collecting. Today, he's a noted bibliophile whose collection numbers in the tens of thousands and focuses on modern literature, history, military and Judaica, including a true first Dutch edition of Anne Frank's diary.

Whether his weekly childhood visits with the Fathers of Confederation had anything to do with it, Eric's interest in Canadian history and literature also runs deep. It was Henry Kreisel, a University of Alberta English professor and author, who stirred that interest when Eric was a student. After graduating with a BA in history in 1959, Eric went into medicine (he maintains a dermatology and skin pathology practice in

Edmonton), but Kreisel's influence — and Eric's love of books — kept him connected to the arts.

Elexis remembers when they were first married how she, as an artist and designer (she later spent 20 years as chief of design at Maclab Enterprises), was drawn to the rich colours and textures of the hardcover books Eric brought home. So she decided to remove their dust jackets. "I thought there was going to be a divorce," she says, smiling. Fortunately, the valuable jackets were still in the garage. She laughs at another memory: of weighing down homemade gravlax — salmon cured with sugar and spices — with a few of Eric's first-edition books. "He came home that night and found the books in the fridge."

Next to Elexis's exuberant personality — today she's wearing bright yellow Doc Martens high-top boots with a bulldog painted on the toe — Eric can appear quiet and reserved. Yet their shared sense of humour and welcoming nature are quickly apparent, warming up the atmosphere of even this formal hotel on a chilly day.

Eric may be reserved, but he speaks passionately about the growth of Canadian literature. In addition to donating more than 40,000 books to University of Alberta Libraries and supporting annual lectureships in human rights and the Holocaust, the Schlosses established the Canadian Literature Centre in the Faculty of Arts in 2006, the only national bilingual literature centre in Canada. It serves as a research hub for the CanLit community and also features a well-known annual lecture series named in Kreisel's honour. Speakers have included heavyweight authors like Margaret Atwood, Joseph Boyden and Lawrence Hill. Eric sees the centre's potential to be an axis for global research and information on Canadian literature, and he hopes for more support and expansion in the future.

Elexis and Eric, who will celebrate their 50th anniversary next year, have two grown children and two grandchildren. They also have a houseful of dogs, including a German shepherd they found in the bulrushes by the side of the road and named, appropriately, Moses.











The couple is determined to make a difference both at home and in the world. Travel usually involves charity, and wherever they visit, they find ways to support the local community. They have volunteered in Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya and twice in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake.

Last year, the Schlosses visited Rwanda, a country rebuilding after the horrific 1994 genocide. Eric, a clinical professor at UAlberta's Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, teaches doctors and treats patients in the hospitals and orphanages, while Elexis uses art to teach children about HIV and bullying. Working with Rwanda's first lady, Elexis created a comic book featuring a superhero called ARV, or Antiretroviral, who fights misperception about HIV. She spent time in the classroom as well, discussing the book and showing students how to cartoon. Drawing circles in the air in the lounge, she demonstrates her method. "I've even taught it to Eric!"

"We really, really believe in giving back," says Elexis. "You know the expression 'Much is given, much is expected'? I'm sure God's in heaven shaking his head saying, 'OK, I get it already, you're grateful!'"

This conviction has made them citizens of the world and also strengthened their commitment to home. In Edmonton, they have been involved in programs supporting the homeless, children in poverty, abuse victims, the hospice movement,

Aboriginal Peoples and immigrant communities. Elexis is a founder of Sorrentino's Compassion House, a housing and support program for women undergoing breast cancer treatment, and is a part-time honorary citizenship judge who has given the oath to more than 2,000 new Canadians. The couple have been honoured for their contributions with multiple Queen's Jubilee medals and Elexis' investment in the Order of Canada in 2014.


The notion of a mitzvah, or good deed, is one both Eric and Elexis have spent much time contemplating. "We always struggle when we do something [philanthropic] because for it to really be a mitzvah you're not supposed to tell anyone," says Elexis. "On the other hand, you really have to be a leader in getting people to say 'That's a good idea! Let's all do it.' So we try to find a balance between the things we do. I think it's important to raise the bar."

The Schlosses draw on their own strong partnership to inspire others, through their volunteerism and philanthropy, to connect, give back and make change. Their pride in UAlberta runs deep — they have seen the university through the lens of its international impact and think it should be treated like a renewable resource. "In Hebrew we say *l'dor va'dor*: from the strength of one generation to the next," says Elexis. "The university will only get stronger by getting stronger." ♣

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*The Canadian Literature Centre in the Faculty of Arts celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2016. The centre brings together researchers, authors, publishers, students, collectors and the reading public to promote the strength and diversity of Canada's written cultures. To learn more about how you can support the centre and its programs, turn to page 50.*





# ‘Some Days You’re a Diamond’

STORY BY LYNDIE BOURGON | PHOTOS BY JOHN ULAN

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Larry Andrews understands hard work, but hustle alone didn’t get him to where he is today. Now he hopes to give others the opportunities he was given



Larry Andrews knows all about taking chances—it's in his blood. When his parents drove west to Alberta in 1954 from a farm in Carrot River, Sask., they took a chance on a new beginning for their young family. With four kids in tow, the couple packed up their belongings—all of which fit in the trunk of the car. Once in Edmonton they got to work, his father as a foreman at the Texaco oil refinery and his mother as a campaign volunteer and writer for the *Sherwood Park News*.

When Andrews was only 17 years old, his father died. His mother, Eileen, went back to school and eventually became an administrative assistant at the University of Alberta. She worked full time while being a single parent to five children. "Education was continually stressed," says Andrews. "That and hard work."

Two years after his father's death, he enrolled at UAlberta in the bachelor of arts program along with his teenage sweetheart and then-wife, Linda. Like Eileen, Linda valued education and encouraged Andrews to stick with school—even though he wasn't sold on the student life. "I was relatively uninterested," he says.

But Linda insisted.

Andrews may have been unclear on a career path but when he and Linda learned they were expecting their first child, he knew he had to plan for a secure future for his family. He saw an opportunity in UAlberta's accelerated law program that, at the time, allowed students to earn an arts and law degree in five years. It seemed like the smart way to go. "But you were supposed to be somewhat of a student," he says. In his interview, after making a good impression on the admissions officer, Andrews was given an entrance exam, a precursor to the LSAT. "I probably shouldn't have done well, but you know that some days you're a

diamond and some days you're a stone? Well, I just happened to nail that exam."

Once classes began, Andrews realized he was going to have to hustle to keep up in the competitive environment. Luckily, this was a trait his mother had passed along. "She was always encouraging me to go forward." After graduation, he articulated with the Edmonton law firm Matheson and Co. before he and colleague Colin Taylor set up their own firm. In 1975, Andrews once again recognized an opportunity: a booming province like Alberta needed more places to live and work. So he left his law career to create the land development company that would eventually be known as Landrex.

The career change was a big risk—especially with three young children at home—but Andrews' business grew quickly along with the province. His appreciation for his opportunity at UAlberta inspired him to give back—by helping students stretch farther and researchers explore their limits. "I remembered the favour the university did, by considering me outside my grades," he says. "It was a real advantage that I got to go to law school."

Andrews is enthusiastic about the UAlberta programs he supports—the Peter Lougheed Leadership College and the Landrex Distinguished Professorship in the Faculty of Arts, currently held by archeologist John W. (Jack) Ives, who researches First Nations people in Western Canada during the Ice Age.

"If we can find bright people and agree somewhat on a philosophy, and then empower them and get out of the way, things work rather well," says Andrews (pictured left, facing page, with Landrex's corporate counsel, Garry Wetsch).

Andrews' wish to inspire others is echoed by







his children, who help run the Andrews Family Trust. “This has absolutely been at the core of our family,” says daughter Brooke (pictured above), a UAlberta arts graduate who is attending law school in London, England. She describes her family’s giving as personal — a way of showing appreciation for organizations that help the community thrive. “I think my dad views the university as having propelled and prepared him for the success he has had. He hopes to give other

students the opportunity he was given.”

That opportunity was a driving force for Andrews, but so were the determination — and bravado — he learned from his mother. He points to a memory of her from 2008. In the face of the global recession, Andrews, who had become a successful businessman by forging ahead and taking risks, bemoaned the crash to his mom. “She looked at me and said, ‘Well, you better put your shoulder to the wheel.’”



*The Landrex Distinguished Professorship in the Faculty of Arts provides research funding to a senior faculty member whose research and teaching activities focus on community issues in the Edmonton region. The Peter Lougheed Leadership College, which welcomed its inaugural class in September 2015, gives University of Alberta students the skills, insights and confidence they need to take on the challenge of leadership in all aspects of life and society. To learn more, turn to page 50.*





# Full Circle

STORY BY MICHAEL HINGSTON | PHOTOS BY JOHN ULAN

An educational summer program connects  
First Nations girls with their culture



“You need to know who you are. Do you know who you are?”

As her question lingers, the teacher searches the faces of the 22 girls in the room. They are silent, then one shakes her head.

“I’m frustrated. I don’t understand my identity.”

“Go visit your kohkom and mosom,” the teacher says. “Your grandparents will tell you things about the past you didn’t know.”

The “teacher” in this scene is actually drama instructor Maureen Belanger and the dialogue about cultural identity is part of a role-playing exercise taking place at a summer program — the Young Indigenous Women’s Circle of Leadership at the University of Alberta. Belanger demonstrates to the girls how they might act out the dialogue and then hands over both roles to the girls to continue.

The Indigenous education program is designed to reconnect First Nations girls with traditional Cree skills and culture. Empowerment is reinforced often, such as in this exercise that encourages the girls to look for their own answers.

One of the young participants, J’Vin Bull, has volunteered to direct the skit. With her messy bun, baggy plaid shirt, oversized glasses perched on her nose and pen in hand, 13-year-old J’Vin looks the part as she helps Belanger assign roles and block out scenes. At J’Vin’s cue, the girls form a semicircle around another character, who is grieving the unexplained disappearance of her

aunt, and sing the *Strong Woman* song, which speaks of strength and resistance.

This is J’Vin’s second year in the program. At first she was hesitant to attend, worried that it would be dull and strict; she envisioned a week sitting quietly and listening to elders like her grandfather. But the girls do not simply receive information about Indigenous culture and identity — they actively discover and explore it. For the past week, J’Vin and two dozen other girls aged 10 to 16 have learned beading techniques, performed traditional Cree songs, dances and prayers, talked with elders, attended a sweat ceremony, picked wild sweetgrass and sage and been immersed in a culture they may not otherwise have had access to, given the destructive legacy of residential schools.

“The act of [the government] taking away children from their families and communities disconnected the ability to transfer knowledge — love knowledge, identity knowledge — all the things that you learn from your parents,” says Rochelle Starr, program co-ordinator of the Circle of Leadership. “A lot of the work we’re doing is simply trying to give these girls access to that information that has been disconnected for well over 100 years.” Some girls, Starr says, have barely heard Cree spoken before.

The Circle of Leadership was founded by UAlberta elementary education professor Heather Blair in 2008, and its popularity has snowballed











with each passing year. Much of that interest has to do with the program's content, which is delivered mainly in Cree. "Unlike French or Spanish, which are noun-based languages, Cree is a verb-based language," explains Starr. "It's all about the doing." The girls learn what sweetgrass smells like by walking into a field, plucking strands and smelling for themselves.

Since first coming to the summer program, J'Vin has incorporated cultural practices such as smudging and praying into her daily life. She also regularly speaks some Cree at home. But the experience changed her life in other ways, too. "I opened up way more. I was self-conscious; now I'm not that shy. Now I love myself more." She wants to be a film director one day but says it makes sense to be an actor first — it makes you a better director. She also wants to be a surgeon.

The Circle of Leadership is uniquely aligned with many of the calls to action from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including efforts to include Aboriginal languages and

history in education curriculum. The sheer fact of hosting the program on university grounds can help bridge critical gaps in education. "[The girls] feel that they belong," Starr says. "So when they're ready to come to university, they know they have a place there."

Starr has dreams of expanding the Circle of Leadership — running multiple sessions to accommodate the increased demand and starting a parallel program for First Nations boys.

Wrapping up the theatre exercise for the day, the girls J'Vin has cast in the roles of teacher and student take the makeshift stage to act out the skit about cultural identity. As the girls turn to refer to their notes, Belanger, the instructor, shakes her head, encouraging them to reply naturally. Like walking out into a field of sweetgrass, identity knowledge is a process of exploration. "This is not a Hollywood production," she tells them. "It's us here, right now, telling a story." ✎

—With files from Amie Filkow

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*Thanks to the support of donors including Alliance Pipeline Ltd., the Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Leadership, through the Faculty of Education, offers summer Cree immersion experiences for girls aged 10 to 16, such as language and cultural activities, drama, dance and leadership building. To learn more, turn to page 50.*





# Fighting Spirit

STORY BY NIALL MCKENNA | PHOTOS BY JOHN ULAN

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Bojan Konstandinovic always had the will and discipline to create a successful company — he just needed someone in his corner



In 2001, the decade-long civil war that broke up Yugoslavia was coming to an end. Bojan Konstandinovic, then 13, saw stability slowly begin to return to his country. His mother saw something else. Looking around, she realized that even those with graduate degrees were struggling to make ends meet as the country rebuilt. She understood just how long it would be before recovery would turn to normalcy and eventually prosperity.

So she made a choice that would change her family's future and set her son on a new path.

The family immigrated to Canada. It was difficult but Konstandinovic's grandparents had come to Edmonton seven years earlier and would help the family adjust to this new life. Even though he was only in Grade 8, Konstandinovic was struck by the opportunity in his new home. "There was an idea of being able to have something and make something out of it. Seize the day with your actions," he recalls. The young man liked the idea that he could take charge of his own destiny.

It wasn't until later that Konstandinovic would learn that destinies are rarely forged alone.

At age 14, he took on a job drilling postholes for fences — difficult work for an adult, let alone for a boy barely into his teens. "I literally couldn't feel my forearms because it hurt so bad," he says. His grandfather, Giovanni, had found him the job, eager to teach him the importance of hard work. His aching arms taught Konstandinovic something more: he did not want to spend the rest of his life digging holes.

He continued to harness the grit he'd learned from his grandfather, an electrician who often put in 14 to 15 hours a day of work, every day of the week. After high school graduation in 2006, Konstandinovic took a summer job in Houston selling home security systems. The job helped him save money for university but it came with a host

of challenges. He was given little training. He had no experience in sales. And he was being asked to sell alarms door-to-door in the United States, which was slipping into its worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

But from his very first day on the job, his intense focus and competitive spirit made him stand out. While his co-workers partied at night, he buried himself in training videos and manuals that taught him the finer points of sales. When other salespeople took breaks, he seized the opportunity to knock on a few more doors. And while some co-workers made just \$2,000 that summer, Konstandinovic took home the unheard-of sum of US\$48,000.

As he continued working, his fame spread among security-system dealers across the continent. At last, in fall 2009, he returned to Edmonton to start business school at the University of Alberta. But he didn't leave sales behind completely and by 2010, his door-to-door success was so well-known that security firm ADT offered him his own dealership. He accepted. The following year, balancing schoolwork with the responsibilities of running a small business, the 23-year-old started his own home security business: Intelife.

As he built Intelife with the help of friends, he learned business strategy. Alberta School of Business professor Tony Briggs saw almost immediately that Konstandinovic had the makings of an influential and successful business leader. But he needed support. "Every entrepreneur needs help and every entrepreneur needs feedback. And when you have different eyes on your business, you learn," Briggs says.

He introduced Konstandinovic to eHub, a donor-supported UAlberta program that helps student entrepreneurs form teams, develop business plans and connect with mentors and



investors. With eHub's help, Konstandinovic found investors and, in just three years, Intelife was bringing in annual revenue of more than \$1 million. It also helped him grow as a leader.

"It wasn't just the business that eHub enhanced," Konstandinovic says. "It enhanced me. This is critical because the investor buys into you and what you can do for them."

Briggs says his former student has come to embody the ideal qualities of an entrepreneur:

resilience, thoughtfulness and the drive to never stop learning. Konstandinovic graduated with a bachelor of commerce degree from UAlberta in 2016 with Intelife valued at around \$20 million. The company has partnerships in the works with major companies like Telus and is branching into other uses for its home-based technology, like elder care.

Konstandinovic's destiny is now firmly in his grasp, thanks to the help he had along the way. ↘

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*Thanks to gifts from donors including David Leeworthy and First Industries Corp., eHub helps student entrepreneurs from across the university bring great ideas to life. To learn more, turn to page 50.*



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It is by spending oneself that one becomes rich.”  
— SARAH BERNHARDT



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