Simon Granovsky-Larsen examines violence in Guatemala
Artwork by Jennifer Shelly Keturakis, a master's student in visual arts in the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance. This photo of the work captures only a portion of the larger piece, *Unknown Origins*, 2018. *Unknown Origins* was part of a larger group exhibition called *Practice*, mounted in the University of Regina’s Fifth Parallel Gallery in October.
Equality in the face of disaster
Amber Fletcher examines how social inequality can render people more vulnerable and less resilient in the face of climate disasters.

To learn more about social equality research at the University of Regina, please visit www.uregina.ca.

How Guatemalan contract killers fuel the Canadian economy
Simon Granovsky-Larsen studies how violence, transnational corporations, trained killers, and violent security companies are connected in Guatemala.

A focus on financial well-being
Magdalena Cismaru turns her expert eye to assessing the influence of campaigns aimed at financial health.

Discourse Submissions
Discourse is a bi-annual publication. The call for submissions is sent out through the University’s research listserv. The call for submissions for the Spring/Summer 2019 publication is in January 2019. The call for submissions for the Fall 2019/Winter 2020 publication is in September 2019.

Discourse is intended to profile new and ongoing research projects by faculty, staff, and students, and showcase the breadth and depth of research being conducted at our University.

If you have a research project, recent achievement, award, funding update, have written or edited a book, or have been included in a world-class publication that you would like to see included in Discourse, or if you are working with students conducting interesting research, please send submissions to: discourse.magazine@uregina.ca.
If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating, as possibility!

-Søren Kierkegaard, 1843

This quotation from the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard represents the groundwork for each one of us who has dedicated our careers to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.

Each one of us who dares to jump into the unknown (for that is the essence of research) takes a risk because we know not what we will find, if we find anything at all. This, in fact, is the joy and terror, or, as Kierkegaard would argue, “the fear and trembling,” of being an academic.

As scholars, we place ourselves in existential danger each and every time we embark on a research project. And why? Because our ideas may come to nothing, our hypotheses may fail, or they may pose an existential threat to the status quo, and that is risky business.

So while each of us as researchers embraces the unknown and many of us explicitly seek to challenge the status quo, in this Fall 2018/Winter 2019 issue of Discourse, we have featured colleagues who have taken this risk in research, this existential threat, to daring heights. These University of Regina scholars embody Kierkegaard’s sentiment that, “To dare is to lose one’s footing momentarily. Not to dare is to lose oneself.”

This latest edition features researchers who venture into the novel, the daunting, the unsettling, and the sometimes scary to follow their passions. These scholars – students and faculty alike – take personal and professional risks, and daily set to work on challenging, creative, and complex problems. They eschew certainty so that in the end they may find some way to be of service, to help people and communities, and to better society and the world we live in.

Scholars here and everywhere take a Kierkegaardian leap of faith from the safe confines of accepted knowledge into the unknown realm of potential—and what is more intoxicating as possibility?

Yours in daring to lose one’s footing,

DAVID MALLOY
Vice-President (Research)
Denise Asham sits with her mother and two sons as they count in Saulteaux.

With help from her mom, Cecile, she’s teaching Bradley and Cary through immersion. She’s also helping to keep the language alive in her community.

“In Pasqua First Nation, our Indigenous tongue is on the brink of extinction. It’s alarming. Especially because I’m a language teacher at our local school.”

While her mother has spoken Saulteaux her entire life, Asham, now a master’s student in the Faculty of Education, only learned to read and write in the language as an adult, when she was an undergraduate student at First Nations University of Canada. But she wants her sons to start earlier than she did.

“I left university thinking that sitting in a classroom was the best way to learn a language,” says Asham. “But when I returned to my community and started teaching my students in the same way, they weren’t engaged.”

She explains that while students were learning to read and write—the colonial way of language learning—they didn’t understand the words and couldn’t carry on conversations.

“I began talking with Elders fluent in Saulteaux. They spoke about the necessity of immersion learning, using the language during all interactions and ceremonies. Once I started using language immersion at home, I quickly realized, as an oral language, Saulteaux should be learned this way.”

Asham then took it a step further. She started teaching her language classes the same way and soon noticed students using Saulteaux throughout the day.

“Now they tell me they enjoy Saulteaux. And because I’m not focused on reading and writing, neither are my students. Instead, they focus on understanding the language.”

Asham’s study is based on the concept of language nests, an immersion model intended for younger children that allows them to learn in a safe, home-like environment, to be totally immersed in the language, and to learn from Elders in the family and community.

“Language nests help create environments where language is involved wholly and naturally,” says Asham.

These practices are now the basis for her master’s research.

“I’ve created a mini language nest with my two sons and my mother. During weekends we speak only Saulteaux,” says Asham. “Next, I’m going to analyze how they develop and grow in their language acquisition.”

She will also be looking at how they adapt to language learning in more natural settings and through their lived experiences.

“This will allow me, and other members of the community, to see that immersion practices are essential to language revitalization—using lived experiences as our aid to teach the language, and using ceremony as our base of guidance, learning, and teaching.”
As carbon dioxide emissions continue to rise, governments and agencies worldwide look for solutions to the problem of increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in our atmosphere. Lirong Liu, a PhD student in the University of Regina’s Institute for Energy, Environment and Sustainable Communities (IEESC), is trying to understand the harmful effects of emissions while also helping to provide a framework for climate-change policy.

“My research is based on an economic model that simulates different climate change policies to figure out how they impact the environment and Saskatchewan’s economy,” explains Liu. “This model uses actual economic data to estimate how our economy might react to changes in greenhouse-gas policy, technology, and other external factors. We can then use the model to simulate various environmental policies and climate change regulations.”

After completing both an undergraduate and a master’s degree in engineering management and economics in China, Liu started a PhD program at the University of Regina focused on environmental systems engineering because she wanted to take an evidence-based economic approach to solving environmental issues. She got her chance when the Saskatchewan government approached the IEESC research team about conducting simulations for the impacts of climate change policies on different socio-economic conditions. Now, the major objective of Liu’s research is to provide a scientific basis for environmental policy-makers.

“After simulating the impacts of a carbon tax in the virtual model, I found that taxing carbon may not be an appropriate solution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Saskatchewan,” says Liu. “Being a largely resource-based economy, a carbon tax would have a significantly negative impact on the provincial economy. And, when considering ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we must also consider other economic impacts, such as employment, gross domestic product, and social welfare.”

Liu says that she has not yet run all of the policies, but will continue to simulate various potential policies and regulations, comparing results to determine which ones will best work for Saskatchewan.

“Ultimately, the goal of my research is to help find better solutions to the province’s greenhouse gas problem.”

Lirong Liu’s research is supported by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), Canada Research Chairs Program, and the Government of Saskatchewan.
Up in the air

Large wind turbines are becoming a common site on the vast Prairie landscape. And why not? There's plenty of available wind to keep these sustainable energy sources whirling. But the spinning blades are also killing an important part of our ecosystem. A University of Regina student is trying to alter that current.

“Large numbers of bat fatalities have been recorded at wind energy facilities around the world, especially of migratory tree-roosting bats during autumn migration,” explains Erin Swerdfeger, a biology master’s student. “They are killed either by the blades themselves, or from damage to their bodies caused by the low pressure created by the oscillating blades.”

Unlike with birds, scientists don't yet know the movement patterns for migratory bats in southern Saskatchewan. That's what Swerdfeger’s research is trying to determine.

“Of the bats killed by wind energy facilities, 80 per cent are migratory,” explains Swerdfeger, who is supervised by bat expert and biology professor Mark Brigham and his post-doctoral student Erin Baerwald. “And a recent study estimated that hoary bat populations, which is one of the species I’m studying, could decline by up to 90 per cent in the next 50 years if this trend continues.”

But if Swerdfeger can figure out where the bats fly, then she can also make recommendations about placing wind energy facilities elsewhere—meaning significantly fewer bats will be killed.

“Bats take a long time to reproduce, so their populations don’t recover quickly,” says Swerdfeger. “And ensuring that bats thrive benefits the entire ecosystem.”

One significant example of their role comes from their food source.

“Bats are the primary consumers of nocturnal insects, including crop pests. Right now, because of bats, the agricultural industry saves billions of dollars in pesticide use every year.”

Bats have made a big impression on Swerdfeger, who has studied them for more than a decade. Now she wants to help them.

“Bats are amazing creatures. I fell in love with them during my undergraduate studies and they completely won me over. They are cute, they have a lot of personality, and there is still so much we don’t understand about them.”

Part of that mystery around bats is their migratory pathways.

“Green energy is positive, and if we can produce it in a way that minimizes how we negatively affect the environment, that’s even better.”
A focus on financial well-being

BY SUZANNE BOWNES As the University’s new Conexus Research Scholar in Financial Well-being, marketing professor Magdalena Cismaru turns her expert eye to assessing the influence of campaigns aimed at financial health.

A recent CBC report shows that Canadian household debt was just over $2 trillion by the end of 2017. It’s no wonder that debt-related stress is also on the rise and may continue to grow given multiple Bank of Canada interest rate hikes in 2018. The money problems that debt leads to can be far-reaching, affecting people’s mental health, their relationships, and their sleep. But none of this is new.

Nineteenth-century circus master P.T. Barnum reportedly claimed, “Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant.” Another quote, most often attributed to actress Mae West goes, “I’ve been rich, and I’ve been poor—and rich is better.” Clearly, we humans have been thinking not only about money, but also our relationship with it for a long time.

For University of Regina marketing professor Magdalena Cismaru, financial well-being is just the latest topic to which she has applied her interest in studying social marketing campaigns and healthy decision making. In the past, she looked at public campaigns around social issues, including those to curb drunk driving, to prevent texting and driving, and to combat depression. In each case, she has examined how these campaigns do and don’t reflect expert advice, and she has recommended ways that campaigns could more successfully line up with established research.

In her latest project on financial well-being, Cismaru takes her study of campaigns a step further by collaborating with Conexus Credit Union. As the University’s new Conexus Research Scholar in Financial Well-being, Cismaru aspires to reap the benefits of consulting with a credit union, and in turn will share insights that will allow Conexus to be even more effective in communicating financial knowledge to its members.

EXPLORING FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

Cismaru says financial well-being is more complex than whether or not you have money. It has to do with emotional responses around money. “Financial well-being is a combination of objective and subjective measures because some people come out of the same financial situation feeling differently. Some might be okay being in a certain situation, while some might stress more than others,” she says.

Given the harm that financial unwellness can cause—stress, marital discord, depression—many organizations, including governments, financial institutions, and not-for-profits, have taken up the charge to help educate the public on financial literacy. It’s these campaigns that Cismaru set out to examine, particularly in terms of how well they reflect current expert knowledge.

In keeping with her past approaches to analyzing public campaigns, Cismaru chose the transtheoretical model of behaviour change as the theoretical framework for her evaluations. This model rejects the idea that change has two facets (change or don’t change), and instead assesses an individual’s readiness to change based on a range of positions, from avoiding change altogether, to contemplating change but not doing anything, all the way to making significant changes and maintaining them.

Cismaru then surveyed the financial well-being literature from around the world, choosing 14 campaigns, including from Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada, as a focus for her study. To be included, campaigns needed to be comprehensive, well-funded, and focused on informing people about financial wellness. A few of the Canadian examples she studied included the Financial...
Feature

“Depending on which stage the person is at, different messages are appropriate.”

Consumer Agency of Canada’s “It pays to know” portal and a guide from Credit Canada that provided a “5-step cure for your holiday debt hangover.”

CAMPAIGNS STUDIED AND EVALUATED

Looking at the campaigns, Cismaru analyzed how each helped move people along in the transtheoretical model of behaviour change, as well as the benefits of their specific messages.

“We first looked at the audience, the channel, the message, and the evaluation,” says Cismaru. From there, she assessed the campaigns against the recommendations of the financial wellness literature so as to identify any additional content that might have triggered behaviour change.

“Depending on which stage the person is at, different messages are appropriate,” explains Cismaru. For example, if someone is in denial, a slight scare tactic might help to jolt them into action. But if a person is in the action stage and simply doesn’t know what to do, then providing easy tools and specific suggestions, such as packing a lunch instead of buying it, might be all that’s needed.

While many campaigns had elements of the recommended approaches and advice, Cismaru was surprised that many also departed from the literature on financial well-being. For instance, while the research shows that low-income earners and, disproportionately, women, face lower financial well-being, campaigns don’t often point to socioeconomic factors. Instead, they focus on life events, such as the birth of a child or a job loss. Cismaru says that campaigns likely do this because people can easily relate to something like buying a car, whereas categorizing themselves as high risk for financial distress due to low income might make them feel bad about themselves.

Cismaru also found it interesting that institutions were reluctant to use scare tactics.

“Scaring people, then providing them with specific recommendations and solutions to overcome that fear, is something that’s been used in social marketing forever. And it works,” she says. “But designers of financial literacy campaigns choose a softer approach based on reward rather than punishment.” Perhaps a reason that they are wary to use scare tactics is that they can backfire, says Cismaru. The fear needs to be moderate, and immediately followed by a feasible solution.

RECI PROCAL INSIGHTS FROM A PARTNER

Cismaru’s usual approach is to publish her findings in scholarly journals. While she’ll publish her findings in the Journal of Social Marketing, this time she will also share her research with Conexus, a development she is enthusiastic about.

“Last September, we had our first meeting and we talked for three hours. I was pleased to learn that they put members’ financial well-being above everything. That’s their priority, and that’s great for me because I’m a social marketer, so I’m not into aggressive tactics. I’m into helping people to change their behaviour for their own benefit and for the benefit of society,” she says.

Conexus is equally pleased with the connection. The largest credit union in Saskatchewan and sixth largest in Canada
with just under 130,000 members and around 1,000 employees, Conexus has long been conducting its own research on financial well-being. “Our organizational purpose is to improve the financial well-being of our members and our communities, so with that in mind we’ve done extensive research around financial well-being and its connection to people’s health and wellness overall,” explains Joel Graham, financial wellness manager for Conexus.

Cismaru says this partnership means that when she has questions about the practical operations of financial institutions, she can reach out to Conexus. In return, she is pleased to share her findings with an organization that can put the information to good use. “We presented our comprehensive review to Conexus and they found it very informative to look at how others did it,” says Cismaru. “Practitioners can benefit from the knowledge we’ve gained through our extensive research, and we can benefit from practitioners’ real-life experience.”

Conexus executives were also keen to get Cismaru’s feedback on their own financial wellness initiatives, particularly a campaign called #MONEYTALK that features a weekly expert blog, plus a financial wellness quiz. Cismaru says, “They wanted to see if it made sense to us after everything we read. We discussed what is good about it, what might not work, along with other ways of communicating with members.”

She adds that she values the opportunity to reciprocate Conexus’ information sharing by providing advice. “Everybody benefits from this type of collaboration. We are all learning from this experience, from each other, and I think we are all doing a better job than if we hadn’t partnered.”

ANOTHER GRATEFUL COLLABORATOR

Cismaru’s graduate assistant Amanda Wuth has been involved in the project from the start. Wuth, who is working on her master’s degree in experimental and applied psychology, assisted with the literature review, campaign searches, and content analysis of the initiatives. Besides deepening her scholarly interests in behaviour change and policy, Wuth said she also valued the practical learning and even took steps to increase her own financial well-being. “As a result of working with this topic, I met with financial advisors, started investing, and became more conservative with unnecessary spending,” she says.

She was also pleased about connection with industry. “My favourite part about working with professor Cismaru and Conexus on this project is that the research is applied: the work focuses on bridging the gap between research and practice. This type of work is valuable because it has a direct impact on real-world problems,” she says.

Cismaru, who plans to continue her explorations into similar social issues (upcoming campaigns will examine impulse buying and driving under the influence of cannabis), says that the opportunity to analyze a topic so central to the average person’s life, and to do it with a partner that can use the results in a practical way, is very satisfying. “This is a very, very timely subject. If financial wellness is improved, everyone benefits—the individual, the family, friends, the workplace, and society as a whole.”

Magdalena Cismaru’s research is supported by Conexus Credit Union.
In 2010, Simon Granovsky-Larsen found himself speeding through the night in Guatemala City, on the run from assassins. He and the family of a friend had spent several days in hiding. This wasn’t the first time his friend had been targeted for their political affiliations, having survived an assassination attempt several years earlier. In Guatemala, intimidation and murder can be bought from armed freelance groups, a practise that became common following the end of its 36-year civil war in 1996.

That frantic night, after convincing a human rights organization to help hide the family more securely, police officers with automatic weapons and ski masks ushered the group into an armoured vehicle. Their seats were assigned, and the officers escorted them with tactical precision. The convoy ripped through the darkness and into a waiting bay designed for such escapes. The midnight rescue service is, unfortunately, in demand.

As it turned out, staff at the human rights office decided it was too late at night to complete the transfer to a safehouse, so the group slept on the lobby floor. Such is the nature of Guatemalan peril: intense and grim one moment, and bureaucratic and bizarre the next.

Granovsky-Larsen, who now works as an assistant professor with the University of Regina’s Department of Politics and International Studies, says coming to terms with the relationship between the dangerous and the surreal is a common theme for people he has interviewed over his 15 years studying violence in Guatemala.

“When people recount horrors, they are often laughing as they do,” he says during an interview. “There is a social acceptance of death among activists because it is part of the climate.”

He is thankful to do the research he does in Canada, safe in his office surrounded by stacks of Spanish books with titles mourning the plights of Central American villagers. There, when he isn’t doing fieldwork, he is able to find answers for victims, colleagues, and friends working in Guatemala. “It’s dangerous to look into these types of questions.”
“There has been a return to violence fuelled by transnational corporations driven by extraction projects just as much as organized crime,” Granovsky-Larsen says. “Things are getting much, much worse.”

The country first captured his attention while he and his wife, both then recent graduates, worked as human rights accompaniers with the Canadian organization Breaking the Silence in 2003 and 2004. Granovsky-Larsen began studying how neoliberal economic reform clashed with the anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberal goals of Guatemalan social movements, a topic that became a focus for his PhD.

Working with human rights groups in Guatemala, his research showed how the turbulence of the civil war morphed as transnational operations established sugarcane and palm oil production, hydroelectric dams, and other industrial ventures. Exactly how the violence changed is complicated, but Granovsky-Larsen saw connections with Canadian corporations, particularly in mining.

“The law regulating mining got re-written after the war,” Granovsky-Larsen says. “There was a slow start to opening the first mines around 2005. That’s when the Marlin Mine opened.” That project, owned by the Canadian company Goldcorp, made headlines following the death of an Indigenous protestor in 2009. According to an anonymous source interviewed by The Guardian’s David Hill in 2014, the protestor’s widow said he was burned alive by “workers of the company.” After attempting legal action, the family quickly dropped the case fearing they would be murdered.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights later urged Marlin Mine to suspend operations to address environmental concerns and local disputes. Goldcorp ignored the request and operated the mine until 2017. Such matters often become tied up in the legal system, and those impacted cannot pursue justice because of the likelihood of violence.

“There has been a return to violence fuelled by transnational corporations driven by extraction projects just as much as organized crime,” Granovsky-Larsen says. “Things are getting much, much worse.”

In a 2014 mining industry report, Amnesty International states Canadian companies are at the forefront of many “high profile” cases. The study, which looks at various incidents of Indigenous protesters targeted by “unknown assailants,” states, “community leaders protesting against mining are often targeted with threats, acts of intimidation, or attacks. In the majority of cases the perpetrators of such acts have yet to be held to account.”

The International Trade Union Confederation documents the murders of 53 Guatemalan trade unionists between 2007 and 2013. Using the annual reports of a Guatemalan human rights organization, Granovsky-Larsen says the number is much higher when all human rights defenders are taken into account.

To better understand those numbers, he put together his own database of murdered human rights defenders. It contains records of 134 deaths between 2007 and 2017, and another 22 cases by mid-October of 2018. After looking at the circumstances of each case and focusing his research on the archived records of criminal investigations, a trend became apparent.

“There about 80 of the 134 murders in the database looked like contract killings.” A majority of the murders appear to be carried out by people who are hired from outside communities and who do not appear either to have past connections to the victims or to work with formally structured armed groups, such as private security or paramilitary.

“Violence has shifted away from identifiable groups, such as the military or death squads, and towards hired killers who provide a great degree of deniability.”

The reporting of these murders shows common hallmarks: drive-by shootings from motorcycles, stray bullets hitting bystanders, and “unknown assailants” carrying out the violence.

“The [contract killing] work being outsourced is not being carried out at the same professional level. There are many more attempted murders than actual murders. In some cases the killers may be sending a message of intimidation, but in others a lack of discipline leads to failed hits,” explains Granovsky-Larsen. In other words, the violence seems to have shifted away from paramilitary groups dedicated to political assassination to outsourced work done by freelance killers.

“They’re not James Bond, and they are not doing this for ideological reasons,” he says. “They are contract killers that have a skill that was often learned through police or military training.”

For one case, Granovsky-Larsen read the transcript of an accused killer’s testimony as he recounted the hit in court. Last-minute changes to the assassination plan had allegedly paired police-trained killers with an unknown amateur, and the makeshift group then made a series of avoidable mistakes that led to their arrest. Granovsky-Larsen sees the move from paramilitary armies to freelance killers as a reflection of the neoliberal era, where violence has been monetized, outsourced, and reconfigured into a gig economy.

Guatemalan activists also face violence from private security companies employed by mines and other large-scale...
operations. Security companies operating in Guatemala are sometimes foreign-owned, and these companies often work with American soldiers and private mercenaries who fought in the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11, according to Granovsky-Larsen. “A lot of [people leaving U.S. wars] created private companies that started to provide private security—especially for intelligence and strategic planning—to large transnational corporations.”

He cites an example of one such counter-protest intelligence operation at the San Rafael mine run by Tahoe Resources, a Canadian-American enterprise. “They hired a U.S.-based private military company that was founded by veterans providing mercenary services in Afghanistan. They trained the Canadian company’s local managers and their private security guards in counter-insurgency intelligence gathering and approaches in protecting their mines.” Granovsky-Larsen later uncovered documents showing further intelligence-gathering around the mine carried out by Guatemala’s National Security Commission under the guise of development work.

Systematic information gathering can lead to targeted brutality. Toronto-based mining giant Hudbay is currently on trial following the alleged gang rapes of 11 women during an eviction of Maya Q’eqchi’ people from Lote Ocho in January 2007. The crimes were supposedly committed during forced evictions of families from their ancestral lands at the hands of security personnel, police, and military employed by Hudbay’s subsidiary company, Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel. Hudbay has since sold the mine to the Russian company Solway Investment Group.

“Violence has shifted away from identifiable groups, such as the military or death squads, and towards hired killers who provide a great degree of deniability.”

Protesters standing against such industrial projects are not fringe groups. They are farmers, villagers, and Indigenous populations. The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs reported that census numbers in Guatemala show that at least 45 per cent of the population is Indigenous.

Many outsiders watching these bloody land disputes in the media might assume they are carried out by drug cartels and Central America’s feared mara youth gangs. It’s a tempting narrative, but Granovsky-Larsen says the situation is more complicated.

“A mistake that gets made from the outside connects this kind of violence to Mexican and Colombian cartels. Guatemala has its own internal violence that is a legacy of the [civil] war. … Many Canadians see gangs, drug cartels, and common violence as not having political and economic purpose.”

He says while cartels play a role in targeted violence, it seems to be in the same way private security companies cash in on the demand for intimidation. Another common assumption is that protesters are leftist rebels trying to...
Granovsky-Larsen explains, “The Guatemalan right paints it as former guerrillas trying to carry on their fight or carrying out campaigns of terror. From what I’ve seen, this is genuine community-based opposition rather than former guerrilla movements.”

This resistance has grown along class lines and around Indigenous rights. “It’s a question of a small group of very powerful, very wealthy investors partnering with transnational corporations in a lot of cases, who feel they have the right to use land and resources they have access to in order to generate profit.”

Granovsky-Larsen says by looking at case-by-case instances of Canadian companies working in foreign regions, leaders can gain a better understanding of the problems around operating extraction projects “against the will and consent of the people affected by them.”

He points out that it is difficult for North Americans to distance themselves from violence in Guatemala given the nature of a global economy. The Canada Pension Plan is invested in highly profitable Guatemalan mining projects. Furthermore, Canadian tax dollars are invested through the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank to aid in building hydroelectric projects in the country, which have been a source of land and water disputes. The same goes for sugarcane and palm oil harvesting for biofuels pumped into Canadian vehicles and being processed for everyday materials like clothing fabric.

“We’re all invested and mixed up in it,” Granovsky-Larsen says. “The kind of investment Canada, the United States, and Europe has in these industries is enormous.”

While for many Canadians these links can seem abstract and distant, Granovsky-Larsen only has to think back to his night spent sleeping on a lobby floor with a terrified family on the run from killers, and the countless interviews he has done with survivors. Their scarred bodies are a mirror of the Guatemalan landscape, pocked and pitted by industrial operations.

“I cannot separate the violence from who I am and the research I do.”

Granovsky-Larsen poring over court documents in his office at the University of Regina.

© Michael Bell
Flooding, wildfires, and droughts are hitting Canadians with greater intensity more often. But what happens when someone watches what little they have get washed away in a flood?

According to University of Regina sociologist Amber Fletcher, social inequality can render people more vulnerable and less resilient in the face of climate disasters.

“Climate change intensifies the need to address social inequality because the risk of disaster for Canadians is increasing — particularly for those in the rural Prairies, a ‘hotspot’ for climatic change in a region with one of the world’s most variable climates,” explains Fletcher, who primarily focuses her research on agricultural and Indigenous communities.

Fletcher is translating people’s experiences of disaster into concrete recommendations for future disaster preparedness, while working to reduce the social inequalities that cause some to be more negatively affected than others.

This project is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.
1. With the enduring popularity of Sherlock Holmes on television and in movies, the historical context of the writing is often forgotten. Retired English professor emeritus Nils Clausson’s new book, Arthur Conan Doyle’s Art of Fiction: A Revaluation (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), explores what the work of Doyle reveals about the attitudes in Victorian England towards crime, class, empire, and gender, bringing readers back to Doyle’s works with a deeper understanding and a greater enjoyment.

2. Covering four decades in the often violent and racially divided Windy City, Rape in Chicago: Race, Myth, and the Courts (University of Illinois Press, 2018), explores and challenges the role of the state in affording protections to victims and the accused in rape cases. In this 2018 paperback re-release, Dawn Flood, Campion College associate professor of history, uses legal studies, medical history, and personal accounts to show how defence strategies evolved in the broader cultural landscape with respect to sex and racial stereotypes between the 1930s and the 1970s.

3. Aspiring author Beck Blades writes ten fiction stories with the dream of having his work adapted for the big screen to no avail. Upon releasing his 11th story, his literary agent secures a movie deal with a big production house, but Beck is oblivious to her true intentions. End It by the Gun (Black Rose Writing, 2018), is a psychological thriller by Kenechukwu Obi, a business administration student in his final year of studies.
Dawn Flood’s *Rape in Chicago* examines how stereotypes changed legal defence strategies in rape cases over a 40-year period, from the ‘30s to the ‘70s.

4. The longstanding debate about whether there is a Canadian identity has been fuelled by imperialism, cultural and racial division, and stereotypes. History professor Raymond Blake co-edits *Celebrating Canada: Commemorations, Anniversaries, and National Symbols* (University of Toronto Press, 2018), in which he examines government-sponsored celebrations that have attempted to shape a Canadian identity, and the individuals and groups that have resisted them.

5. Twentieth-century French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty believed that adversity, ambiguity, and changing relationships shape the political landscape and how people act. *La politique dans l’adversité: Merleau-Ponty aux marges de la philosophie* (MétisPresses, 2018), by La Cité assistant professor Jérôme Melançon, is the first book to take into account how the political and historical context of the time shaped Merleau-Ponty’s work and views.

6. Emerging in the 18th century, the Gothic movement disrupted politically and socially acceptable boundaries, bringing the dark side of human desires to light. William Blake, a writer of this movement, is concerned with taboos and the consequences of their violation. Chris Bundock, assistant professor of English, co-edits *William Blake’s Gothic Imagination: Bodies of Horror* (Manchester University Press, 2018), a volume that combines critiques of Blake’s work with Gothic studies in an effort to advance thinking in both fields.
More than $558 million in funding through the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) means that nearly 4,300 researchers and students throughout Canada will have the means to pursue world-leading research.

As part of this historic investment, the Honourable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, on behalf of Minister Duncan, announced more than $4 million in funding for 18 University of Regina science and engineering scholars through the NSERC Discovery Grant and Scholarship program.

“Congratulations to the U of R for fostering an atmosphere where curiosity and bright minds can flourish so successfully. The investments we are making today in this University will give researchers and students the foundation they need to explore the new avenues of world-leading research.”

1. During Congress 2018, the Honourable Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science and Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, announced $158.4 million for 808 research projects across Canada funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

“Thanks to the work of the hundreds of researchers being recognized today, Canadians can gain a better understanding of the world we live in. It is my honour to support these talented researchers and help them push the boundaries of knowledge that will mean a better environment, better health, a better society, and a better economy for all Canadians,” said Duncan.

Also present was SSHRC President Ted Hewitt.

“SSHRC-funded scholars and researchers can provide guidance on important societal changes.”

Through these projects, SSHRC is helping to develop talent and to connect Canadian and international researchers and partners across disciplines and sectors to support world-class research that provides critical insights on the challenges of today and tomorrow,” said Hewitt.

Duncan highlighted the work of Margot Hurlbert and Sheila Petty, two University of Regina researchers who received the new SSHRC funding.

Hurlbert, who received $245,045 for her project, said SSHRC’s support will help the research team focus on reducing vulnerability to climate change, specifically in relation to a community’s decisions respecting water management issues.

“I’d like to extend a big thank you to SSHRC for making this research possible,” said Hurlbert, a professor at the Centre for the Study of Science and Innovation Policy at the University’s Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. “Together with our students, we are a passionate team of eight interdisciplinary scientists who are excited to partner with the Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds (SAW) in this project.”

Petty, a professor in the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance (MAP), was awarded $79,167 for her project, A cinematic history of the origins and legacy of la marche pour l’égalité et contre la racisme in France.

MAP’s Francesco Freddolini (Luther College), who was unable to attend the announcement, received $78,805 for his project, Regal alterities: imagining exotic rulers and ambassadors in early modern Europe.

The largest investment in research for 2018 was announced in early October by Minister Duncan.
discovery that will benefit all of us,” said Minister Goodale.

The array of research supported by this round of significant NSERC funding ranges from AI to carbon capture, and from how our brains work to enhancing oil recovery.

One of the grant recipients, an expert in paleolimnology, Peter Leavitt, received NSERC support for researching landscape effects of nitrogen on aquatic ecosystems. His work also includes the study of global warming and its impact on lakes and their hydrological variability.

“I work with mud. The fossils in that mud at the bottom of lakes can tell us about the past and also about the future,” said Leavitt, a Canada Research Chair in Environmental Change and Society. “We want to understand how droughts occur on the Prairies and we want to understand water quality of the past to see how it has changed, because how can we fix the lakes if we don’t know what fixed looks like?”

Leavitt, who works directly with Indigenous peoples, notes that NSERC funding helps address the issue of respecting Indigenous knowledge of the land in the course of his research. “We must honour the obligations within the treaties to move society forward. We’re trying to understand the role of fresh water in our society, and honouring the treaties to create that reciprocity is essential.”

Summing up the impact of such research, Minister Goodale said, “The knowledge you add at the University of Regina lifts the human condition here and around the world.”

3. People who experience depression will often go through five or more episodes in their lifetime. Yet, treatments for recurrent depression are only moderately effective. Psychology assistant professor Shadi Beshai was awarded an Establishment Grant worth $117,539 from the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF) to study whether self-compassion can help.

“People currently living with depression, or who have suffered from an episode in the past, are often very self-critical. Self-compassion is defined as being moved by your own suffering and having the desire to alleviate that suffering for yourself,” explains Beshai.

Beshai’s team will use an intervention designed to increase people’s capacity to be self-compassionate, which they predict will make it less likely for people to relapse into additional full-blown depressive episodes.

“Self-compassion may be a powerful antidote against future depressive episodes.”

4. A SHRF Establishment grant worth $117,213 is helping social work’s Kara Fletcher examine whether Saskatchewan’s current service offerings for those suffering with addictions and mental health issues are meeting the needs of the communities they serve.

“I’m interested in finding out why some people find treatment helpful and others do not,” says Fletcher.

While there are well-known barriers to treatment, such as long wait times, Fletcher’s work will help to establish if there are systemic barriers to access or continued involvement in treatment, whether there are particular demographics that are predictive of a particular treatment trajectory, and what approaches work best for service users.

The study will also include interviews with individuals who benefited from mental health and addiction services, those who did not, those who left treatment early, and those who rated their sessions low. This information will help create a clear profile of service users and their experiences.

“This is a significant part of the project, because it’s coming from individuals with direct experience with our provincially funded mental health and addictions services about what their experiences and challenges were.”
INNOVATION IN PRAIRIE POTASH

Potash is a billion-dollar industry and Saskatchewan is the world leader in its production and sales. The province accounts for more than 45 per cent of known potash resources globally, making efficient potash processing practices important for the economy, the environment, and the world food supply. This means that innovation is at the forefront of the mining industry, and the University of Regina is trying to help.

“I decided to try using polymeric reagents in an effort to affect potash flotation in a more environmentally friendly way,” explains environmental systems professor Stephanie Young.

Young proposed her idea during the inaugural North American AIMday (Academia Industry Meeting day), an event akin to speed dating that matches industry need with research expertise.

Prior to AIMday, companies identified challenges that needed solutions. Then, during one-day workshops, groups of academic experts tackled the problems. They were allotted one hour to discuss possible solutions, and then they submitted short proposals.

Nutrien, a Saskatoon-based fertilizer company, and one of the largest potash producers in the world, posed a question about enhancing the potash extraction process.

“As an expert in water and wastewater treatment, not potash flotation, I took a chance when I decided to tackle industry’s question,” says Young. “AIMday provided a good opportunity to work in a new and exciting area.”

Others are glad she took the chance, too.

“We are focused on innovation and continually enhancing what we do,” says Courtney Rohachuk, senior process engineer at Nutrien. “So we are excited to have partnered with Stephanie Young on this project because her findings could positively affect Nutrien, the potash industry as a whole, and the environment.”

Stephanie Young’s AIMday project is supported by the International Minerals Innovation Institute (IMII).
The University of Regina and Carmichael Outreach are working together towards a homelessness and harm-reduction strategy.

A ROADMAP FOR REGINA

Gabriela Novotna is reflective as she recounts a recent trip to a managed alcohol program (MAP) in Edmonton.

A multi-site residence, it provides housing and alcohol for people with severe alcohol addictions.

“Managed alcohol programs go beyond tolerating alcohol consumption. They are part of a homelessness and harm-reduction strategy,” says Novotna, an associate professor of social work at the University of Regina. “The onsite staff monitor and dispense regulated doses of alcohol, and despite what many think, people in these programs financially contribute to the provided alcohol.”

She adds that the MAP site she visited “was calm and well organized, with residents engaged in cultural programming, conversations, and card games.” This supportive environment stood in stark contrast to an area she walked through only a few blocks away, where people were living precariously, pushing their belongings in shopping carts, many visibly inebriated.

It’s these contradictory images that prompted her to reach out to Regina’s Carmichael Outreach, an organization that works with the city’s homeless population.

“They wanted to know if research supported implementing a MAP in Regina,” says Novotna, a long-time addictions researcher who worked with nursing student Erin Nielsen on this project.

Their research showed that people involved in MAPs reduced their drinking, had fewer injuries, and had less contact with emergency rooms and police.

“We found that harm reduction, and, in particular, MAPs, are cost-effective for the community, and, more importantly, help to bring dignity to those who are vulnerable,” says Novotna.

She adds that harm reduction is part of a spectrum of strategies for alcohol addictions, which also include abstinence and residential treatments.

Rochelle Berenyi, communications, advocacy, and projects officer at Carmichael Outreach, says as someone who works closely with the community, the research confirmed what she’s known.

“Carmichael’s goal with this project is to help the people we work with by reducing the stigma of addictions,” says Berenyi. “And we hope this research can help us do that.”

Carmichael Outreach also aims to minimize the use of non-beverage alcohol.

“We’ve seen people die from using non-beverage alcohol, such as hairspray and Lysterine, and MAPs can minimize that risk and encourage people to stop using them,” says Berenyi.

Novotna explains that MAPs are available for only a very vulnerable segment of the population that has chronic and severe alcoholism, engages in risky behaviours, has tried detox, and is chronically homeless.

“Managed alcohol programs should be part of a response to homelessness in Regina,” says Novotna, adding, “Simply put, MAPs are a picture of humanity.”

This research is supported by the Regina Public Interest Research Group (RPIRG) and the University of Regina’s Community Research Unit.
RESTING POTENTIAL

Responding to the way most people now watch content, a University of Regina professor is releasing his new feature film online.

Mark Wihak, associate professor in the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance, has written, and is now directing and producing, Resting Potential. The feature will be released online in nine chapters in fall 2019.

“We consume content differently now,” explains Wihak. “We watch a lot of movies online, and, when we’re on our devices, our attention spans are shorter than when we go and see movies in theatres.”

He adds that online platforms offer new opportunities for filmmakers.

“When you’re making films for TV or for theatrical release, running times have firm parameters,” explains Wihak. “In the online environment, running time is up to the creator.”

Kaitlyn Semple, who plays the film’s main character, Lucy, says this format also makes the content accessible to more people.

Semple, who majored in theatre and graduated from the University in 2009 with a bachelor of fine arts, says, “Any time I tell someone we’re releasing Resting Potential online, they say, ‘Amazing! I’ll actually get to see it!’”

She adds that although screenings are special and exciting nights, “online content provides a quick way to reach a far bigger audience.”

While Wihak won’t divulge much about the plot, he does reveal that the focus is on Lucy, who experiences profound changes because of her beliefs.

“The film is an intersection of different sorts of beliefs – spiritual, scientific, and political – and how they affect our behaviour,” says Wihak.

Semple says she jumped at the opportunity to land the lead role in an independent film. She also admits that playing the character has changed her.

“Walking in Lucy’s shoes has made me a more curious and compassionate person,” says Semple.

Resting Potential is created by a team of actors, cinematographers, lighting designers, a sound and design team, a composer, and an editor – many of the creative contributors behind the film are alumni of the University of Regina’s film department.

Mark Wihak’s project is supported by the Humanities Research Institute, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the President’s Seed Fund, the Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative, and ACTRA.
The 24/7 news cycle is virtually impossible to escape – and it’s getting harder to decipher fact from fiction.

But it is possible, says Gordon Pennycook, cognitive psychologist at the University of Regina. It just takes a bit of effort.

“Fake news can be hard to spot, so if you find yourself wanting to believe something, question it. Then check your sources,” advises Pennycook, who completed a Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship at Yale.

An analytic reasoning expert, Pennycook’s goal is to produce research that is directly relevant to journalists and social media companies, leading to the development of public policy related to social media.

To learn more about the impactful research being done at the University of Regina, please visit www.uregina.ca.
1. Allyson Stevenson is the University’s newest Canada Research Chair (CRC). Her CRC in Indigenous Peoples and Global Social Justice focuses on raising the global profile of the human rights of Indigenous women and children, who are among the world’s most marginalized people. Centring their experiences reflects her larger goal of seeing social justice in research as a way of actualizing justice for Indigenous communities. An adoptee and a historian, Stevenson aims to gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous child removal systems tied to government-based efforts at assimilation. She says, “While the methods of removing Indigenous children have changed over time, whether through residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, or foster care, what remains consistent is that Indigenous children have been and continue to be removed from their families.” Stevenson will also examine women’s political organizing, highlighting their role in advancing Indigenous human rights in national and international realms.

2. Education professor Alec Couros is a technological guide and mentor for his students as they navigate the labyrinth of digital literacies, technology integration, and digital citizenship. His innovative approach was recognized in June when he received the 2018 D2L Innovation Award in Teaching and Learning from the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, an internationally recognized organization that advances the practice and scholarship of university teaching. The award recognizes those at the forefront of innovation within their academic institutions and higher education more broadly. Couros earned the award for his technology-facilitated student engagement assignments. “This award means a lot to me because it recognizes the peer-driven pedagogical approach that I use in my classes. This approach demands a high degree of student participation, and I’ve been extremely fortunate to have worked alongside passionate students who transform our courses into vibrant communities of learning,” he says.

3. Newly appointed Banting Postdoctoral Fellow, Ranjan Datta, is working with Indigenous communities to learn how to best mitigate the negative impacts of pipeline leaks on their communities. His project also includes generating and sharing knowledge about the impacts of energy exploration and extraction on Indigenous peoples and their resiliency. Datta says that the pipeline leaks that have affected several Indigenous communities have been costly to human life and infrastructure. “While pipeline projects bring income to some, and wealth to a few, their impact...
on the environment and on the lives of many Indigenous groups is profoundly concerning.” He adds that Indigenous communities are more vulnerable to pipeline leaks than larger urban centres, but have less capacity to mitigate them, “Indigenous people's meaningful engagement and perspectives are crucial in their energy management.” Ultimately, Datta, who works out of the University’s Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, will also create better energy management strategies and policies.

4 & 5. University of Regina historian Raymond Blake and environmental biologist Peter Leavitt have been elected to the prestigious Royal Society of Canada. They join distinguished scholars, artists, and scientists from across the country who have made remarkable contributions to the arts, humanities, and sciences, as well as Canadian public life.

Blake’s innovative historical research has opened up new ways of thinking about Canada. His scholarship on federalism, social welfare, politics, and national identity has focused on the interplay between statecraft, citizenship, and political leadership to show the complexity of public policy-making in modern Canada. He is the author and editor of more than 20 books, including several acclaimed monographs, explaining how notions of citizenship have been a powerful force in either creating political crises or solving them. Blake, a history professor in the Faculty of Arts, has just completed a five-year term as head of the Department of History. A new book, Where Once They Stood: Newfoundland’s Rocky Road to Confederation (University of Regina Press), is forthcoming in March 2019.

Leavitt, a Canada Research Chair in Environmental Change and Society, has advanced our understanding of how climate change and human activities interact to degrade Canada’s surface waters. A global expert in the field of paleolimnology, Leavitt has investigated how lakes are impacted by global warming, hydrological variability, and societal development associated with food production, resource extraction, and urbanization. By combining whole-lake studies with innovative fossil analyses, Leavitt’s research has led to improved strategies to protect and sustain aquatic ecosystems. Leavitt, a professor in the Faculty of Science, is also the director of the University’s Institute of Environmental Change and Society, and recently completed six years as director of the Canadian Institute of Ecology and Evolution.

Allyson Stevenson, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Peoples and Global Social Justice, is focused on raising the global profile of the human rights of Indigenous women and children.