



Assiniboine

THE FIRST 60

BY DIANE NELSON



ASSINIBOINE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Throughout her 34-year career as a print journalist and broadcaster, Diane Nelson has regarded the telling of people's stories as both a wonderful privilege and a tremendous responsibility.

A lifelong devotee of the written and spoken word, Nelson began her media career as a copywriter, radio announcer and voice-over artist at CKX Radio and Television. She was a full-time journalist at The Brandon

Sun for 15 years, specializing in arts/lifestyles features and covering the medical beat as the newspaper's health reporter.

Even after joining the Assiniboine faculty, Nelson continued writing for the Sun in several capacities: as the author of the weekly Curbside and Sun Shines features, as well as, most notably, the creator of Vine Lines, a weekly wine column that ran for 12 years.

While at The Brandon Sun, Nelson was the recipient of the Thomson Newspapers International Award for deadline writing in 1996 and was the winner of three Manitoba Human Rights Journalism Awards (for Print - Small Circulation)—two as part of a reporting team and one as an individual—in 1995, 1996 and 1998.

She is also a documentary filmmaker, working as a scriptwriter, narrator and host for a variety of joint professional projects. As well, she has written for local, provincial and national magazines, including Border Crossings, In the City Magazine, Arts West, and the award-winning SAY (Spirit of Aboriginal Youth) Magazine. Nelson is also a frequent freelance writer for both ACC and Brandon University.

This book is her first foray into long-form writing.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Written by **Diane Nelson**

Designed by **Callie Crump**

CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

Bob Horton

Elizabeth Glaseman

Danielle Adriaansen

Kimberley Lynn



A LEGACY

This is not a history. Rather, it's a memoir, a retrospective and a tribute to a beloved institution.

Official documents and reports from years ago were not easily accessible, and many actualities have been forgotten or misplaced throughout the annals of time. Consequently, much of what follows is anecdotal. We've had to rely in large part on oral history to tell this story because often, the guardians of history don't know that's what they are until many decades have passed.

So please think of this as a respectful and admiring collection of reminiscences of our treasured not-so-little college on the prairie. We know there will inevitably be gaps and oversights in what you're about to read, and for that, we apologize. But we've done the best we could with the materials and the contacts available to us.

I am forever indebted to Bob Horton, who assembled much of what's included about the early days of the college at a time when many folks still clearly remembered what had happened. Without his thorough and thoughtful compilation, pieced together in the late 1990s, much information about Assiniboine's history would be missing. As well, the intrepid Kimberley Lynn was an eager and invaluable resource—she provided leads, research and suggestions and tracked down sources for much of the existing information.

It was a pleasure to revisit old friends in the writing of this legacy book, as I've come to call it, and wonderful to reminisce about my treasured time as an ACC instructor—I taught in the Media Production and Web Design programs (which became Interactive Media Arts, and which is now about to become Media and Communications, Digital Art and Design, and Web and Interactive Development) from 2001 until 2016. For one-quarter of Assiniboine's history, I was part of it, and I was both delighted and honoured to be asked to create this book. You'll read a bit about my memories and experiences as we progress through the years in the pages that follow. Happy reading, and Happy 60th Anniversary, Assiniboine!

Diane Nelson

INTRODUCTION

“Learn by Doing.”

That became the college’s motto in 2012, and it remains thus to this day. But it could have been a mantra for ACC’s entire 60 years of existence. It’s applicable to each and every one of those six decades because learning by doing is precisely what the college did right from day one. In fact, one might suggest that was a guiding principle long before the institution became known as Assiniboine Community College.

From its humble beginnings as The Brandon Vocational Training Centre, the college has always been hailed as being not only on top of things, but truly ahead of the curve. According to many current staffers with a keen interest in institutional history, management, faculty and other employees were quick not only to apply the most current theories, techniques, philosophies and technologies, but to devise those very things because they saw an immediate need and did their utmost to fill the void.

In fact, so much one might not think would be applicable to a small college that grew from very limited roots into the admirable, impressive and still cutting-edge post-secondary educational facility it became, is truly what has defined it over the years. Its dedication to providing something more, something extra, something special—evidenced by its pledge to deliver “exceptional learning experiences”—was as true in yesteryear as it is today.

What follows is an attempt to document, in mostly chronological order, the evolution of Assiniboine Community College over the last six decades, sometimes through data, but primarily through the recollections of the staff members who came and went throughout the years. Their passion for their craft is abundant and evident, and their thoughtful and often humorous tales offer a rare glimpse into the history of a place many of us know and love so well.





Assiniboine

THROUGH THE YEARS

THE 1960s

It's said the more things change,
the more they remain the same.

And that's certainly been the case
with Assiniboine Community College.

In 1961, a shortage of people with training in the skilled trades motivated the creation of the entity that became ACC. And today, 60 years later, despite all its progress and innovation and the educating of thousands of students in this area, a dearth of tradespeople in a variety of specialties is still a problem for our society.

While Assiniboine continues to instruct multitudes of aspiring professionals in more areas than its originators could ever have imagined, and although it has massively increased its capacity to do so in these much-needed fields, the demand for capable and well-trained individuals outpaces the supply.

But in order to understand just how much the college has grown, changed and expanded to address those concerns—and how it has, over its six decades of existence, evolved into much more than it was ever envisioned to be—it behooves us to go back to the year prior to Assiniboine's original incarnation to see how it all began.



In 1960, the federal government passed The Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act. This act was the authority under which the federal government participated in, and provided financial assistance to, technical and vocational training programs in Canada. The Act defined technical and vocational training as any form of instruction for which the purpose was to prepare people for entry into gainful employment in any primary or secondary industry, or service occupation, or to increase the skills or proficiency of those who were presently engaged in these occupations. The resulting federal-provincial Technical and Vocational Training Agreement embraced ten basic programs, which included:

- » vocational high school training
- » science-related technical training for programs with a minimum of 2,400 hours
- » trade and occupational training for students beyond the compulsory school age
- » training in co-operation with industry
- » training of the disabled
- » training of vocational teachers
- » training for federal departments and agencies
- » the student aid program
- » research programs evaluating the effectiveness of training methods and programs
- » technical and vocational correspondence courses

It was under the auspices of The Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act that the building and expansion of vocational training across the country took place.

The Brandon Vocational Training Centre began operations in portions of the Agricultural Extension Centre building on February 1, 1961. Five pre-employment courses were offered: Automotive Mechanics, Electrical Construction, Architectural Drafting, Plumbing, and Commercial and General Office Practice. Dick Jones was appointed Supervisor/Principal, Anne Lloyd became Stenographer, Walter Scott was named Automotive Instructor, and William Howe was the Electrical Instructor. Dorothy Scott (no relation to Walter) was hired to teach Commercial and General Office Practice, Julian Gorchynski was added to the staff to teach Architectural Drafting, and, following a couple of temporary instructors, John Walczak was hired to teach Plumbing. By the end of March, a total of 84 students were enrolled.

Dick Jones (*Principal*): "Prior to coming to Brandon, I ran a Ford dealership in Morris, Manitoba. When I decided to get into education, I met with B.F. Addy, then the Director of Vocational Education. He told me I would be starting a school the next day. Then we drove to the Agricultural Extension Centre on Queens Avenue to see the location of our classrooms and offices. I was quite impressed when I saw the Agricultural Extension Centre, but any

pleasure I had was short-lived when Addy pointed out that I wasn't moving into the Agricultural Extension Centre. Instead, we would be occupying an old, deserted wartime hut at the side of the Agricultural Extension Centre and a metal shed on the other side. The heating was being hooked up and linoleum being laid that day in preparation of starting the school the next day.

"I had been responsible for setting up training programs in the military on a couple of occasions. In these instances, I could call upon whatever resources and manpower I needed to get the job done. In Brandon, the situation was completely different. I was on my own. There was little in the way of resources and little support from the community. We were learning as we went along. I took many decisions on my own, such as setting up a college advisory board and instituting programs in conjunction with the Brandon Correctional Institute and the Brandon Mental Health Centre. In spite of the



many problems, I look back on those early days at the college as the best time of my life."

Not only were the surroundings inauspicious, but there was very little in the way of machinery, devices and other accoutrements for the instructors and students to use.

Julian Gorchynski (*Architectural Drafting Instructor*): "My first classroom was in an old H-hut on the grounds of the Agricultural Extension Centre. Our equipment was cast-off equipment from MTI, plus whatever we could scrounge from shops around town. About a year later, my classroom was moved to the old transit garage (then on Queens Avenue). From there, we moved to the old Brandon Sun building (at 24 10th Street)."

Speaking of The Brandon Sun, while those at the Training Centre struggled to do





“Enrolment kept increasing, and more instructors were hired to cater to a local population obviously hungry for education and training.”

what they could with a lack of supplies and their many temporary quarters, the newspaper’s reporters and editors were not impressed. In its November 26, 1962 edition, the Sun published the following:

“The present vocational facilities here are jumbled and inadequate, housed in a scattered assortment of huts and basements at the Agricultural Centre. Presently, about 100 people are taking courses there. Estimates are that this enrolment could be doubled or tripled in a year or two given the proper facilities.”

The paper went on to urge the then-Roblin government to take advantage of the 1960 Dominion-Provincial agreement whereby the federal government would bear 75 per cent of the cost of building a vocational school in Brandon.

Dick Jones (Principal): “We were all term employees, a situation that didn’t change for four years. There was no job security, little in the way of equipment; classroom and working accommodations were poor, and there was little assurance that things would improve in the near future.”

Some of the instructors threatened to resign, but Jones managed to convince them to stay. And then the college began to expand far more rapidly than Jones—or anyone else, for that matter—had expected. Extra space was found at the former Western Motors building on Princess Avenue, and a new program called Basic Training for Skill Development (BTSD) was added to the growing list of courses—it was taught at the famed and now demolished Prince Edward Hotel.

Enrolment kept increasing, and more instructors were hired to cater to a local population obviously hungry for education and training. By the beginning of the 1963

academic year, the number of students in Automotive Mechanics had doubled from the preceding year, so a second class was offered. The Commercial and General Office course was divided into a Stenographic course and a Clerical and Machines course, offering the potential for up to 50 students in the business area. College staff increased to 12 people during the peak enrolment periods, and almost 400 students attended the college over that year.

Dick Jones (*Principal*): "In 1963, the Cabinet approved the construction of the new college, with construction to begin in 1964. But it would be another two years before we could move into the new building.

"At first, the city wasn't all that helpful. They offered the college an old dumpsite north of the river and east of 1st Street as a possible location. When this was turned down, they offered a portion of an old, unused municipal golf course in the East End. The land, which was zoned agricultural, had to be rezoned before construction could begin."

The year 1963 marked a boost in stature for the college, thanks to the aforementioned higher enrolments and new and better equipment for training. February saw 152 students enrolled, up 30 per cent from the previous year. The drafting program received 20 new

drafting machines, making the drafting shop state-of-the-art. New business machines were procured for the business programs and an additional automotive shop, along with the necessary equipment to operate it, was added.

The best news of 1963, however, was that students would finally receive official recognition for their course work. Up until then, all graduates received upon finishing their courses were letters of completion signed by Principal Jones. In October, the Drafting and Commercial programs also received diploma status. Automotive Mechanics, Construction Electricity and Plumbing received similar status in December.

And, as had become usual, space and less-than-ideal surroundings continued to be a problem for the fledgling institution.

Dave Rudy (*Basic Training for Skill Development Instructor*): "I started at the college on February 1, 1964. We had over a hundred students in five classes. Sometimes, we had two classes going at once and were going from one class to the other. There was nothing in the way of air conditioning. The classrooms were hot all the time, and we had to put up with the gas fumes coming up from the shops below.

"Most of my students were 27 or 28 years old. Sometimes they went to the beer parlour and were slow to return to class. Because I was under 21 at the time, I was

not allowed in to retrieve them. I had to stand in the doorway motioning to them to come back to class."

In 1964, the college's name was changed to The Manitoba Vocational Centre. And in January of that same year, the first formal graduation was held. Seventy-seven students received certificates of attainment, and 28 received certificates of qualification.

Before the academic year was out, the staff complement reached 17. Four social events were conducted over the year by the student council and a curling league was formed, which ran through the winter. Enrolment reached a peak of 239, up from 162 in the 1962-63 season.

Charlie Clark (*Basic Training for Skill Development Instructor*): "I started at the college in February, 1964; the students were right in the middle of the program. It was hectic teaching 40 students, especially with new students starting every week at every conceivable level. I had taught in a one-room schoolhouse with Grades 1 to 9, so this was not entirely new to me. The students varied in age. A big percentage of them were getting paid (to be there by Manpower). We had our coffee shop in an old vault."

The Manitoba Vocational Centre continued to offer an ever-increasing variety of pre-employment courses



DURATION: Approximately 10 months





ASSINIBOINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CEREMONY
 The Manitoba Vocational School is no more. In a brief ceremony yesterday afternoon the Hon. Leonard S. Kwan, acting in the place of Education Minister Saul Miller, declared an official name change for the educational institution located near Brandon's eastern boundaries. The centre is now called Assiniboine Community College, and was renamed along with two other centres in the province — Red River Community College in Winnipeg (formerly the Manitoba Institute of Technology and Applied Arts) and Keweenaw Community College in The Pas (formerly the Northern Manitoba Vocational School). Among the 15 platform guests representing various fields of government yesterday were Gerry Cobb, MP (Portage la Prairie), who brought greetings from the federal government and in particular from Manpower Minister Allan Rock, who was usually to be in the province for the ceremony at the three centres because he was in his own Nova Scotia riding opening a new vocational school. Mayor Blomquist brought graduates from the city, and Lt.-Gov. Richard S. Boyles, made a few valedictory remarks to add to the dignified air of the ceremony. In his dedication address Mr. Evans said the government is "launching a new enterprise in vocational education" in the province, and the name changes of the three centres will help to signify an expanded role going beyond just vocational training. He said there will be a renewed emphasis on adult education at the centres, and that the community college concept "is wide enough to embrace all the academic training taking place here." Mr. Evans pointed out that vocational classes began in Brandon in 1961 with only 22 students in two classes held in temporary facilities in the city. In the past three years over 2,000 students have graduated from 25 different courses offered at the new school.



MANITOBA VOCATIONAL CENTRE (BRANDON)
ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY
 INSTRUCTORS: A.G. Berez, B.Sc. E.E.; C. Krahn, B.Sc. E.E.; P.R. Warkentin, B.Sc. E.E.

as well as BTSD. Course lengths for Automotive Mechanical Repair, Plumbing, and Drafting were increased, and Junior Automotive Counterman was added. Also new to the business section was Clerk Typist. Over and above these changes, plans were made to add three new course areas: Commercial Art, Welfare Services, and Radio and Electronics Servicing.

The college continued to occupy three main areas. The original quarters, located at, or on the grounds of, the Agricultural Extension Centre housed General Automotive and Business Education. BTSD, Clerk Typist and Parts Counterman were located in the old Western Motors Building on 10th Street, while the former Brandon Sun building housed the Electrical, Plumbing, Drafting, and Welfare Services programs.

Enrolments continued to rise in all program areas. During the year, 259 students sought vocational training. And the college continued to administer Federal Civil Service clerical exams for 173 candidates attempting to obtain Civil Service qualifications.

By the end of the year, staff had increased to 16 instructors, six administrators and two custodians for a total of 24. An active student council arranged several dances throughout year, as well as a Christmas social and a bowling league.

The year 1965 was one of great promise for the college. While the outlook over

the previous four years had been bleak, there was now some hope on the horizon. Manitoba had lagged badly behind other provinces with only \$7-million invested in vocational training over the last four years compared to over \$400-million in Ontario, \$74-million in Quebec and \$64-million in Alberta. So it was good news indeed that construction was to start on the new facility in Brandon, as well as a new vocational school in The Pas. The Brandon facility was expected to cost \$2.2-million while \$2.7-million was slated for The Pas. In both cases, the federal government would cover 75 per cent of the capital costs.

Completion of the two new schools was scheduled for the fall of 1966. On September 30, Manitoba Premier Duff Roblin turned the sod to officially prepare the way for creation of the new campus.

Aden Bauman (*Welfare Services Technology Instructor*): "The students had worked in a variety of fields and were a very mature and cohesive group. My first class was in the old Brandon Sun building. The Drafting class was in the room above, and the Electrical classroom and shop were below. The noise was so bad it sometimes made teaching difficult. We had to ask others to keep the noise down so we could be heard. The first year, one of the books we ordered was Margaret Mead's book 'Coming of Age in Samoa.' The accountant accused us of ordering pornographic material! Generally, there was never a problem with our book orders,

and we seemed to get whatever we asked for. I remember ordering a book on the history of toilets just to see if the system would pass it. Sure enough, it was ordered and received along with our other books."

Bob Horton (*Radio and Electronics Servicing Instructor*): "I came in on January 30, 1966. The students arrived the next day, January 31, so I had ample time to prepare. (This was the modus operandi at the time). There was very little in the way of equipment. I had to bring in everything I owned to keep the course going. It was a challenge to keep a page ahead of the students and keep them busy. At first, students could enter the course every Monday. Fitting them in was a real challenge. Initially, there were few related subjects, so I was instructing pretty well full-time from eight to four. Although I had a few years experience teaching electronics in the Air Force, it took a while for the students to educate me to civilian ways. I ran a tight ship for the first few courses, and it took me a couple of years to adopt a more relaxed mode of teaching.

"When I started teaching, most of the consumer products were tubes. Transistors were just coming in, but I had the advantage of having learned and taught them in the Air Force. Students were servicing record players, eight-track players and car radios, as well as a variety of home entertainment equipment."

Jerry Matiation (*Radio and Electronics Servicing Instructor*): "When I started at



the college, there was little in the way of equipment, and we had to get by with a few oscilloscopes and meters. By today's standards, things were very basic. Televisions were restricted primarily to black and white as colour had yet to make much headway. All radios and televisions were primarily still vacuum tubes as transistors were just starting to find their way into the home market.

"The next few years saw the introduction of color television, transistors, integrated circuits, cassettes, video recorders, and home television camcorders to name just a few. Keeping up to the rapid advances in technology was a never-ending struggle as our students were expected to be knowledgeable on all the current equipment when they graduated. There was never a shortage of items to work on as staff and students kept the students busy with a variety of items in need of repair. The college was often a shop of last resort; many times, we got items for repair that other shops would not take.

"Looking back, I remember the students as being highly motivated. In the early

days, there were lots of jobs and students had little trouble finding employment. In those days, home entertainment products required lots of servicing and there was plenty of opportunity for students to start their own businesses."

In the summer of 1966, some 450 students had submitted applications for the 26 courses planned for the new facility. Enrolment was on a first-come, first-served basis and applications were accepted as soon as space was available. With the exception of Welfare Services and Technology, students could enrol any time during the school year. Among the applications were submissions from such distant points as Jamaica, the Hebrides Islands and Ghana.

Although work on the new facility was not quite finished, on September 22, 1966, Premier Roblin laid the cornerstone of the college. The event was widely attended by officials of education, government and business.

On October 27, 1966 the first students moved from their temporary quarters to the almost-completed 22-acre site on Victoria Avenue East. The building incorporated some 120,000 square feet (approximately one hectare) and was home to 23 training courses. In addition, the building soon became host

to an ever-increasing range of evening programs designed to provide the citizens of Brandon and the surrounding area with every opportunity to further their knowledge in a variety of fields or embark on self-improvement. The calendar for the 1967-68 term boasted the following: "These facilities, coupled with a large cafeteria, student lounge, bookstore, library and other supporting services, all join forces to make The Manitoba Vocational Centre one of the outstanding vocational training institutes in western Canada."

Most of the instructional staff had offices in the south section of the main floor—an area that was referred to as the bullpen, which consisted of a space full of cubicles with dividers approximately shoulder high. There was no soundproofing, natural light or privacy. In spite of the drawbacks, most instructors remember their years in the bullpen fondly. The fact that most of the instructors were obligated to spend a portion of each day in proximity with their peers led to a close working relationship that was carried beyond the confines of the college. Everyone was extremely busy developing course materials and lesson plans, and morale was high.

John Cameron (*Heavy Duty Mechanics Instructor*): "We all had offices in the bullpen. The early days at the college were fun. There was a minimum amount of administration, and instructors had a lot of authority in designing the courses and choosing equipment. I enjoyed the students and always tried to remember

that we were there for them. A lot of students were older, some older than the instructors."

In October of 1966, the big move to the new facility finally took place. And to cap off that memorable year, the first graduation ceremonies to be held in the new building took place on December 9, 1966. Approximately half of the 170 graduates attended the ceremonies, which were held in the gymnasium. But even then, it was obvious demand was already outpacing the more than two-year-old design.

Dick Jones (*Principal*): "It was evident early on that space would be at a premium in the new building. We were discussing expansion even before we moved in."

George Milne (*Plumbing Instructor*): "Courses started at the new college in October, 1966. At that time, the plumbing course shared a corner of the carpentry shop. Although things were extremely crowded, I remember having as many as twenty-two students at one time in that corner of the shop. In those days, plumbing was fairly primitive by today's standards. Sewer pipes were joined together with oakum (hemp rope) and lead, which had to be melted with torches. PVC and ABS piping, common today, had yet to make their entry into home plumbing."

Roderick Danielson (*Pre-Employment and Heavy Duty Mechanics Instructor*):

“We had barely begun to get organized when we had to start the Heavy Duty Mechanic Apprenticeship program in January, 1967. There was just Roy Sobchuk and myself; we each had a full class of pre-employment students, and suddenly we had this apprenticeship program. At the time, there was not even a Heavy Duty Apprenticeship program in the province. I had to develop the outline for four levels of apprenticeship and be ready to teach the first group of apprentices in January. Between Roy Sobchuk and myself, we kept these three classes going until the end of January. In February, John Cameron joined us.

“In the early days, the college owned very few vehicles for the students to work on. We overcame this by repairing and overhauling heavy equipment for some of the contractors and municipalities. This included graders, bulldozers, etc. that were stripped right down and overhauled in our shops. In addition, the shops were always full of vehicles brought in by students and staff for everything from minor tune-ups to complete overhauls. In fact, we were doing so much work that we were getting flack from some of the dealers who felt we were taking some of their business.”

That was a sentiment the college has become much more sensitive about over

the years—that what was done in classes on campus could not interfere with the livelihoods of the businesses in the region which, it was hoped, would eventually employ the college’s graduates.

During the latter years of the '60s, enrolment continued to increase, course offerings continued to expand, and the college continued to be a staple of the community, training students subjects and skills specifically designed to bridge directly to industry.

By the fall of 1969, the college was conducting 24 full-time day courses, including two technologies (Electrical first and second year, and first-year Electronics), and 22 trade, industrial and business courses. In addition, seven full-day classes were conducted for vocational preparation and occupational English. Just over 900 students attended the college during the year, and more than 1,000 students attended the 27 evening courses offered by the college. Steps were taken to develop a common first-year for Computer and Instrumentation technologies, and the college obtained its first closed-circuit television equipment. The staff complement stood at 48 full-time instructors, 20 administration staff, and 13 support staff from government services.

On December 15, 1969, the Manitoba Vocational Centre was dedicated and renamed Assiniboine Community College.



THE 1970s

One of the things that struck most people about ACC over the years was the collegiality between staff members, between students, and between staff and students. It's hard not to form friendships when you sometimes spend more time with your colleagues and your classmates than you do at home. In Media Production, we used to say that we were one big, mostly happy, often dysfunctional, family.

Barb Tanner (*Business Education Instructor*): "We all had offices in what was called the bullpen. We were all one big family then. The workload was heavy, but everyone got along well together. There were lots of practical jokes played, and we had really good times in spite of the long hours we put in. At coffee breaks and lunch breaks, the staff occupied the first two tables in the cafeteria. This tradition continued for many years."

That sense of 'we're in this together' is something that's been evident right from the get-go. Assiniboiners relied on each other to make it through the lean times, to deal with difficulties, to make things work. While times were occasionally tough, the collegiality of staff and students saw us through.



While that sense of camaraderie has lasted throughout the decades right until the present day, as might be expected, there were and are a lot of differences between then and now.

Phyllis Creighton (*Business Education Instructor*): “I remember how close-knit the staff was in those early days. It was a cohesive group and everyone helped everyone out. In the early days, there was a strict dress code. Slacks, jeans and shorts were taboo, and students not dressed ‘appropriately’ would be sent home. Even the staff had what amounted to a uniform with similar jackets.”

Leslie Callum (*Business Education Instructor*): “I started at Assiniboine College in September, 1971. The college was a family grouping in those days. I came dressed the first day wearing a pant suit that was, unknown to me, against the dress code in effect at that time. The next day, I came wearing what was referred to then as ‘hot pants,’ which were shorts under a short skirt. The third day, all the women in the department came in pant suits, which put an end to the ‘dress code.’ It was then I found out that there was an unwritten rule that skirts would be a certain distance below the knees.”

John Krahn (*Business Education Instructor*): “At first, we had student intakes every week or two. For the 1967-68 year, intakes were reduced to every second month. The teachers were fed up teaching the

same thing over and over again every few weeks. Although staff had only three weeks of vacation in those days, there was a real problem getting staff away for vacations and summer school. We often had to fill in with less-than-qualified staff who, in some cases, could do little more than baby-sit the students until the regular instructors returned. These problems continued until the quarter system was introduced in the 1972-73 academic year.”

In many programs, four yearly intakes eventually became two, and then one. According to George Milne, who was head of the Construction and Drafting department, tuition was seven dollars a month, payable in advance.

The college also offered courses in Cosmetology and Barbering, and like many other programs, these were phased out over time. However, other areas of study not only continued, but continued to grow. In its ongoing effort to be innovative, ACC was the only one of the province’s three colleges to offer Heavy Duty Mechanics. Consequently, students came from across Manitoba (and elsewhere) to learn that trade at Assiniboine, so many that four streams of the program were being taught at the same time. Demand was high, ACC answered the call, and the automotive

sector benefited by having more trained and skilled mechanics in the workforce.

As well, the Certificate in Adult Education, which all instructors in Manitoba are still required to earn in order to teach at Assiniboine, Red River and Keewatin, used to be taught at ACC (the administration of CAE now rests solely with Red River College in Winnipeg). But ACC’s focus on hands-on learning—another tenet that remains to this day—served those who took the course locally exceedingly well. Remember earlier, when it was mentioned Assiniboine was cutting-edge?

John Ferguson (*Adult Basic Education Instructor*): “I came to Assiniboine Community College from a purely academic university background. At

the college, the cognitive and affective domains, while important and a large part of the course offerings, were augmented to a much larger degree than was the case at the university level by the psychomotor, or hands-on, domain. This change in structure made for interesting and challenging lesson preparation. I found the challenge to be stimulating.

“I began work at the college by writing and delivering a series of courses in the field of Adult Education... to enable the college instructors to achieve their Certificate in Adult Education. The CAE classes were (among) the most exciting post-secondary classes I have ever taught.

“The Adult Basic Education program offered by Assiniboine Community



“Tuition was seven dollars a month, payable in advance.”



College was in the vanguard of progressive educational offerings. The instructors were extremely competent, dedicated and professional. These instructors were among the best with whom I have ever associated. The ripple effect of their teaching is still being felt in many situations and locations; it is still influencing both instructors and students. This is one of the great rewards of teaching.

“I count my experiences at Assiniboine Community College as some of the most rewarding of my professional experiences, and I shall always treasure them.”

I, too, have precious memories of my time at Assiniboine, but my fascination with the college began long before I became a faculty member. At some point in the '70s—I can't remember if it was when I was at Earl Haig Junior High School between 1971 and 1974, or at Neelin High School between 1974 and 1977—ACC hosted some sort of evening open house for students. My recollections are vague, but I do know my friends and I were mightily impressed with Assiniboine. We couldn't believe how brand-spanking new it looked, how huge and shiny the gym was, and how easily we got lost as we ran around the myriad mazes of hallways.

(And as an aside, to this day, I still can't find the lower level access to the theatre.

After one particularly embarrassing incident where I was to guide visiting MTS-TV producers from the parking lot doors to the stage entrance to the theatre, I got hopelessly turned around and my media colleagues had to send out a search party to find us. From that point forward, I didn't care whether I had to be on stage in the theatre or seated in the audience section—I always used the door near the gym. I could at least find that one.)

Among the many activities that have remained constant at the college is its active and enthusiastic recruitment of potential students. From participating in job fairs and the Brandon Career Symposium to outreach at schools across the Westman region and beyond, the champions of the college sometimes had to deal with the misperception of a college education as secondary to that offered by universities. The old saying, 'If you want an education, go to university, but if you want a career, go to college' has a large measure of truth in it. But ask almost any Assiniboine graduate, and you're likely to find they got both a thorough education and a job—truly the best of both worlds.

Ken Fox (*Student Services*): “My official position was as a counsellor, but initially I was more involved with college promotion and recruitment. This meant joining various instructional staff at high school career days around western Manitoba. At





career days, I would often hear remarks about vocational schools being the best place for students who couldn't achieve at regular academics or anything else. I spent a lot of time explaining the value of our college as an alternative to university rather than a substandard choice for post-secondary education. I would always tell potential students that at the college, 'their aptitudes and academic standing are extremely important and to be valued.'

Technology, too, was becoming a regular part of college programs. But, as remains the case today, being cutting-edge required keeping up with the always

shifting standards and the latest available equipment. And, also like the present day, more capable and innovative advancements seemed to appear with head-spinning frequency.

Bob Horton (*Radio and Electronics Servicing Instructor*): "Around 1970, the college got its first video equipment: an IVC recorder and RCA camera. The IVC was an impressive machine, but it never worked right. It was later traded for a one-inch Sony 320 recorder, a large, heavy recorder with editing capabilities. Of course, all our equipment was black and white. I remember several years later, one of the Sony salesmen was using two Sony 320 recorders in the back of his van for traction. Our first portable machines were

bulky Sony 3400s. These were about ten times the size of today's portables and had about a tenth of the capabilities.

"About every five years, video formats would change, making all your equipment more or less obsolete. First, we had one-inch video, then half-inch reel-to-reel. Then Beta promised to be the format to go with and then VHS. In between, there were quarter-inch formats."

After the college had been established for a few years, The Brandon Sun did a series of articles profiling Assiniboine Community College's many course offerings. Brian Marshall, who later became managing editor, was then a staff writer at the newspaper and marveled at

the variety and the multitude of options available to full-time and part-time students, and to the general public as well.

It was noted that while the college was pretty much packed to capacity in the daytime hours, attendance in the specialized evening 'extension' courses—what's now called Continuing Education or Con Ed—was triple the number of students in the regular programs!

In another article singing the college's praises, reporter Wayne Boyce remarked on the vast array of courses being presented by writing, "(With) macramé and transistors and rec-room building," ACC seemed to have it all going on, and then some.

As well, Assiniboine was quickly becoming a veritable United Nations, with students enrolled from such faraway places as Hong Kong, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Czechoslovakia, Trinidad, Guyana, India, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Pakistan, West Germany, Japan, the USA, France, Honduras, Zambia, Kenya, South Africa, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Cameroon, and every Canadian province, including the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

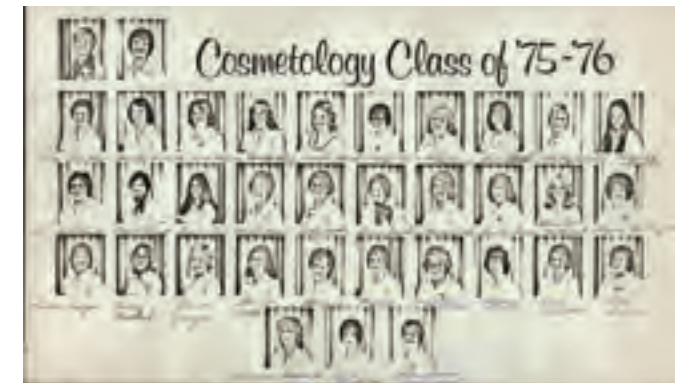
Ken Fox (Student Services): “International/overseas students had unique needs that also required input from our counsellors. There were a couple of years when the international students numbered almost (half) of the total student population. Some of these students arrived ill-prepared for life in Brandon and sometimes for life as a student. We often had to scrounge clothing for them to wear and sometimes food for them as well. John Miller played a large role in their winter survival, taking them shopping for parkas and long underwear, among other things.

“When instructors had difficulty reconciling classroom performance with their previous academic standing, we decided to do some checking into their academic backgrounds. We were astounded at the number of times that schools and colleges in their home cities would deny knowing the student or deny their academic status. It didn’t take long for admissions to demand original

documents of academic status prior to acceptance. I was impressed with how college instructors went way beyond the call of normal duty to provide tutoring and extra service to help these students succeed.”

As happens in many programs, opportunities present themselves and become special events, not just for the particular area in which they are focused, but for the college as a whole. One such memorable project was undertaken by the Electrical Technology, Auto Mechanics and Auto Body programs in December of 1974. The provincial government, in cooperation with Manitoba Hydro, the Manitoba Research Council and the Department of Motor Vehicles, issued a challenge to Assiniboine and Red River community colleges: students were to convert a conventional gasoline-powered vehicle to run on electricity. The goals of the challenge were to demonstrate the feasibility of electrical automobiles (providing the Motor Vehicle Branch an opportunity to see if the Highway Traffic Act would adequately cover electric vehicles) and, perhaps most importantly, allow college students to demonstrate their acquired skills in a project with public visibility.

A limit of \$4,000 was provided for the purchase of parts and supplies, and a commercially-available vehicle had to



be used for the conversion. The vehicle had to comply with the Highway Traffic Act and be capable of attaining a speed of 30 miles per hour with a range of at least 30 miles. In addition, the vehicle had to have the capability of having its batteries recharged from a 110-volt (household) source.

Naturally, Assiniboine was quick to take up the challenge. A small committee composed of Peter Warkentin, Gerry Diswinka and Dave Rudy supervised the design, the purchasing of the necessary equipment and supplies, supervision of work done by others, and coordination of the various activities required to see the work to completion. Andy Bereeza also assisted with the design of the electronics needed to control the motor.

The car they chose was a second-hand Karman Ghia, which underwent extensive modification and repairs (such as changes to the suspension to support the weight of the ten 12-volt batteries needed power the vehicle). Students and their instructors worked hard, and the car was ready for a test drive by Premier Ed Schreyer on May 22, 1976.

By 1979, more than 100 miles had been logged on what was nicknamed 'The Ampeater.' It was able to travel 35 miles on a charge, travelling at speeds of up to 45 miles per hour—more than would be required for a leisurely ride to work and back each day in an urban centre such as

Brandon. The running cost of the vehicle, based on the cost of electricity at the time, was estimated at 1.4 cents per mile. The car required little maintenance with the exception of the periodic addition of distilled water to the batteries and an annual check on the motor control module.

Peter Warkentin (*who headed the effort*): "The main purpose of the project was to demonstrate the use of a renewable energy source that produced minimal polluting effects for the environment. The project was a remarkable success, both in this and in providing college students an opportunity to use their skills in an imaginative way."

Sports also flourished at the college. Brandon Sun sports writer Bruce Penton credited Nick Haraszthy, who was athletic director in the early 1970s, as well as Georgina Boux, who instructed and oversaw the women's activities, with creating an impressive program in unusual, if not challenging, circumstances.

"The obstacles (Haraszthy's) hurdled in an effort to maintain a smooth-working and efficient program at Brandon's community college are numerous, but he's jumped them all," Penton wrote.

A number of sports, including soccer, softball, touch football, outdoor field handball, horseshoes, golf, volleyball,

badminton, indoor field handball, floor hockey, table tennis, weight-lifting, judo, fencing, gymnastics, archery, jogging, curling, and trampolining were a regular part of the student experience. And, as has always been the case, the impressive personnel at Assiniboine did what they could with the limitations they had.

Nick Haraszthy (*Athletic Director*): "Students here don't stay for three or four years like in high schools or universities. The longest course we offer is 10 months, so sustained athletics are almost impossible. We just do as much as we can with what we have available."

Penton also hailed the facilities at Assiniboine as "better than those at most high schools." And he said the equipment ACC students had at their disposal "is probably the best in Brandon." The gym was set up for basketball, volleyball and badminton. The table tennis room was located directly behind and above the gym. There was an outside soccer field where touch football and field hockey could also be played, as well as a fenced baseball diamond and a pair of tennis courts.

In addition, there was a student newspaper and a chess club. The college was a hub of activity from morning 'til late at night, and often on the weekends too.

At the same time, the college was expanding well beyond its physical walls.

If a course was requested by an outlying community, ACC would either send an instructor there to teach it, or arrange for someone in industry to do so on the college's behalf. More than 2,000 students attended evening classes in Dauphin, Russell, St. Lazare, Birtle, Virden, Swan Lake, and Brandon. The Applied Arts department delivered a Canadian Job Strategy-sponsored Licensed Practical Nursing course in Killarney. The CJS program on Developmental Studies was soon being taught in seven First Nations communities.

Three school divisions completed the second year of the three-year Carpentry and Woodworking Training program. The college also provided curriculum and support materials to Hamiota Collegiate in the delivery of a Small Motor Mechanics program.

The Agriculture department registered more than 1,600 individuals for the many programs and courses offered in more than 73 communities. A new Entrepreneurship in Agriculture program was delivered in three locations. In addition, several agricultural programs were offered via distance education. More than 1,000 individuals took advantage of the programs offered by the Business, Industrial and Continuing Education department. Gross revenue for the year was \$1.3-million. Distance education enrolment increased by 20 per cent over the previous year.



a 27-week pilot program—the first of its kind in Manitoba—in guard training for the corrections service. Students in the course studied criminology and psychology, and the program did what it set out to do—what had been asked of it—and provided better-qualified personnel to work in the corrections system.

Near the end of the '70s, it was announced that ACC was going to expand. But the question was when. A proposal suggesting an addition to the east end of the college to house more classrooms, an auto body repair and paint shop, a heavy duty mechanics workshop, and a learning resource centre was proposed. And sod for the project was turned in 1977.



The expansion was pegged at \$4.75-million, with construction slated to begin in 1978. But as anyone who's had a long-term association with the college knows, nothing to do with government is ever certain. Because governments change. And frequently change their minds.

The much anticipated and necessary addition, the notion of which was gratefully and warmly welcomed, was cancelled at the end of March in the year in which construction was to have begun.

Al Loveridge (Principal): "ACC has been grossly overcrowded for the last five years."

And as the decade drew to a close, it appeared that situation was not going to be remedied any time soon.

Parkland campus served some 1,300 full-time day students in Dauphin and other Parkland communities. A Health Care Support Worker program was held in Roblin, graduating 17 students. Ten students completed a four-week Job Readiness training course in Ebb and Flow First Nation.

And the college continued to be innovative. Assiniboine began offering

VF - ASSINIBOINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Brandon Sun October 18, 1979

Diane Shiach, Manitoba's first female heavy duty mechanic, says: her interest in machinery began with an oiling automobile.

Mr. Good Wrench? Please move over

by LINDA BUDOLOWSKI
Sun Staff Writer

Diane Shiach says her parents didn't think she was serious when she first started talking about becoming a mechanic.

"They told me I would never make it. Now I guess they're kind of proud."

Shiach is the first female graduate in Manitoba of the heavy duty mechanics course and the only woman in the course at Assiniboine Community College (ACC).

She was one of 15 students who wrote the final exam administered by the department of labor Friday. In order to receive provincial certification, a mark of 60 per cent is needed, while 70 per cent is needed for inter-provincial certification. Shiach's mark was 73.3.

Shiach says passing the exam "means you have a basic understanding of mechanics. It's hard for either a guy or a girl when they have no ticket (certification). No one wants to hire an apprentice."

She also says it guarantees a certain wage — in mining, about \$10 per hour.

Shiach says she became interested in mechanics when she bought a car. "It was using a lot of oil and the brakes weren't working. So many things were going wrong that my dad said that if I had the rag, I had to learn how to fix it."

She also says she knew a few people who were heavy duty mechanics and it sounded interesting.

She says originally she didn't plan to take the apprenticeship course at ACC. "But otherwise you have to work five years in the trade before you can write the exam. And 95 per cent fail because they don't understand the terminology."

"I had the books, but I just couldn't sit down and read them. I guess another reason I took mechanics is that there's not much homework."

The apprenticeship course takes four years, with five weeks of classes per year.

"The theory part is very well (with the practical training)," she says. "In the mining division there are a lot of things you don't do. We don't have a lot of sophisticated equipment. They can show us by having us come to the school."

She says that at home she never helped her father, who is a cook, with mechanical work. He always asked her brother for help, she says.

And she says that before she started the mechanics course she tried a variety of things, including selling cookware door-to-door, waitressing, being a telephone operator and joining the armed forces. "I thought there had to be something better."

Shiach, now working for Sherritt-Gordon Mines in Leam Rapids for her fourth year, says she does "a little bit of everything, such as servicing machinery and rebuilding engines and transmissions."

"I love off-road machinery. For one thing, it's easier to work on because the parts are larger."

She says that although the men at camp still outnumber the women, there are female operators and women apprenticing to electricians and welders.

She says most of the men at the mine are helpful, but when she first started there were a few who were "rebellious."

But she says that after working with them, most got used to her. "They know I'm pulling my weight."

She says she didn't have much trouble being the only woman in the course, but that she did encounter problems when she applied for a pre-employment course she took in Saskatoon. She didn't meet the weight requirement of 150 pounds, "but I talked to the instructors and they agreed to allow me to try."

Her future plans include marriage and moving to a ranch near Meadow Park. She says her training will allow her to help her future husband repair the farm machinery.

"I wanted to get a trade before I got married," she says. "If things don't work out I'll stick to my trade."

Another advantage to her training is that she doesn't have to pay costly garage repair bills on her car.

"I'm busy too. You see them using tools improperly in the garage. The little things count. So I do it myself. If I do it wrong it's my fault."

THE 1980s

First it was on. Then it was off. Then it was partially on. Then the pause button was pushed once more. But one day, lo and behold, the addition was on again. And this time, the plan to expand the Victoria Avenue East campus finally happened.

But it wasn't without a lot of grumbling and infighting between provincial and local political friends and foes. This was something that would repeat itself with even more drama a couple of decades later. Unfortunately, it seemed Assiniboine always had to fight every step of the way to be recognized, to be valued, and to be supported the way an institution that had proved itself over and over again deserved.

Naturally, money was an issue, and while the governing NDP supported the project when it was in power, the whole issue was revisited once the Tories were elected, hence the back and forth on the decision that's outlined above. Costs had jumped in a couple of years from about \$4.25-million to \$6.3-million.

However, the project—in full—was given the nod in 1980, noting, among other things, the “booming electronics industry.” Shovels hit the ground (again) and the





new wing was opened on November 30, 1982. The addition was 93,000 square feet—a 50 per cent increase in space—and it was to allow all the students to be under one roof. (Sound familiar? That’s long been an institutional goal that has yet to be achieved. There’ll be more about when we move into the next century.) The Students’ Association office was in the new space, as were counselling offices, the bookstore, the library/AV centre, as well as more classrooms and space for the Heavy Duty- and Farm-related programs.

But as always, while all this dithering was going on, and politicians were arguing about the cost and debating whether or not to build, the college continued to inform, educate and graduate skilled students that were sought-after and hired by a plethora of establishments.

George Milne (*Plumbing Instructor*): “In the late ‘70s and early ‘80s, Bob Horton and I chaired a committee struck to identify the changing needs of the college. Many of the suggestions of this Expansion Committee were incorporated into the ... expansion that eventually took place. Unfortunately, some of the ideas, such as a swimming pool and an athletic field house, were not adopted.”

Bruce Caruthers (*Drafting Instructor*): “With the addition of new courses at the college, space became at a premium. The drafting course, which had started out on the third floor, was moved to the back of



the CKLQ building across the street from the college. We stayed there for three years until the college expansion was completed in 1982.”

Roy Sobchuk (*Farm Machinery and Heavy Duty Mechanics Instructor*): “We were in the (original) building for just a few years. In the early ‘70s, we moved to the old highways garage on 1st Street and College Avenue. All the apprenticeship programs for Heavy Duty Equipment and Farm Mechanics, as well as Pre-employment Farm and Heavy Duty Mechanics, were relocated there. The old highways garage lacked air-conditioning of any kind. It provided a hot, dirty and dusty work environment. When some of the big diesels were started up, the place would fill with smoke and we had to give our students a ‘smoke break.’ In spite of the poor working conditions, the time at the highways garage was among my best time at the college. We were responsible for the programs ourselves and out of the firing line of administration.

“In the early ‘80s, we moved back to the college. At first, we had classrooms away from the shops, but as classrooms became in short supply, we had to teach in the labs surrounding the Heavy Duty and Farm Equipment shop. The noise from the shop made teaching a real challenge.

“Over the years we brought in Recreational Vehicles, the two-year Farm

Machinery program and increased our apprenticeship programs. Shortly after moving into the new building, we had as many as 31 full- and part-time instructors in the Mechanical department. The building (had) doubled in size; the staff tripled in size.”

With the advent of the new decade came not only the physical expansion, but as always, the addition of several new programs. The interest in, and focus on, technology and computerization that had begun in the ‘70s really came to the fore during the 1980s.

Peter Warkentin (*Electrical Technology Instructor*): “The federal and provincial governments were placing heavy emphasis on technical education. There was no shortage of funds for equipment and supplies, and staff morale was extremely high. In 1974, a training contract with the Libyan government assisted the college in obtaining a PDP8E computer. This was one of the first computers in the Brandon area. While [physically] huge by today’s standards, the PDP8E was considered a mini computer at the time. In the ‘70s, the only computers were large mainframe devices found primarily at universities and government offices. The addition of the computer allowed us to train students in computer languages and programming techniques, as well as the fundamentals of interfacing computers to external devices.”

Bruce Caruthers (Drafting Instructor): "In 1984, I applied for and received a \$93,000 Skills Growth Grant to obtain a computer-assisted drafting system. The system we got was a PSI system that came from an outfit in Kansas. The system consisted of two drafting stations and a plotter. At the time, counting our system, there were only two of these particular systems in Canada.

"As well as obtaining the computer system required to run the CAD system, I was able to go down to Missouri—Kansas City, Joplin and St. Louis—for three consecutive summers to take short courses. In 1986, we started getting Autocad systems. These were using 286s with 40 meg hard drives, which seemed advanced at the time. The PSI system was used until 1991, (at which time) the entire PSI system, except for the plotter, was sold at a garage sale for \$150."

As near as I can tell from the testimonials and research that were provided to me, administrative personal computers were added to the college network by Computer Services in the late 1980s, providing access for email and laser printing. The obsolete VAX 11.750 was replaced with two Vaxstations 3100 systems. The department now boasted close to 500 active computers.

I have to admit, however, that all this tech talk is completely confusing to me,

as I've never been able to wrap my mind around any kind of technology. When the college moved to a new phone system around 2005 or so, I couldn't program or even answer my own phone without the help of my much more savvy media colleagues! So I just have to hope that what's included in the above quotes means something to those in the know, and that they find it interesting.

What I do understand, however, is that these examples illustrate just how dramatically, and how rapidly, technology changed the college, our lives, and as a natural consequence, how and what we taught.

To back up a bit, but still in the technological realm, in 1986, ACC added what was hailed as an educational revolution in Manitoba: video conferencing. Commonplace nowadays, the college was praised, as it so frequently was, in local and provincial media for introducing such an advanced technological option to its bounty of offerings. Assiniboine was blazing trails at every opportunity, and the public and the powers-that-be were taking notice.

Peter Warkentin (Electrical Technology Instructor): "One of the major changes that occurred over the years was the introduction of a variety of new segments of the program. Computer technology was added in 1974, followed by Telecom Technology in 1986 and Electronic Technology in 1995. In addition,

technology was increasing at a rapid rate. Between that and the addition of new programs, we had to learn and teach subjects that were as new to us as they were to the students."

Not only were there new programs at the Victoria Avenue East campus, new programs were being offered at another Assiniboine institution a couple of hours north of Brandon. Although ACC had started its outreach activities in the Parkland region in 1969, delivering academic upgrading programs in a number of rented facilities all over Dauphin, the much-hailed Parkland campus was established in a converted Co-op building in 1986. According to Gabe Mercier, Parkland's Director since 2011, there were 11 original staff members at the then-new location, and the first courses offered were Auto Mechanics, Trailer Mechanic, Welding, Academic Upgrading, and Business Certificate.

As if the opening of an additional campus wasn't impressive enough, yet another feather in the college's cap was the fact that both ACC and BU were being widely acknowledged as leaders in distance education. Mobile units (trailers) travelled throughout rural Manitoba, offering all sorts of courses, especially those that involved computers, micro-computers and software, as well as general interest courses. And quite remarkably, at least in this writer's opinion, there was also



1981-1982
Back: Susan Bosman (Sports Director), David Gull (Vice-President), Susan Babbington (Publications Director).
Front: Helen Harrison (Secretary/Treasurer), Wendy Schlichtmeyer (President), Chris Wjyas (Activities Director).



a welding trailer! Rather than people coming to us, we went to them, training folks in the communities where they were hoping to stay and work, thereby enriching their hometowns and regions.

During the late '80s, advisory boards were introduced at all the Manitoba colleges, which transferred governance from the province to the local entities. The board was and is responsible to the Minister of Economic Development and Training, and governors are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. While that's the official info, the bonus was that this allowed informed decision-making appropriate for each particular institution and the area it served. The ACC Board of Governors included and includes representation from the community, as well as one college staffer and one member of the Students' Association, usually the president. All are appointed by the government of the day and then approved through the Agencies Boards and Commissions office.

The college's website states, "The Assiniboine Community College Board of Governors considers itself to be a policy board and has adopted a governing style that emphasizes outward vision, encourages diversity, provides strategic leadership and that clearly distinguishes between the work of the board and college staff. The board is responsible for establishing college policy, developing the long-range vision and mission

statement, ensuring effective and efficient management of resources, and maintaining communication with the community the college serves."

(While the local governance program was initiated in the latter part of the 1980s, it wasn't until March 10 of 1993 that Assiniboine's Board of Governors was invested under the Colleges Act by an order in council.)

In addition to the introduction of the Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program (more on that in upcoming chapters), the '80s also marked the beginning of a program that eventually became one of the flagship entities for which Assiniboine is widely known and much admired.

In 1986, Steve Renton was hired to design and instruct in the Hospitality and Tourism program. Renton, who had been employed by Fairmont Hotels prior to



First staff photo, Parkland campus, 1986



Graduation, 1989



Steve Renton (*Hospitality and Tourism Instructor*): “At the very start, we didn’t have a culinary program yet. So Larry came in for a month after teaching his class at Crocus—he came in after four o’clock and gave our students a crash course in cooking.”

Like so many instructors at the college, Renton wanted to offer his hospitality pupils real-world experience, so the Great Grey Owl Restaurant, named after Manitoba’s provincial bird, was established in 1989. The first incarnation was staged in a separated section of the cafeteria and was decorated with lights and candles and, of course, elegant table settings.

coming to ACC, worked in tandem with Red River College to design the two-year program, and the first intake of students took place a year later.

But while Renton had plenty of hospitality experience, he wasn’t a chef, and he desperately wanted to round out his students’ skill set. So he arranged for Brandon’s highly respected and best known chef, Larry de Vries, who taught the culinary program at Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School and was many times president of the Brandon and District Chefs Association, to share his knowledge and talent with Assiniboine’s students.

But with no culinary students to prepare food that the hospitality students needed to practice serving, de Vries once again came to the rescue.

Larry de Vries (*Chef Instructor at Crocus Plains*): “I would work at Crocus during the day and then prep and get everything ready for the evening and take everything over to ACC and do Grey Owl.”

The excellence of the food and the then-reasonable prices were a huge hit with the local community, and a meal at Grey Owl has been the hottest ticket in town for the past 30 years. But further advancements in the program were forthcoming, and they all took place in the next two decades.



THE 1990s

Since the Great Grey Owl Restaurant was a rousing success right from the get-go, when the space beside the cafeteria that housed the bookstore was vacated, Grey Owl moved in. It remained in that location for the next 17 years.

Steve Renton (*Hospitality and Tourism Instructor*): "When they moved the bookstore, we felt we'd hit gold. We finally had a room that we could decorate and make our own. We could set a mood."

"It was actually a lot of fun working Grey Owl, and the students enjoyed it too. And people raved about it, and that kind of added to the enjoyment of it as well."

Of course, there still wasn't a full-on culinary component to the hospitality program then—that development would happen in the next three years or so. Until that time, however, de Vries and members of the local Chefs Association stepped up to cook for Grey Owl, both to help the college and to promote their craft, creating a unique and mutually beneficial partnership.

Larry de Vries (*Chef Instructor at Crocus Plains*): "Because there was no culinary program at the time, they needed the culinary expertise in order to pull this hospitality thing off."



The relationship between ACC and the Chefs Association continued to blossom. When the college decided it would offer a culinary arts program to complement the much-in-demand hospitality program, de Vries was on the hiring committee for the first chef instructor who would lead the program.

Larry de Vries (*Chef Instructor at Crocus Plains*): “We were involved sort of on the ground floor getting things started. I was on the interview panel when they were hiring instructors. My job was to ask the technical questions. Some of them (the applicants) were just horrible. One guy, I asked him how to make a béchamel sauce, which is about as simple as you can get. And he said, ‘I don’t do any of those fancy sauces—just the basic ones.’”

Eventually, Chef Ken Kilgour was chosen to lead the fledgling Culinary Arts program, which was taught at Bethel Christian Assembly for its first 14 years. The logistics, which instructors just had to deal with, were daunting, since the space at the church wasn’t designed for instruction. And then, during the month of Grey Owl, Kilgour and the culinary students did what de Vries and the other chefs who’d helped out in earlier years had had to do—prepare all the food for the restaurant off-site at Bethel, then schlepp it all to Assiniboine’s campus, where it was then cooked to order for patrons.

Larry de Vries (*Chef Instructor at Crocus Plains*): “When they were at Bethel, they still went back to the East End to do the training. The hurdles they had to overcome were astonishing.”

The connection between the Hospitality/Culinary Arts programs and the Brandon and District Chefs Association was maintained for many years, and even led to training that was the first of its kind in Canada. The Brandon Sun wrote a story about it (over its thus-far 60 years of existence, Assiniboine has provided a plethora of newsworthy items for the newspaper to cover!) and as usual, the college was at the forefront of innovation and opportunity.

The two entities—ACC and the Chefs Association—partnered to create a program for cooks who had been in the food industry for five years to allow them to write the exams for their Red Seal, a governmental designation of a high level of competency in one’s field.

“We assume they already know a lot of it, but the refresher course in theory gives them the knowledge they need to challenge the provincial exam,” David Agnew, co-ordinator of the Chefs Association, told Sun reporter Leah Bradish at the time. “Under the Trades Qualifications Act, anyone with five years working in the industry can challenge the exam.”

Larry de Vries (*Chef Instructor at Crocus Plains*): “We had a Red Seal program, and we did training at the college. We had over a hundred students in a year—at that point, we had more Red Seal Chefs in Brandon than anywhere else in the province of Manitoba.”

Assiniboine’s programming in agricultural education was also hailed as a real boon to the area in the early 1990s, and among other things, the college offered a high-tech pilot project aimed at rural women. As well, a Licensed Practical Nursing business course was developed that was also specifically directed at farm families.

But while the positive stories vastly outnumber the negative ones, it wasn’t always a bed of roses at ACC. The 1990s were a tumultuous time for those in the Manitoba civil service. Despite the college’s ongoing success, and although the Board of Governors would soon be responsible for Assiniboine’s direction, the government controlled the purse strings. And when austerity measures were brought in by Premier Gary Filmon’s Conservative Party in mid-1991, the news was life-altering for a number of employees.

Keith Smith (*Telecommunications Engineering Technology and Electrical Engineering Technology Instructor*): “The end of my first teaching year, which would be June of 1991, a meeting was called for all staff to report to the gymnasium. As



Anne Bridge and Lesa Carey



First Board of Governors



“Despite job cuts, there was continued expansion, both at the main campus, across the province and even in more far-flung locales.”

soon as everyone was seated, we were told by the acting president that there were going to be layoffs to staff and instructors. We were to return immediately to our offices, and wait. Those of us affected would be getting a phone call to deliver the bad news. As a new instructor, I was so busy that I was oblivious to all of the college’s politics, so this came as a huge surprise. I remember people crying as they were escorted out of the college by security. I felt lucky I wasn’t one of them.”

A total of 20 college employees were pink-slipped, and many dark days followed as the dust from the layoffs settled. But as always, the college persevered, and both recovered from that grim time and moved forward with its usually tenacity. Despite job cuts, there was continued expansion, both at the main campus, across the province and even in more far-flung locales.

Roderick Danielson (*Russell Training Centre Manager*): “(After many years of teaching at the college), in March 1992, I applied for and was hired to open up a new training center in Russell, MB; a very challenging position, no telephone for the first few months. I was provided with a cellular telephone, which would only connect up with the Sask/Tel System from inside the building. I discovered that if one took the phone outside and crouched down on the north side of the building, the phone would call on the Manitoba system. Russell residents were amused by the strange antics of the new training centre manager.

“The budget for the centre had been spent for the first year when I arrived there, but could draw on some petty cash in the amount of \$25 maximum on any one purchase. I had to wait for paint to come on sale to buy one gallon to brighten the place up a bit. By the second year, the place was booming—Business Skills and Recreational Vehicle Mechanics day programs and



[L to R]: Gerald Bashforth, Barry Gooden and Harvey Laluk (Assistant Superintendent with the Brandon School Division)





Ag instructors: Jack Braun, Terry Powell and John Bandor



Signing of ACC/BU Articulation Agreement



400-plus persons taking advantage of evening course offerings in Russell and surrounding towns."

George Milne (*initially Plumbing Instructor*): "I went to Kenya in 1992 and taught a course in developing curriculum at two colleges. At that time, Diana Youdell was the overseas coordinator, with The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) as principal funder. This opportunity will always be remembered as one of many exciting times at Assiniboine."

Ken Fox (*Student Services*): "A group of foreign students from Kenya bring fond memories from the early 1970s. Hal Pallister and I were assigned to provide guidance and academic support to eight persons coming to Canada under CIDA sponsorship. They were to take one year of trades training before going to the University of New Brunswick to complete their degrees in Teacher Training. It was a pleasure to take these students to places such as the Austin Agricultural Museum and have them make comparisons with progress in Kenya. They would often come to our house to eat or enjoy family life or to repair their cars in the back lane. On occasions when our family would leave home for a long weekend or vacation, some students would come to live at our place and use the workshop in the basement to build loudspeaker enclosures for hi-fi sets that they later took home."

"In 1995, I went to Kenya and met with five of the eight students; the remaining three were away at the time of my visit. They are all successful and contributing members in their country, and all of them fondly remember their year at ACC."

There was a move afoot, especially in the 1990s—and one I believe continues to this day—to integrate programs between Assiniboine and Brandon University, allowing students who were so inclined to end up with both a practical diploma and a university degree. Although that partnership really came to the fore during the college's fourth decade, its seeds were sown in the 1970s. And the collaboration showed that then, as now, ACC's approach and its learn-by-doing philosophy were an invaluable combination that resulted in student success.

Ross Playter (*Economics, Management and English Instructor*): "A student could take a diploma in Business Administration and receive credit at BU. Many students took advantage of this, particularly in accounting if they wanted a to become a chartered accountant. After two years, they had a diploma. After two more, they had a degree. The college students are very technically competent because of the practical work that is emphasized at the college."



By the mid-1990s, programs and class sizes were expanding, the roster of rural initiatives was increasing, and ACC became a hub for distance education.

The college's Electrical Engineering Technology and Telecommunication Energy Technology programs received accreditation from the Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists and were given the stamp of approval from the National Standards Council.



Bonnie Proven, 1993

Assiniboine saw its first graduates from the Prairie Horticulture program receive their certificates. Then, always one or more steps ahead of other institutions, ACC offered Introduction to Education as its first course delivered solely on the Internet. Not only did the college's subsequent online courses fill up quickly and consistently, but these opportunities were both a provincial first and, at that time, unique to the Internet as well.

With the arrival of the Maple Leaf Foods hog-processing plant, specially trained skilled workers were required, so Assiniboine stepped up to the plate once again. As well, both ACC and Brandon University were given funding for technological expansion.

And in September of 1995, in partnership with BU and the Brandon School Division, Assiniboine opened The Brandon Adult Learning Centre on Rosser Avenue, the goal of which was to help mature



students get their Grade 12 diplomas and take upgrading courses for both community college and university.

"Their lives weren't together during their teenage years," Jeff Kerr, the centre's co-ordinator, told The Brandon Sun's Scott Gibbons. "There were forces at work that prevented them from getting their high school at that time. We wanted to create an environment that would be more supportive. It takes courage to come back to school after being out for a long time. Our goal is to help them become independent learners so they will be able to survive in larger classes on their own."

The Adult Learning Centre certainly did, and continues to do, just that. But despite all this progress, the hardships with which the decade began were not over yet. Government cutbacks were being felt at every level, and by the late '90s, college staffers had had enough.

Keith Smith (*Telecommunications Engineering Technology and Electrical Engineering Technology Instructor*): "In 1997, all three of the Engineering Technology programs were cancelled. This happened the morning after our union took a strike vote—that we would not accept a second round of 'Filmon Fridays' without striking. The college's response was to call me and all of my colleagues into the college the next morning to meet with then-

president, Brenda Cooke. We were told our programs had been cut, and that most of us would be laid off (five of the seven instructors were given notice of layoff). This included some very long-term employees, Bob Rodgers and Collin Walker being two that I remember most.

"Ernie Sowiak and I were the only two instructors from the Engineering Technology programs that survived that time. Ernie was transferred to teach in the Consumer Electronics Repair Technician certificate program. I was tasked with creating a new Computer Systems Technician certificate program.

"Ernie and I both ran these respective programs for two years. I was then asked by the current president/vice president combination of Brent Mills and Earl Davey to add a second year to the Computer Systems program and make it into a Computer Systems Technology program. Ernie came over to teach in this program, and a new instructor was hired to continue teaching the Consumer Electronics program until it was retired a few years later."

Additions to and subtractions from program offerings were a constant and so were alterations to the titles of established programs. In order to keep up with the times, program names were modified to better reflect the incorporation of advancements in particular fields. So with the dizzying

pace of societal and technological change, as well as increasing demands for varied and hitherto-non-existent employment sectors, the college worked hard to not only remain current, but anticipate what might be required in the future, and tailor its programming accordingly.

Marlene Stadnyk (*Administrative Assistant*): "I am delighted to be an ACC retiree who had been employed with the college from May 1993 to June 2012. However, my association with ACC began long before this.

"In 1967, I was one of the student graduates at the first graduation ceremony held in the gymnasium of the new location at 1430 Victoria Avenue East. I was successful in obtaining a Certificate in Stenography. This was a 10-month course that included a compulsory six-month practicum. One hundred graduates attended. (I have the group photograph.) The capacity of the college was 300.

"My employment commenced in 1993 as Administrative Assistant with the Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Division. For my position, major responsibilities included all aspects of administration for the distance education programs and contract delivery. At this time, the division was experiencing great growth spurts, including delivery of the pork production program and pesticide certification for licencing.

"I was impressed with the opportunities this position provided me, especially the team building and unique environment. Tasks were demanding of my co-ordination and interpersonal skills, with a need to prioritize and meet deadlines. College programs were developing, expanding and accelerating at a significant pace."

Stadnyk is just one of myriad ACC graduates who were, either immediately following graduation or years down the road, recognized for their stellar abilities and hired by the very entity that had trained them. Dozens, probably hundreds, of Assiniboine grads have been and are still on the college's roster of staff members, speaking not only to the quality of education students received, but to the ongoing allegiance between ACC graduates and their alma mater. The college is always looking to hire the best and the brightest, so it's only logical that many of those would have come from within!

Many graduates-turned-employees, as well as other staffers, spoke highly of the camaraderie they experienced among the college ranks. Friendships forged in the workplace (which, according to most, was a wonderful place to be) remained constant even after staffers retired or moved on.



Lisa Huston (Students' Association President) and Tim Ryan (Business Administration instructor)

Ken Fox (Student Services): "The staff made a lot of effort to get to know one another and also support each other. Staff barbecues on the lawn of the college and in later years in John Lung's cow pasture were well attended and enjoyable. The Mini Olympics organized by Jan Sullivan and John Stonehouse provided enjoyment for both students and staff. Skit nights were a highlight where we could look at the lighter side of our jobs and laugh with each other rather than at each other. On the whole, we were a contented staff. The times were good."

Keith Smith (*Telecommunications Engineering Technology and Electrical Engineering Technology Instructor*): "There were a couple of tables in the cafeteria that were informally reserved for staff, and throughout the day any and all staff would stop by for their coffee or lunch breaks. People from all departments, and all levels of administration, would meet

and chat. At any time, you could be sitting across from admin staff or instructors from any of the programs in the college, chairs, deans, building managers, or cleaners. It was a great way to get to meet others in the college, and everyone seemed very willing to help each other out. I particularly remembered many of these folks were avid golfers and would be scheduling their golf games for the end of the workday with anyone who was available to play.

"I organized a golf league at the college and ran this for about five years. I would schedule weekly games with groups of three or four people, and they would in turn schedule their own games to play that week. The scorecards would be returned to me, and I would post the ongoing stats in our staff lounge. At the end of six to eight weeks of play, we would have a wrap-up golf tournament.

"I also organized and ran a billiards league for about three years. The dozen or so members would meet once a week to play games and socialize. We started this



when one of our instructors, Andy Singfat, opened a pool hall.

"I also remember annual Christmas parties that were very well attended and a lot of fun."

Students continued to flock to ACC in the latter part of the decade, and in 1998, there was an exchange of tourism students between ACC and Trinidad and Tobago. College representatives engaged in plenty of international consultation and consequent travel, and a number of students from Tanzania could also be seen around the Victoria Avenue East campus.

Another impressive achievement in 1998 was the opening of Assiniboine's Winnipeg campus, which has almost entirely focused on nursing since its inception. Karen Hargreaves, who joined the college as a healthcare and practical nursing co-ordinator in 1997, then left for two years in 2003 and returned as Dean of Health and Human Services in 2005, said the Winnipeg campus was yet another extension of the nursing training Assiniboine offered in Dauphin, Portage, several different First Nations communities, and two rotating rural locations each year. The opening of the Winnipeg campus made another 100 seats available to those wishing to pursue a career in this noble profession.

Karen Hargreaves (*Dean of Health and Human Services*): "The program was expanding when I came on board in 1997. For a short time, we referred to it as the enhanced practical training program, as that was when changes were made to the program (in 1996). In May of that same year, Assiniboine Community College was given the mandate from Manitoba Health for education of Practical Nurses throughout Manitoba. ACC worked in conjunction with the provincial authorities, Manitoba Association of Licensed Practical Nurses (now called the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Manitoba), the Practical Nursing Advisory Committee, and with the LPN Program Steering Committee to revise the Practical Nursing program to reflect the changing needs of communities as identified by health reform."

In addition to nursing growing by leaps and bounds, Assiniboine's early foray into online learning continued to bear fruit. ACC became the only community college in Canada to offer a complete two-year Business Administration diploma through distance education. The benefits of that option were noted particularly by rural residents, and the number of programs was expanding both on-campus and via distance. The college was widely acknowledged as a leader in agricultural education, recognized nationally and internationally as offering a sound educational product and, as the '90s neared their end, ACC was poised for even more unprecedented growth.



THE 2000s

The New Year—the new millennium—arrived without incident, despite widespread fear that computers wouldn’t “compute” a year starting with “20” instead of “19.” Thanks to some intense work ahead of time by the great folks in Computer Services, Assiniboine’s technological systems survived the Y2K threat without incident.

Randy Ramsey (*Network Administrator*):

“We started in advance—in spring of 1999. We actually rolled the clocks ahead to February (of 2000) to encompass the leap year, as well as to see what would happen. We did a lot of testing and then rolled everything back. We budgeted, too, but we also got a bunch of extra money to replace computers. We had to replace 350 computers (out of about 1,200) that weren’t Y2K compliant. So we had everything upgraded before Y2K.”

After that, ACC delved into what would become one of its most memorable decades in years. But as usual, the advancements made by the college wouldn’t come without a lot of dedication, tenacity and, eventually, the prevailing of cooler heads and plenty of foresight.

Speaking of cooler heads, 2000 began in January with what for many years was the annual Hot-Tub-A-Thon, a fundraiser in which the Ag and Environment



students took turns in a hot tub in freezing cold January weather to raise money for diabetes research and support. The unmistakable smell of chlorine and the sight of frosted eyebrows and facial hair was commonplace outside the doors by the cafeteria where the hot tub was situated. I always chuckled when I happened to be walking by during a 'shift change' as the bikini- or trunks-clad students threw themselves into towels and high-tailed it for the warmer air inside.

As well, Westman Newline, Media Production's student-produced 15-minute daily news broadcast, debuted in the fall of 2000. Broadcast live to the region on Westman Communications Group's Access 12 channel, the show revolved around the students researching, producing and delivering daily news, sports, weather, and entertainment information in a live studio setting. (Students over the years also provided intense live coverage of civic elections in 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014.)

Work officially began at the Brandon campus on the renovation of the basement in the new wing and the construction of a two-level link between the old and new buildings. Renovations provided extra classroom, lab and office space, as well as a new print shop, and were completed in August 2001.

Before I move on to the issue that unquestionably dominated the entire

decade, it's perhaps prudent to first outline other noteworthy happenings. And to begin, it's only logical that I refer to what was surely the single most important event ever to happen at the college. In 2001, I, Diane Nelson, was hired to teach in Media Production and the brand new Web Design program!!

All kidding aside, despite having taught voice and musical theatre classes for years, and vocal coaching or musically directing dozens of high school and community theatre productions, and having spent my entire career in media, working in radio, television and primarily print journalism for decades, nothing quite prepares you for your first foray in a formal classroom setting. I still remember trembling like a leaf for that first 8:30 a.m. class in Media. Of course, it was Writing Skills, which basically translated into hard-core grammar. A passion of mine, and a thorn in the sides of most students, this was the beginning of my own experience in learning by doing. Like most others who venture from industry into full-time teaching, I survived, but it took me about five years—which I understand is quite common—to really feel comfortable and confident in the knowledge that what I was doing was of value. Though many of the students were skeptical at the time, I was thrilled many years later when I saw two former students, who worked at Global TV Saskatoon, interviewed about Movember by one of their colleagues. When the

anchor asked, "How are you doing today?" one replied, "I'm well, thank you," and the other responded, "I'm well as well," my heart fairly burst with pride. Mother Teresa did good. The rest of us do well. The fact they remembered and applied that lesson long after graduation was one of those "YESSSS!" moments that always makes me smile.

A week to the day after my very first class, two planes purposely flew into the World Trade Center towers in New York City, and life as we knew it was forever changed. I'd seen the incident at home as it unfolded live on TV, and by the time I arrived, shell-shocked, at the college, my very accomplished colleagues were steps ahead of me and had set up a television in Room 427, where students were glued to the screen. We all gradually drifted down to Room 255 where more TVs had been set up, and other staff members and students shuffled in and out all day long. The silence, except for the ongoing barrage of newscaster talk over the horrific images on the screens, was deafening.

One of our second-year students, a reservist, was in tears, fearing she'd be called upon to join the ranks and fight the terrorists. Another student, a first-year from The Balkans, seemed to be even more mesmerized than others by the moving pictures in front of him. Knowing he'd come from a place where violence was not uncommon, I was concerned





he might be experiencing some sort of post-traumatic stress. So I approached him and gently asked if he was okay. He turned to me, with just a film of tears in his eyes, and said, "I am fine. Don't worry, Diane. This happened a lot when I was growing up. I'm used to it."

That destroyed me.

But as it always does, the world moved on, and so did those of us at ACC. The college celebrated its 40th anniversary with a homecoming event in October of 2001, and at a gala celebration in the cafeteria, I, along with several other musically inclined staffers, presented a showcase of popular songs from the four decades of Assiniboine's existence for the 275 staff and alumni in attendance.

Demand for Licensed Practical Nurses continued to increase, and the college responded by offering more training not only at its campuses, but by rotating nurse-training programs closer to communities that needed them. In 2002, ACC was the first organization in the province to install a new telephone system called an Internet Protocol Telephony Network.

As the decade progressed, the college made application for its 24-hour campus-community radio station license, CJJJ. Better known as CJ-106, the station finally got the formal nod from the

CRTC in 2003, and media students who previously had just been broadcasting in-house at the college were now legitimately on the airwaves, with their efforts accessible to all within a 20-mile radius of Brandon.

Students trained in the GIS (Geographic Information System) program were being employed as soon as they graduated (national accreditation for the program came a couple of years down the road), and in 2004, the Students' Association staged the first incarnation of its exceedingly popular Sun of a Beach volleyball tournament. This sports- and party-centric event drew teams from near and far for well over a decade, and there was always a sense of excitement in the air during the weeks leading up to it.

In 2005, and in other years as well, students from across the college excelled in the Skills Manitoba competition. Those who won gold medals—and there were many—moved on to compete in Skills Canada. Several of those brought home hardware from the national event, and it was clear Assiniboine students could more than hold their own against the best in the country.

And that continued to be the case in 2006 when our Media Production students won the Broadcast Educators Association of Canada (BEAC) award for Best Student Newscast. Delighted by this national recognition, ACC President Joel Ward sent seven students (accompanied

“Your kids
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and shoulders
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There was
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close.”

by yours truly, who instructed the producer and the on-air talent, and my colleague Greg Sherris, who taught the technical crew) to Seneca at York in Toronto to collect the trophy. It was a gala evening I'll never forget. And it was made even sweeter when one of the judges for the competition took Greg aside at the after-party and told him, “Your kids were head and shoulders above all the other entries. There was nothing else that even came close.”

Good times indeed!

That same year, ACC unveiled plans for yet another unique-to-Canada program, Police Studies. The college partnered with the Brandon Police Service (BPS) to begin offering the one-year course, which delivered the academic requirements of police officer basic training, in 2007.

Karen Hargreaves (*Dean of Health and Human Services*): “We were one of the only colleges in Canada accredited by a provincial Justice department to do recruit training. Other colleges might have a program, but we do Phase A (of training that would usually be done by a police force), which includes theory, drill, physical training, and scenarios. And the great thing that speaks to the success of the ACC Police Studies program is that graduates from our program make up a large part of the Brandon police force today.”

In fact, in a 2020 email from BPS Chief Wayne Balcaen, he shared the actual numbers with Hargreaves, and they're truly impressive.

Wayne Balcaen (*Chief, Brandon Police Service*): “BPS has a present compliment of 92 sworn police officers including our Executive Officers. We have 39 ACC Police Studies graduates that we presently employ as police



officers. This works out to 42.4 per cent of our sworn members. It is important to note that many were direct hires out of ACC to the BPS, and some were also experienced officers who had graduated from ACC and were hired by another police service, gleaned some experience, and then returned to Brandon. Further, prior to BPS, many of the ACC hires from Police Studies had experience after graduation with other justice areas such as sheriffs or corrections.

“Since October 2007, BPS has hired 46 police officers and 39 of them—or 84.8 per cent—have been ACC Police Studies graduates. The other seven were experienced officers.”

Graduates from the program, which at the time of this writing has been renamed Public Safety, not only become police officers, but corrections officers, sheriffs, and border services officers, as Balcaen indicated. ACC is also the sole deliverer of the First Nations Safety Officer program in partnership with Manitoba Justice. And the college’s offerings in the justice area continue to grow. Hargreaves said Assiniboine is expanding into restorative justice and in 2020 got a contract through the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer to train animal protection officers.

At this point, we’ve wandered into the present from the past, since it seemed logical to summarize many of the decade’s additional happenings in one

fell swoop. But as was mentioned earlier, there was one singular topic that dominated the decade, and even it had its roots in the late 1990s—ACC at BMHC.

Partially closed in 1992, and falling into varying states of disrepair, all the buildings of the former Brandon Mental Health Centre (BMHC) were completely closed by 1999. So there was much speculation as to what might or should be done with the property.

Brent Mills (*Past President*): “At roughly the same time as I joined ACC, the City and the Province were engaged in discussions, public consultations and the like, about the future of the former Brandon Mental Health Centre grounds. Lots of ideas were floated but none really took root. One day on a bicycle ride through the BMHC grounds with my wife Rena, I commented that the property reminded me of an Ivy League University campus and mused, with a chuckle, that it would be a pretty spectacular spot for ACC to relocate. With a lot of encouragement from Rena, I pitched the concept to the City and the Province.”

It was proposed that the architecturally significant buildings and gorgeous grounds would make a natural campus and that the area should be repurposed





Randy Ramsey

as a hub for education. And in the early 2000s, the notion of relocating ACC to the BMHC site started to gain some traction, especially since it would finally unite the college, not under one roof, but at least on a single site. As was discussed earlier, Culinary Arts had never been at Assiniboine's Victoria Avenue East campus—from its inception as a program, it was based at Bethel Christian Assembly, which had a functional kitchen but not one designed for teaching.

But there were other ideas being considered. As *The Brandon Sun* reported in February of 2001, "a city committee (was) quietly preparing to sell the entire 64-hectare Brandon Mental Health Centre grounds to a Winnipeg developer as early as March. The city (had) been negotiating with The Development Consortium, a group of prominent movers that (included) Joe Bova, about taking over the grounds and co-ordinating development, Councillor Doug Paterson said."

I still worked for the Sun at that time, and after the news broke, I met twice with Bova: first for a tour of the BMHC site when he pointed out what he was thinking of doing where, and once in Winnipeg as he outlined further plans that included a residential component, possible shopping outlets to serve the community that would be built on the hill, and various other things I desperately wish I could recall.

And whether it was because the city was "quietly" preparing to sell the BMHC site, or because others felt there was more value to it than simply as an exclusive sort of gated community, that galvanized the ACC at BMHC proponents into action.

Studies were done, estimates were made, and it was determined in 2002 that at \$36-million, moving the campus to the North Hill, while still a wonderful idea in many people's minds, would be a terribly costly investment for the government of the day. So there was talk of putting a casino on the site. Then it was suggested that both Assiniboine and a casino could co-exist on the property. The debate dragged on for years and led to a whole lot of infighting between politicians—councillors of various political stripes weren't on the same page as either the provincial government or the city, MLAs who were loyal to both their party and their community were torn—really, the whole thing was just one big mess.

NDP Premier Gary Doer publicly expressed optimism that the ACC move to the BMHC site would go ahead. But there was no mention of it in the agenda for the throne speech.

And then there was.

The government declared it was prepared to spend \$25-million to assist in the college's move to the North Hill location. Mills, who shepherded the college through this ultra-tumultuous time in its

history, said while the province's financial support for the project was welcome and he was hopeful the move might proceed, he didn't view the announcement as any sort of guarantee.

"ACC move unlikely in 2003" was the banner headline in *The Brandon Sun*. And was that ever accurate! When 2003 dawned, things were still in limbo, the political infighting continued, and the rollercoaster ride went on. On November 7 of that year, those in the know speculated the college's relocation was dubious at best and predicted the site would be turned into a housing development.

I don't know when Bova and The Development Consortium washed their hands of the project, but I know it happened. Perhaps all the dilly-dallying was enough to scare them off or just made them figure they'd put their efforts toward something that seemed a little—or a lot—more solid and secure.

As 2003 melted into 2004 and then became 2005, plans for the college and the North Hill site were still uncertain. But with the passage of time came increased cost estimates—what had been a \$36-million venture a few years earlier was now pegged at between \$60- and \$80-million.

Outrage on the part of relocation proponents was palpable, and the naysayers now had more fuel to add to

their anti-move fire. And the inevitable comparison was drawn between the historic Prince Edward Hotel (a chic Canadian Pacific Railway establishment that had been Brandon's crown jewel for decades but was allowed to disintegrate after it closed and was eventually demolished) and the BMHC property. After all, the Nurses' Residence, designed by architects Jordan and Over and built from 1920 to 1923, was a classic example of "Asylum Architecture," and many folks, me included, lamented the loss of the Prince Eddy and thought the North Hill buildings should be preserved.

But the question then became, "At what price history?" And as February of 2005 rolled around, the debate became even more heated. Developers who had money to buy the property were being sought, the government suggested it was "sleeping on it," infighting between political-party stalwarts became increasingly heated, and other suggestions, including moving ACC downtown, were being proffered.

Then all of a sudden—out of the blue, it seemed—there was a change of heart on the part of the province.

I'll never forget sitting in Media Production's main editing suite—we had a big screen in that classroom—with much of the college's management team for the throne speech. We were all on pins and needles for what seemed an

inordinately long period of time. But when it was finally announced that funds had been allocated for a "substantial or full" relocation of Assiniboine Community College to BMHC, Mills slapped his hand on the table and jumped to his feet, grinning from ear to ear. The room erupted in cheers, and Assiniboine's latest expansion effort was about to become reality.

Brent Mills (*Past President*): "Like many, I was barely able to believe the news. It may take decades for the final result, but there is no doubt that Brandon and Manitoba will benefit from the preservation of the beautiful North Hill property and from the development of a truly outstanding college campus."

Planning began in earnest, and the project moved along briskly. The move was seen by many to be key to our region's future, and as construction began, the city and much of Westman followed its progress with great interest.

While Mills had conceived the idea of the move to the hill, once the relocation was assured, opportunity beckoned him in the form of a new adventure as Director/President of the United Arab Emirates' Higher Colleges of Technology. Assiniboine's Vice-President, Academic Joel Ward was selected as ACC's new President, and he set forth an ambitious

plan for the revitalization of the BMHC site.

Campaign Assiniboine, which was to raise funds to assist in the realization of Ward's vision, was launched in January of 2007, and plans for the extensive North Hill campus were publicly unveiled in November, with projected completion slated for 2011.

But first, shovels hit the ground to expand and repurpose the kitchen at the Nurses' Residence. That elegant building, with its classically detailed portico, oak woodwork, mosaic tiles, wrought-iron staircases and ornamental plaster, was to be the new home for the Culinary Arts and Hotel and Restaurant Management programs, and everyone involved wanted it to be a showpiece.

Those who worked on restoring it did so lovingly and respectfully, repairing rather than replacing what had been there for so long, ensuring the building's historic legacy lived on. And Ward moved quickly to secure the name 'Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts,' thereby cementing the college's role as a provincial entity, rather than a regional or Brandon one.

While the launch of the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts took place on December 6, 2006, MICA was officially opened with much fanfare on October 5 of 2007. A grand luncheon, prepared by the culinary students and served by the hospitality students, hosted dignitaries

from the city, the region and the province, along with members of the media, the business community, and college representatives. The public was invited to join the festivities by witnessing the ribbon-cutting ceremony at 1:30 p.m. and taking guided tours of the building from 2 to 7 p.m. The place was packed to the rafters for all five of those hours, and there was plenty of back-slapping and socializing. It was a fabulous day and a significant milestone for Assiniboine.



Chef Joanne Johnston (formerly Canada-Somers), who joined ACC in 2001 as a Culinary Arts instructor, was elated to move from the cramped quarters at Bethel Christian Assembly to the sparkling new facility that was MICA.

Joanne Johnston (*Culinary Arts Instructor*):

“There was a real sense of anticipation. We’d been working from the church—it wasn’t the basement but it felt like a basement. When I first started, there was not one piece of commercial-grade equipment—we always had house-grade equipment. So when we moved up (to MICA), we had restaurant- or professional-grade equipment. And the site itself is just gorgeous—the building is beautiful. It’s nice to do events up there. Moving up there was certainly the best thing that ever could have happened to our program.”

Because BMHC had been around for so long and had many ties to the community during its days as a healthcare facility, perhaps it’s not surprising that some of those links would be maintained when the college moved onto the property. And the location on the hill was a familiar one for Johnston, one with which she had lifelong ties. So working as a chef instructor in the former Nurses’ Residence was like a homecoming of sorts.

Joanne Johnston (*Culinary Arts instructor*):

“My whole family has worked up there. My dad, Edward Vandermeulen, worked in the dairy barns. Mom (Ruth) was up there

for 35 years. She worked in the kitchen and then she was a supervisor in the kitchen. My sister Brenda worked on the wards as a nurses’ aide. My brother Mike was in Central Service Supply, sanitizing and making sure everybody had all the sterilized equipment they needed.

“And what’s interesting is that my mom and dad lived on 2nd Street North just a block away. As a kid, I used to come over and toboggan and stuff—all of the staff gatherings were so wonderful. It was just a celebration of all the people and staff.

“After I finished (culinary) school at Red River, and worked in Winnipeg and Alberta for a few years, I came back home to Brandon and worked in the kitchen at BMHC with my mom. And my husband, Don Johnston, was facilities manager at BMHC and continues to be facilities manager of the site for the Manitoba government.”

Kyle Zalluski, who studied Hospitality under the tutelage of Steve Renton at ACC and graduated in 2001, joined the college team in 2004 as an instructor for Hospitality Administration, which is now Hotel and Restaurant Management. Zalluski also has fond memories of the move to MICA.

Kyle Zalluski (*Hotel and Restaurant Management Instructor*): “Walking into the Nurses’ Residence for the first time with the architects and plan developers prior to construction commencing for



the new MICA campus was like walking back in time. The building was more or less in the same state as when they closed the Nurses' Residence doors. To see how many of the rooms would still be used in the similar format with upgrades was neat—many of the original classrooms that nursing students used are still classrooms used today by ACC students. And the nurses' dining room is now The Grey Owl dining room.

"It was exciting knowing the two programs—Hotel and Restaurant Management and Culinary Arts—were leading the organizational change of the relocation to a new campus, and it was great being a part of such a major change for ACC and post-secondary education in southwestern Manitoba."

Like Johnston, Zalluski knows through conversations with patrons of Grey Owl and other popular annual events, how strong the connection between the former Brandon Mental Health Centre and the community still is.



Student Council

Kyle Zalluski (*Hotel and Restaurant Management Instructor*): "It's always a special moment during our many MICA events over the years whenever a guest stops me or calls me to their table and shares 'their story'—that they worked, visited or studied at BMHC, the grounds or the nurses residence, and them visiting us as a college guest is kind of like coming home for them. And that's especially true for the former nursing students who returned to MICA after they stayed at the residence for several months as a nursing student.

"My wife's grandmother studied as a nursing student at BMHC in the mid-1950s and dormed in a room just down from my current office at MICA for four months. She had fond memories of her time spent at BMHC. When we brought Gran back to MICA for the first time, she was able to pace off the steps from the staircase down the second floor hall to the door of her old dorm. Once she was inside, she looked out the window and recalled that the view of one of the main pillars at the front entrance blocked the view of the dorm window from outside, and they used that blind spot to sneak out of the balcony after the dorm mothers had ensured all nursing students had retired to their rooms after curfew!"

Another heartbreakingly lovely moment at Grey Owl occurred when Dr. Richard Parker, who had been a psychiatrist at BMHC for 24 years, and his wife, Nora, came to MICA for dinner in 2009. The

Parkers' grandson Trevor's wife, Carey Pod, who works in the ACC Registrar's Office as an admissions specialist, had managed to get through the onerous phone reservation system to reserve a table for two. She later informed Zalluski she wouldn't be attending, but that the Parkers would be there to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary.

Kyle Zalluski (*Hotel and Restaurant Management Instructor*): "This one will always have a special spot with me. Carey told me Dr. Parker was a long-time psychiatrist at the BHMC, and they had lived on the grounds in one of the private homes that was provided for each physician; they had raised their family there.

"The night they were coming for dinner to Grey Owl was the first time they had been back to the grounds or the buildings since Dr. Parker had retired (in 1984). When they arrived, Dr. Parker was in a wheelchair, and I remember choosing a star student to serve them. Kristy Stewart (now Lamarre) was the student, and she and the whole Grey Owl team were briefed before their arrival. We made the evening very special for them, with extra-detailed service and a full tour of the kitchen and classrooms after their meal. Dr. Parker was especially happy to see the private dining room as that had been the doctors' private dining room for all the years he worked at the hospital.

"The Parkers shared stories of their home (which had been demolished)—I recall Mrs. Parker saying she would have a fresh-cut

bouquet of flowers on her kitchen table throughout the summer that was provided by the patients and grounds crew from the gardens. The stories went on and on, and many students and staff were captivated listening—much like the Parkers were captivated listening as college students and staff talked about the future use of the buildings and conversion of the BMHC grounds to the future ACC campus. The Parkers left late that evening with smiles on their faces, and approximately two months later, Carey contacted me to let me know that Dr. Parker had passed. She said that they had shared many times with their family their memories of that special night at the Grey Owl right up until his passing. I remember reaching out to Kristy on social media since she had graduated, and it was nice to reminisce about that special night we all shared."

What a story! The great thing about the college, though, is tales like that continue to be told and memories continue to be made, not just at MICA, but in all of ACC's buildings and campuses. Speaking of buildings, the next major happening of the decade occurred in June of 2008, when it was confirmed that funding had been approved for the building of the Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology at the North Hill campus. Construction commenced soon afterward, and the college looked forward to welcoming the new decade with another freshly minted facility.

THE 2010s

One could really just continue to write 'and repeat' at the beginnings of all of these chapters, because as has been stated so many times already, the college has never stood still. In every decade of its existence, it's grown, expanded, extended its reach, continued to be innovative, has thrived despite adversity—I mean, it's starting to sound like a broken record!

But the truth is, this is all truth! Tenacity, future-casting on the part of its keen and always enthusiastic management team, and the impressive ability and strength of its dedicated faculty and staff has been a constant, and those qualities have kept the college not only at the forefront of development, but actually ahead of it. Anticipating needs before they arise, listening to what the greater community wants and requires from us, and then ensuring what must happen to make those things happen actually happen—well, that's something Assiniboine always should, and I hope always will, be proud of.

Naturally, in the 2010s, these unwritten guidelines for ACC's success continued. The college extended its presence in Dauphin by applying for a grant to expand its facility under the Knowledge Infrastructure Program. The KIP funding allowed the college to build an Early Learning Centre for 40 children, and enhance and expand its Early Childhood



Kodi Whitehurst, Early Childhood Education
Mud Day, 2018



ACC Days, Ebb and Flow First Nation, 2018



Staff Gathering, 2017



Nicholas Ewasiuk, Culinary Arts
Bronze Medalist
Taste Canada Cooks the Books, 2016

Education program, as well as its technical trades program facilities.

And under that umbrella, the \$46-million Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology officially opened on the North Hill campus on October 1, 2010. All of ACC's existing trade certificate and diploma programs were moved to the new site, along with apprenticeship offerings. And Premier Greg Selinger joined local dignitaries, staff and students to mark the grand occasion.

"Our government supports projects such as this high-tech, world-class training facility to help build capacity to meet the growing need for more skilled workers in high-demand sectors in today's economy," Selinger said in an ACC press release. "We are also providing more opportunities for young Manitobans wanting to enter skilled trades and apprenticeship fields that offer stable, high-paying jobs in both the public and private sectors.

"Two years ago, when this construction project got underway, there was a feeling of optimism for the future growth of Assiniboine Community College in Brandon and the areas it serves. The official opening of this tremendous facility shows how effectively we have worked in partnership to get the job done, opening more doors for Westman residents to study and learn their professions closer to home."

Named in honour of the long-time NDP MLA for Brandon East, the creation of the Len Evans Centre necessitated the redevelopment of the Pine Ridge building on the former BMHC grounds, as well as the construction of two new shop buildings. And The Len, as some have taken to calling it, was designed to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold building standard, exceeding the province's Green Building Policy within the original project budget. The facility was built to accommodate more than 1,400 students, including more than 700 new apprenticeship spaces.

"The Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology will significantly boost the number of apprentices that can be trained in Manitoba and increase the number of employees available to fill highly skilled technical jobs," Selinger continued. "This is a win-win situation for individuals, businesses and the provincial economy."

In his first official act as ACC's newly named President, Mark Frison heartily agreed.

"The official opening of the Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology is a wonderful day for our staff and students, for community members and for the province," Frison said in a news release at the time. "This historic space will be an asset to the community and will be shared with the community. We are proud that our students will be trained

in a state-of-the-art facility and will be using some of the most technologically advanced equipment available."

In 2011, ACC made its mark on the world stage, when Hotel and Restaurant Management instructor Kyle Zalluski had the honour of representing Team Canada as a coach with his student Brittney Ross (now Jensen) in Sao Paulo, Brazil in the World Skills (Americas) competition. Jensen did the college proud by winning the gold medal in the Restaurant Service competition against 10 other countries from North, Central and South America.

Speaking of stages, in February of that same year, yours truly was asked to perform on a makeshift platform in the Victoria Avenue East campus gymnasium when ACC celebrated its 50th anniversary. Catherine Deurbrouck Moes, Director of Board and Executive Operations and organizer of the event, wanted to represent all fifty years of the college's existence in song, and after some research, decided that superstar Cher had spanned those five decades, having topped the charts with recordings in each of them. She then asked me to not only sing the tunes, but dress the part as well. It was completely intimidating to perform in front of my colleagues in the skimpy outfits Cher was known for, but I sucked it up—literally—and did my best with the numbers. We started in 2011



[L to R]: Mark Frison, Bobbie Robertson and Jim Rediger
Westoba Innovation Lab Grand Opening, 2020



[L to R]: Kyle Zalluski, Wade Barnes, Beny Mwenda and Whitney Roberts
Alumni Advancement Dinner, 2018

and went backward, including the songs Believe, If I Could Turn Back Time (how appropriate!), The Shoop Shoop Song (It's In His Kiss), Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves, and finally, in tacky '60s garb with Vice-President, Academic Jack Moes joining me as Sonny, I Got You Babe. It was a day and a performance that will long remain in my mind. I'm trembling with nerves again just recalling it!

On March 28 of 2013, ACC's sustainable \$1.3-million, 3,300-square-foot greenhouse was officially opened on the North Hill campus. Incorporating and demonstrating a number of sustainable design features, including rainwater collection, water conservation measures,

solar thermal and biomass heating, and composting, the facility was, once again, state-of-the-art, and a boon to the students of several programs.

"The training and applied research activity in this facility will benefit rural business and communities in a variety of ways and will complement activity in this sector underway elsewhere in the province," read a press release about the occasion. "Some of the main objectives include providing qualified greenhouse personnel, providing an example of a model business suitable for enhancing economic opportunities in rural and First Nations communities, and in addressing needs for applied research on local food production,

safety, and security for rural and northern communities.

Supported by the Canada-Manitoba Growing Forward Strategic Innovation Fund/Advancing Agri-Innovation Program and funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI), the project was yet another stellar addition to the many and varied opportunities Assiniboine continues to provide for its students.

"Assiniboine Community College is a great partner in keeping Manitoba at the forefront of agricultural research, which directly benefits farm families

and agri-food businesses," said Premier Greg Selinger. "This greenhouse is an excellent example of how we can study and promote local food production to grow our economy and protect our environment."

"Our government's commitment to research and training in agriculture will create opportunities for employment within the burgeoning greenhouse industry," added Merv Tweed, MP for Brandon-Souris. "This sustainable greenhouse facility is another example of ACC's progressive thinking and will allow local students the opportunity to gain the experience they need for skilled employment opportunities."



Open House, 2017

ACC programs that benefited directly from the sustainable greenhouse were Agribusiness, Culinary Arts, Land and Water Management, and the new Horticultural Production program.

“Faculty and students in the Horticultural Production program will be the primary users of the greenhouse,” said VP, Academic Jack Moes. “The link, however, between research and many of our other programs really changes the landscape of how our students learn and how they are taught. Working in a facility such as this on a daily basis truly offers a valuable hands-on experience.”

MICA continued to not only host established events during the college’s fifth decade, but to add new ones as well. The Beer and Food Festival, which became Harvest on the Hill a year after the Horticulture program was established, happened each year in October. The

Holiday Buffet took place at the end of November, the Great Grey Owl Restaurant was in January and February, the ACC Foundation Gala Dinner occurred in March, and the grand finale of each college year, The Wine and Food Festival, was in April.

Kyle Zalluski (*Hotel and Restaurant Management Instructor*): “I’ve been connected to ACC in some capacity since ‘98 either as a student, alumni, guest speaker, industry co-op partner, and faculty. The college has allowed me to experience new opportunities and network with a wide range of people from all over the globe. I’ve been a proud member of Team Assiniboine, engaging with the tremendous team at the college to local learners and now many international learners. The North Hill campus has provided me with the opportunity engage with our students over the years and invite over 30,000 guests into our students’ classroom at MICA, and engage with them in our learning events over the past 13 years.”

Throughout the 2010s, as they always have, programs continued to innovate and incorporate exceptional learning experiences in their offerings. Media Production began taking students to the National Association of Broadcasters annual conference in Las Vegas, which attracts in excess of 100,000 media

movers and shakers, including hundreds of world-class presenters such as Stan Lee, James Cameron and Steve Wozniak. The web design students attended Flash In The Can (FITC) in Toronto, and both Media and Web conducted numerous industry tours of media- and web-related companies in Toronto and Winnipeg.

Graham Street, who graduated from Assiniboine’s Media and Communications program in 1994, returned to the college in the 2008 to teach all facets of cinematography in what was then Interactive Media Arts and now, again, is Media and Communications. His extensive portfolio and list of accomplishments made him an impressive addition to the faculty. His many talents were appreciated by both students and colleagues, not only in the Media program, but across the college as well. And he introduced many new elements to the course in the 2010s, as one would expect anyone with his experience to do.

Graham Street (*Audio and Video Production Instructor*): “I remember signing up for the course (which was a one-year certificate program at the time) as I really didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do after high school graduation, but the Media and Communications program seemed like a good fit. I fondly look back on that decision as one of the luckiest I have ever made. I really didn’t know what I was getting into, but this program was

a perfect fit and started me in one of the most interesting, exciting and fulfilling careers possible.

“While I learned a good deal during my time as a student at ACC, I would say the second most important thing that happened—the first most important was that I started dating my wife, Marsha, on graduation night from the program!—was that by the time I graduated the program I knew that I wanted to teach media production at a college one day. I’m not



Legacy Gala Dinner, 2019



sure what the appeal was to me then at nineteen years old, but it stuck and it shaped my career decisions from that point forward.

"I graduated ACC and worked for two years as a news photojournalist and editor at CKX here in Brandon before moving to Red Deer in Alberta to work on their children's show called Toon Crew. From there, I moved to A-Channel in Edmonton to work as their Live Truck operator and then to Pyramid Productions in Calgary in October of 2000. There, I worked on shows such as Inside Entertainment, A&E Biography, Flames TV and Technical Knockout, as well as multiple documentaries and commercials. I was lucky enough to attend many red carpet events for film festivals and award shows, as well as to travel extensively to cities such as Los Angeles, New York and London. Some standout moments would include filming on a Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker above the Arctic Circle, as well as seeing the Hogwarts Express roll into King's Cross station for the Harry Potter DVD release event in London (I'm a big Harry Potter fan).

"This all sounds exciting, but I still wanted to teach, and I knew higher education would help this career goal come to pass. So Marsha and I decided to take a year off work and move to the UK so that I could complete my Masters of Arts in Archaeology for Screen Media from Bristol University. This was an intensive

year of study and following this I went back to work for Pyramid Productions in Toronto before moving back to Calgary.

"This is when I received the call from Bob Simmons that there was a teaching position coming open at ACC within the Media Production program and would I like to apply for it. At the time, I did think it was a little early in my career to move into teaching, but it actually didn't take much thought. I was lucky enough to be offered the position, and we decided to take it.

"Teaching within the Media Production program has been one of the best choices of my life. I thoroughly enjoy going to work every day. I get to teach content I'm passionate about and seeing the students learn and grow is incredibly fulfilling. I also started a partnership with Bell MTS TV where second-year students produced long-form content for Bell MTS TV's video-on-demand service. This has provided a vehicle for authentic, exceptional learning experiences for our students for over ten years now.

"Overall, when I stop and think about it, Assiniboine Community College has had a huge impact on my life. From meeting my wife, to the start of my career in the industry, to my further studies in higher education, and to my teaching career to date, I have Assiniboine Community College to thank for all of this."



Cardboard Challenge, 2018



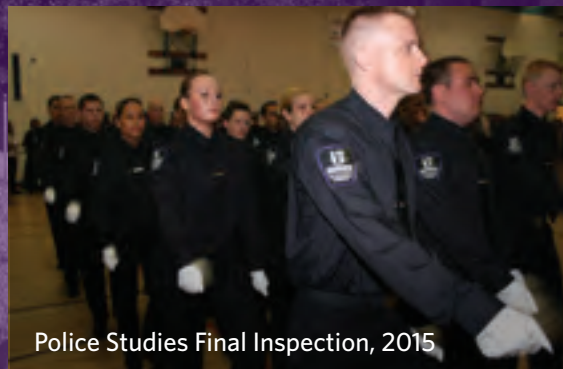
Student Success Celebration and Pow Wow demonstration, 2018



Brandon graduation, 2019



Retirees Banquet, 2017



Police Studies Final Inspection, 2015



Jim Treliving, Honourary Diploma Recipient, 2014



Plumbing Mezzanine Unveiling, 2019

Dave Perkins, who started at Assiniboine as an instructor in 1988, has held various positions during his 32-year tenure at the college. Having taught in the Business programs, then becoming Chair of that department, and then becoming involved with MICA in the last decade, he's seen a lot of change—and a lot of good things stay the same.

Dave Perkins (*Instructor and Administrator*): "In 31 years full-time at the college, I have had many standout moments. For sure, the best ones have been about student accomplishments that I have been part of. They include multiple former students who persevered, worked hard and have gone on to become Certified General Accountants (now Chartered Professional Accountants).

"I was at the college for all of MICA, Len Evans, and the greenhouse opening. And I was fortunate to manage MICA for about six years. There were certainly some challenges with a variety of facility changes and program changes, but there were many wonderful things to come out of all of these happenings too.

"When I was chairperson for MICA, we had the opportunity to host Chef David Wolfman—one of Canada's pre-eminent Indigenous chefs and cookbook authors. Simply replying to an email from his manager, letting the Culinary Arts faculty develop plans and approving some expenditures led to an incredible event for our students and guests that attended.

"In January of 2017, I became Interim Dean of the School of Business, Agriculture & Environment. During that time, I worked with ACC researchers Poonam Singh and Sajjad Rao to complete a funding application for horticultural research. We received \$950,000 over a five-year period for them to continue their research.

"In my later years with the college, I worked directly with the President (Mark Frison) and Deanna Rexe (Vice-President, Academic) on various planning efforts. Those two have been just an amazing duo at the helm. The college has done an incredible job in many respects, and it has truly been an honour and a privilege to work with them.

"I was always amazed at the depth of talent the college attracted to the faculty—and how much the faculty cared for their students. And that hasn't changed. The college still hires faculty with great academic and experiential credentials who truly want to see their students succeed.

"When I started at the college, I never anticipated I would spend the vast majority of my career there. But for the most part, it has been a great experience. ACC has always been a close-knit community that does wonderful things for its students and for the communities it serves. Helping thousands of students on their educational journey in the hopes that they create better lives for themselves is just an incredible thing. So many Assiniboine graduates are making huge



Brandon graduation, 2019

differences in their communities, and the lives of others, on a regular basis. To have been part of that is truly amazing.”

Throughout the 2010s, nursing continued to expand its delivery throughout the province, with the program being delivered in partnership with many First Nations communities and Indigenous partners. When the province changed the entry requirements to practice for registered nurses to the completion of a bachelorette degree, there were two entries to being a nurse: a degree leading to an RN/BN or the practical nursing certificate, leading to an LPN. Though Assiniboine’s practical nursing program had more advanced skills and overall course hours in comparison to other provinces, the program was one of the few in the country that continued

be recognized by the province of Manitoba as a certificate program. In 2013, Assiniboine’s practical nursing program received provincial approval to be recognized as a two-year diploma program, with the condition that nine additional credits be added to better support practical nursing transferability into a Bachelor of Nursing or Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing program.

The practical nursing program has become one of the largest programs at the college. Both Brandon and Winnipeg have two intakes of 35 each year (September and January), so at any given time, there are up to 140 practical nursing students (Year 1 and Year 2) at each location. In addition, the program had two ‘rural rotating’ programs, based on Regional Health Authorities’ needs (25 students per location), delivered every two years. The program expanded to three rural rotating sites, adding Dauphin as its third. Based on the needs for practical nurses in the area, Dauphin has since become a permanent location for the delivery of the program. Due to an ongoing need in Southern Health/Santé RHA Portage, training at that location continued for years. In 2021, the college received provincial approval for Portage/Southport to become a permanent site. Assiniboine continued to deliver several programs through contract training in partnership with First Nations communities, and became the college of choice for program delivery in Northern Manitoba—an impressive achievement.

Karen Hargreaves (*Dean of Health and Human Services*): “When the practical nursing program was being deleted in all other colleges in the province, Diane Shamray, a former dean, persevered and received provincial approval and funding, leaving ACC with the provincial mandate for practical nurse training. ACC proudly maintained that provincial mandate for many years, and has been a leader in practical nursing education for more than 40 years. With this continued growth, the Practical Nursing program and Comprehensive Health Care Aide program were moved from the School of Health & Human Services, and a stand-alone School of Nursing was created in 2020 to support the ongoing growth in this area.”

Since he began his tenure at Assiniboine in 2010, President Mark Frison has had a bird’s eye view of all that’s happened during the decade. And while a few aspects of it have been disappointing, many others have been downright inspiring.

Mark Frison (*President*): “From 2010 forward, there was a fair bit of enthusiasm about what was going to happen at the North Hill. There was the notion that what we had seen over the past three years would continue in terms of level of investment. And that turned out to be optimistic. Political leadership changed, the elevated spending from the recession recovery ended, people were

turning their attention back to regular levels of spending, so that capital piece all got delayed. So when I look back at the decade, the thing that I was probably most enthusiastic about when I came was the North Hill. You have a campus there. Most colleges built in the ‘50s, ‘60s and ‘70s have all the charm of an industrial park. That North Hill campus has possibilities to not only play the part, but to look the part. Even if somebody had said, ‘This is going to take 25 years,’ it’s probably still the right thing to do. But of course, when somebody gives the impression that this’ll take five years, and then it’s five times that, it lets some air out of the balloon.

“I think that’s one of the things that changed along the way—the notion that it was going to be ‘a relocation of the institution’ to ‘the North Hill was going to be a development project.’ And that really came into view around 2013-14, that just moving everybody from Victoria Avenue East campus all at once was not going to be likely, given the cost.

“But beyond the cost, I think what took a stronger view in and around 2012 and has carried through to today, was that there was a desperate need in Manitoba for more college seats. We had the lowest post-secondary participation rate in the entire country, and we have the third-lowest percentage of college seats as part of our mix—only Newfoundland and Nova Scotia have fewer college seats. And

“So that has been a dominant focus: How do you increase the number of graduates? And all at a time when government funding has been relatively flat, or in the case of the latter half of this decade, declining.”

we’re highly concentrated in Winnipeg —85 per cent of the post-secondary spending is in Winnipeg. But when you looked out over the map, you saw what we needed—we needed more access points, more college, more rural. Well, who’s that? That’s Assiniboine.

“And the college review that was conducted in 2016-17 sort of reinforced that that’s what had to happen. So the story of the last decade has been more about growth of graduates as opposed to growth of square footage. So in 2013, we set out the plan to double the number of graduates by 2025, and then in 2018, that was revised to go to 2028 grads by 2028. So that has been a dominant focus: How do you increase the number of graduates? And all at a time when government funding has been relatively flat, or in the case of the latter half of this decade, declining. So that’s been a big part of that story. And there’ve been lots of things that have contributed to the growth in graduates. Certainly the community programs have done that. And I think that’s been one of the shifts we’ve seen with Assiniboine over the last decade: people often talked about it as a regional institution. When they talked about Assiniboine, they talked about Westman. But when you really look at what we’ve been doing, we have been, and need to be, a provincial institution. We offered programs in more than 20 communities in most years in this decade. So that is really probably one of the core strengths of the college—the ability to deliver programs at a distance.

“Some folks have asked me from time to time, ‘Why are you guys so good at it?’ And I said, ‘Look—I couldn’t tell you. We couldn’t sell you the recipe. Somehow, it’s hardwired into the DNA of the place, probably just from so many years of doing it. Folks aren’t intimidated by it.’ Whereas I know other institutions have said, ‘Well, look, we tried it, and we only ended up with three graduates and we spent this much money; how do you guys do it?’ And I’m not sure what the secret sauce is, but I think

that’s been an important piece for us. And since a significant percentage of that activity is with Indigenous communities or organizations, that’s also been a hallmark—having fairly good growth over that time in Indigenous graduates.”

Another massive piece of the tale of the 2010s was the move toward attracting international students. In 2011, Vice-President Diane Shamray led a global citizenship task force that examined four things: What do we do with newcomers to Canada? What are we doing with international students? What are we doing in international development work? And what are we doing to give Canadian students international perspectives?

Mark Frison (President): “The international development is a really interesting story. The college punched well above its weight at one time in that area and then had a project that didn’t go well and exited the field. Among the things that were knocking on the door when Diane was doing that report with the global citizenship task force was the fact that there were a number of people who wanted us to get back into international development work. And since there had been such a large influx of newcomers to Canada—and to Brandon—there were some views of, ‘How well are we serving this population?’.

“But what emerged from the report, essentially, was we should get back to

international development. I think in 2013, we were at about 30 (international) students. And it grew to the point where we added an international coordinator and then it grew to the point where we created Assiniboine International in 2015 or ‘16, and then in 2019, we were at over 600 students. And so now international students represented a fair chunk of the student population and were certainly a changing face for the college.”

What may not be widely known is that most international students are physically on campus. And that’s because the impetus for Assiniboine to attract international students was all related to the provincial immigration strategy. Manitoba was quite keen, Frison said, to have more of its provincial nominees for citizenship come from the post-secondary system. ACC’s international students were eager to achieve post-study work permits in order to better their lives.

Mark Frison (President): “So that has really helped facilitate some new



programs, like the Food Processing program we brought on and Baking Foundations—things like that. And if we hadn't been able to offer the program (at) cost recovery for international students, domestic students would have never been able to take any of those programs. So I think that's one of the hidden stories of the international enrolment: it's allowed for some seat expansion that can then be filled by domestic students, which otherwise wouldn't exist.

"I think some people often think the opposite—somebody's coming from another country taking a seat that a domestic student might want. And in the case of ACC, we happen to have an enrolment management system that says if the programs will fill completely with domestic students, they're not eligible for international students. But then if we can twin those with international sections so that you still have domestic and international blending in the same classes, we do that. That typically facilitates extra seats for domestic students. So that has been good news, not only for our economy and our immigration system, but for some of the fundamentals of the college and facilitating access for local students."

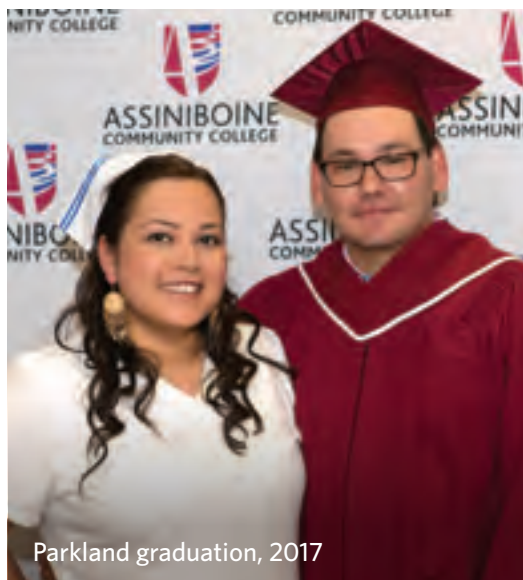
The college has changed and enhanced a lot of programs over the last few years, and enrolment is way up—many programs even have wait-lists. And

certainly the number of graduates has continued to rise over the decade, which was the goal at the start of it.

But unbeknownst to and unanticipated by many, around the corner loomed a hurdle much larger and vastly more daunting than anything the college had faced in its nearly six decades of existence.



Sheldon Kennedy, Courage Award Recipient, 2018



Parkland graduation, 2017



Baking Foundations students, MLA Reception at the Manitoba Legislature, 2018



Adult Collegiate graduation, 2018

THE 2020s

And then came 2020...

There had been rumours, of course, and even some legitimate news, about a strange illness that was causing some consternation overseas. While most people remained fairly unconcerned, Dr. Deanna Rexe, Assiniboine's Vice-President, Academic, was not only paying attention, but planning in advance and in earnest for an unthinkable situation.

And as COVID-19 got closer to taking hold in North America, Rexe had already been informing and involving the college's senior management team in discussions about what to do if the threat actually became a reality.

Mark Frison (President): "Deanna had already been encouraging many of us to get our heads around what could happen. And having been through SARS and H1N1, sometimes there's a view that this is going to be much ado about nothing. But the effort that she, in particular, put in during those early days, plotting out the what-ifs, became incredibly helpful in the first few weeks of the pandemic."

We all know what happened next. And as the province and the country and the world began to shut down, Assiniboine somehow managed to carry on doing what it does best—educating and rolling with the punches.

Brandon graduation, 2020



Mark Frison (President): "I'm very proud of how the institution managed in those early days. I watched many other institutions struggle with what they should do, some saying, 'Well, we're going to clear everybody off campus, and then bring them back in a week or two when it's safe.' And we just had a different sense here that it would be safer earlier and that the risks would come with time, not something that would clear up in a week or two. So we made the decision that we were going to go a little longer than most and try to finish—to prepare our folks to get as much of their hands-on work done as quickly as possible. And for the most part, we finished every program we started in September on time in the spring. That's something I'm proud of—that people were dedicated to getting the students through."

Frison said another thing that buoyed his spirits were the results of the graduate follow-up survey that was sent out in April and May, when the labour market was devastated by layoffs and business closures due to the pandemic.

Mark Frison (President): "We were wondering, 'What's this going to look like?' And what we found was, by and large, our graduates were working during COVID, in (the areas in which) they were trained, just like other times. That was certainly a good feeling, that you had given people skills that allowed them to be somewhat resilient or resistant to even

the major shocks that the labour force was enduring during that time. And then faculty started planning for a fall that was going to be very different from the spring."

With ACC staffers' usual tenacity and dedication, faculty spent much of their summer 'vacation' adapting their teaching materials and instructional methods to this new mode of learning. Despite COVID, the college's plan for the fall was that most programs would be delivered more than 50 per cent face to face—far more than other institutions in the country.

Mark Frison (President): "I think that was a good choice for us. And even then, the faculty had to be ready to shift if that changed, and it did. When we went into Code Red, they had to make other choices. And they did so, and the programs kept going.

"I think it's incredible what people have done. And I think probably the thing that impresses me most has been the good nature of the staff as they've gone through it all. You'd expect there'd be a lot of grumbling about everything everybody's had to do, because I think it would be fair to say it's unreasonable. And at the same time, I'd say that most folks have accepted the situation as they found it, done a yeoman's service to put the students' needs first, and done it with grace and good humour.

"And I think that's one of the things—aside from just getting students through the program, which I think is an achievement to be proud of—that makes you really appreciate working here. That people could be that good-natured through such a difficult circumstance, many of whom probably are facing their own personal challenges through this time—their health issues, their families' health issues, being separated from loved ones—all that they would face outside of what they had to overcome at work. It's hard to believe that they could rally that much good will. And I think that's hard to measure in the same way—it's hard even when you express it, for it to really land with people what a big impact that leaves."

And while it's not exactly a silver lining, some positives have come out of the pandemic. Perhaps the most significant is that, while they were forced to change how they did things because of COVID, faculty members have discovered new and improved ways of doing what they already did so well.

Lloyd Carey, a multi-faceted trades instructor who's currently in a one-year term position as Chair of Mechanical Trades and who's also on ACC's Board of Governors, said that's certainly what he's seen during the past year.

Lloyd Carey (Mechanical Trades Chair): "It's been a different year. Shop time is shop time on campus, and then theory is



Parkland graduation, 2020



Parkland graduation, 2020



Alyssa Desrochers and Carrie MacKay,
Staff Gathering, February 2020



Morgan Fryer, Shaun Cameron and Bonnie Hertzog
Staff Gathering, February 2020

done through Moodle and Zoom. But for the most part, it's encouraging to walk around and see instructors doing amazing things and making it work. But that's sort of the nature of tradespeople—they're problem-solvers.

"It's not quite business as usual; there's masks, distancing, sanitation protocols. And the college did step up and get the gear that we needed to do that. And plenty of modifications had to be made. But I've heard lots of good comments from the students, like, 'It's different being online, but the instructors have gone out of their way to make it as good as they possibly can.'

"We anticipate this will be ongoing in the fall. We're doing due diligence by planning for a blended model. But if we get a pleasant surprise, we've got classrooms assigned in case we have the chance to be back in the building.

"We've had instructors doing videos and even the course content they've been putting into Moodle; they're going to use that learning management system just to provide an extra resource for students. So the material's all there. Even though they might teach it differently in the classroom, students will have that as a study resource."

And that sort of upbeat attitude and approach is exactly what Frison is hearing and seeing from instructors in other areas of the college.

Mark Frison (President): "Early on, there were some folks who were getting out their crystal ball and talking about how this is the future. I think all that was a little premature. But there was no question there were going to be things we were going to learn. And that's certainly what I've heard from lots of faculty members—how much they value the in-class time now. And how they think differently about how they'll use that time in the future. So I think even for most people, if we were to return tomorrow to how things were in 2018, they'd be doing it differently. And there were some who said, 'I built a killer course and students got engaged in it in this way in a way they never did before—I'd hate to go back.' And I think that's great. When you look at the academic reform of the past decade, ACC has had a lot more in-class contact time than most institutions afford. But there's probably been room there to get the students to do more things on their own. And that's been hard, culturally, for the institution to gravitate toward. But I think the pandemic may have given some increased confidence that they could do that and that the students would be able to do these things on their own and here's where I can have the biggest impact when I spend time with them. And I think that's going to be good for both the students and the faculty in the long run."

Frison, who left his Cape Breton Island home in 2004 to take a job as president of what became Great Plains College in



Mark Frison and Mariah McCue, 2020



Ag Partnership Breakfast, January 2020

Swift Current, Saskatchewan, is convinced the influence of agricultural roots plays a huge part in the can-do attitude of prairie folk.

Mark Frison (President): “Some of the things I’ve noticed, being a come-from-away on the prairies in my last 17 years, is there’s definitely an ingenuity, and a resilience and a willingness, to make do. That’s been a huge benefit.”

And that prevalence of positivity and perseverance will certainly benefit the

college and its students throughout the years to come. While COVID continues to be a dominant factor at the time of this writing, things are still progressing as Assiniboine celebrates its 60th year.

Here’s where things stand at this point in time.

In 2015, the Valleyview building on the North Hill campus was slated to be retooled and rebuilt in order to house programs that would move there from the Victoria Avenue East campus, but then—does this sound familiar once again?—the government changed, and it was requested that ACC fill up the Victoria Avenue East campus it had been asked to empty in order to facilitate the college’s ‘planned’ move to the North Hill. As a result, the Centre for Creative Media is under construction at the Vic East campus, the Adult Collegiate will be moved from downtown Brandon to occupy the space Media and Web once did, and a new International Study Centre will be created as well. These facilities are slated to open in September of 2021.

But the North Hill site is also going to see some action in the near future.

Mark Frison (President): “It’s been a benefit to be able to rejuvenate Victoria Avenue East—it’s been a release valve for the growth that has happened. As the number of graduates has grown over that period, this has allowed us to do it at a time when there haven’t been new builds.

But we’re also reaching that point where the next new build is required. So when we dusted ourselves off after the rejection of the last project, we came back and looked at what was most important to us in that project. And that’s what took us to the Prairie Innovation Centre. We saw that one in every five jobs in agriculture was going to go vacant by 2025, so it became one of the areas we identified in our plan early on where we were going to have to have provincial leadership—we wanted to grow from about 300 seats to about 800 seats. And while we had started doing some of that in some of the existing space, we couldn’t get there without new space, particularly to get to some of the pieces for digital farming and industrial automation. So in many ways, the next piece—building the Prairie Innovation Centre at the North Hill—looks at using the Valleyview Building and bringing it back to life because it’s close on the site to all the other agricultural assets. It’s got a smaller physical footprint so it can probably be done in the \$60-million range, which is an easier bite, I think, for governments. We launched a \$10-million fundraising campaign which will likely turn into a \$15-million fundraising campaign, announced the college’s first million-dollar donor back in the fall, and we’ve had very good response from the donor community about the project. Certainly ag is one of the things that resonates both in the province and definitely even closer here in Westman. And as a result, it’s much more likely that that project will see its way to fruition.”



North Hill campus grow plot harvest, 2020



Mark Frison and Darise Peters-Fontaine, Lieutenant Governor Silver Medal award recipient, 2020



James Epp, Governor General's Academic Medal recipient, 2020

The background features a collage of sports-related images. At the top, a soccer team is lined up on a field. Below that, a hockey game is in progress on an ice rink. At the bottom, a volleyball game is shown with players jumping for a ball. The entire background is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. On the left side, there are two large, overlapping diagonal shapes: a dark red one in front and a black one behind it.

Cougars

ATHLETICS

GO Cougars GO!

Sports have been an integral part of college life for much of Assiniboine's history, although there was a lengthy hiatus after the government of the day, in a cost-saving effort, stopped funding college sports in 1986. But Brent Mills, who was ACC's president from 1998 to 2006, thought this was folly, and reintroduced athletics to Assiniboine two years into his tenure.

Brent Mills (*Past President*): "The lack of sports at the college concerned me for several reasons. Most other provinces had active college sports leagues. Local high school graduates wishing to continue in athletics didn't have that option. Post-Secondary institutions use varsity athletics to raise profile, to drive enrolment

Haylee Anderson and Mariah McCue celebrate on the ice with their teammates
ACHA Division 2 National Champions, March 2019





Men's futsal, 2017

and to build college pride. ACC was missing out on all of those benefits. We started with baby steps, first finding a local donor (Cando Rail Services) willing to put up a little seed money for a couple of volleyball teams. Shortly thereafter, a group of students organized a hockey team and requested funding for uniforms and league registration. We realized that we were onto something and made the decision to free up a small amount of money to pay an honorarium for an athletic director and a volleyball coach. Larry Shannon accepted the first role and has done a marvelous job ever since. Grant Wilson, then a local high school coach, took on the coaching position. Grant would go on to coach Brandon University and to be named U Sports national coach of the year. I recall that we paid him \$1,000 the first year! Sport at Assiniboine has evolved and grown dramatically since my time, but its reintroduction is something that I view as a highlight of those years."

The Cougars, in their many forms and over their many decades of activity, have often been a force to be reckoned with. While the experiences of college athletes have differed over the years, one thing has remained constant: the dedication and passion ACC's student players brought to their game. Playing sports, while also meeting the demands of full-time course loads, can be a challenging balancing act,

but the Cougars do it not just willingly, but enthusiastically. For many, while focus on their studies was paramount, their heads and hearts were often on the court, the ice or the field. The camaraderie and the friendships forged in pursuit of athletic excellence were as important as the wins and left all involved more closely knit—both at the time they were actively playing and remaining so years after the teammates had parted company.

Here's a small sampling of the memories cherished by those involved in athletics who have proudly worn the college colours over the years.

Charles Tweed (*Media Production, '10*): "I played hockey for the ACC Cougars for two seasons, 2008-09 and 2009-10. Sports, in general, including the collegiate level, have been an important aspect of my life. While there's often a lot of emphasis put on winning or losing, what doesn't get as much attention is the fact that sport teaches you about teamwork, leadership, selflessness, and hard work. I learned a lot of valuable lessons playing with the Cougars. Learning how to be responsible to your teammates is incredibly important in life.

"There are certainly added responsibilities playing a sport while attending school, but the bus rides are a good time to catch up on homework... sometimes. As you can imagine, the bus rides are a pretty social time with 20 players. That said, I



Charles Tweed, 2021

was able to balance the two without any major challenges.

"Our first season we lost in the MCAC (Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference) final. It was hosted in Winnipeg that year, and we might have lost a little focus travelling for the weekend from Brandon to The City. We had a great team that year and fell a little short of our goal.

"Our second year, the championship was hosted in Souris, and we committed to the process more. That was the last championship awarded in the MCAC before they disbanded the hockey league. We defeated CMU 7-4 to win the championship.

"The relationships I forged are what I treasure the most from that time. I've remained close with some of my former teammates with the Cougars. A rink is



a different dynamic than a classroom, and for some people, the ice or field can really put them at ease and allow them to flourish. Seeing teammates excel was really rewarding, especially as someone who was a little older than the rest of the players on the team.

“Our coaches, Larry Shannon and Chris Kennedy, were great. They put in a lot of time away from the rink to ensure we were successful on the ice.

“We used to practice at the Sportsplex before class at 8:30 a.m. and getting up at 5-something to get to the rink for a 6:30 a.m. practice wasn’t a lot of fun, but it was worth it once you got there. Imagine some of those days: freezing your a** off in the cold and dark to lug your hockey equipment to the rink before classes. My equipment would often ride to school in my trunk for the day, and I’d

take it out (now fully formed into an ice cube) to hang and dry when I got home.

“I really remember a few of the tournaments we travelled to—Bemidji and Duluth-Superior. Riding the bus with the team became incredible bonding experiences. As important as the time together was on the ice, it was just as important and fun off the ice. We hung out together, ate together and bunked together. We became part of a brotherhood. I still speak fondly of my time at Assiniboine and anticipate getting together with past teammates to this day.”

Beth Clark (*Athletics Associate*): “I was the first person hired to work in athletics full time. I was Athletics Manager from September 2013 until recently. In October 2020, I gave up my role and returned to work part-time because COVID changed our lives and childcare options.



Marley Quesnel, 2020

“Athletics at the college has seen vast growth in the time I’ve been there, and we are continuing to get better. Soccer was introduced in 2013, we rebranded the logo in 2016, and we introduced a new sport of futsal in 2017. (It’s) a variation of indoor soccer, played five versus five using the basketball parameters, switch on the fly/off the bench.

“We were able to get our women’s hockey team into a legitimate college league in 2018—The American Collegiate Hockey Association. We won a national title in hockey in 2019. We entered the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association with soccer and volleyball teams—we should be officially voted in this June (2021).

“We’ve run summer camps for youth, ID camps for prospects and had more community involvement. We’ve had individuals recognized by leagues as athletes of the week, MVPs and various other awards, including multiple Lieutenant Governor’s Silver Medal award recipients. We fundraise and give out around \$40,000-plus in scholarships per year to student athletes.

“I’m proud of how far the Cougars program has come, and I am looking forward to seeing where we can take it in the future.”

Marley Quesnel (*Business Administration, ’20*): I came to ACC in the fall of 2018 and was a part of the soccer and hockey programs. My first year, I got to experience many major events that took place for both



Men’s soccer



Women’s futsal



Larry Shannon, CCAA All Canadian Hockey Award recipient, 1983

sports teams. For the soccer team, I got to be a part of the team's first-ever goal and first-ever win. As for the hockey team that year, I was the only goalie playing for the hockey team, and I had some of the biggest accomplishments of my career. We went on to nationals in Dallas, Texas where we went undefeated in the tournament and had to face one of the only teams that we'd never before beaten in the finals. We were the underdogs, and everyone favoured them to win. But our whole team, including the coaches, worked very hard to get there, and we went there with one goal in mind—and that was to win the tournament. We accomplished that goal, beating the Minot State Beavers 1-0 in the finals. That was one of the best feelings, and I've never experienced winning anything like that in my life.

"My second year, I not only played for the soccer and hockey teams, but I was also a part of the futsal team. My second year included many great experiences too, as I experienced never-before career firsts. I scored my first-ever goal in soccer during a futsal game; it was a buzzer-beater against Brandon University, our city rivals. The second was from about 70 feet away in a futsal game against the CMU Blazers. For the hockey team, I was no longer the only goalie for the team but had two goalie partners. Our team did something that I've personally never experienced before, and I don't think any of the teammates or coaches have before

either: going undefeated through the entire season.

"I came back for a third season with the Cougars as I was going to play all three sports again. And, because we were unable to go to nationals during my second year, I wanted another chance at repeating what we did in Dallas. Unfortunately, I was only able to play a couple exhibition soccer games and a few hockey practices before everything was shut down due to Covid-19.

"Playing three sports was very uncommon at the college level, but I made it work. I loved every sport so I couldn't say no to an opportunity to keep playing them. Having a game with one of the teams every weekend and a practice or team workout almost every night of the week, I learned how to use my time very wisely. Although I loved sports, education was the reason I was there, so I knew I had to make sure my studies were good. If it meant I had to stay up extra late some nights to finish homework or do it on the bus rides or in between games, it had to get done. But it wasn't impossible. I managed my time well and even had multiple semesters of a GPA above 4.0. Sometimes it was hard, because all of my time was used for school or sports, and I never had time to relax or enjoy other activities. But in the end, it was worth it, and I'd do anything to do it again.

"I wouldn't have changed a thing about my years at the college. The sports programs

“You hear of many other post-secondary schools where athletes don’t have fun playing the game they love, but that’s not the case at ACC.”

have so much support from students, college staff and the school president. Every team was so much fun to be a part of, and I got to make many wonderful memories with many new teammates that soon became friends that I will have for the rest of my life. You hear of many other post-secondary schools where athletes don’t have fun playing the game they love, but that’s not the case at ACC. The coaches were some of the best coaches I’ve had in my life, and they made every game, practice and road trip fun for all the players. They welcomed every player to the team and treated everyone equally. It truly was the best three years of my sports career.”

Katriana Miller (*Office Administration, '02*): “Ahhh, ACC life! What great memories of being a student here. Many days started with breakfast from the cafeteria (usually pancakes and bacon for me) with my good friends Irene and Mandy! Then the three of us would head off to our classes and sit in the back of the classroom so we could secretly talk and/or pass notes all class. Eventually, some of our instructors caught on and tried to split us up, but it was fun while it lasted.

“I remember second year of college and being pregnant with my daughter and 9/11 happening and wondering if bringing a child into the world was really wise. It was a terrifying time. I remember sitting in the cafeteria watching the replay of the towers being hit.

“I played Cougar Volleyball during the 2000-01 academic year and the 2001-02 academic year, even while pregnant! I was also assistant coach for Cougar Volleyball in the 2013-14 academic year.

“Athletics has always been a huge part of my life, throughout my schooling and beyond. Volleyball especially was my outlet from the time I was in Grade 4 (1984) until I stopped playing recreational volleyball in 2017.



Katriana Miller, 2021

“Road trips with the team were always a good time. It gave us a chance to bond as a team and as a college as we would often travel with the men’s team on the same bus. We often did homework on the bus/van when needed as a team to stay on top of our school tasks. I know in my diploma program, my instructors were quite good at giving me an extra day to complete assignments if I needed it due to athletic commitments.

“Going to Bemidji and Yorkton were always the most fun. Bemidji had different volleyball rules. Some were a benefit to us, and some we found difficult to adjust to. The Bongo Volleyball tournament in Yorkton had a social that was so much fun for our team to attend.

“The free meals were awesome and the swag was pretty great! Although I did

retire my sweats that have C O U G A R written across the butt when I hit mid-30s for obvious reasons!

“I was fortunate enough to make some really great friends during my college years, many I still speak to today. My favourite moments of college athletics would have to be our road trip to Yorkton for a tournament in February 2001 with Lacie Anderson and Kristen Larson (nee Salmon) when Norm Bootsman was our coach. We were giving him ideas for Valentine’s Day with his then-girlfriend, but now wife, Colleen Bootsman.

“One other memory I have of my athletic days is playing a few games at William Catherine Booth College and most of us leaving with some serious rug burn. They had carpet as their gym flooring! Not ideal for volleyball games.

“However, my favourite ACC memory will always be the day I graduated and was allowed to take my infant daughter up with me to accept my diploma. I had her during Christmas break of 2001 and returned to school with her in January of 2002 to finish the last four months of my diploma program. I thought it only fitting to have her with me for graduation.

“I became an ACC staff member in September of 2012 and have worked in the Health & Human Services department (Practical Nursing), Business, Ag & Enviro department (MICA, Horticultural

Production, Sustainable Food Systems), and the International department (ESL programming) where I am currently an administrative assistant.”

Assiniboine has been fortunate over the years to retain much of the talent, like Miller, it helped train. While there are far too many to name, one that simply had to be singled out was Larry Shannon, who has already been mentioned more than once in this chapter. For 40 years, Shannon and his passion for, and dedication to, all things Assiniboine, especially sports, has been unwavering. No one could better recount the complete history of the past decades of sports at the college than he. So here’s his take on the college in general and athletics in particular.

Larry Shannon (Purchasing Agent): “I came to the college in 1980. I was enrolled in Business Administration and played hockey for the Cougars from 1980 to 1983. We had a successful team that



Larry Shannon, 2021

went on to win three MCAA (Manitoba Colleges Athletic Association) provincial championships 1980–1983. I know the highlight of those years was our trip to Europe to play some exhibition games in Germany and Austria. The college also had three curling teams that were very strong, with the men winning gold in 1987 and 1989, and silver in 1986. The women took silver in 1986, with the mixed team taking bronze in 1986 and silver in 1987.

“I started to work for ACC in March 1983 when Bill McCaughan offered me a position in the stores department where I remained for 18 years, working with Dave Robson and Craig Freeman. A few years after the college got its autonomy in 1995, I was the successful candidate for the first Purchasing Agent’s position in 2001, a job I retain to this present day. The college getting its autonomy was the first step in us becoming what we are today.

“The college has seen a lot of changes over the 40 years I have been here. I would not recognize it if I had not been here all this time.

“It was a sad day in 1986 when the government of the day decided to stop funding college sports in Manitoba. It was not until 2000 that ACC President Brent Mills decided to bring back athletics to the college. I was asked to be the Athletic Director, in addition to my full-time duties as purchasing agent, and I was excited to accept the job.



Women’s Volleyball, 2017



Coaches: Grant Wilson, Larry Shannon and Norm Bootsman



"It started slow, first finding a league to play in. We started in the MCCA (Manitoba Christian Colleges Athletic Association) with both male and female volleyball teams for five years. After the first year in MCCA, we changed the name to CPAC (Central Plains Athletic Conference), which in 2008 changed its name to MCAC (Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference).

"In 2005, we introduced men's hockey and won the CPAC championships in 2006-07 and MCAC in 2009-10. Hockey was discontinued that next year.

"We started women's hockey in 2007 and won CPAC in 2007-08 and the MCAC 2008-09 before deciding to move into the Manitoba Senior Women's Division B for the 2009-10 season. We won the Senior B Provincial championship in 2013-14 at home before going to Red Deer to play in the Senior B Women's Western Canadian Shield where we finished with a silver. In 2014-15, we were the co-host of the Western Shield, held in Stonewall, MB, where the Cougars were victorious and won gold. In 2015-16 the Cougars found themselves back at the Western Shield, but came up short with a silver. Not a bad three-year run for the Cougars!

"The Cougars then joined the ACHA (American Collegiate Hockey Association) in the 2016-17 season. In the 2018-19 season, the Cougars won the American Collegiate Hockey

Association Championships. What an accomplishment for a small college on the prairies!

"The team was undefeated in 2019-20 and was poised to repeat as national champions again. However, the championship tournament was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"In 2013, the college hired a full-time Athletics Manager, Beth Clark, and she introduced both male and female soccer. Today, we have men's and women's volleyball, men's and women's soccer and women's hockey. I'm happy to say that I am still involved in the athletics program. It feels good to give student athletes a chance to have the same positive experience I did when I first came to ACC all those years ago.

"It has been great, for 40 years, to give back to the college where I got my start. Not many people get to say that, and I feel proud that I can. I have spent all of my adult life at ACC, and I have a lot of great memories, along with some sad ones as well. The people are great to work with and the students keep you young. I am proud to say that I am a COUGAR and always will be."



LOGO Evolution



1961-69



1970-79



1976-86



1984-86



2000-14



2015-Present



1980-93



1993-07



2002-06



2006-Present



2003-06



2006-11



2011-Present



ASSINIBOINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

60th Anniversary

ASSINIBOINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARKLAND CAMPUS

35th Anniversary

PRINCIPALS, DIRECTORS AND PRESIDENTS

1961–1971	R.A. Dick Jones , Principal
1971–1984	Al Loveridge , Director
1982–1983	Lois Britton , Interim Director
1983–1984	Roderick Danielson , Acting Director
1984–1990	Richard Mackie , President
1990–1991	Bill McCracken , Interim President
1991–1997	Brenda Cooke , President
1997–1998	Gerald Bashforth , Acting President
1998–2006	Brent Mills , President
2006–2009	Joel Ward , President
2009–2010	Jim Brinkhurst , Interim President
2010–TODAY	Mark Frison , President

AFTERWORD

There's no doubt Assiniboine's coming decades will be exciting. And that's because, as has been noted ad nauseam, its past has been so inspiring. From the most daunting of beginnings, ACC has reshaped and reinvented itself countless times.

But right from the get-go, it established a reputation of excellence and was hailed as an institution well ahead of its time. Consequently, there's no reason to expect it would do anything but continue to strive, to thrive, and to offer a great education to a multitude of people from all corners of the province, the country and the world.

From the sages on the stages to the guides on the sides, from the student who was prudent to apprentices who were menaces, from staffers who stayed affable though demands sometimes were laughable, ACC has learned and adapted and tailored its offerings to the needs of the present day, but always —always— with an eye to the future. I can't wait to see what happens in its next chapter!

Diane Nelson

Assiniboine

THE FIRST 60

Take a look at Assiniboine Community College's journey over the past 60 years. From its humble beginnings as a vocational centre in the 1960s to an institution with campuses and training sites across the province, Assiniboine is an organization deeply connected to its roots and the communities it serves.

Join Diane Nelson, writer and former ACC instructor, as she strolls down memory lane, recounting her own personal experiences and reconnecting with past faculty, staff and students to paint this personal portrait of a much-loved institution that has played a role in the lives of many.

ASSINIBOINE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

