



Sharon McCoubrey (front), pictured with Maxine Baptise, Instructor II, Aboriginal Education (back left) and Wendy Klassen, Associate Professor, Math Education

## To Preserve and Protect

SHARON MCCOUBREY, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ART EDUCATION and DIRECTOR of INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, EDUCATION

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Part of a person's role in the community is to make it stronger by contributing to it through their passions and expertise. Likewise, a university's role is to facilitate enhancement of the communities it services. Sharon McCoubrey's passion is education, and for the last 20 years she has been striving to connect the community to education through the University—an effort that is manifested in her prestigious awards: the UBC Alumni Award for Outstanding Faculty Service and the B.C. Community Achievement Award.

McCoubrey is committed to working with pre-service teachers and is keen to ensure that their foundation of understanding is sturdy. This passion, matched with her interest in Aboriginal education, lead McCoubrey to work closely with the En'owkin Learning Centre and the Okanagan Nation Alliance, addressing Aboriginal education matters that are of incredible significance to the Okanagan Valley.

"Being an educator in the Faculty of Education at UBC Okanagan, and being in the Okanagan territory with the Okanagan people, I don't think any educator can go very far without becoming aware of the issues related to Aboriginal education," she says. Locally and nationally, the number of Aboriginal people certified as teachers is insufficient. Although many Aboriginal people are teaching in band schools, this isn't the case in the public school system where a

great number of Aboriginal students are without Aboriginal teachers or models.

To address this growing concern, McCoubrey and colleague Wendy Klassen have examined Aboriginal teacher education programs across Canada and abroad to determine the most effective approaches. Issues such as community-based learning, intergenerational learning and the role of elders in education were investigated. "How best to incorporate these values is the big question we are addressing," says McCoubrey.

McCoubrey has played a role in establishing the Developmental Standard Teaching Certificate (DSTC) at UBC Okanagan, which provides certification for teachers to teach the Okanagan language and culture in public schools.

Program development is taking great strides, including the recent hiring of Maxine Baptiste, an Aboriginal Educator, linguist and fluent Okanagan speaker, specializing in language revitalization to deliver core courses in the DSTC program.

"It is a huge and a very important goal to try and increase the number of Aboriginal people who are certified teachers," McCoubrey says. "At the same time, with the gradual loss of elders, the Okanagan people are facing the potential loss of their native language. The DSTC program serves both these needs."