



USRA Newsletter
September 2026
No. 128



In This Issue

From Our President	3
Education, Social and Recreation Committee Report	3
Health Column: Mushroom Magic?	4
Spotlight on USask History: Emmett Hall's Legacy of Nation-Building	6
USRA Members and Awards Celebration	8
Engagement Committee: Summary of the USRA Survey	11
College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC/ARUCC) News	12
2026 USask Employee Appreciation Picnic	13
GLOBE WALK RECAP: Getting Through (Another) Saskatoon Winter with the Intensely Vigorous USask Retirees	13
SCOA Spotlight on Seniors Tradeshow	14
Members No Longer With Us	14
Keep in Touch!	17
Annual General Meeting Draft Agenda	19
Report of Nominations Committee for 2025-2026	20

From Our President

In addition to its regular activities in 2025-2026, the USRA completed two major initiatives. One was the member survey led by Vice-President Hope Bilinski to assess member satisfaction with association activities. The second resulted from the university's decision to discontinue email access for retirees and to establish an email retention fee for retirees with a USRA membership. Secretary Jacqueline Huck and Treasurer Tom Wilson worked with the university to complete the change by collecting fees and recording new members. The USRA benefited by accepting new members who wanted to retain email access to the university.



Looking ahead, the USRA is initiating a strategic planning process to be completed in 2026-2027. With the USRA's growth to more than 600 members, it is important to set goals that are relevant to a larger, more diverse membership. The planning process will help to ensure that the USRA remains relevant to its membership. Watch for updates as planning proceeds.

Vera Pezer
Chancellor Emerita

Education, Social and Recreation Committee Report

Members: Bob Card, David Mandeville, Nigel Rawson, and Jim Thornhill (Consultant)

2026 Activities

All presentations will be held at the Western Development Museum (WDM) unless otherwise stated. Doors open at 11:30 a.m., with lunch at 12:00 noon and presentation to follow. E-mail invitations will be sent to USRA members about two weeks before each event with full information about the speakers including specific topic, lunch menu, and cost. We hope you can join us for the following events.

Tuesday, September 22	Dr. Angela Bedard-Haughn , Dean of the College of Agriculture and Bioresources, will make a presentation related to activities at the College. Note: this event will occur on a Tuesday rather than the usual Wednesday.
Wednesday, October 14	Jeff O'Brien , City Archivist, will present on a topic related to City of Saskatoon history. Note: this event will precede the USRA Annual General Meeting that begins at 2:00 p.m.
Wednesday, November 4	Dr. Steven Rayan , Professor, Mathematics and Statistics Department, will present on quantum computer topology and its applications.
December	USRA Holiday Event. Note that the date and location of this event are to be determined.

2027 Activities

The dates for 2027 luncheon presentations have been confirmed from WDM. They are booked on the following Wednesdays and are posted on the USRA website.

January 20	February 17	March 17
April 21	May 19	September 14
October 13 (including AGM)	November 3	

The ESR Committee has a large list of potential presenters. At this time, discussions with prospective speakers are underway for 2027 and we will confirm the list of speakers by the time of the next newsletter. We always welcome further recommendations for speakers and tours which might have an important message for our membership. Please contact us by phone at 306-966-6618 or by e-mail at ss.usra@usask.ca. We hope to have our audience feedback form to fill in after each event ready by the fall sessions.

Finally, we have arranged tours for members from time to time. The last tour was on January 21st, 2026 when USRA members visited the Canadian Light Source (CLS) synchrotron. The Committee has recommended that tours take place on days other than the pre-booked WDM luncheon presentations. Tours are currently being planned for the upcoming year.

Health Column: Mushroom Magic?

By Dr. Tom Wilson, Professor Emeritus, USask College of Medicine

In Canada, the possession, production, and sale of psilocybin the active ingredient in “magic mushrooms”—is illegal. However, patients suffering end-stage cancer, for instance, can apply for medical access to psilocybin through Health Canada’s Special Access Program (SAP).

In June, Saskatoon-University MP Corey Tochor introduced a private member’s bill—Thomas’ Bill—that would move psilocybin and other psychedelic substances from the restricted drug list to the narcotics list, allowing physicians to prescribe psilocybin for therapeutic uses (see footnote 1).

Tochor named the bill after his constituent Thomas Hartle, the first person in Canada to get psilocybin legally for advanced cancer but who had trouble renewing psilocybin.

Though several high-income countries and U.S. states have decriminalized personal possession of psilocybin, I believe Canada’s SAP approval process is adequate for accommodating rare therapeutic needs (see footnote 2).

Critics of the current approach say there can be significant wait times for patients seeking therapy. But enabling doctors to prescribe psilocybin is not the answer. There simply is not sufficient high-quality evidence at this time to ensure widespread patient safety with broader accessibility of this psychedelic.

What exactly does the science to date tell us about the efficacy and possible adverse effects of psilocybin?



Psilocybin is synthesized by over 50 species of mushrooms native to equatorial regions. They use two biochemical pathways, both starting with the amino acid tryptophan, that they take up from decaying plants and animals (1). Swiss chemist Albert Hoffman made pure psilocybin in 1958 and the pharmaceutical company Sandoz marketed it worldwide in 1960.

Psilocybin was studied by researchers who described its short-term psychological effects, including euphoria, altered time perception, and hallucinations. The 1960s counterculture nevertheless embraced it. Although tolerance develops with repeated use, there is no evidence of physical dependence or drug-seeking behaviour.

By 1970, the American Food and Drug Administration classified psilocybin as “Schedule 1”: no medical use and high probability of abuse (2). Canada has similar regulations. At least four companies, including two in Canada, manufacture psilocybin that can be accessed through Health Canada’s SAP.

However, though retail sales remain illegal, online dispensaries and underground storefronts have been popping up in some Canadian cities, including Saskatoon (<https://momentmushrooms.com/saskatoon/>).

The respected Cochrane Reviews journal based in the U.K. has concluded there is no high-quality evidence for benefit or adverse effects of psilocybin and other psychedelic agents (5).

Psilocybin is a “prodrug”: it has no activity on its own and is changed (metabolised) to the pharmacologically active form psilocin (3) which increases serotonin activity in our brain. This in turn increases activity of dopamine, our “feel good” chemical (3). A widely used group of drugs for depression called SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) such as fluoxetine (Prozac®) and sertraline (Zoloft®) act similarly.

Researchers with the Canadian Network for Psychedelic-Assisted Cancer Therapy (CAN-PACT), a multicenter group of Canadian researchers (CAN-PACT) have set out to study the efficacy and adverse effects of psilocybin for patients with terminal cancer (4). They envision a Canada-wide clinical trial which is now in the design phase.

Health Canada makes decisions on drug availability based on high-quality evidence, usually randomized controlled clinical trials. Such evidence is difficult to obtain for psilocybin, particularly in terminal cancer patients.

First, recruiting very sick people is challenging; most previous trials recruited fewer than 100 patients over a two-year period(5). Low numbers preclude achieving statistically significant results. Second, the diseases suffered by such patients can change rapidly. Are such changes due to the disease or the drug? Third, the short life expectancy of the subjects prevents finding long-term good or bad effects.

The plan would be to compare “low dose” (1 mg) to “high dose” (25 mg) treatments, but having two active treatment groups, along with a placebo group, could make it more difficult to achieve a statistically significant result. And there’s the issue of whether the control group should receive only a placebo or also antidepressants.

Another concern with a clinical trial is measuring its primary outcome. Improving the quality of life for patients with a terminal illness is a laudable goal, but difficult to measure. CAN-PACT mentions “demoralization syndrome” (DS) which is characterized by symptoms that include hopelessness, helplessness, and loss of purpose. But so is depression(6).

It would seem likely that Health Canada will not approve widening the use of psilocybin. In any case, the current process to obtain it through application to Health Canada is relatively simple, especially for previous users, and permitting doctors to prescribe it is unnecessary.

Footnotes

1. SP link (<https://epaper.thestarphoenix.com/saskatoon-starphoenix/20260623/page/1/textview>).
2. Canada Health Special Access Program <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/special-access/drugs.html>).

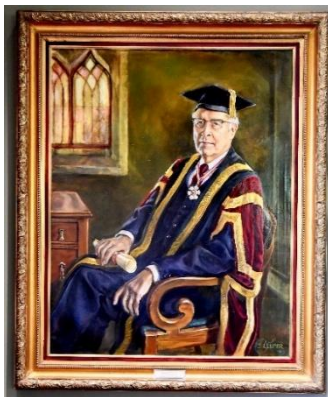
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2. Fradet M, Kelly CM, Donnelly AJ, Suppes T. Psilocybin and hallucinogenic mushrooms. CNS Spectr. 2024 Dec;29(6):611–32. doi:10.1017/S1092852924002487.

3. Passie T, Seifert J, Schneider U, Emrich HM. The pharmacology of psilocybin. *Addict Biol.* 2002 Oct;7(4):357-64. doi:10.1080/1355621021000005937.
4. Carlson LE, Richardson H, Shore R, Albertyn CP, Balneaves LG, Bates A, et al. The Canadian Network for Psychedelic-Assisted Cancer Therapy (CAN-PACT): A Multi-Phase Program Overview. *Curr Oncol.* 2025 Dec 22;33(1):7. doi:10.3390/currenol33010007.
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6. Robinson S, Kissane DW, Brooker J, Burney S. A Systematic Review of the Demoralization Syndrome in Individuals With Progressive Disease and Cancer: A Decade of Research. *J Pain Symptom Manage.* 2015 Mar;49(3):595–610. doi:10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2014.07.008.

Spotlight on USask History: Emmett Hall's Legacy of Nation-Building

By Kathryn Warden



Emmett Hall's portrait as Chancellor

Photo credit: Jim Hall

This past summer, 75 descendants of the Hall family from across Canada gathered in Saskatoon to honour the legacy of their remarkable relative Emmett Hall, a University of Saskatchewan alumnus whose leadership as a lawyer, judge and policy maker led to the creation of Canada's public health care system and paved the way for our country's modern Indigenous land claims process.

"Hall was a nation builder whose legacy is inextricably linked to the history of the University of Saskatchewan," USask President Emeritus Peter Stoicheff told the family in the Emmett Hall Boardroom where Chancellor Emeritus Hall's portrait hangs. Stoicheff noted that Hall's connections throughout his life to USask were strong—he taught at USask, received a USask honorary doctor of civil law degree in 1964, and served as the university's chancellor from 1980 to 1986.

The family members visited a new tribute wall in the College of Law library showcasing a bust of Emmett Hall and Indigenous artwork gifted to him, as well as a recently installed tribute plaque in the Health Sciences building featuring the medal awarded to Hall when he was posthumously inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame.

Hall was born in 1898 in a village north of Montreal to an Irish Quebecer dairy-farming family of 11 children. Lured by the promise of cheap land and of free education at a new provincial university, his family moved to Saskatoon in 1910. That same year, Hall, then just 12, was in the audience when Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier spoke at the cornerstone ceremony for the future USask campus.

After graduating in 1919 from the USask College of Law, Emmett Hall practiced law in Saskatchewan for 35 years. In 1957 at age 58, he was appointed Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench. Hall later became Chief Justice of Saskatchewan's Court of Appeal and was then appointed



Dr. John Wedge with bust of Emmett Hall in the College of Law library

Photo credit: David Stobbe

to the Supreme Court of Canada (he was fluent in French) where he became one of the most respected jurists in the history of the court.

Described by biographer Dennis Gruending as an “establishment radical,” Hall was known as a man who was passionate about social justice and individual rights but someone who did not suffer fools well and sometimes took contrary and controversial positions on major issues rather than popular political ones, a trait that may explain his lack of success in politics as a Conservative candidate.

In the 1920s, Hall defended a newspaper editor against the Ku Klux Klan and was reportedly burned in effigy by the Klan one summer evening. He defended participants in the 1935 Regina Riot, sparing most of the men—who were driven to despair due to joblessness—from conviction. He defended a Saskatchewan doctor for performing five abortions, establishing that the abortions had been vital to preserving each woman’s life. As a member of Regina’s elite Assiniboia Club, he led its decision to undo its exclusion of Jews. He also wrote a letter to the Saskatoon Club that was instrumental in changing the club’s decision not to include women as members. He was a defender of Indigenous rights and those of people with disabilities. As biographer Frederick Vaughan puts it, Hall displayed “unswerving determination to bring to bear all his energy and passion for justice on any case where he believed that there was a miscarriage of justice.”

In 1961, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, Hall’s former USask law school chum, asked Hall to lead the Royal Commission on Health Services to assess whether Canada should set up a universal, government-funded medical care insurance system, a controversial innovation that Premier Tommy Douglas had long championed for Saskatchewan but which was not yet in place. As a result of the Hall Commission’s work, the National Medical Care Insurance Act was passed in the House of Commons in 1966, earning Hall the title “Father of Canada’s medicare system.”

Hall received many awards and accolades over his career, but his grandchildren say that one of the most meaningful was being named an honorary chief of the Nisga’a Nation in British Columbia. They recall him sharing stories with them about this honour.



The artwork gifted to Emmett Hall by Frank Calder and the Nisga’a people
Photo credit: Kathryn Warden

In the late ‘60s, Chief Frank Calder, first president of the Nisga’a Tribal Council, sued the federal government over whether Nisga’a title to territory had been lawfully extinguished by previous colonial proclamations. Hall’s dissenting judgment was later accepted by the Supreme Court as law, leading to the affirmation of Indigenous land rights in Canada and the signing in 1998 of the first modern treaty, the largest land claim treaty in Canadian history.

As a thank you to Hall, Calder presented him with a hand-carved hammered copper shield, a highly valued treasure traditionally presented to chiefs in honour of their status, wealth, and authority. The bear on the shield is considered by elders to represent “the very foundation of the Nisga’a Nation.” The Indigenous artist, George Gosnell, was part of a Nisga’a family that played a key role in negotiating the treaty that put an end to the myth that B.C. could ignore Indigenous land claims.

The artwork was donated to the law college in 2025 by Emmett Hall’s grandson and renowned orthopedic surgeon Dr. John Wedge, a USask alumnus who also earned a USask honorary degree and, like his grandfather, has been a generous donor to the medical college.

Jurisprudence excellence was carried on by Hall's daughter Marian Wedge who became a Saskatchewan Queen's Bench judge and by his grand-daughter Catherine Wedge, also a USask alumna, who became a justice on the Supreme Court of British Columbia as well as a USask honorary degree recipient.

Another grand-daughter, Toronto ophthalmologist Dr. Charlotte Wedge, recalls being asked by a patient why a photo of Emmett Hall was hanging in her office. The patient turned out to be Stephen Truscott, who had been tried for murder at age 14 and found guilty on circumstantial evidence. On an appeal to the Supreme Court, Hall's strong sense there had been a miscarriage of justice and his lone dissenting opinion eventually led to Truscott's exoneration in 2004.



Niece Mary Scissons with Hall's grandchildren, the Honourable Justice Catherine Wedge and Dr. John Wedge at Health Sciences tribute wall
Photo credit: Kathryn Warden



The Hall family on campus
Photo credit: Kathryn Warden

Though Hall died three decades ago, his legacy lives on. His niece Mary Scissons, who organized the family reunion, says her uncle strongly believed that access to health care is a basic human right. While she says he would be disappointed by the number of people today who don't have access to primary care doctors, she adds "When I think about all the people going through severe health issues and without financial barriers are receiving world-class care here in Saskatchewan and across Canada, it means the world to me that this is in large part due to my uncle's exceptional passion for social justice."

USRA Members and Awards Celebration

Awards Committee: Merry Beazely (Chair), Bryan Harvey, Kathryn Warden, Tom Wilson, and President Vera Pezer (Ex-Officio)

Our annual USRA Celebration was held on June 17, 2026 at Louis' Loft. We welcomed new members, long-time members and USRA award recipients and their family members and friends. Emcee Merry Beazely provided a land acknowledgment, noting that Louis' and the adjacent Student Centre are named in honour of Louis Riel, the Metis leader who championed his peoples' rights and identity in the 1800s. She also noted the beautiful inscriptions on the stone wall and fireplace memorializing the USask students who died in service to our country in World War I.

The USRA has greatly appreciated the support and camaraderie of USask senior leadership and the excellent staff and faculty on campus. We were pleased that Kris Brown, Associate Vice-President Alumni and Strategic Engagement, could join us. Kris is our key 'connection point' with the university. Thank you, Kris, for bringing greetings from Provost Patti McDougall and your team in University Relations.

President Vera Pezer brought greetings on behalf of the USRA board and thanked everyone for being there. She commended members on USRA initiatives during the past year and congratulated the 2026 USRA award recipients. Thank you, President Vera.



Kris Brown, AVP Alumni and Strategic Engagement
Photo credit: David Mandeville



Vera Pezer, USRA
President
Photo credit: David
Mandeville

Merry acknowledged President Emeritus Peter Stoicheff who was in attendance. She thanked Peter for being such an exceptional supporter of the USRA over the past decade. During his tenure as President, the university achieved record levels of research funding, accomplished a highly successful fundraising campaign to support a variety of initiatives, and strengthened partnerships and ties within the province, nationally and internationally. She added that the USRA is looking forward to Peter joining the USRA in a couple of years when he retires!

Merry then introduced the USRA awards and this year's honoured award recipients and presenters.

ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan - "Let's Fly Up Together" Award

Recognizes meaningful and significant contributions of a USask individual retiree, or a pair or group that includes one or more USask retiree, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, towards achieving the commitments of the Indigenous strategy for the university.

Merry extended thanks to Amaranta Sokol, USask's Director of Indigenous Engagement, who assisted the USRA in honouring this year's recipient, **Dr. Peter Butt**. Dr. Butt could not be present but Kathryn Warden described his many accomplishments. We plan to present Peter's award to him at our USRA Annual Lunch and AGM on October 14, 2026 at the WDM.

Dr. Peter Butt, a retired clinical associate professor of family medicine, has significantly shaped medical education, policy, and practice in Saskatchewan, expanding physician services across northern Saskatchewan and playing a leading role provincially and nationally as an addiction medicine expert. Over his career spanning more than three decades, his work at USask and within the provincial health system has been instrumental in advancing compassionate, evidence-based care for individuals and communities affected by substance use disorders. Peter is a strong advocate for Indigenous health and has consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to patient-centered care, public health, and medical education. He has helped strengthen pathways toward health, understanding and reconciliation, making a meaningful and lasting contribution to Indigenous peoples and communities. Thank you and congratulations Peter!



Peter Butt
Photo credit: University of
Saskatchewan

Continuing Contribution Award

Recognizes and expresses to persons who have retired from work at the university, but have continued to make research, scholarly, artistic or service contributions, whether associated with their university work, their scholarly work or their service work, at an exceptional level. Such contributions may not have been recognized by international, national, provincial or local bodies, but have substantially benefitted society. The USRA was pleased to recognize two deserving individuals.

David Mandeville, USRA board member and our official photographer, presented the Continuing Contribution Award to **Dr. Lea Pennock**.



David Mandeville, Lea Pennock, and Vera Pezer

Photo credit: Alaisha Gaudet

Dr. Lea Pennock served as USask's Registrar, University Secretary and Director of Student Information Systems, retiring in 2013. She is a dedicated community contributor and continues to be widely respected for her expertise in governance, higher education and environmental stewardship. Her commitment to service is equally evident in her wide-reaching volunteer work, including her leadership, with husband Dan, in the Canadian Company of Pilgrims. Her efforts extend to global refugee sponsorship and community wellness. Lea is also the enthusiastic coordinator of USRA's Globe Walk Team – the *Intensely Vigorous USask Retirees*. However, she shares that her best volunteer activity is grandparenting, with Dan, two little girls. Thank you, Lea, for your many ongoing contributions.

Kathryn was welcomed back to the podium along with co-nominator Ann Donald to present the Continuing Contribution Award to **Miranda Jones**.

Miranda Jones is a highly respected artist, educator, and community leader whose work has had a lasting impact on the Saskatchewan arts community.

Born in Australia, Miranda immigrated to Canada in 1980 and has dedicated more than four decades to artistic practice, teaching, and mentorship. Through her work with USask's Community Arts & Design program (now the Community Arts and Artisanry Certificate), Miranda played an important role in providing access to arts education and serving as a mentor to emerging artists. Since concluding her instructional work in 2021, she has continued to contribute meaningfully to the university and broader community. As a highly regarded yoga instructor and active advocate for wellness, she inspires others through both her teaching and her example. Her leadership in national and international arts networks, her dedication to community-based projects, and her commitment to sharing knowledge through teaching and retreats demonstrate a remarkable continuation of scholarly and artistic excellence. Miranda continues to foster creativity and inspire others, embodying the spirit of lifelong contribution. Thank you and congratulations Miranda!



Kathryn Warden, Miranda Jones, Vera Pezer, and Ann Donald

Photo credit: David Mandeville

Honorary Life Award

Recognizes USRA members who have made a significant contribution over a long period to the USRA and the university community.

We welcomed board member Joe Angel to present the Honorary Life Award to **Dr. Rick Bunt**.

Dr. Rick Bunt joined the Department of Computer Science in 1972, later serving as Department Head, Associate Dean for Science, the university's Chief Information Officer and Associate Vice-President for Information and Communications Technology (ICT). He retired in 2014 as Professor Emeritus, with an *Erdős number of 2* (*interesting to look this up*)! The USRA board was delighted in 2019 when Rick joined the board and brought his outstanding understanding and invaluable common sense of all things ICT, always with good humour! He chaired the USRA's Engagement Committee, working diligently to strengthen our relationship with the university.



Joe Angel, Rick Bunt, and Vera Pezer

Photo credit: David Mandeville

His expertise was invaluable when negotiating the USRA's first Memorandum of Understanding with the university in 2021 and again in 2024. He has continued to generously share his wisdom advising the USRA. Thank you, Rick!

Prime of Life Achievement Award

Honours and expresses appreciation of persons who have retired from work at the university and, after their retirement, have been recognized for outstanding scholarly, artistic or service contributions, recognized by international, national, provincial or local bodies.

USRA Vice-President Hope Bilinski was honoured to present the Prime of Life Achievement Award to **Dr. Sara Williams**.

Dr. Sara Williams is a renowned horticulturist, educator, humanitarian and author whose passion for gardening has had a profound influence on prairie horticulture and community outreach. Following graduation from the University of Michigan, Sara joined the Peace Corps in 1963, moving to Africa to teach at a school for girls in Tanzania. She later moved to Saskatoon where she studied agriculture, was an outstanding teacher and author and was inducted into the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame. Tanzania never left Sara's heart, and for decades, she has supported the Canadian Harambee Society, improving education access for Tanzanian girls. In 2015, she received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from USask, in recognition of her humanitarian work in Tanzania. Through her dedication and enthusiasm, Sara has inspired us to connect with and appreciate the beauty and resilience of prairie landscapes. Congratulations Sara!



Hope Bilinski, Sara Williams, and Vera Pezer
Photo credit: David Mandeville

Thanks are extended to the award nominators and presenters and awards committee colleagues Bryan Harvey, Kathryn Warden, Tom Wilson and Vera Pezer (ex-officio). Special thanks to Jacqueline Huck, USRA Secretary, for preparing the award certificates and maintaining the award displays in our Retirees Lounge on campus; to our photographer David Mandeville; and to Alaisha Gaudet, stakeholder engagement coordinator for the USRA, for her exceptional assistance.

Again this year, attendees enjoyed the unique West Coast table centerpieces, crafted by Past-President Jim Thornhill. Additional door prizes included *Saskatchewan Superwomen: Challengers and Champions*, generously donated by Vera; flowers by Merry; and the handy USRA bag with McNalley Gift Certificate. It was a most enjoyable event.

Engagement Committee: Summary of the USRA Survey

Members: Joe Angel, Hope Bilinski, Vera Pezer, and Nigel Rawson

Thank you to all members who responded to the 2026 USRA Member Survey. Below is a brief overview of the process and results. If you are interested in further details, please contact USask stakeholder engagement coordinator Alaisha Gaudet at (306) 966-6019 or alaisha.gaudet@usask.ca.

The Membership Survey was designed by the USRA board to gather feedback on members' perspectives of USRA programs, social activities, and communication efforts. To support member confidentiality, the University Alumni and Strategic Engagement Office collected the data and conducted the analysis in March and April 2026. Responses were received from 216 participants—a response rate of 36%. The data reflects a range of age groups, employment backgrounds, and geographic locations. As expected, a large majority (87%) of respondents live in Saskatoon or the surrounding area.

The survey results indicate that respondents place a high value on the core purposes of the USRA, particularly to be a channel of communication between USask and retirees. Access to the library and ICT/email services, educational opportunities, social programming, and communications (e.g. newsletters, emails) continue to be valued in various degrees by respondents. Modality of program delivery, such as the provision of remote participation, was also emphasized by some respondents. Qualitative responses provide rich data and ideas for future planning of USRA activities.

The survey results will provide valuable information as the USRA embarks on its strategic planning process in 2026/2027.

College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC/ARUCC) News

Merry Beazely (CURAC Representative) and Kathryn Warden (CURAC Delegate)

USRA members are all members of CURAC, a federation of Canadian university and college retiree organizations. Its objectives are to coordinate activities that promote communication among member associations, share information about activities of member organizations, and speak on issues of concern to the thousands of university and college retirees across Canada.



Please see CURAC's website for information about what is happening at member organizations across Canada (May 2026 Newsletter) and the benefits that members of CURAC can access at [Member Benefits — CURAC](#): <https://curac.ca/en/blog/may-2026-newsletter> and <https://curac.ca/en/member-benefits>.

USRA is currently represented on the CURAC Conference Committee (Merry Beazely), the Health Policy Committee (Tom Wilson), and the Later Life Learning Committee (Murray Scharf).



Dr. Jo-ann Archibald spoke about her concept of "Indigenous story work"—"Connecting Heart, Mind, Body, & Spirit."

Photo credit: Gladys We

Board member Kathryn Warden represented USRA at the CURAC national conference in May in New Westminster where CURAC benefits and discounts were highlighted for: health (hearing and eyeglasses); car, home, and travel insurance; health insurance; and travel. For instance, one member reported he saved \$300 on glasses through Specsavers; \$800 on home insurance through Belairdirect; \$2,000 on HearingLife hearing aids (which also makes earmolds for noise and sleep); and \$1,500 with travel company Trip Merchant for a university group he organized (note that this company is also a USask alumni partner). CURAC is interested in learning whether there are other kinds of benefits that members would like to see such as dental benefits.

CURAC recently held a webinar about member benefits. To view the recording, visit:

<https://ucalgary.zoom.us/rec/share/TNBtHPCF6BxTY4NPBXKc9nLLVoWaUE7R86Pmt4JzOVygHejJOozpKU3RvWjoRjX.MGUn1uMleadvBYkp> (use the passcode: !1\$6qq9&).

Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, a member of the B.C. Stó:lō First Nation, U.B.C. Professor Emeritus (education), and Chancellor of the University of the Fraser Valley, spoke about the importance of Indigenous storytelling as a way to develop innovative educational approaches. She stressed that one must listen with respect: "with three ears: two on your head and one in your heart."

Interested in volunteering abroad? The annual meeting featured a presentation on **Catalyste+**, a Canadian economic development organization largely supported by Global Affairs Canada which provides training, mentorship and advisory services to partners and clients in emerging countries and Indigenous communities

in Canada. Skilled advisors in various fields—average age 55—undertake two to three-week assignments, with accommodation and food paid for by local partners. The partners are sent CVs to match opportunities with advisors' skill sets and interests. Training is provided. For more information, visit: <https://www.catalystplus.org/>.

CURAC committees are listed at <https://curac.ca/en/committees>. The Communications Committee is particularly in need of new members who know something about website maintenance and writing/editing of newsletters, etc. The Surveys and Archives Committees are also looking for support. **Volunteers from the USRA for these positions would be warmly welcomed.** Please contact the Nominating Committee Co-Chairs: Sandi Hirst (shirst@ucalgary.ca) and Carole-Lynne Le Navenec (cllenave@ucalgary.ca) [Cell calls/text messages/Whats App: (+1) 825-438-1356].

2026 USask Employee Appreciation Picnic

The USRA hosted a booth at the annual USask Employee Appreciation Picnic held on Wednesday, June 24th in the green space behind the Engineering Building. Board members who attended were Joe Angel, Bob Card, David Mandeville, Merry Beazely, Tom Wilson, and Jacqueline Huck, along with USask stakeholder engagement coordinator Alaisha Gaudet. More than 30 individuals stopped at our booth to hear about our organization, events, etc.



Jacqueline Huck, Merry Beazely, Howler and Merry's friend Marnie Macdonald

Photo credit: Alaisha Gaudet



Jacqueline Huck and Tom Wilson
Photo credit: Alaisha Gaudet



Bob Card, David Mandeville and Joe Angel

Photo credit: Alaisha Gaudet

GLOBE WALK RECAP: Getting Through (Another) Saskatoon Winter with the Intensely Vigorous USask Retirees

Lea Pennock, Globe Walk Captain

A small but intensely vigorous cohort of USRA members signed up earlier this year to exercise our way through the cold and ice of a Saskatchewan winter. From January through April, we cross-country skied, rowed, walked on tracks, treadmills, sidewalks (both clear and icy), and beaches, did yoga, swam and shovelled our way through some of the hardest months of the year.



Dan on the track at the PAC
Photo credit: Lea Pennock

We did all of this, as we've done in previous years, through the auspices of Globe Walk, an initiative started by our own Vera Pezer, USRA president. Globe Walk provides a dynamic and fun way for us "older adults" to stay active and engaged during months when we're often tempted to curl up all day with a good book and a cup of hot tea. Not all the activities mentioned above took place in Saskatoon—one of the great things about Globe Walk is that you can report your activity from wherever you happen to be on the Globe!

Your intensely vigorous colleagues this year were Merry Beazely, Pat Bowman, Mary Dykes, Fern Fitzharris, Angela Kalinowski, Maggie L'Arrivee, Dan and Lea Pennock, Vera Pezer, Beryl Radcliffe, Kathryn Warden, Lin Whitworth, and Tom and Merne Wilson. Thanks to all of you for being a part of our team!

We hope all of you (and others!) will sign up for next year's Globe Walk Team. But first we need someone to volunteer to be next year's team captain. It's not onerous: all you need to do as captain is to send out a call to USRA members in late fall, register the group (easy!) and compile and report the total number of minutes of activity to SCOA at the end of each month from January to April. (If no-one signs up, we have an option to fold our team into the larger city-wide SCOA team, but it would be great to keep our own Intensely Vigorous Team going). Contact Lea Pennock (lea.pennock@usask.ca) to volunteer, or for more information.



Kathryn on the rowing machines at the PAC
Photo credit: Peter Stoicheff

SCOA Spotlight on Seniors Tradeshow

The *Spotlight on Seniors Tradeshow* (theme – Embracing the Future) will be held on Tuesday, October 6th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at TCU Place (Grand Salon, upper level). The cost is \$15 (cash only) payable at the door.

This annual tradeshow, hosted by the Saskatoon Council on Aging (SCOA) and TCU Place, is the hub for Saskatoon and area seniors to receive the latest information on a wide range of products and services while having a great time. For additional information, please visit the [SCOA website](https://www.scoa.ca/).

Members No Longer With Us

The USRA has learned of the deaths of the following members and extends our sympathies to their families.

Note: Surviving partners of deceased Life Members may inherit their partner's USRA membership if they wish to do so. Please contact USRA via e-mail at ss.usra@usask.ca or phone 306-966-6618 for further information.

Donna Mae Barber (July 6, 1938-July 20, 2024)

A nurse educator for the USask Continuing Medical Education for 25 years (1975 to 2000), Donna was born in Vita, MB and her family later moved to Regina. Following high school, Donna entered the nursing program at the Regina General Hospital in 1956 and graduated in 1959. In 1989, Donna returned to school and received a Masters of Administrating Education from the University of Regina.

Donna participated in Saskatchewan's Golden Jubilee Choir and travelled to Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Chicago in 1954 and the province in 1955. She married Stan Barber in 1955. During their 65-year marriage, she and Stan sang in the Wesley United Church choir for 25 years. The couple were honoured to sing at Carnegie Hall, New York City in 2019.

Barry Leigh Bates (April 28, 1935-July 21, 2026)

After graduating from commerce at USask, Barry initially worked in a marketing role in Winnipeg and then shifted to personnel work, starting with the Provincial Hospital in North Battleford and then at USask. He became director of the newly formed Personnel Department in 1974.

The importance of Occupational Health and Safety was recognized in the 70s and this responsibility moved to the Personnel Department. It mushroomed quickly with the complexities of biosafety and radiation safety and the formation of many committees and staff added to help with this.

In the 80s, staff were added to the renamed Human Resources Division and in the early 90s, Barry became Assistant Vice President. He was asked to become the university's spokesperson in negotiations with the Faculty Association. He retired in about 1996.

Fern Lois Green (May 3, 1927-March 17, 2026)

Fern grew up on a farm near Meadow Lake, SK. After leaving school, she travelled to Battleford where she trained as a Registered Psychiatric Nurse. After receiving her certifications, she worked at the Battleford hospital. She met Gordon and they were married in 1950. Gordon was employed by the university in the Registrar's Office and died in 2022.

In 1963, the family moved to Saskatoon where Gordon attended the USask College of Commerce and Fern returned to part-time nursing. Following Gordon's convocation, she returned to university in 1977 and received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 1979. She was employed by the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology.

Krishan Lal (died June 21, 2026)

A USask economics professor for over 35 years, Professor Emeritus Krishan Lal was born in India and received his undergraduate degree from New Delhi. He studied at the London School of Economics and the University of Gottingen in Germany where he completed a PhD in 1960 in the field of microeconomics theory, growth theory, and development economics.

In the early 60s, Krishan moved to Canada, settling in Saskatoon. He served as head of the economics department from 1979 to 1984. He was the first recipient of the department's R.E. Olley Teaching Award for his exceptional dedication to his students.

Krishan was one of the founding members of the India-Canada Cultural Association. A man of faith, he studied Hindu texts and philosophy with passion and continued to teach himself Sanskrit until his passing.

Krishan served as lead of the Faculty Pension Committee. He volunteered his time to the City of Saskatoon Pension Committee and received the Distinguished Community Service Award. He created a scholarship, The Dr. Krishan Lal and Sunita Lal Fund in Economic Research, which is awarded to students enrolled in economics at USask.

Evelyn Patricia Lovell (June 4, 1927-July 8, 2026)

After graduating from Nutana Collegiate, Pat earned a USask bachelor of commerce degree in 1948 with a major in accounting. In first-year university, she met Frank Lovell and they married in 1950. Frank was employed by the university as Director of Development.

Pat was employed as an accountant until she retired to raise their family but she returned to part-time work when the children were older. She played violin with the Saskatoon Symphony for several years. Pat and Frank loved to travel and visited Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Greece, Turkey, and countries in

southeast Asia and the United Kingdom. Following Frank's death in 1998, Pat continued to travel with her daughters to places in Canada and on cruises.

Mary Paynter (died February 20, 2026) (USask affiliation unknown)

Hubert William Savage (January 16, 1928-April 24, 2026)

Professor Emeritus Hubert Savage was born in Alberta and grew up in Manitoba where he earned a bachelor of arts degree with a certificate in education. He married Clem (McNern) in 1951. He taught high school in Manitoba and then spent three years teaching in Ethiopia for the Ethiopian government. Upon returning to Canada in 1955, he earned a PhD in education at the University of Toronto and taught there for four years. In 1962, he became a faculty member in the USask College of Education's department of educational psychology where he served until his retirement in 1989. In 1995, he married Ethel Quiring and they spent their retirement years together.

Josephine Scappaticci (November 14, 1939-October 15, 2024)

Josephine was employed at the USask Printing Services, working in bindery. Following retirement, she joined the University of Saskatchewan Non-academic Retirees Association (USNARA) and when they disbanded in 2018, she joined USRA.

Graham Scoles (December 21, 1950-June 12, 2026)

During nearly 40 years at USask, Professor Emeritus Graham Scoles was known as an outstanding teacher, administrator, researcher, and mentor who made innovative contributions to plant genomics and crop research.

Born in Norfolk, England, Graham earned a bachelor of science degree in agricultural botany from the University of Reading, followed by a one-year work experience at the Plant Breeding Institute in Cambridge, UK, which piqued his interest in plant breeding. He joined the University of Manitoba in 1973 where he earned an MSc and a PhD.

In 1979, he joined the USask plant sciences department in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources and went on to become department head, followed by 14 years as associate dean of Research and Graduate Studies where he oversaw many large research infrastructure projects. He then served as the college's interim dean from 2007-2009. He is known for co-developing a molecular marker assisted breeding program with barley and oats. During his career, he mentored countless graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and researchers, retiring in December of 2018.

He was known for his kindness, optimism and his acceptance of his many health issues including polycystic kidney disease for which he underwent two kidney transplants. He served as co-ordinator for the Saskatoon chamber of PKD Canada.

Sylvan (Syl) Skarsgard (March 21, 1925-July 30, 2015)

Sylvan was raised near Viscount, SK. After leaving the farm and marrying Doreen, he worked 15 years with the Department of Transport. He took a leave in 1958 to study for a civil engineering degree and was hired by USask in 1967 to direct the planning and building of major projects: Engineering, Agriculture, Geology, WCVI, VIDO, Place Riel Centre, Dental College, Cancer Centre, PAC, and Diefenbaker Centre, as well as the major expansions of Thorvaldson, Law/Commerce, Physics, Health Sciences, Royal University Hospital, MUB, and Administration buildings. Sylvan retired in 1991. Sylvan and Doreen travelled to all parts of Canada and much of the United States.

Note: For notices in memory of former employees of the university, as well as current students, employees and others honoured when the flag on the Thorvaldson Building is flown at half mast, please see the In

Memoriam website maintained by the University Secretary: <https://governance.usask.ca/about/flag-at-half-mast.php#InMemoriam>.

Keep in Touch!

We welcome your letters to the editors Jackie Huck, Bob Card, Joe Angel, and Kathryn Warden. Do you have an event of interest to retirees and seniors that you want to let other members know about? We are happy to pass on news about your event by e-mail and in the newsletter. Please send information by e-mail.



Moving? Changing your e-mail address?

Don't miss an issue of our newsletter and our e-mail notices about upcoming activities! Make sure you send us your new contact information.

University of Saskatchewan Retirees Association

221 Cumberland Ave N

Saskatoon SK S7N 1M3

Phone: 306-966-6618

Email: ss.usra@usask.ca

Website: <https://usra.usask.ca>

**UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN RETIREES ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday, October 14, 2026
Western Development Museum, Saskatchewan Hall
Approximately 2:00 P.M. after Lunch and Speaker Presentation by Jeff O'Brien**

DRAFT Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes of October 15, 2025
4. President's Report: Vera Pezer
5. Treasurer's Report: Tom Wilson
6. Standing Committee Reports
 - a. Awards: Merry Beazely
 - b. College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC): Merry Beazely
 - c. Communication Committee: Jacqueline Huck
 - d. Education, Social and Recreation Committee: Bob Card and David Mandeville
 - e. Engagement Committee: Hope Bilinski
 - f. Membership Committee and Tribute to Members No Longer with Us: Jacqueline Huck
 - g. Honorary Degrees: Tom Wilson
 - h. Ad Hoc Committee on USRA Documents: Merry Beazely
 - i. USask Senate Representative: David Mandeville
7. New Business
8. Report of Nominations Committee: Merry Beazely
9. Election of Board for 2026-2027
 - a. President: Vera Pezer
 - b. Vice-President: Hope Bilinski
 - c. Secretary: TBA (appointed from among the Directors)
 - d. Treasurer: Tom Wilson
 - e. Immediate Past President: N/A
 - f. Members at Large: Joe Angel, Bob Card, Carol Henry, Suren Kulshreshtha, David Mandeville, Bob Tyler, and Kathryn Warden
10. Other Business
11. Adjournment

Report of Nominations Committee for 2025-2026

Members: Merry Beazely (Chair), Bryan Harvey, Kathryn Warden, Tom Wilson, and President Vera Pezer (Ex-Officio)

The Nominations Committee is pleased to present to the membership the following slate of executive positions (President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer) and directors for the 2026–2027 year, for one-year terms.

President: Vera Pezer

Vice-President: Hope Bilinski

Secretary: TBA (appointed from among the Directors)

Treasurer: Tom Wilson

Immediate Past President: N/A

Directors: Joe Angel, Bob Card, Carol Henry, Suren Kulshreshtha, David Mandeville, Bob Tyler, and Kathryn Warden

We are most appreciative that Vera Pezer has agreed to take on the presidential duties for another year, as has Hope Bilinski as Vice-President and Tom Wilson as Treasurer. Joe Angel, Bob Card, David Mandeville, and Kathryn Warden are continuing on the Board, sharing their time and talents with us in the coming year.

Merry Beazely, Jacqueline Huck, and Nigel Rawson are stepping away from the board and we thank them for their valued efforts in growing the USRA mandate. Their commitment and contributions to the USRA will be missed.

We are pleased to report that the Nominations Committee has recommended and the board has approved the following three new nominees to serve the association for 2026-2027. They are:

Dr. Carol Henry, Professor Emerita, Nutrition, College of Pharmacy and Nutrition. Carol welcomes the opportunity to join the USRA board to give back to a community that has meant so much to her. She is committed to helping foster connections, lifelong learning, and meaningful engagement, while ensuring that the expertise and talents of retired faculty and staff continue to enrich the university and the broader Saskatchewan community.

Dr. Suren Kulshreshtha, Professor Emeritus, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, College of Agriculture and Bioresources. Suren's interest in being on the USRA board includes providing his time and experience to other retirees through learning about their views on retirement and issues facing them, as well as assisting with the financial operations of the association.

Dr. Bob Tyler, Professor Emeritus, Food and Bioproduct Sciences, College of Agriculture and Bioresources. Bob's interest in serving on the board stems from his desire to contribute to an organization he believes provides significant value to members, adding he would be happy to be involved wherever his experience may be useful (e.g. strategic planning, university relations, partnership development). He notes the many new USRA members and opportunities this presents for a creative and strategic board.

Please note that the election of the 2026-2027 Board of Directors at the AGM will be by acclamation unless further nominations, each signed by three members of the association, are received by the secretary at least 15 days prior to the AGM on October 14. Please see USRA's By-Laws (Section 11) on the website.

The Nominations Committee has further recommended that the nominations process be reviewed as part of upcoming USRA strategic planning, including the above by-laws.

If you have any questions or are interested in serving on the board in the future, please contact us at ss.usra@usask.ca.

Respectfully submitted,
Merry Beazely, Chair, on behalf of the Nominations Committee