

**Monday, September 22, 2014 – President and Vice-Chancellor Annette Trimbee  
Inaugural address**

**PART ONE: RECAPPING OUR PAST**

- I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are on Treaty One land, in the heart of the Metis nation.
  
- Good afternoon to each of you and to our honoured guests here today:
  - ✓ Stan McKay, Elder
  - ✓ The Honourable Philip Lee, Lieutenant Governor
  - ✓ Robert Silver, Chancellor
  - ✓ Honourable James Allum, Minister of Education and Advanced Learning
  
  - ✓ Rorie McLeod-Arnould, University of Winnipeg Students' Association President
  
- As I stand here today, prepared to officially take on the role of seventh President and Vice-Chancellor, I am keenly aware that our roots stretch deeply into this community, going back 130 years.
  
- When this fully restored heritage building, Wesley Hall officially opened in 1896, horse and buggies rambled by outside on Portage Avenue.
  
- The city around us was on the verge of an enormous expansion – going from a population of just 1,500 people in 1873 to more than 200,000 in 1914. However, that period of unprecedented growth and boundless energy would be short-lived.
  
- The rapid expansion relied on tens of thousands of new immigrants who often lived in near-poverty. It also created new tensions with Indigenous people as settlement pushed onto traditional lands.
  
- The Great Depression and World War Two loomed. The Panama Canal was completed. These events shaped and changed the complexion of Winnipeg.
  
- It is a history that we carry with us. If we think back to conditions in period 1880 to 1930, it was a tough time to be living on the Prairies. People had to forge a living in a demanding and often inhospitable environment.
  
- It was a time when there were no social safety nets.
  
- And into this void grew a new imperative. In 1938, Manitoba College and Wesley College joined forces to become United College, rooted in the new social gospel movement.
  
- It was a profoundly contemporary idea - to build a movement around the ideal that faith and politics can intersect to create positive and lasting change.

- From this belief grew social ethics and sociology and in part, the United Church. The movement tackled real, everyday problems and found solutions leading to reforms in housing, health and child welfare laws.
- This formed the ethos of United College, and became an important part of fabric of the University of Winnipeg that remains consistent today: whether science students are tackling climate change, or arts students are engaged in human rights and conflict studies, or education students are tutoring incarcerated young offenders – we remain a place that nurtures a social justice conscience.
- Henry Duckworth, our second president and a former student here, embraced and celebrated the idea that this University is about community and connection.
- It was Duckworth who coined the phrase, in his 1971 President's Address – **“The city is our campus.”**
- That was more than 40 years ago. Yet it resonates with us in this room today because our sixth president, Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, breathed new life into this concept: The city **IS** our campus. Our campus **IS** the surrounding community.
- In the past decade there has been renaissance on our campus and downtown, and we have been at the forefront of that renewal.
- Through the incredible work of Dr. Axworthy, our Foundation, Board of Regents and our faculty and staff, - government, corporate and community partners - we have attracted \$217 million dollars to the downtown.
- We used to be known as the small liberal arts school. Now we are a diversified academic entity with two new faculties: Business and Economics and the Gupta Faculty of Kinesiology and Applied Health.
- We have a thriving graduate program – the cohort of graduate students has grown by 16% in the past year alone.
- We have added majors in emerging fields such as human rights, Indigenous development and disability studies, programs unique in Canada.
- We have state-of-the-art facilities. Enrolment is up by 55% in just over a decade and we now welcome international students from around the globe.
- We remain affordable, with one of the lowest tuition rates in the country.
- We continue to offer a high quality education, small class sizes and real student interaction with professors. That is highly valued by our students and is always cited as one of our top strengths in the annual Maclean's and Globe and Mail University surveys.
- We have impact. We have more than 47,000 graduates – and the vast majority, more than 80%, remain in Manitoba. They build careers and families and lives here.
- I just met one of our extraordinary young graduates: Muuxi Adam who received the Red Cross 2014 Young Humanitarian of the Year award last week. Muuxi arrived in Winnipeg as a teenage refugee from Somalia, struggling to overcome the effects of working 16-hour days without pay in a garage fixing cars. He received one of our very first fast-track

bursary through the Opportunity Fund and last year he graduated. He is the co-founder of Humankind International and founder of a school for refugee children in Kenya.

- Let me share a few more examples:
- Two recent Faculty of Arts graduates are performing on Broadway: Samantha Hill is playing Cosette in Les Miserables, and Nyk Bielak is playing Elder Cunningham in The Book of Mormon.
- Our alumni authors include the world-famous Linda Holeman, and David Bergen, Giller-Prize winner; Margaret Sweatman is an acclaimed author and one of our English faculty members. And how about Guy Maddin, award-winning film-maker.
- In the world of business: The Honourable JoAnne Buth retired from the Senate and is now the new CEO of Canadian International Grains Institute. Ed Romanowski is the President & Founder of Bellstar Hotels & Resorts and was recently featured on the show Undercover Boss. Pina Albo is President of U.S. Operations for the world's biggest reinsurer. And Ray McFeetors, former President and Chairman of Great-West Lifeco, who established McFeetors Hall Student Residence on campus recently donated \$2 million to establish The McFeetors Heavy Horse Centre at the Assiniboine Park Zoo.
- More than 500 of our alumni are lawyers. Last year alumnus and lawyer Avi Gesser investigated, prosecuted and secured guilty pleas in connection to an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Fred Headon is currently President of the Canadian Bar Association. And Madam Justice Brenda Keyser, Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench Judge, and past Chair of the University of Winnipeg Board of Regents.
- Alumni from a variety of disciplines have achieved much in public service. Currently serving are: Honourable Kevin Chief, Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities; Donovan Fontaine, Chief, Sagkeeng First Nation; Troy Lulashnyk, Canada's Ambassador to the Ukraine; Omar Zakhilwal, Minister of Finance, Afghanistan; and Devi Sharma, Winnipeg City Councillor.
- You see I could go on and on. This campus has produced an extraordinary amount of talent.
- We have solidified our core mission to reach out and support Indigenous students, war-affected youth, new immigrants, children from low-income homes and now, foster children in care.
- More than 10% of our student body self-identifies as Indigenous and the Indigenous Advisory Circle now helps to govern our institution.
- This is a new way of thinking about education, and who has access to higher learning.
- I am passionate about building on this momentum and solidifying the unique role that UWinnipeg plays in this community.
- **PART TWO – ANNETTE**
- So who am I?
- First and foremost, it is an honour for me to return to my roots at The University of Winnipeg.

- Without the financial and emotional support I received here, I may not have pursued a post-secondary education. I was inspired by my UWinnipeg professors to follow my dreams. I have a strong heart and soul connection here and a passionate desire to give back to the next generation of leaders.
- I graduated from here with a Bachelor of Science in Biology in 1977 and went on to do a PhD and post-doc with the dream of coming back to UWinnipeg to be a Biology professor.
- I grew up in Transcona, as did my mother and father. I am from a family of six kids and both of my parents were from families with eight kids. (I still have lots of relatives that call Winnipeg home, including both of my brothers and their families).
- Like many kids growing up in the 1960s in Winnipeg I was confused about my heritage. My parents both spoke French as their mother tongue but all of their siblings married partners who did not. They stopped speaking French at home before I was born. My grandmother on my dad's side was pretty clear that she was Metis and yet my dad said we were not. I understand my parents' choices but at the same time do wish times were different and my parents had continued to speak French at home and celebrated our Metis heritage. My Metis grandmother had a huge influence on me.
- This is an area of my life that I am continuing to explore.
- Since I've returned I've spent a lot of time with elders, and have travelled to Churchill and to several First Nation communities.
- The Aboriginal communities and cultures are so much a part of the everyday life of Winnipeg today. I'm just immersing myself in these rich conversations about the current challenges and future opportunities of various First Nations and Metis communities.
- This Indigenous resurgence is one of Winnipeg's greatest strengths – there is tremendous talent and energy on the rise.
- It is up to us to harness and grow that talent.
- I believe that students coming to university are not just coming for a credential and skills to get a job. They want to be inspired.
- The decision to go to university is more than a practical one; it is a decision of the heart, especially for students that come from families where going to university is not yet a tradition and where going to university can distance you, geographically and emotionally. The University of Winnipeg gets this.
- While I did not pursue an academic career as a Biology Professor as I was bitten by the policy bug, I am pleased that I now have an academic position in our department of Environmental Studies and Sciences. I very much look forward to participating in the activities of my department.
- It was during my post-doc at the University of Alberta in aquatic ecology that public service claimed me. Much of my time was spent collecting data in the field and doing analysis in labs. I got to know people in government for two reasons: First, they had tons of data, and second, they had grant money to fund research that was intended to inform

public policy.

- I thought I should figure out what public policy was all about. So I ventured into public service and I just really liked it. Eventually I became a Deputy Minister and had the chance to shape policy in diverse sectors - Treasury Board and Finance, Advanced Education and Technology, the Environment and Health and Wellness.
- The invaluable part of this experience has been learning how to collaborate and work in diverse teams to make things happen. That brings me full circle – back to UWinnipeg today.

### **PART THREE: OUR PRIORITIES AHEAD**

- My first priority has been to meet with as many members of the University and broader community as possible to listen and gain insights from community leaders, Elders, our senior executive team, our professors and our students.
- I recognize there are challenges ahead. We must grapple with issues such as fiscal stability, the incredibly rapid pace of technological change, and an increasingly mobile student population.
- I don't pretend to have answers. But I am interested in fine-tuning and asking the right questions.
- We have been through tremendous growth. Can we sustain that growth? Why are we growing? Do we have the right balance?
- While there is much to learn, one thing is certain: What attracted me to the University of Winnipeg is that it is open, it's inclusive. We are diverse. We have a really caring and nurturing faculty. There's a good sense of purpose here.
- The management, faculty and staff at UWinnipeg are a talented team. Together we play an important role in nurturing tomorrow's leaders and ensuring that Winnipeg and Manitoba continues to produce outstanding community and globally minded citizens.
- There are many opportunities ahead to solidify our reputation as a progressive and compassionate place of higher learning. We are THE community university, a place where students want to discover, achieve and belong.
- Miigwech, Ekosi, Merci, Thank you.