

UBC's Jeannette Armstrong appointed Canada Research Chair

Assistant professor will explore Okanagan indigenous knowledge and philosophy

Jeannette Armstrong, an assistant professor of Indigenous Studies in the Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences at UBC's Okanagan campus, has been appointed a Canada Research Chair.

Armstrong will be Canada Research Chair in Okanagan Indigenous Philosophy. With the prestigious appointment comes an annual award of \$100,000 for five years to research, document, categorize and analyze Okanagan Syilx oral language literature.

The oral stories of the Syilx Okanagan contain a wealth of Indigenous knowledge. Unfortunately, much of this knowledge is largely inaccessible.

Armstrong aims to address existing barriers to research within this Indigenous community by surveying, analyzing and categorizing Syilx captikwl (mythology) and smamay (legends) from a variety of published and unpublished collections.

Armstrong is analyzing Syilx traditional knowledge to obtain information about Syilx society, as well as ecological and sustainability practices, and to link Syilx story knowledge to such areas as governance, land use and health. Her analysis is being conducted in the Nsyilxcen Okanagan language and includes approvals by fluent language speakers for accuracy of translations.

To date, Western conventions have created a cultural blindness to Indigenous methods of knowledge documentation in storytelling. As well, analysis of Syilx culture and language contexts has not been conducted using a combination of Syilx story and Western literary conventions.

Armstrong's research will make the Indigenous knowledge of the Syilx Okanagan accessible for the first time, and will provide planning and development support within Syilx Okanagan First Nation communities.

Armstrong's appointment brings to five the number of Canada Research Chairs at UBC's Okanagan campus. Others are:

- Philip Ainslie, Canada Research Chair in Cerebrovascular Function in Health and Disease
- Heinz Bauchke, Canada Research Chair in Convex Analysis and Optimization
- Susan Murch, Canada Research Chair in Natural Products Chemistry
- Barbara Pesut, Canada Research Chair in Health, Ethics and Diversity

Minister of State (Science and Technology) Gary Goodyear made the announcement of new Canada Research Chair appointments today while speaking at Western University in London, ON.

"Our government is committed to attracting and retaining the world's best and brightest researchers, supporting innovation, creating jobs, and strengthening our economy," said Goodyear. "By investing in programs such as the Canada Research Chairs, we are fostering cutting-edge research and the generation of new innovations for the marketplace, which will benefit Canadians."

The Canada Research Chairs program has positioned Canada as an international leader and destination of choice in research and development. In total, the Government of Canada will provide \$90.6 million in support to 120 newly awarded and renewed Canada Research Chairs. The research, which will be conducted at 39 Canadian institutions, has potential benefits for Canadians and their families, businesses, practitioners and policy-makers. Of this total, 19 researchers have been recruited from abroad, including 10 Canadians returning to work in their home country—demonstrating the success of the program in attracting and supporting research excellence in Canada.

The Canada Research Chairs program invests approximately \$300 million per year toward research in engineering and the natural sciences, health sciences, humanities and social sciences.