

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 9, 2019

CAFA DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC AWARDS, 2019

(EDMONTON) – The Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA), the provincial organization representing academic staff associations at the University of Alberta, the University of Lethbridge, Mount Royal University, Grant MacEwan University and Athabasca University, is pleased to announce the recipients of the CAFA Distinguished Academic Awards for 2019.

The CAFA Distinguished Academic Awards recognize academic staff members at Alberta’s research and undergraduate universities, who through their research and/or other scholarly, creative or professional activities have made an outstanding contribution to the wider community beyond the university.

The recipient of the **2019 CAFA Distinguished Academic Award** is **Dr. Geoffrey Messier**, Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Calgary, in recognition of both his influential research in the field of wireless and digital communication network and his committed to humanitarian contribution to serve people living with homelessness in Calgary and Alberta more broadly.

Dr. Tracy Bear, Assistant Professor in the Department of Native Studies, University of Alberta, has been chosen to receive the **2019 CAFA Distinguished Academic Early Career Award** for her innovative, interdisciplinary research and artistic practices in the fields of decolonized sexuality and indigenous feminism.

“The annual CAFA Distinguished Academic Awards for over ten years have celebrated the contributions of our members to the community beyond the academy through their research, scholarly and creative pursuits” notes Dr. Heather Bruce, President of CAFA. “On behalf of CAFA, I extend warmest congratulations to Dr. Geoffrey Messier and Dr. Tracy Bear, deserving recipients of our awards for 2019.”

The 2019 CAFA Distinguished Academic Awards will be presented at a banquet at the Edmonton Convention Centre in Edmonton, on **Thursday, September 12, 2019**.

For further information on the work of this year’s Award recipients, please see the attached backgrounders.

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<https://cafa-ab.ca/>

BACKGROUND
CAFA DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC EARLY CAREER AWARD 2019
DR. TRACY BEAR

Dr. Tracy Bear, Assistant Professor, Native Studies and Women's & Gender Studies, at the University of Alberta, has been chosen to receive the 2019 CAFA Distinguished Academic Early Career Award. We are pleased to recognize Dr. Bear's outstanding contributions to the wider community beyond the academy through her teaching, scholarship, and artistic practices in order to change the discourse around and empower indigenous women in our communities.

Dr. Bear is a Cree scholar from Montreal Lake First Nation in Northern Saskatchewan. In 2016, at an early stage in her academic career, she obtained her Ph.D. in English and Film Studies at University of Alberta—for which she won the Governor General's Gold Medal—and has taken up a tenure-track position at the Faculty of Native Studies at the same institution. Prior to joining the U of A, Dr. Bear served as Special Advisor to the Provost, at the U of A, and included in her administrative accomplishment were both the development of an Elders Protocol and Guideline, and the repatriation and reburial of 28 Sharphead people's remains.

Dr. Bear is currently the director of the Indigenous Women's Resilience Project in the Faculty of Native Studies at the U of A: a position that is charged with leading the development of a Centre for Indigenous Women's Resilience as well as the development of an Endowed Research Chair in the Centre.

She is also involved with the Research-Creation Laboratory (called RELAB) with her colleagues Kim TallBear and Kirsten Lindquist. This research and performance group has grown out of and will continue to support the indigenous erotic storytelling show, *Tipi Confessions*. This critically acclaimed show brings together emerging indigenous artists with testimonies from the audience to portray a positive and healthy understandings of decolonized sexuality. It is staged three times a year in Edmonton, and has had performances in Toronto, Winnipeg, and New Zealand.

Dr. Bear is also a member of the National Collective of Walking with Our Sisters, an art institute dedicated to remembering and honoring the nearly 2,000 indigenous women, girls, and genderful folk that have gone missing or have been murdered in Canada. This traveling exhibit will have visited more than 30 indigenous communities by the time it closes in 2019. Each community visit involves a complex set of ceremonial protocols and extensive time listening to the voices and stories of local women which Dr. Bear has accomplished with remarkable grace and compassion.

Since 2017, Dr. Bear has initiated and participated in pedagogical projects with incarcerated folk in the Edmonton area. These classes have included a four-week course on Contemporary Indigenous Art (CIA) in the men's gang unit at the Edmonton Remand Centre and a ten-week course on CIA for 35 women at the Edmonton Institution for Women. According to her co-instructor "Tracy's research and professional experience have confirmed the power of art-making and expression for Indigenous people's healing and learning."

BACKGROUNDER
CAFA DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC AWARD 2019
DR. GEOFF MESSIER

Dr. Geoff Messier, Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the Schulich School of Engineering at the University of Calgary has been chosen to receive the 2019 CAFA Distinguished Academic Award. This award acknowledges both his excellent teaching and research contributions to the U of C, and more importantly his humanitarian contributions to multi-agency collaborations that serve people living with homelessness in his community.

Dr. Messier currently holds an NSERC Discovery Grant for *Investigating Wireless Networks for Industrial Applications*, and has held NSERC Discovery or Engage Grants since 2006. Also, in the same period, Dr. Messier has published over 35 peer-reviewed articles, presented roughly 50 refereed presentations, and holds two patents. His commitment to teaching is also outstanding, and he has won 11 undergraduate and graduate teaching awards in the Schulich School of Engineering and in his department. These academic accomplishments, alone, place him as a notable scholar in his field and at his institution.

On top of his academic contributions, Dr. Messier has gone far beyond any professional commitment to provide service to the large community of Calgary and the province of Alberta. Since 2017, Dr. Messier has volunteered with multi-agency collaborations that serve people living with homelessness in his community. His contributions are directly connected to the skills he crafted and honed in the academy: engineering expertise, project management experience, grant writing, and leadership skills. In this way, Dr. Messier is an exemplar of how scholars can use their academic skills outside the ivory tower and in their community.

Dr. Messier's work first started with Dr. Simon Colgan and Dr. Bonnie Larson who lead the CAMPP and StreetCCRED initiatives which are aimed at improving healthcare for people on the street. When most of us get out of the hospital, we can go home to recuperate but those living with homelessness cannot. Dr. Messier provided organizational and project management guidance for the creation of a facility housed at the Calgary Drop-In and Rehab Centre that allows people on the street to access homecare services. He worked to broker funding and grants from Alberta Health Services and private donors valued at over \$500,000 per year.

Dr. Messier's work with the Drop-In Centre homecare beds has presented him with opportunities to serve people living with homelessness in other ways. Collaborating with Dr. Monty Ghosh, Dr. Messier has provided engineering expertise to Dr. Ghosh's work tackling the opioid crisis. This work includes electronic overdose detection technology and the creation of a virtual supervised consumption project. This project hopes to reach individuals who would not engage with addiction and harm reduction services due to stigma, geographical distance, and fear of social isolation. Dr. Messier has also recently started data science research aimed to help improve client services at the Drop-In Centre.