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# First Major Conference at New Algoma University

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On June 18th to 20th, 2008, Ontario's newest University will host its first national academic conference in partnership with the Canadian Indigenous/Native Studies Association (CINSA), and law firms Thomson Rogers and Olthuis, Kleer, Townshend.

"It is fitting that Algoma University's first academic conference as an independent university involves the promotion of Indigenous Scholarship," remarked

Conference Chair, Professor Sara Mainville who is a former First Nations' lawyer and policy advisor. "It is especially fitting after the June 11th apology of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, that we host one of the first public engagements of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission."

Professor Mainville and Professor Harvey Briggs will be busy supporting the Conference and its participants, who are largely undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students from native studies departments across Canada. Professor Harvey Briggs has been recently hired by Algoma University to teach in their popular sociology department. Professor Mainville has been teaching both law and politics using her First Nation experience in both legal and political contexts for the past year at Algoma University.

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Both feel that their First Nation backgrounds help to support Indigenous scholars as they enter academic life. "This is truly reconciliation," states Mainville, "We teach both Anishinaabe and non-Anishinaabe students at the former Shingwauk Residential school site. We respect the former students by ensuring that we are attempting to meet Shingwauk's vision of equipping students to have respectful relations with one another, for the sustainability of both vibrant communities."

The new appointments are comfortable within their respective departments and the faculty as a whole. "In the Algoma University Act, which is awaiting royal assent, the special mission is towards liberal arts and science as well as to Aboriginal education," says Dr. Gayle Broad, whose Community Economic and Social Development Program hosts the CINSA Conference. "The holistic worldview of Anishinaabe peoples encourages an interdisciplinary approach to study and research, and that approach is reflected in the Conference agenda, as well as in a number of our programs here at Algoma University".

The Conference Planning Committee is particularly excited about the Conference's Dinner program on June 19th which is hosted by Garden River First Nation, a partner in Algoma University and the Shingwauk Education Trust, as well as a leader in the Shingwauk Kinooaage Gamig initiative. At the Dinner, the keynote address will be made by newly appointed Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner, Claudette Dumont-Smith. Of First Nations background herself, as a health educator and prolific academic writer and presenter, Ms. Dumont-Smith's involvement is symbolic of the internal reconciliation happening in the Sault Ste. Marie area between the First Nations, residents of Sault Ste. Marie, and the present University students of both Anishinaabe and non-Anishinaabe descent.

"We have the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association figuring largely in our conference program," says Professor Mainville proudly. "As a child of Residential School Survivors myself, I am extremely fortunate to have their guidance and strength directing almost everything we attempt to do for Anishinaabe education within this historic site. We hope that this keynote will begin a path of empowerment and healing for former students of Shingwauk Indian Residential School and future students of Shingwauk Kinooaage Gamig."

Shingwauk Kinooaage Gamig will be making a welcoming address and presentation at the CINSA Conference on its first day. This "Centre of Excellence for Anishinaabe education" is emblematic of the start of a long journey of reconciliation for the Anishinaabe peoples of the Great Lakes.

"While we walk together on this journey, we hope that Sault Ste. Marie and Ontario recognize how privileged they are to have such an institution in their midst," advises Mainville, "The CINSA Conference is the bell tolling on past educational practices that disrespected Anishinaabe identity, this Conference is clearly a celebration of all we have to offer as Indigenous peoples."

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