

Champion of Engineering Education Award

Randy Herrmann, P.Eng. FEC



Randy Herrmann, P.Eng. FEC, graduated from the University of Manitoba with a degree in Geological Engineering in 1988. After graduation, Randy worked for seven years with a consulting engineering firm in Peterborough, Ontario. Committed to raising the profile of professional engineering among Indigenous people, Randy was hired as the Director of the Faculty of Engineering's Access Program (ENGAP) in 1998.

For the past 30 years ENGAP has provided a pathway for Indigenous peoples to access engineering education. But unlike many programs of this type, it is not focused solely on "access". The real achievement is to ensure that those admitted are given the tools and support to successfully complete the program. Engineering is generally considered to be one of the most demanding programs at any university. Therefore, ensuring that Indigenous peoples have access to those tools and support are all the more critical.

Almost 20 years ago, ENGAP, although relatively successful, was still a small program with a very limited number of graduates. Randy brought a number of particular skills to the position of Director: he was Metis, so he shared the culture of the program; he was a professional engineer, so he shared the culture of the profession; he was a University of Manitoba graduate so he shared the culture of the Faculty; and he was relatively young, so he could identify with his students.

Put very simply, Randy and his staff have taken the ENGAP program and made it the most successful access program for Indigenous peoples who want to pursue an engineering career. The level of commitment that Randy brings to his job is astounding. This year the program celebrates its 30th anniversary and over 100 graduates.

Randy actively pursues many projects to advance the educational opportunities for Indigenous students, including raising funds to purchase ten-thousand activity books on engineering that have been distributed to communities throughout Manitoba, chairing the Indigenous Professionals Initiative Committee (IPIC) and leading the organizational committee for the 2008 Dreamcatching Conference in Winnipeg. Randy is particularly proud of his involvement with Science in a Crate – a program which takes boxes of teaching materials to Indigenous communities. The program helps teachers show that science is an integral part of Indigenous life. Most recently Randy was instrumental in the creation of "The Birch Bark Canoe – Navigating a New World" a 21st century curriculum connection and video resource for Manitoba Teachers of Grades 5-9. This documentary and teachers' curriculum guide celebrates First Nations ingenuity and technology as demonstrated by the design and achievement of the birch bark canoe.

For his passionate dedication to helping Indigenous students achieve their dreams of a higher education, and his tireless promotion of the engineering profession, the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Manitoba, together with the Association, is pleased to award the 2015 Champion of Engineering Education Award to Mr. Randy Herrmann, P.Eng. FEC.