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MEDIA RELEASE

Media Opportunity: SFU hosts internship addressing Indigenous health equality gap-July 31

Participants to practice DNA extraction on clam garden samples during inaugural Genomics Canada summer internship at SFU

July 30, 2018

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Genomics is rapidly integrating into the Canadian health-care system, leading to innovations in targeted treatments for cancer, creating personalized drug regimens, and uncovering diagnoses for rare diseases that were previously genetic mysteries. However, the lack of diversity in existing genomic data limits the ability of ethnic minorities, including Indigenous Canadians, to take advantage of these scientific advances.

To help close the health equality gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians, SFU is hosting the **Summer Internship for Indigenous Peoples in Genomics Canada** (SING Canada).

The initiative aims to help the next generation of Indigenous scientists understand how genomics can help them successfully tackle problems relating to health, environment and politics in their communities.

The 20 participants, from across North America, will learn about the social implications of genomics as well as Indigenous approaches to relational health.

The inaugural week-long, all-expenses paid program runs from July 29 – August 4 at SFU's Burnaby campus.

Participants will also learn about genomic methodologies and techniques used in conservation genomics, restoration and governance, as well as using clam populations from B.C. as a model system.

Other topics will include B.C.'s ongoing colonial politics, including the tensions between environmentalism and resource management, pipelines and dams, and Indigenous knowledge, governance, and sovereignty.

VISUALS: students will learn how to extract and analyze DNA in a hands-on workshop where they will practice with clams taken from a traditional Indigenous clam garden in B.C.

WHEN: 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

WHERE: **SFU Burnaby Campus** (Blusson Hall Wet Lab BLU 9650)

There will be an opportunity for media to interview students participating in the program as well as a few of the organizers of SING Canada, including SFU genomics professor Felix Breden, University of Alberta professor Kim TallBear and SFU director of the Indigenous Student Centre Marcia Guno.

Fast Facts:

- According to Statistics Canada, Canada is more diverse now than ever. Today, nearly a quarter of all Canadians belong to a "visible minority" group, while 1.7 million Canadians have identified as Indigenous.

- SING, an Indigenous-led initiative, has been held for the past seven years in the U.S. and is being offered for the first time in Canada.
- In 2016, SFU President Andrew Petter established the Simon Fraser University Aboriginal Reconciliation Council (SFU-ARC) to facilitate and support broad discussions about how the university could address the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission specific to post-secondary education.
- SFU has committed \$9 million in University funding to advance reconciliation projects across the SFU community over the next four years.
- The university has a long history of providing academic and support programs to Aboriginal students, among them: SFU's Indigenous Student Centre, Aboriginal Co-op, an Executive MBA program in Indigenous business and leadership, an academic summer camp for Indigenous students, Math Catcher, Indigenous content in more than 150 courses, and much more.

ABOUT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY:

As Canada's engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded more than 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is Canada's leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia's three largest cities – Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey – SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 145,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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