



News Brief celebrates the many achievements of alumni, students and faculty from the Faculty of Health Disciplines. Share your story! Please [send a note to fhdnews@athabascau.ca](mailto:fhdnews@athabascau.ca).



Treasuring academic achievement with gold, silver

For the second year in a row, the Governor General's Academic Medals — awarded to the top graduate (Gold Medal) and undergraduate (Silver Medal) graduates at each of Canada's universities — have gone to a couple of outstanding Faculty of Health Disciplines grads!

[Read more](#)



Improving the lives of nursing home residents with dementia

People who can't tell caregivers where or how much they hurt often suffer needlessly. Research led by Dr. Jennifer Knopp-Sihota aims to develop a groundbreaking new tool to help assess the severity of pain — and reduce that pain through better management.

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There is no happier day in the AU calendar than Convocation. On Friday, June 9, 2017, the campus was awash in a sea of smiles, tears, hugs, handshakes — and much-deserved pride. Congratulations, grads! You are truly the "class" of 2017. We hope AU will continue to be part of your academic journeys.

[Read more](#)



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Last year, Mariko Sakamoto (Master of Nursing '16) received the top prize from the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology for her master's thesis. This year, the Faculty of Health Disciplines doubled down: Karen Lara (Master of Counselling '17) took home the IIQM top honour.

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Our teachers are tops

Bring together great instructors and great students, and you have the recipe for great success. Faculty of Health Disciplines faculty go the extra mile to ensure students have outstanding learning experiences. Recent award-winners epitomize that spirit and commitment.

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Coming to a conference near you

Advancing knowledge and practice doesn't happen only through courses and research. Taking part in conferences is a prime way for faculty, alumni and students to help improve health and well-being. AU will be represented at some high-profile events. Drop by and say "hi" if you'll be attending.

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Active Living Corner: Tough mudders rise (wallow?) to the challenge

Deb Fraser and Bill Diehl-Jones (both Nursing professors in the Faculty of Health Disciplines) have previously run half and full marathons. For a change of pace, they recently participated in the Manitoba Mud Run — and, as Bill writes, lived to tell the tale.

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Alumni, students and faculty continue to inspire

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Share your news! Submit a story! Let us know what you want to read about! **Drop us a line** and help grow and strengthen the Faculty of Health Disciplines community. Together, we'll have the conversations that matter to you.

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Christine Philbrick (Post-RN BN '17) and **Adrijana D'Silva** (Master of Health Studies '17) are in a class by themselves. Based on academic achievement, they're the top achievers among AU's 40,000 students!

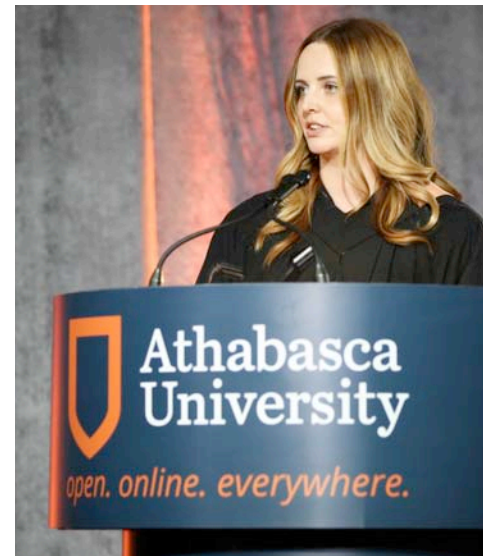
Getting the news was "surreal," according to D'Silva. "Even when I received the award at Convocation, it took a while to sink in." Philbrick describes being "absolutely shocked" when the Registrar called to say she'd won, and didn't realize the magnitude of what she'd done until she saw her daughters' pride and excitement.

"I'm a single mom and worked at a full-time job and three part-time jobs while completing my degree," Philbrick explains. "Going back to school after being out for 25 years is tough, but AU really fit." A travel bursary enabled her and her daughters to attend Convocation on June 9, 2017. "The certificate, the medal, the letter from the Governor General — all even more special because it's Canada's 150th year — this will be a family heirloom."

For D'Silva, sharing her personal story at Convocation was an honour. "It's one thing to get an award, but a complete privilege to be able to speak to others. It's just as great as the award," she says. "To be honest, Convocation was absolutely one of the best times of my life."



Christine Philbrick's daughters help celebrate mom's achievement



Adrijana D'Silva shares her story

Both Philbrick and D'Silva say AU was a springboard to further studies. While Philbrick, who works in Student Health Services at Niagara College in Ontario, has started an online program in mental health and addictions, D'Silva is building on her master's research and is enrolled in PhD studies at the University of Calgary.

"People say I've grown exponentially over the past three years, as a person and a professional," D'Silva says. "Everything has come together nicely to prepare me for the next step. If I didn't believe I could do it, I wouldn't pursue it. But thanks to AU, I'm confident I can."

Seeking better pain assessment to improve the lives of nursing home residents with dementia

People who can't tell caregivers where or how much they hurt often suffer needlessly. Research led by Dr. Jennifer Knopp-Sihota aims to develop a groundbreaking new tool to help assess the severity of pain — and reduce that pain through better management.

A societal “tsunami” is on the way. Thanks to high number of aging baby boomers and longer lifespans, a rapid rise in the number people living with Alzheimer’s disease and other related dementias is expected.

People living with dementia also often have complex and chronic health issues — stroke, depression, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, other medical conditions — all of which can cause pain. How



Shutterstock photo

do you ease that pain? How do you know what pain someone feels, especially when memory, thinking, orientation, comprehension and verbal communication is impaired?

Dr. Jennifer Knopp-Sihota, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Health Disciplines, is the primary investigator on a three-year research project to better understand how nursing home residents communicate their pain. The goal is to develop a new tool to assess and manage pain — and reduce suffering.

“It’s estimated that 80% of older adults with dementia are also experiencing pain,” Dr. Knopp-Sihota says. “This can be devastating to their overall quality of life and mental health, and it’s often associated with a quicker progression of cognitive and functional decline.”

Funded in part by the Alzheimer Society of Canada, the project involves a comprehensive review of existing data gathered through the Resident Assessment Instrument (RAI), which most of Canada’s nursing homes use to monitor the quality of residents’ care. While the tool is effective at identifying pain for people without dementia, its usefulness has not been validated for people with dementia.

“We’re doing a comprehensive review of existing RAI data sets and their hundreds of behaviour indicators in order to identify RAI items that can be used as markers for pain,” Dr. Knopp-Sihota explains. “Once these markers are identified, an expert panel will develop a focused list of pain markers and an associated scale, which will link behaviours already in the RAI to pain severity.”

— continued —

Once that is complete, the final and most crucial part of the project will be a clinical trial. Both the RAI and the “gold standard” Pain Assessment Checklist for Seniors with Limited Ability to Communicate (which is currently in use) will be administered to as many as 100 nursing home residents in Alberta and Ontario in order to validate the effectiveness of Knopp-Sihota’s new scale at measuring pain.

“This could be a breakthrough in pain management in nursing homes,” Dr. Knopp-Sihota says, explaining that the trial will inform the development and implementation of the new intervention tool.

It is also expected to spearhead workshops to be developed to further educate caregivers on managing pain in nursing home residents with dementia.

“Nursing homes could potentially use existing RAI data to identify residents whose pain could be managed better, without having to conduct other assessments. It could improve care for residents and have a positive impact on caregiver stress and workloads.

“For residents, this will mean less distress,” Dr. Knopp-Sihota says. “We also expect that fewer people will be prescribed medications they don’t need, because the root causes of pain will be treated, instead of the symptoms.

“This project has the potential to significantly improve the quality of life of nursing home residents with dementia — and give greater peace of mind to families who worry about the care of their loved ones.”

‘This can significantly improve the quality of life of nursing home residents with dementia — and give greater peace of mind to families who worry about the care of their loved ones.’

Dr. Jennifer Knopp-Sihota

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Two master's theses. Two top prizes. Two years in a row. The International Institute for Qualitative Methodology advances qualitative research methods across disciplines, recognizing work that expands and enhances knowledge — and for the past two years, has cast the spotlight on AU students.

Seeing dementia from a younger person's perspective

Long-time nurse **Mariko Sakamoto** (Master of Nursing '16) wanted to know how younger people with dementia felt about having an illness usually



associated with the elderly. She believed this knowledge would inform nursing practice. Expecting young people to see having the illness differently, "I learned their feelings are aligned with what a person of any age might experience,"

she says. "There was more stigma, however, and that reinforced that it can be more difficult for a young person to have dementia."

"Perceptions of Personhood and the Early Onset Dementia Experience" was the title of Sakamoto's award-winning thesis and the basis for an article in the May 2017 issue of the *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*.

Sakamoto is currently working on her PhD at the University of British Columbia. "It was a delightful surprise to receive the award. I realized how much I enjoy doing research and also being in 'nurse mode.' I knew I wanted to do more."

Validating Indigenous researchers and methodology

For **Karen Lara** (Master of Counselling '17), the IIQM award affirms the value of Indigenous approaches to research, which she describes as "of a way of being. It's about ethics, relationships and who you are in the world." Rather than being focused on Indigenous communities and Elders, Lara worked with them on a project centred on Indigenous justice and First Nations Courts. The resulting research isn't hers, but theirs.

"The value in this methodology is translating research into practice, into direct and meaningful benefit to people and the work of counsellors and professionals in the justice system," she says. "Participants shared in the project, are connected to it, and are empowered to take it forward."



Believing "research is at its best when it has a ripple effect," she is proud their work resulted in a **video accessible throughout B.C.'s criminal justice system**. Lara is currently a clinical supervisor at an Aboriginal health agency near Kamloops.

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Jennifer Jackson (Master of Nursing '16) is passionate about empowering nurses to excel and is focused on researching organizational resilience. Receiving AU's Rising Star Award recognizes what she has achieved already — and the positive difference she's destined to make in the future.

The talents and achievements of Faculty of Health Disciplines alumni and students continue to inspire — and to reflect the quality of teaching and learning at AU. The Faculty couldn't be more proud of the latest award recipient, Jennifer Jackson, who received AU's Rising Star Alumni Award at a reception in Olds, Alta., on Thursday, Aug. 24, 2017. Meet Jennifer below and read more on the [AU news website](#).

Jennifer Jackson (Master of Nursing '16) celebrated finishing her degree by feasting with her family on their Alberta farm, and then hopping on a plane to England to start her PhD at King's University College in London. She's been there ever since, researching organizational resilience in nursing with the hopes of empowering and educating future nurses to excel in their profession.

Jackson's ability to see health systems from a broad vantage point has been honed through experiences living across Canada, enabling her to reflect on how the country's natural landscapes impact communities. From the fisheries along the East Coast to the farms in the West, "by living in these places, I've had opportunities to get a better understanding of how land and related industry influences the way communities are formed," she says.



Jackson went to London armed with extensive nursing knowledge and confidence built on her Canadian achievements — from creating a hospital social media campaign, to spreading best-practice awareness in diabetes management, to competing in the Chicago Marathon, to raising substantial funds for the Canadian Lung Association.

The resiliency she studied in critical care nursing helped her to become the Rising Star she is today. Every time she faces a crisis or challenge, she has been able to pause, reflect on the bigger picture and come up with answers, new ways of examining the situation, the world and her place in it — and solutions.

BREAKING NEWS →

Rhonda Lee Crew (Master of Nursing '16) will receive AU's 2017 Distinguished Alumni Award. Watch for more in the Winter 2018 newsletter!

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Our teachers are tops

Bring together great instructors and great students, and you have the recipe for great success. Faculty of Health Disciplines faculty go the extra mile to ensure students have outstanding learning experiences. Recent award-winners epitomize that spirit and commitment.

Five members of the Faculty of Health Disciplines received local and national honours recently, reflecting the difference they make at home and across the country, to individual students and health care as a whole.



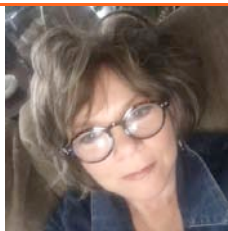
2017 AU Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Supervision: Dr. Jeff Vallance

The AEGSS recognizes excellence in advising, monitoring and mentoring graduate students engaged in project, theses or dissertation work. Jeff was honoured for his superior supervisory and mentoring abilities to interest, stimulate and excite students to motivate them to achieve high standards.



2017 AU Craig Cunningham Memorial Award for Teaching Excellence: Adrienne Weare

The CCMATE, named in memory of a respected AU faculty member, recognizes excellence in teaching. Adrienne was honoured for her consistent service, excellence in teaching, presentations and innovation in subject matter delivery.



2017 AU President's Award for Tutoring/Mentoring Excellence: Yvonne Moore

The PATME recognizes excellence in instruction to students by AU Tutors. Yvonne was honoured for her ongoing commitment to student teaching and mentoring.

150 NURSES FOR CANADA

The Canadian Nurses Association celebrated Canada's 150th birthday by recognizing the contributions of 150 nursing professionals across the country.

In Alberta, Dr. Margaret Edwards

was recognized for her key contributions



to establishing what are regarded as Canada's leading online nursing programs, and her extensive work promoting nursing standards.

In Manitoba, Dr. Caroline

Park was recognized for her life's work combining teaching,



research administration and community service.

Read more on the [CNA website](#) and see the next issue of News Brief for the names of AU grads and students who are on the list.

Coming to a conference near you

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World Conference on Online Learning **Toronto, Oct. 16–19, 2017**

Teaching in A Digital Age: Re-Thinking Teaching & Learning is the theme of this year's event, which is a prime opportunity to showcase AU's leadership in online learning. The Faculty of Health Disciplines will be well represented among the presenters' ranks:

- Lynn Corcoran, Annette Lane, Adrienne Weare and Beth Perry: *Online Teaching and Learning for Clinical Practice: Using Simulation in a Mental Health Nursing Course*
- Margaret Edwards and Beth Perry: *Authenticity and Engagement in Online Learning Achieved Through Thoughtful Feedback Presented Intentionally*
- Shawn Fraser, Terra Murray, Steve Johnson and Jeff Vallance: *A Web 2.0-Based Interprofessional Master of Health Studies in Health Promotion Focus*
- Kimberley Lamarche: *Socialized Learning - Social Media Engagement for Graduate Students*
- Kimberley Lamarche, Caroline Park, Shawn Fraser, Susan MacKenzie: *Normalizing Mobile Learning through Evidence-based Strategies*
- Beth Perry and Margaret Edwards: *The Importance of Teacher Presence in Creating an Invitational Educational Environment*
- Kristin Petrovic, Rose Schroeder, Jacqueline Mann, Annette Lane and Adrienne Weare: *Engaging Post-Licensure Nurses in Distance Education: Strategies and Theoretical Underpinnings for Success*
- Gwen Rempel, Beth Perry, Tatiana Penconek, and Shawn Fraser: *From "box tops" to the "big leagues": Developing a successful thesis program in an online environment*



American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy **Atlanta, Ga., Oct. 5–8, 2017**

Jeff Chang will present "High Conflict Divorce and Parenting: Current Interventions" at the full-day pre-conference institute (Oct. 5) and "Supervising Therapists Working with Families in High Conflict Divorce: Key Issues" at a workshop (Oct. 7).

WNRCASN2018

*Reimagining Nursing Education:
Innovations for the Future*
Calgary, Feb. 21–23, 2018

Athabasca University is co-hosting, along with the University of Calgary and Mount Royal University.



7th International Nurse Education Conference **Banff, May 6–9, 2018**

Athabasca University is supporting this conference, which focuses on research, scholarship and evaluation to ensure nursing leadership in education, practice and healthcare.

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ACTIVE LIVING CORNER

Tough mudders rise (wallow?) to the challenge

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The physical and mental health benefits of running are widely appreciated, and in North America millions of people 'lace-up' to participate in a variety of running events. Deb and I (both members of the Faculty of Health Disciplines) have run several half and full marathons, where the terrain has varied from flat to hilly, including the infamous Heartbreak Hill of the Boston Marathon. However, all of these were on *terra firma*, and nothing had quite prepared us for the 5th Annual Manitoba Mud Run in Dauphin, Man., on Aug. 12, 2017.

Spartan races, tough mudders, electric donkeys and mud runs are all examples of a growing trend: the adventure race. If you are looking for something different and want to push yourself physically and mentally, one of these events might be for you.

As you might expect, the primary focus of a mud run is ... mud. Lots and lots of mud. And more mud. From running through creek beds, doing the army crawl through mud-filled dugouts, to scrambling through culverts filled with primordial ooze, participation guarantees that mud will literally permeate every pore and every article of clothing (note to self: wear nothing you ever want to wear again).



(L–R) Deb Fraser, Bill Diehl-Jones and their daughter wear mud and medals after the Mud Run

Perhaps, for some of us, this speaks to our inner child; for others, it is perhaps the novelty and/or bragging rights. In addition to mud, one is treated to other physically and mentally challenging tests, which also included pulling tombstones up a hill, climbing over Everest-esque hay stacks, wading through mud-filled ditches, swimming submerged through ice water (this serves only to redistribute mud) and scrambling over, under and through a variety of sadist-inspired obstacles.

Two hours, 10 kilometres and 24 obstacles later, we slithered our way to the finish line. The only casualties were bruised knees and egos, as well as sundry scrapes and abrasions. The outcomes? Finisher-medal bling and muddy grins all around (sore muscles come as a value-added reward the following day). So what is the motivation to do an adventure race? The reasons can be intrinsic or extrinsic, and the type of race hardly matters. At the end of the day, it is about combining physical activity and fun.

Alumni, students and faculty continue to inspire

Do you have a new job? A project that would be interesting to others in the profession? Reason to celebrate? A recent publication or presentation? Share it with the Faculty of Health Disciplines community by sending an e-mail to fhdnews@athabascau.ca.

Jennifer Beresnak
*MRC/AU BN and
MN alumna*

... is a clinical nurse educator with Alberta Health Services in Calgary, in the area of Women's Health. She's always looking for new, more-engaging ways to teach or review information with staff for the annual RN education day. Given the wide popularity of escape rooms (where people solve puzzles or follow clues to "escape" from a "locked" room), she and her team saw the format's potential for team-building and learning — and The Escape Womb was born. "This was a labour of love from the get-go," she says. "It took time to think of different clues to find, puzzles/riddles to solve and hiding places for important objects like keys that would open a box that would hold the next important clue, but still keep the activity connected the learning that needed to take place." Feedback confirmed the game's effectiveness, and the 16% "escape rate" proved it was challenging. How does she build on this success? Watch for Amazing Race: OB Edition.



Kathryn Borowitz
MN student

... took a moment to share a few thoughts: "Truly, one of the most valuable things that I am gleaning from this Master's degree as a whole is the ability to imagine so many new and exciting possibilities for my future nursing practice. I never would have imagined a professional practice doing (actual) research and writing journal articles or developing proposals for implementing health programs in my community. Regardless of whether I will choose to participate in these ventures in the future, I now know that I am CAPABLE of them. It is freeing and exciting, though difficult to stop and appreciate in the thick of a work-intensive semester. It is no wonder that critical reflection plays such an important part in our nursing careers!"

Dana Browne
MN student

... received a CIHR Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's Award, one of only 400 across Canada. Her research is titled "Social Norm-Based Intervention to Decrease Sedentary Behaviour in the Workplace."

Adrijana D'Silva
MHS alumna

... received the Governor General's Academic Medal – Gold at Convocation, given to the graduate student with the highest grades at AU ([read more about Adrijana](#) in this issue of *News Brief*). The multiple scholarship and bursary award winner has two manuscripts from her thesis — which objectively assessed activity and sedentary time among lung cancer survivors, the first study of its kind in this challenging population — under review for publication, and has presented her work at prestigious conferences such as the World Congress on Lung Cancer (December 2016). She's currently working on her PhD at the University of Calgary.

Margaret Edwards
*Dean, Faculty of Health
Disciplines*

... was invited by Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI), the country's quality assurance regulator, to be the external reviewer for the first proposed blended nursing program in Ireland. This was an excellent opportunity to participate in a different review process and to gain insights into how other institutions are moving forward with online learning.



Traci Fisher-Zaiser
Post-RN BN alumna

... celebrated with fellow Class of 2017 graduates at Convocation on June 9, 2017, and is now working as a Manager of Community Services. She [shares a few words](#) about her AU experience in this issue of *News Brief*.

Melanie Fuller
MC student

... welcomed a new daughter, Eva, in March. She's the representative for the Faculty of Health Disciplines on the AU Graduate Students' Association and AU's representative for the Canadian Psychological Association (where she's also the webmaster for the Counselling Psychology section of the CPA website). She's on hiatus from her studies and from writing a celluloid psychology column for *The Voice*, planning to return to all in January 2018.

Patrice Gordon
MN:NP alumna

... continues to inspire and to make a positive difference in the world, including spending time in Kandahar, Sierra Leone and Nepal — and most recently during the Chilcotin wildfire in B.C. — where her nursing skills and compassion improved countless people's lives. Never one to shy away from a challenge, she also applied to become a Canadian astronaut! [Read more](#) of Patrice's already-amazing story in a feature article in the *Castlegar News*, and check out what it was like to work on the [front lines of the Ebola epidemic](#) in the Spring 2015 issue of *News Brief*.

Carol Huynh
MC alumna



... was inducted into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in April 2017. Carol won the country's first-ever gold medal in women's wrestling at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing and a bronze four years later in London. She is an assistant coach for the University of Calgary Dinos Wrestling Club, Next Generation coach at the Canadian Sport Institute and President of the United World Wrestling Athletes Commission. She looks back on her career and talks about [receiving this honour](#) in a *Calgary Herald* article.

Dongwon Kim
Post-LPN BN alumnus

... received the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) Peter MacKinnon Student Services Award in November 2016, recognizing Dongwon's community leadership and service contributions. He lives in Edmonton where he volunteers with many festivals and cultural events, and also helps a local Korean traditional percussion group grow and discover their potential.

Dr. Annette Lane
Associate Professor

... served as a panel member on the 4th Annual Biennial Homelessness Research Symposium hosted by the Calgary Homeless Foundation, April 18–20, 2017. She spoke on "Traumatic Stress and Organizational Dynamics among Homeless Sector Workers."

Michelle Lane-Barmapov
MHS alumna

... tied for first place for the 2017 Outstanding Montessori Master's Thesis Award. She was also one of the keynote and lecture speakers at the Montessori Australia Early Childhood Conference in March, and a keynote speaker at the Montessori Asia Conference in Hong Kong. You can [read and download her thesis](#), "Montessori and autism: An interpretive description study" in AU's Digital Thesis Room.

Karen Lara
MC alumna

... received the prestigious IIQM (International Institute for Qualitative Methodology) Thesis Award for her master's thesis, "Revitalizing Roles: The Inclusion of Indigenous Elders in Contemporary Judicial Contexts" — the second year in a row that a master's student from the Faculty of Health Disciplines has won the award! [Read more](#) in this issue of *News Brief*.

Amy-Caroline McClocklin
Post-LPN BN alumna and MN:Gen student

... says: "Thank you to friends, family and faculty (you know who you are!) for the mentoring, belief and support with educational and nursing endeavours. I would not be where I am today, without you." She currently works full-time in Rural Surgery/Pediatrics at Dauphin Regional Health Centre in Dauphin, Man., and casually at Extendicare-Hillcrest Place in Brandon., Man. Come October, she begins a new journey in Emergency Nursing.

Dr. Sharon Moore
Professor

... was inducted into the Canadore College Alumni Hall of Fame in North Bay, Ont., in June, recognizing the wide impact of her research, teaching, publications and presentations focusing on hope, aging and distance education teaching and learning. She celebrated alongside AU alumna Kelly Crawford, who graduated from the MAIS program. Sharon has also been nominated for the Ontario Premier's Awards in the Health Sciences category; recipients will be announced in November.



Christine Philbrick
Post-RN BN

... received the Governor General's Academic Medal – Silver at Convocation, recognizing her achievement as the top undergraduate student at Athabasca University. [Meet Christine](#) in this issue of *News Brief*.

Jananee Rasiah
Program Director, BN

... received the 2017 ARNET Academic Scholarship for academic and professional achievement and pursuits. The value of the award was matched by the University of Alberta Faculty of Nursing. Jananee received her award at the CARNA banquet in Calgary on May 18.

Brittney Tradewell
MN:NP alumna

... joined the team at Alberta Health Services' Family Care Centre in Slave Lake, Alta., in January. Brittney says it was busy blending her studies with family life — she and her husband, Scott, have a 23-month-old daughter —and completing her clinical hours at FCC was wonderful. "The nurse practitioners and physicians work together really well; it was a very positive learning environment."

