

Media Release

July 28, 2015

Hon. Graydon Nicholas Named to the Endowed Chair in Native Studies

The Hon. Graydon Nicholas has been named to the Endowed Chair in Native Studies at St. Thomas University.

St. Thomas University President and Vice-Chancellor, Dawn Russell, said that over his career, Nicholas has excelled in many different roles—as a lawyer, activist, judge, and advocate for education—and that he will bring tremendous experience and skill to the position.

“Throughout his career and public service, Nicholas has led by example, from one achievement to the next. He has developed very strong relationships with First Nations in the region which will further assist in linking St. Thomas University with those communities. He will also teach a course in Native Studies and continue his work with our Aboriginal Student Services Advisory Committee,” said Russell.

“Our First Nation students have many campus supports including internships, exchanges, workshops and cultural events, as well as an Elder-in-Residence. Having such an accomplished leader as Graydon Nicholas on campus will only add to the positive environment for our students,” she added.

The Endowed Chair in Native Studies was established in 1984 as a result of the university’s long standing interest in the educational needs of Native students and its relationship with First Nations communities. The Chair is supported by an endowment fund created by agreement between the Government of Canada, the Union of New Brunswick Indians and St. Thomas University. Among its goals, the Chair makes resources available to Aboriginal communities and promotes the understanding of Aboriginal issues in society. The Chair also supports the Native Studies Program at the university.

Nicholas is from the Tobique First Nation and earned a Bachelor of Science from St. Francis Xavier University, a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of New Brunswick and a Master’s of Social Work from Wilfrid Laurier University. He served as president of the Union of New Brunswick Indians and had previously held the Chair of Native Studies at St. Thomas University. He was the first Aboriginal person to receive a law degree in the region and the first appointed as a provincial court judge.

He is a distinguished jurist who argued cases at all levels including at the Supreme Court of Canada. With former Supreme Court Justice Gerard V. La Forest, he co-authored the March 1999 *Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Issues* at the request of the New Brunswick Government following the court decision in *R. v. Peter Paul*. He served as New Brunswick’s Lieutenant Governor from 2009-2014.

Numerous awards have recognized his longstanding community service, including the New Brunswick Human Rights Award, the Fredericton YMCA Peace Medallion, the 125 Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada Medal and the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal. Nicholas has received honorary doctorates from St. Francis Xavier, Wilfrid Laurier, Mount Allison and the University of New Brunswick.

St. Thomas University has more than 150 Aboriginal students representing 7% of the student population, the highest rate in the province. Some notable Aboriginal alumni include academic and activist Pam Palmater, lawyer Tom Isaac (Top 100 Aboriginal Business Lawyers Worldwide) and Bernard Francis (2013 Atlantic Aboriginal Business Leadership Award).

- 30 -

Media Contact – Jeffrey Carleton at (506) 452-0522 or carleton@stu.ca.