U of A alumni share their new books, including a history of ink, a graphic novel about two Aboriginal brothers and a reflection on 100 years of ALES.

Compiled by BRIDGET STIRLING

Overcoming Conflicting Loyalties: Intimate Partner Violence, Community Resources and Faith by Irene Savick, ‘71 BA, Michael Ratheny, Nancy Nisson-Clark and Robert Pynn, University of Alberta Press, emailbrutus.ca

To date, little has been published about the place of spirituality in working with survivors of intimate-partner violence. This book examines the intersection of faith and culture in the lives of religious and nonreligious women in the context of the work of FaithLink, a unique community initiative that encourages religious leaders and secular service providers to work together.


Home Again tells the story of the Canadian football league from 1995 to 2014, a period full of ups, downs and surprises. The year 1995 represents the only time in history when a team outside Canada won the Grey Cup. The Grey Cup champion Baltimore Stallions and other American teams were unable to survive past the 1995 season. The Stallions were later resurrected and reincarnated in Montreal as the Alouettes, and in 2014, the Ottawa Redblacks entered the CFL, to make it a nine-team league once again.

Kapital Capital by José M. Alonso-Solís, ‘70 MA, ‘90 PhD, Ediciones Universal

At first glance a historical novel, Kapital Capital soon becomes a political fantasy peopled with great nostalgia for Cuba’s past way of life. Upon the fictional death of Fidel Castro, alumni of a military academy in Havana gather for an unusual high school reunion to celebrate the arrival to the island of a liberator.

Residential Schools: With the Words and Images of Survivors by Larry Loyie with Constance Brisenden, ‘72 MA, and Wayne K. Speers, Indigenous Education Press, firstnationswriter.com

... This full-colour national history features seven chapters, more than 45 survivor memories in support of the text and more than 110 images. The book is the ninth collaboration between the authors. Loyie is a survivor (former student) of St. Bernard Mennonite residential school in Gretna, Alta.

People might assume that science broadcaster and award-winning author Jay Ingram, ’67 BSc, ’89 DSc (Honorary), wrote a book about Alzheimer’s because he has had personal experience with the disease. And he has—three of his family members have died of dementia, but that’s not why the former host of Discovery Channel’s Daily Planet wrote The End of Memory: A Natural History of Aging and Alzheimer’s. “I wanted an anatomy of the disease, a natural history,” he writes in the introduction. “Where does it come from? What causes it? Is it a natural part of aging? How are we trying to combat it?” We asked Ingram what most surprised or intrigued him while he researched and wrote this, his 14th book. Here’s what he said.

We are living a lot longer. In countries such as Sweden and Japan, for every four years that pass, human life expectancy rises by one year. Gains early on were made by reducing infant and child mortality, but these days the years are being added at the other end, with the result that we now have a new category of age: the “oldest old.”

Sister Mary’s Mystery — Sister Mary—a 100-year-old recruit in the Nun Study, a longitudinal study of dementia and old age, involving 678 Catholic nuns—was intellectually sharp just before she died at 101. But the autopsy of her brain revealed a profusion of the hallmarks of Alzheimer’s disease, the depositions discovered by psychiatrist and pathologist Alice S. Alzheimer, called “plaques” and “tangles.” Given that these are diagnostic of Alzheimer’s disease, how did Sister Mary escape their demencing effects? She and others like her remain a mystery.

Personality Puzzles — Long-term studies of large numbers of people have revealed some puzzling associations. For instance, conscientious individuals—who, once having planned a course of action, carry it out dependably and thoroughly—are less likely to develop the disease, whereas those who are cynical are more likely. The puzzle is in linking these characteristics, which seem to be aspects of personality, with the organic changes in the brain that mark the disease.

The Aluminum Theory — In the 1970s and early 80s, scientists believed that aluminum encouraged or even triggered tangles in the Alzheimer’s brain. They could see them in the microscopic; they were convinced that the higher the aluminum level in the drinking water, the higher the rate of dementia. Today the theory has been largely discounted.

Brain Reserves — Some individuals are able to withstand the destructive plaque and tangle growth in their brains, and maintain their cognition intact. They have something vaguely called “brain reserve” or “cognitive reserve.” But what exactly is that? The best guess right now is that this is the cumulative protective effect provided by a mix of influences, such as education, circulatory health, physical fitness and a variety of personal qualities from an individual’s leisure activities to the size of her head. One drawback: those with great brain reserve show few symptoms as the number of plaques and tangles grows, but there is a threshold, and once that’s hit and the reserve exhausted, the brain’s decline is rapid and steep.

This is a book about you, your relationships and where you best fit in life’s journey. Following an exploration of love, the fundamental focus of the book is discovering what work you do best and harmonizing it with how you earn your living. MacMillon endeavours to illustrate how to find one’s true niche. The book promises that