Martha Crago’s PhD launched her academic career, and the people she met through her field research in Northern Quebec left an indelible mark on her. So much so, that in her bequest to McGill, she is creating and naming an undergraduate scholarship for Indigenous students after Vilasi Annahatak, the woman who housed her during that time.

"Without the partnership of the Inuit community – all the way from feeding me to participating in my studies – I would not have the career I’ve had. I owe it backwards."

For Crago, BA’68, MSc’70, PhD’88, her bequest is the chance to create an opportunity for a student who might not otherwise be able to attend McGill.

"I had that privilege, my children had that privilege, so I felt that we should, as a family, help somebody else go to university." As Crago points out, that kind of philanthropy benefits both future students and the University. “We’re getting better quality students because we can offer scholarships.”

Over her four decades at McGill – as a student, a professor, and today as Vice-Principal of Research and Innovation – she has often been inspired by the generosity of other faculty. “I would think, ‘Well, they’re giving. I guess I should grow up some day and do this.’"

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Crago recalls an exciting time when she looks back to the late 1960s, when she was an undergraduate. “We thought we had the power to make change, as 20-year-olds.” She cites changes brought about by young people, especially in her native United States, including the end to the war in Vietnam and desegregation.

"We believed we could do things. I think that stays with you. I still believe that I can make things change. It is fundamental to the sense of who I am."