New research chair will be BC’s eye in the sky

BY VALERIE SHORE

University of Victoria geologist Dr. Renoit Rivard and his team will be keeping a very close watch on BC’s natural resources in the coming years.

As the new BC Leadership Chair in Hyperspectral Remote Sensing, Rivard is investigating new ways to use advanced remote sensing techniques to protect and manage the province’s natural resources. The chair was announced last month and is the first in its field in Canada.

The $2.5-million chair is funded by a $2.25-million investment from the prov-ince’s Leading Edge Endowment Fund and matching funds from UVic and the University of Victoria Foundation.

Rivard is former director of the Centre for Earth Observation Science at the University of Alberta and a leader in interpreting hyperspectral data. The chair is based in UVic’s Department of Geography.

“Dr. Rivard’s appointment builds on our already considerable strengths in hyperspectral remote sensing,” says UVic president David Turpin. “Thanks to the Leading Edge Endowment Fund and the generosity of matching donors, this program will be a focal point for research on the application of hyperspectral imaging technology to BC’s natural resource challenges and opportunities.”

Remote sensing is the science of obtaining information on an object, area or phenomenon from a distance, typically by using aircraft, satellites, buoys or ships.

Hyperspectral imaging collects and measures the visible light reflected from surface features such as rocks, trees and water, as well as the non-visible energy they emit. It provides much more detailed imagery than conventional remote sensing systems.

UVic scientists use ground-based, airborne and satellite-based hyperspectral imaging systems to study the condition of targets such as water surfaces or vegetation canopies. This information is used for various applications, including mapping the health of coastal environments, determining the risk factor for forest fires and the extent of pine beetle infestation.

UVic is the only academic institution in Canada to have an airborne hyperspectral scanner, flown in partnership with Terra Remote Sensing in Sidney, BC. The scanner is being combined with other sensors—thermal scanners, digital cameras and a LiDAR scanning laser system—to address issues in resource exploration and management, and environmental monitoring. The platform is unique in Canada.

Rivard will work with government, industry, and non-government organizations to help build a national hyperspectral remote sensing network in Canada.

Energy-savings program leads to co-op award

Business Co-op Student of the Year

BY DIANNE GEORGE

Heather Weberg has won the 2008 Business Co-op Student of the Year Award for her co-op work with Javel Properties, where she was hired to design and implement an energy awareness program for the company’s more than 60 public and private sector tenants.

Weberg built the program around education and awareness and worked with tenant champions to change behaviours and attitudes about energy consumption.

"The biggest thing I tried to get across was that every little bit makes a big difference," says Weberg. "It all adds up even if just one person turns off the lights when they leave a room."

Weberg’s Tenant Energy Awareness Program focused on energy conservation and included components on transportation demand management, waste reduction and water conservation. It featured email tips, newsletters and posters, sample workstation audits, suggestion boxes, a practical how-to program, and luncheon speakers.

"While it is hard to quantify the exact amount of energy savings as a result of Heather’s program, we estimate it is in the range of three to five per cent of energy consumption in our buildings," says Weberg’s supervisor, Karen Javel (BCom ’03). Through physical upgrades and the energy awareness
BY VALERIE SHORE

The University of Victoria is playing a key role in a new national research network studying Canadian oceans. The NSEQ Canadian Healthy Oceans Network (CHONe), based at Newfoundland’s Memorial University, brings together 65 top marine researchers from 14 universities across Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and several federal laboratories to develop science-based guidelines for the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources in the country’s three oceans.

The goal of the network is to create a marine biodiversity database for the three oceans, help train the next generation of marine scientists, and raise public awareness of the importance of Canada’s oceans.

Several UVic researchers, as well as the YEUS and NEPTUNE Canada ocean observatories, are involved with CHONe, which focuses on three research themes: marine biodiversity, population connectivity, and ecosystem function.

The biodiversity theme is co-led by Dr. Kim Juniper, a UVic marine ecologist and the RC Leadership Chair in Marine Ecosystems and Global Change. “The many projects under this theme are involved in understanding the importance of biodiversity to the stability of Canadian marine ecosystems and how marine biodiversity is being influenced by climate change and resource extraction,” says Juniper.

Other UVic researchers, including marine geologist Dr. Marit Best and marine biologist Dr. Verena Tunncliffe, will target biodiversity hotspots in the Arctic Ocean and coral banks north of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Other researchers are also partnering with Memorial University engineers to develop object recognition software that will automatically count animals such as clams and sea stars in seafloor images.

Under the population connectivity theme, studies include the movement of fish and crab larvae in the Strait of Georgia (with UVic fisheries oceanographer Dr. John Dower), and population dynamics of giant tube worms at the Endeavour hot vents site off BC’s west coast (with Tunncliffe).

The ecosystem function theme will examine how the seafloor performs vital functions to maintain a healthy ocean. Several cross-country collaborative studies will use the YEUS and NEPTUNE Canada ocean observatories as research platforms to conduct experiments.

Dr. Martin Taylor, president of Ocean Networks Canada, sits on the new network’s board of directors and sees CHONe as a leading national research program that will address one of the most important scientific and public policy issues for our oceans—how ocean change is impacting marine biodiversity and the health of our fisheries.

Vancity CEO, senior public servant named Distinguished Alumni

Tamara Vrooman, MA ’94, CEO of Vancity credit union and Bob de Faye, MBA ’85, BC deputy minister of Aboriginal relations and reconciliation, have joined a circle of 49 distinguished alumni graduates who have received Distinguished Alumni Awards from the UVic Alumni Association.

Tamar Vrooman, a history grad, became the leader of Canada's largest credit union in 2007 after a meteoric provincial public service career that culminated with three years as deputy minister of finance. Her nominators cited Vrooman’s “outstanding leadership qualities” and noted that she is “gifted in communicating and planning, on a large scale, she is committed to excellence, and she has been a motivator and mentor to aspiring leaders.”

In supporting the nomination, former BC finance minister Carolle Taylor wrote that Vrooman’s academic background in history provided her with a unique perspective on dealing with issues of policy and financial affairs [she] is able to look beyond the numbers.”

Vrooman maintains regular involvement with UVic alumni, performing her promotion of the Department of History and her service on the advisory committee of the School of Public Administration.

Bob de Faye has become widely respected as a consummate public servant, working quietly and effectively on behalf of BC citizens over the span of his 27 years. He played a critical role in establishing the local government Community Charter, guided the early organizing stages of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, and provided leadership in securing long-term collective agreements with public sector employees.

Philip Halkett, a former deputy minister to the premier, supported de Faye’s nomination and described him as “an excellent example of someone who has taken his university training and applied it in progressively important positions which serve the public and the public interest.”

De Faye became chair of the School of Public Administration’s alumni chapter in 2006 and since then the group has grown to more than 300 members in Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton and Montreal.

Vrooman and de Faye received their awards during a special Alumni Week ceremony on Feb. 3 at the University Club of Victoria. The ceremony also included a UVic Faculty of Business presentation of its Alumni Award of Excellence to Jeff Harris, MBA ’95, a principal of KPMG Silicon Valley Harris developed and leads KPMG’s national systems stabilization and improvement practice and he spearheaded the new UVic Alumni chapter in Northern California. The alumni association has also named two other recipients of the 2008 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Imagine the Possibilities
at one of Canada’s leading schools of theology

Vancouver School of Theology

Study in Sunny Vancouver

Imagine the Possibilities
at one of Canada’s leading schools of theology

Vancouver School of Theology

Open House
March 12–13, 2009
• talk with faculty and students
• attend an introductory class
• learn about the programs
• share meals in community
• join in community worship
Recycling in the caf
Mountains of plastic become cash for kids

BY TARA SARPAE

The English ditty ‘Ten Green Bottles’ means a lot more to Lisa Church than just an old rhyme children still sing. Church, University of Victoria’s retail outlet coordinator, devised an ingenious ‘green’ plan for bottles and other recyclables collected in the University Centre cafeteria, and personally made sure local children could directly benefit from the collection of hundreds of bottles.

Church joined UVic’s Housing, Food and Conference Services department in November 2007 and quickly became tired of seeing a steady stream of bottles from vending machines, and the UVic program had exhausted its bottle depots for cash. Last month, Church approached her managers with a plan, bought a stack of extra trays, and the UVic program has made a big difference to us. "

The number of bottles collected for recycling, Church joined UVic’s Housing, Food and Conference Services department in November 2007 and quickly became tired of seeing a steady stream of bottles from vending machines, and the UVic program had exhausted its bottle depots for cash. Last month, Church approached her managers with a plan, bought a stack of extra trays, and the UVic program has made a big difference to us. "

Now that food services staff are sorting through the food trays, sandwich bread and other compostable materials are staying out of the garbage more; at least five large compost containers are filled daily. Before, the Centre Caf’s dumpster would be completely full by the end of the second day and now it takes a whole week before the garbage reaches the top.

We recycle now right down to the paper wrapper on the straws, adds Church. "

And Church hasn’t stopped coming up with good ideas. Next, she would like to see UVic welcome elementary students into the cafeteria for regular tours so the kids can witness the process for themselves.

Each month, a new organization is selected based on a first-come, first-served system. The name of the current organization is posted on the Centre Cafe’s community board. School groups and other youth organizations can add their names to the list by contacting Church at 250-721-8429 or church@uvic.ca.

RESEARCH CHAIR CONTINUED FROM P.1

How will climate change affect the health of British Columbians and what can we do about it? What infrastructure and institutional changes are needed to reduce greenhouse gases while maintaining BC’s economic competitiveness? And how can a cap-and-trade system help BC meet its emission targets?

These are some of the questions tackled in a set of climate change discussion papers prepared by teams of researchers associated with the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS).

The discussion papers cover eight broad areas of policy concern for BC—identified in consultation with the BC government—and have been submitted to the BC Climate Action Secretariat for review.

‘These papers define the issues and set the questions in each of these policy areas,’ says Dr. Ned Djilali, UVic’s Canada Research Chair in Energy Systems and chair of the PICS program committee. "Once we’ve received feedback from the government and other stakeholders, the papers will serve as building blocks for the institute’s long-term research agenda."

PICS is a collaborative venture among BC’s four research-intensive universities. Led and hosted by UVic, PICS was created in 2008 with a $90-million endowment from the BC government. It brings the province’s best minds—from universities, government and the private sector—together to frame questions and propose solutions to the climate-related technological, social, economic and public policy challenges facing BC.

The eight discussion topic areas are: health, forestry, cap-and-trade systems; green building design; trans- portation; alternative energy; sustainable communities; and adaptation priorities.

The full text of each discussion paper is available on the PICS website at www.pics.uvic.ca/research.php.

SOLGARD PEAK

Building better retirement incomes since 1949

J. MARIE GOWIN

700-740 COLUMBIA STREET, VICTORIA BC

PHONE (250) 385-3636

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PICS papers identify areas of climate change concern

RESEARCH CHAIR continued from P.1

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You wouldn’t abandon your puppy. So please don’t leave your pet rabbit here.

Sadly, most rabbits at UVic are unwanted pets or descendants of unwanted pets abandoned on campus. Dumping them on campus is not only irresponsible and inhumane, it’s illegal.

Pet rabbits are part of UVic campus life, but their activities can have a significant impact on human health and safety, and on plants and property. To help reduce this impact, we need campus and community members to do their part:

• don’t abandon your pet rabbits on campus
• don’t pet or feed the rabbits
• don’t chase, harass or handle the rabbits

To learn more, visit www.uvic.ca/rabbits.
To most people, Venus and Neptune are distant planets. But mention them at the University of Victoria and minds turn to the deep ocean, not deep space.

VENUS (Victoria Experimental Undersea Network) and NEPTUNE Canada (North-East Pacific Time-series Undersea Networked Experiments) — a unique virtual laboratories. The cabled networks of instruments allow scientists to analyze data that flow 24/7, without getting their feet wet or even leaving their desks.

Since the first leg of VENUS was activated on the floor of Saanich Inlet in February 2006, there has been a steady torrent of information from instruments recording everything from water temperature, pressure and oxygen levels to images, sounds and video.

So far, VENUS instruments from Saanich Inlet and a second leg in the Strait of Georgia have sent half a million measurements (and counting) back to UVic and — through the Internet — to scientists and the rest of the world.

“With this incessant gush of data, it’s like trying to drink wine through a fire hose,” says Dr. Richard Dewey, a UVic oceanographer and associate director of research for VENUS. “It’s rich but it’s almost overwhelming. You can get awfully drunk.”

To handle this deluge of information, UVic has developed an advanced data management and archiving system (DMAS) that is reading, storing and making the data web-accessible as the two observatories take the pulse of the Pacific Ocean.

It’s a massive task that involves scientists and a team of information technology specialists. “The information we see today on the VENUS website is just the tip of the iceberg,” says Benoit Pirembe, who heads the DMAS team. “Beyond the scenes, there is an extensive software and hardware infrastructure designed to collect data from the various instruments and store them for 25 or more years.”

DMAS also allows scientists to schedule instrument activity, pre-plan instrument responses to unusual events such as an earthquake, or collaborate with others through Facebook-like features on underwater development.

VENUS studies in Saanich Inlet focus on ocean processes and seafloor ecology in a sheltered fjord. Of particular interest is the inlet’s unusual combination of high plankton populations and deep water that is naturally depleted of oxygen for part of the year. This seasonal ‘dead zone’ offers oceanographers a data-rich study site.

Scientists think of Saanich Inlet as a bell-wether indicator of how marine ecosystems are going to change over time,” says Dewey.

The Strait of Georgia leg of VENUS offers a compromise between a sheltered inlet and the wildness of the deep ocean. Studies in this busy waterway are looking at water mixing, the responses of bottom animals to plankton blooms, sediment and slope dynamics of the Fraser River delta, and acoustic monitoring of whales and deep sea ships.

NEPTUNE Canada, due for completion later this year, will consist of an 800-km ring of cable and instruments along the Juan de Fuca tectonic plate off the west coast of Vancouver Island.

More than 130 instruments at five sites—one as deep as 2,600 metres—will support studies of ocean-climate interactions and their effects on fisheries, seismic and tsunami activity, gas hydrate deposits and seafloor ecology.

Together, NEPTUNE Canada and VENUS Canada could generate up to 30 terabytes of information every year — roughly equal to an iPod filled with 13 million songs.

Data accuracy and accessibility — they’re both keys to the success of VENUS and NEPTUNE Canada where, as Dewey notes, “we’re putting the power of the Internet into the deep ocean.”

Major funders of the DMAS component of VENUS and NEPTUNE Canada are the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the BC Knowledge Development Fund and CANARIE Inc., a national organization that promotes advanced networks and applications.

“REAL” HISTORY VS. NATIONAL MYTH
Ronald Wright on American identity

BY SAM VANSCHE

Ronald Wright has never let the United States off easy. The acclaimed Salt Spring-based historian and novelist has dedicated several books to reminding the world of the superpower’s tarnished past.

His most recent work, What is America?: A Short History of the New World Order, jumps back half a millennium to 1492 when Columbus landed in the Caribbean to find, not a barren landscape, but an established civilization. Moving in on that land, settlers wiped out whole populations with which their diseases, which Wright sees as the beginning of a pattern of unfettered conquest that remains intact to this day.

During the President’s Distinguished Lecture he offered on Jan. 22, Wright had a fresh sliver of wisdom to offer on Jan. 22, Wright had a fresh sliver of wisdom to offer. “All those stories are true, but if we know only one without the other, what we know is not history but myth, and such myths are dangerous,” he said.

Without acknowledging a “real” history, Wright says, America is bound to a willful ignorance and stilled in the past, doomed to repeat the mistakes of colonialism with each election. “A significant part of the United States belongs to an archaic, aggressive and colonial culture that has drifted a long way from the mainstream of Western civilization.” Wright said, giving as examples that the United States is the only major Western nation that still uses the death penalty, has no universal healthcare, keeps one in 99 adults behind bars, and where half the population thinks the creation myth in the Bible is literally true. “To get away from this, Wright suggests educating, flattening the social pyramid, and keeping out of the Oval Office “political extremists such as George W. Bush and Dick Cheney who feed on superstition, fear and the worst kinds of patriotism that have arisen with regularity since the days of Andrew Jackson.”

Shelter on wheels
A UVic-community partnership leads to “shelter in a cart” for homeless “binners”

BY PEIGI McGILLIVRAY

You may think it’s the end of the line when you put a beverage container into your recycling bin, but as Jutta Gutherlet knows, it’s really just the beginning.

The University of Victoria geographer is finding ways to help make life better for informal recyclers or “binners”—people who make their living collecting the beverage containers we put in our recycling bins and dumpsters.

“Informal recycling is a widespread activity in countries around the world,” says Gutherlet. “And it’s becoming more and more prevalent in Canada. Binning is playing an increasingly important role in keeping recyclable waste out of landfills, especially in Victoria and Vancouver.”

Most binners in Victoria are home-less men between 40 and 59 years-old. They work five to seven days a week for up to six hours a day, earning an average income of $10 to $30 a day.

Binnners often follow regular routes through city streets, travelling sub-stantial distances and working long hours to collect and return bottles and cans. Because many binners are home-less, they may not have anywhere to leave their personal belongings while they’re collecting. Transporting both personal belongings and collected containers is a big problem.

Gutherlet’s Community-Based Research Laboratory at UVic has teamed up with Tony Hoar, an engineer and founder of Tony’s Trailers, to create a unique “shelter-in-a-cart” that solves that problem—and more. The roomy, collapsible cart can be towed behind a bicycle, and when it’s empty, it un-folds to support a built-in tent with an elevated cot built into the base. It’s a livelihood and living accommodation in all one.

“It allows people to get around the city more easily, gather more recycla-bles, carry their own possessions with them—and have a safe, dry place to sleep at night,” says Gutherlet. “While it’s not a long-term solution to the problem of homelessness, especially in cold weather, it makes a signifi-cant difference to the quality of these people’s lives. And it’s something we can do right now, today, at a very low cost.”

The Mothers Project, a pilot initiative in which Gutherlet participates, has provided four binners with carts, bicycles to tow them and training on how to use them. It’s part of a larger project to create awareness about the important role informal recyclers play in our community, to reduce the stigma and isolation they feel, and to create immediate solutions for the homeless.

“We’ve also worked with binners to create video documentaries about the reality of their lives,” says Gutherlet. “And we’ve completed a survey about the binning community here in Victo-ria to help us better understand who they are and how we can help improve their quality of life.”

Informal recycling has fascinated Gutherlet since her childhood in São Paulo, Brazil. “It is very widespread in Brazil. The Bush administration took the United States to war in Iraq in 2003, but still number nearly half the electorate. “The United States are best understood as products of the country’s past—by that I mean the real past, not the imagined one of national myth,” Wright stresses.

Creating a real history, Wright said, means considering many perspectives. He used the example of the years before the Civil War, when a free citizen might see the country as a thriving democracy at the same time as a slave might call it a cruel tyranny and onlookers from beyond its borders might say it’s a ruthlessly expanding empire.

“They work five to seven days a week for substantial distances and working long hours to collect recyclable waste out of landfills, especially in Victoria and Vancouver,” Gutherlet adds.

Most binners in Victoria are homeless men between 40 and 59 years-old. They work five to seven days a week for up to six hours a day, earning an average income of $10 to $30 a day.

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Astronomers launch year-long celebration

When the International Year of Astronomy kicked off in Paris last month, the celebrants included royalty, government ministers, Nobel Prize winners and other eminent scientists.

Oh, and third-year University of Victoria student Deanna Pineau was also there, with a special invitation in hand.

Pineau was one of two undergraduates chosen to represent Canadian university students at the opening ceremonies. She earned the honour in a national essay competition in which she wrote about the impact of astronomy on society.

Coordinated by the International Astronomical Union, the International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA) marks the 400th anniversary of Galileo’s first astronomical observation through a telescope. More than 135 countries, including Canada, are participating in the global celebration of astronomy and its contribution to society and culture.

Pineau and a student from the University of Western Ontario joined 80 astronomy students from other countries at the Paris event, which featured presentations and video conferences with astronomers from around the world.

“Meeting eminent scientists and students from around the world was an enriching experience,” says Pineau. “I gained advice from top scientists, insight into what to concentrate on as a researcher and, in general, a broader perspective and greater appreciation for astronomy and its place in the world.”

Pineau’s winning essay included an innovative idea for public outreach during IYA. She plans to develop an astronomy-themed camp—games and crafts—and publish it in Canadian Gardiner magazine, which goes to Girl Guide leaders across Canada.

“My goal is to build a camp in a box, which is something that guide leaders can run for their groups,” says Pineau, who was a Girl Guide from kindergarten through to grade 12. She recently reconnected with a Victoria group.

“We’re delighted with Deanna’s success,” says UVic astronomer Dr. Sara Ellison. “Her project will not only help bring astronomy into the community, but provide strong role models for the youngsters she works with.”

Thanks to UVic’s Department of Physics and Astronomy and the National Research Council’s Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics in Saanich, Victoria is a hub of astronomical expertise. It’s no surprise, then, that Victoria will host a series of IYA events throughout 2009.

One of the first events is a public lecture on Feb. 8 by Alain Berinstain, director of planetary exploration and space astronomy at the Canadian Space Agency. The lecture, entitled “Missions to Mars,” takes place at 2:30 p.m. in room B150 of the Rob Wright Centre. The lecture is free and suitable for all ages.

“One of the main goals of IYA is combining astronomy with other disciplines,” notes Ellison, who is the IYA contact at UVic. Other planned events include astronomy-themed plays, musical performances and art exhibits, as well as star-gazing nights at UVic’s on-campus observatory.

For more information on the International Year of Astronomy visit www.astronomy2009.ca and click on “Search for local events.”

UVic students slay “dragons”

From the serious to the sublime, 13 UVic teams tried to win over the judges at the first UVic Pitch Competition, a mini-dragon den event held Jan. 20. Five ideas received supreme and earned $300 for each of the winning teams.

The Pitch Competition, the first of two business plan competitions, saw students make two-minute presentations to convince the judging panel that their idea had merit. “All of the ideas were excellent, and the students’ presentations were crisp and focused,” says pitch organizer Mia Maki, instructor in the Faculty of Business entrepreneurship program.

“The competitions are a good way to learn about entrepreneurship and hone business presentation skills,” says Maki, who is also organizing the March 6 Business Plan Competition.

The winning pitches covered a range of ideas. BCom student Dan Macdonald presented his idea for an action figure toy line. Science student Jill Doucette talked about her concept of a consulting firm that helps companies “green” their operations. Other ideas included a ready-made entertainment package featuring a bicycle trials stunt team, by business students Dane Low and David Herr; a strata website for condo owners by economics student Alex Conconi; and a travel website aimed at gay and lesbian travelers by business student Gavin Lawrence.

The UVic Business Plan competition is now under way. Students have just over six weeks to develop a plan that could earn them as much as $5,000 for a first-place finish. Prizes also include $2,000 for the best social entrepreneurship plan—contributed by the Institute for Co-operative Studies—and the potential for an expenses-paid trip to the national Entrepreneurial Award Competition in Ottawa. Tips and resources for preparing a business plan can be found at www.business.uvic.ca/planit

2009 Distinguished Lecture in Islam

Tariq Ramadan

University of Oxford

The Scope and Limits of Reforming Islam

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

7:30 p.m.

Engineering/Computer Science Room 123

An internationally recognized scholar of Islam, Tariq Ramadan was named by Time magazine as one of the 21st century’s top 100 innovators for his influential efforts toward the establishment of a modern and independent European Islam.

Prof. Ramadan’s lecture will draw from his most recent book, A Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation, in which he calls for a dramatic transformation of Muslim spiritual, ethical, legal and social traditions as Muslims and non-Muslims alike. “Ramadan’s proposal is bound to provoke controversy and spark debate among Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation, Prof. Ramadan’s lecture will draw from his most recent book, in/f_l our top 100 in the world.”

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Thanks to UVic’s Department of Physics and Astronomy and the National Research Council’s Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics in Saanich, Victoria is a hub of astronomical expertise. It’s no surprise, then, that Victoria will host a series of IYA events throughout 2009.

One of the first events is a public lecture on Feb. 8 by Alain Berinstain, director of planetary exploration and space astronomy at the Canadian Space Agency. The lecture, entitled “Missions to Mars,” takes place at 2:30 p.m. in room B150 of the Rob Wright Centre. The lecture is free and suitable for all ages.

“One of the main goals of IYA is combining astronomy with other disciplines,” notes Ellison, who is the IYA contact at UVic. Other planned events include astronomy-themed plays, musical performances and art exhibits, as well as star-gazing nights at UVic’s on-campus observatory.

For more information on the International Year of Astronomy visit www.astronomy2009.ca and click on “Search for local events.”

UVic students slay “dragons”

From the serious to the sublime, 13 UVic teams tried to win over the judges at the first UVic Pitch Competition, a mini-dragon den event held Jan. 20. Five ideas received supreme and earned $300 for each of the winning teams.

The Pitch Competition, the first of two business plan competitions, saw students make two-minute presentations to convince the judging panel that their idea had merit. “All of the ideas were excellent, and the students’ presentations were crisp and focused,” says pitch organizer Mia Maki, instructor in the Faculty of Business entrepreneurship program.

“The competitions are a good way to learn about entrepreneurship and hone business presentation skills,” says Maki, who is also organizing the March 6 Business Plan Competition.

The winning pitches covered a range of ideas. BCom student Dan Macdonald presented his idea for an action figure toy line. Science student Jill Doucette talked about her concept of a consulting firm that helps companies “green” their operations. Other ideas included a ready-made entertainment package featuring a bicycle trials stunt team, by business students Dane Low and David Herr; a strata website for condo owners by economics student Alex Conconi; and a travel website aimed at gay and lesbian travelers by business student Gavin Lawrence.

The UVic Business Plan competition is now under way. Students have just over six weeks to develop a plan that could earn them as much as $5,000 for a first-place finish. Prizes also include $2,000 for the best social entrepreneurship plan—contributed by the Institute for Co-operative Studies—and the potential for an expenses-paid trip to the national Entrepreneurial Award Competition in Ottawa. Tips and resources for preparing a business plan can be found at www.business.uvic.ca/planit

2009 Distinguished Lecture in Islam

Tariq Ramadan

University of Oxford

The Scope and Limits of Reforming Islam

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

7:30 p.m.

Engineering/Computer Science Room 123

An internationally recognized scholar of Islam, Tariq Ramadan was named by Time magazine as one of the 21st century’s top 100 innovators for his influential efforts toward the establishment of a modern and independent European Islam.

Prof. Ramadan’s lecture will draw from his most recent book, A Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation, in which he calls for a dramatic transformation of Muslim spiritual, ethical, legal and social traditions as Muslims and non-Muslims alike. “Ramadan’s proposal is bound to provoke controversy and spark debate among
A planned gift to the University of Victoria can create many bright futures. Just ask Nainesh Agarwal, who received a graduate scholarship from a planned gift. Nainesh now has a PhD and works for the government as a Technical Leader at the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Your generosity will help ensure that future generations of talented students like Nainesh receive a quality education. You can establish a fund in your name, or the name of a loved one, to support any university program you wish. Planned gifts are forever.
Dr. Geoffrey N. O’Grady died on Dec. 28, at home in Victoria, just before his 81st birthday. He came to the linguistics department at the University of Victoria in 1963, becoming involved in the study of various Indigenous languages on Vancouver Island and teaching phonetics and historical sound change. He is regarded as a pioneer and leading scholar of Aboriginal languages, and his linguistic research and teaching career are a tribute to the languages of First Nations peoples around the world. As a young man, he spent six years as a “jacker” in the Australian Outback on a vast sheep station. Riding and camping with his Aboriginal mates, he began learning their rich and intricate languages and dialects. He was eventually adopted into the Nyangumarta tribe and spoke their language fluently. While working on his BA at the University of Sydney, he conducted field trips to record and transcribe Indigenous languages. His first book, an alphabetization of Nyangumarta resulted in a literacy program and a Nyangumarta newspaper that is still published. He completed his PhD at Indiana University, where he began a lifelong collaboration with Ken Hale of MIT, beginning with fieldwork in Arizona on Hopi. He culminated in a series of studies on the classification of the Pama-Nyungan languages of Australia and reports to the Australian government on bilingual education. At the University of Alberta from 1963–65, O’Grady extended his work to northern Canadian First Nations languages. After his retirement from UVic in 1993, the Australian National Dictionary Centre asked him to advise Indigenous communities who will be remembered for his class and charm, his engaging nature and gift for humour and wordplay, his modernity, his outstanding linguistic talent, his generosity and wonderful rapport with his students, and a total lack of artifice. Donations in his memory may be made to the Geoffrey N. O’Grady Scholarship in Linguistics, to assist UVic graduate students doing linguistic research, to the University of Victoria Development Office, PO Box 3060, Victoria, BC, V8W 3R4.

Submitted by Dr. John Eising, chair, Department of Linguistics

A day in the life of janitor Hung Nguyen starts early and by 7 a.m. he had already scrubbed the floor of the University Centre’s main foyer.

For the past 14 years, Hung has arrived at 5 a.m. in a crisp navy shirt bearing UVic’s logo and cleaned the floors, windows and seats of the Farquhar Auditorium and University Centre. He knows the building as if it were home.

Hung clasps his hands on his knees. He smiles and says his wife and brother-in-law work as janitors for UVic, too. Hung’s son is a recent graduate of the co-op program and feel very fortunate it has led to this career and other Aboriginal peoples—“trade” was translated as “makuk,” a word that meant, more loosely, “exchange,” and encompassed not only trading, but also buying, selling, and other non-economic forms of reciprocity. Thus, what Europeans took as a straightforward concept was anything but for their Aboriginal counterparts.

Lutz argues that this economic change is rooted in a series of misunderstandings during the early days of contact. Trade, for Europeans, meant nothing more than a simple exchange of one good or service for another. However, in Chinook jargon—the imprecise language of interaction among Europeans, Chinook, Nootka, and other Aboriginal peoples—“trade” was translated as “makuk,” a word that

nature and the accumulation of wealth, while Aboriginal peoples lived in coexistence with nature and believed in sharing wealth through rites such as the potlatch. Using oral histories, manuscripts, newspaper accounts, and biography, Makuk demonstrates how this crucial difference, rooted in itself, became the seed that led to the original pejorative myth of the “Lazy Indian”—one of the most persistent and damaging stereotypes ever applied to Aboriginal peoples. With this mistaken characterization as justification, Aboriginal people were disenfranchised from their own traditions and economic as well as the Canadian capitalist and wage economies.

“Whenever they could, Aboriginal people flocked to work places,” Lutz explains. “Laziness was the worst character flaw and any member of a family not willing to help accumulate wealth was shunned. In their rush to acquire wealth for themselves, Euro-Canadians overlooked the sharing and environmental values in the Aboriginal cultures they met.”

UVic historian John Lutz is providing a fresh perspective on Aboriginal poverty. His new book, Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations, explains how Canada’s Aboriginal people fell from prosperity to poverty and the origins of the myth of the "lazy Indian".

“Aboriginal people in BC went from being among the wealthiest people in the late 19th century to being among Canada’s poorest at the end of the 20th century,” says Lutz. “Makuk was offered as compensation to Aboriginal people when they were driven out of paid and subsistence work by legislation and racism.”

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