Webber named 2009 Trudeau Fellow
Uvic Law the only Canadian department with three fellows

Grad medalist defines our ‘love of place’

BY LISA GREWAR

“I was shocked to be nominated and to win,” says Leila Scannell, who has received the Lieutenant Governor’s Silver Medal for her thesis on place attachment. “A lot of people at UVic are doing great things.”

According to her supervisor, environmental psychologist Dr. Robert Gifford, Scannell is very deserving of this honour. “I believe everyone can change the future,” he says. “Leila will change it by inspiring students and advancing this newer field of environmental psychology.”

Scannell has provided mixed results. Gifford adds, “I was fascinated by the opportunity to work with Dr. Gifford, who is such a well-known and established researcher in environmental psychology. I was also attracted to UVic by the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, located on campus.”

Her thesis examines how the people of Trail and Nelson, BC, feel about where they live and if those feelings influence their actions in preserving and protecting their environment. She discovered that even though Trail has a loud noise problem in the town as opposed to Nelson’s pristine natural setting, the residents of each town feel that the environmental quality of their area is acceptable. In addition, those who are more attached to the natural aspects of either place are more likely to recycle and reduce environmental hazards in their community.

“My research indicates the longer you live in a place, the more attached you are,” concludes Scannell. “And that when you are attached, you are more likely to believe your environment is better than may be perceived by non-residents.”

Previous research on place attachment has provided mixed results. Gifford adds enthusiastically, “This is an award-winning thesis because it clarifies the relationship between place attachment and environmental behaviour.”

“The medal gives me momentum to keep going,” says Scannell.

With a graduate fellowship at UVic’s Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, she is now working toward her PhD. She also considers herself very lucky to have received a three-year Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

She will use the scholarship to conduct research on people’s thoughts about climate change as well as the effectiveness of positive messages in climate change communication.

In the future, she would love to teach and continue doing environmental research anywhere in the world, but she notes she does have a fond place attachment to Victoria.

Scannell thanks her supervisor, Dr. Robert Gifford, and her committee members Dr. Frederick Grouzet and Dr. Naomi Pope.

SPEED READING

RESEARCH ON AGING

Really getting to know Canadian seniors

As people age, how do they cope with changes in their health, their relationships, and their finances? That’s what researchers at UVic’s Centre on Aging are hoping to discover as they take part in a new 20-year interdisciplinary study of 10,000 Canadian seniors aged 45 to 85. The $3.0-million Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging is one of the world’s largest and most comprehensive studies on the topic.

TEACHING TECHNOLOGY

Clickers in the classroom

Increasingly, UVic instructors are incorporating the use of clicker technology into their courses. It can be a way for instructors to promote learner engagement in large lecture classes and gauge the level of student understanding of concepts. Story, page 2

CLEAN ENERGY RESEARCH

The next wave in energy production?

UVic’s Institute for Integrated Energy Systems is a partner in a newly announced network of researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs and computer modeling experts who will collect and analyze information on the wave energy potential off western Vancouver Island. The West Coast Wave Collaboration Project, co-funded by the Government of Canada, will use wind, wave and tidal current data to assist developers in the wave energy industry and channel wave energy researchers, and to help guide policy and program development by government and regulators. More: http://communications.uvic.ca/releases/

CONVOCATION ADDRESSES

Lieutenant Governor’s Silver Medal

BY THOMAS WINTERHOFF

University of Victoria law professor Jeremy Webber has been named one of four new Trudeau Fellows by the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation. The prestigious academic honour recognizes his cutting-edge research into the constitutional structure of democratic governance, as well as the opportunities and challenges presented by a culturally diverse society.

Webber has a BA in political science from UBC, common law and civil law degrees from McGill University and a Master of Laws degree from Osgoode Hall. He is currently the director of the Graduate Program in Law and Society at UVic and holds the Research Chair in Law and Society at the university.

“The great task of any society is how to determine the principles and rules that will govern that society in the face of continual disagreement over what those principles should be,” explains Webber. “In highly diverse societies, such disagreement is often grounded in different cultures of social debate and decision, indeed often in different practical ways of life.”

Webber is a world-renowned scholar and author in the areas of cultural diversity, constitutional theory and Indigenous rights. He has written on labour relations, Indigenous rights in Canada and Australia, the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada, issues of nationhood and cultural minorities, and questions of constitutional design and interpretation. He notes that dealing with our cultural, political, moral and religious differences can be difficult at times, but it is also exhilarating and essential.

“It forces us to reconsider preconceptions. It reveals aspects of our lives that we might otherwise overlook. It challenges us to find ways to live together peacefully and respectfully,” he says. “I am interested in what we need to do to sustain a community, how we should adjust our relationships and how we respond to injustice. This fellowship will enable me to further my research in a whole range of ways, engaging deeply with scholars and graduate students between place attachment and environmental behaviour.”

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PHOTO: DIANA NETHERCOTT

PHOTO: UVIC PHOTO SERVICES

PHOTO: UVIC PHOTO SERVICES
TEACHING TECHNOLOGY

Click here for answers

BY TARA SHARPE

Laptop keys are not the only buttons that University of Victoria students are pressing in class. Increasingly, instructors are using clicker technology in their courses.

Clickers are handheld devices that allow students to respond anonymously to multiple-choice quizzes or questions posed by instructors during lectures. The technology is similar to the keypad system used for “audience lifetime votes” in TV game shows like Who Wants to Be a Millionaire, but with clickers, students are drawn deeper into course material.

The remote-control device is especially helpful in larger lecture rooms to keep students intrigued about the material and connected to the discussion even if they are a dozen rows away from the lecturer. UVic psychology professor Dr. Martin Smith, who uses clicker technology in classes of more than 300 students, usually finds a way to fit three to six clicker questions into a standard 50-minute session.

“The human mind is not meant to passively soak up concepts for an hour without a break,” says Smith. “The clicker technology doesn’t replace skillful teaching techniques, but it definitely augments them.”

Students can choose buttons A through E and the clicker results are displayed on an overhead screen, usually in a bar graph displaying the spectrum of answers. With built-in anonymity, clicker technology offers shy students a more comfortable means of participating. In addition, instructors can keep track of overall responses and gauge the level of student understanding as coursework progresses, rather than waiting for the next written test. The technology is being used in universities and colleges across the country.

Designing lectures to engage students is not a new approach, but the ancient Socratic method of inquiry and debate has found a particularly unique expression in the electronic age.

“In an academic setting, we spend a lot of time promoting individual learning,” says Dr. Ed Ishiguro, UVic professor emeritus (computer science) and Dr. Leslee Francis Pelton and Tim Pelton (curriculum and instruction) were assisted by numerous co-investigators across campus in a research study on the use of clicker technology, available at http://webhome.cvc.uvic.ca/~smannour/class_clickers/.

“The clicker technology doesn’t replace skillful teaching techniques, but it definitely augments them.”

—Dr. Martin Smith
(psychoLOGY)

PHOTO: UVIC PHOTO SERVICES

Bike to Work Week: UVic participants 1,000-strong

Fifty-three campus teams and more than 1,000 UVic cycle commuters participated in Bike to Work Week 2009 (May 11–17). The annual province-wide event was an excellent excuse to enjoy good exercise and fresh air, and sample the benefits of commuting by bicycle every day. Employees throughout Victoria pedaled a total of 17,332 km. Bicycles make up over 7 per cent of UVic’s total transportation mix.

Changes to senate student appeals process

The senate recently approved several significant changes to the Senate Committee on Appeals’ terms of reference and procedural guidelines. The changes are intended to strengthen and improve the student appeal process. The time limit for students to file an appeal before the Senate Committee on Appeals will change from six months to two months effective July 1, 2009. Faculty members, staff and students are encouraged to visit the website of the University Secretary at http://web.uvic.ca/ for full details of the changes.

Experiencing UVic

Mikala and Graner Montgomery and their parents Glena and John from Portland, OR, chat with Dr. Munel Govit of the Department of History at the Faculty Expo event at Experience UVic on May 23. Mikala has enrolled in the Faculty of Social Sciences. More than 1,350 prospective students and family members participated in the popular and successful campus-wide “test-drive” of the university.

Effects of endowment losses minimized

The vast majority of UVic students seeking financial assistance during the upcoming academic year will receive it. Nearly 70 per cent of UVic’s undergraduate scholarships and bursaries are part of the university’s base budget and over 96 per cent of graduate student support comes from UVic’s base budget and external sources. None of this assistance is directly affected by the global economic downturn.

The remaining support is funded through the endowments administered by the University of Victoria Foundation board. While the endowments did suffer losses in 2008 as a result of the financial market downturn, most of the funds—60 per cent—are scheduled to award their designated disbursements to students. Forty per cent of the endowment’s funds were reduced to less than the amount of their original donations, and the practice of the foundation is to protect the principal and hold disbursements until these funds recover.

“In place to protect the funds from diminishing over time, but many of the donors notified about their funds’ status responded positively, signing a commitment to fund their endowments to make disbursements. Through a combination of their generosity and university funding, many of the funds previously designated as unable to make payments will now also make disbursements.”

Nearly 90 per cent of endowment funds will provide their regular disbursements for 2009/10,” says UVic associate Vice-President Financial Planning and Operations Kristi Simpson. As in its usual practice, the foundation will review its spending policy and asset mix this coming year and evaluate if its current approach is still appropriate, based on economic outlooks.

The university foundation board will continue to steward the funds by actively monitoring their performance and will likely have to wrestle with diminished investment returns next year as well, says Simpson, as national and global economic uncertainty is expected to extend into 2010.

STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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It’s mid-week, mid-term, and a steady stream of students is entering the Mearns Centre for Learning. Some students are hitting the books and some are heading for the Learning Commons where they can find extra help when they need it most. Though they may not be fully aware of it, they’re taking part in a “preventative” approach to student support—one that is improving student life by helping them before they get overwhelmed and fall behind.

Here, in one location students can access resources, services and technology they need for learning, writing and research. This evolution in student learning is possible because other learner-centred service providers on campus are partnering with UVic Libraries. Students can cut out numerous support programs in key learning areas: writing, math, statistics, chemistry, physics, scholarly research methods, computer help and peer tutoring. Previously, these various services supporting learners were only available from providers spread across campus.

The Learning Commons supports learning in a holistic fashion to create active learning spaces. Using the social network model, it brings together teaching assistants, librarians, tutors, instructors and professors—a knowledgeable community dedicated to improving the quality of student learning. Since opening in September 2008, the Learning Commons has been a popular success and continues to receive positive feedback from faculty and students.

“It’s great that the Writing Centre is available in the library,” says visiting student Kinggan Tanatapanon, who is taking a summer course in English. “I’d have a problem. I can find someone to help me. All three tutors I’ve used have different skills and I’ve learned a lot from their examples.”

“The interaction between the graduate students and a community sense that is created through the Learning Commons workshops are priceless,” writes one graduate student on a feedback form. “It takes us out of our isolation . . . to analyze and reflect on our work.”

Average monthly usage statistics show how busy this learning hub is. Each month the Computer Help Desk averages 642 inquiries; Library Technical Help fields 1,129 questions; Physics Help tutors 55 students; Chemistry Help, 170 students; Math and Statistics Help, 774 students; the Writing Centre has 369 appointments; and Research and Library Help answers 1,953 reference questions.

But numbers don’t tell the full story. Learning Help run by UVic Counselling Services assists students in the development and practice of efficient study techniques, effective learning methods and high-level thinking skills. They also offer courses designed to assist students new to university, helping them adapt and thrive. And when student life goes “sideways,” peer helpers, trained in listening and counseling skills, have space in the Learning Commons to provide comfortable, private, confidential and safe spaces for students who need someone to talk to.

The Mearns Centre Learning Commons is named in honour of Dr.Che Woo Lui, chairman of the K. Wah Group of construction companies and students.

More info: http://learningcommons.uvic.ca/
Trying out UVic's new Emergen -

Co-op in the classroom: Completing the learning circle

BY DIANNE GEORGE

UVic is renowned for its focus on experiential learning, and the Faculty of Business, with its philosophy of integration, has developed new ways to transfer workplace learning back into the classroom, to complete the learning circle.

In addition to making co-operative education a required element of the BCom and MBA programs, business also established Canada's first experiential learning officer position in 2006, Jonnail Gill, who now fills that role, works with students on their co-op learning journey.

"I give them ideas on how to connect and leverage their academic and co-op learning experience to prepare for future career paths," Gill also works with faculty members to share student co-op reports and has developed an online teaching resource site for business instructors. His most recent initiative encourages final-term students to share their experiences and insight gained through their academic studies, co-op work terms and international exchanges with prospective employers in a poster exhibition event.

Earlier this year, Dr. Lynne Siemens, who had redesigned her Business and Government Relations (Com 440) class, put some of Gill's ideas into practice. Siemens started by assigning 5 per cent of the final grade to the co-op integration project. The assignment included a written paper in which students reflected on an issue related to business-government relations that they encountered while at work. She held in-class discussions about the issues and strategies students used to manage the issue.

"I was really pleased with the results," Siemens says. "I had students from different faculties in the class, but they all had a co-op or other work experience. This assignment helped to build common ground."

Teresa Sims, a fourth-year BCom student, found the assignment engaged her in unexpected ways. "We do a lot of cases in the program, but I really liked talking about something that I had actually experienced," says Sims. "A case is four or five pages, whereas a work-term is four months. It made the assignment more interesting and opened the door to conversations I might not have had with other students."

In addition to in-class discussion, professors have incorporated their learning and builds critical thinking skills," says Gill.

More than 3,000 undergraduate and graduate students participate in co-operative education at UVic, linking their academic studies to real-world experiences.

UVic faculty members can learn more about integrating student co-op workplace experiences into the classroom by contacting Co-op and Career Services at 250-721-7628. Experiential Learning Officer Jennifer Gill can be reached at 250-853-3750.

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WEBBER continued from P1

professor to be honoured with a Trudeau Fellowship. Professor Jim Tally (cross-appointed in law) was named a fellow in 2003 and Prof. John Borrows in 2006. Only Université de Montréal has had more Trudeau Fellows than UVic, and no other single academic unit in the country has had three fellows. Each fellowship is for a three-year period and includes a prize of $150,000, plus a $75,000 research and public engagement award.

Webber served as dean of law at the University of Sydney in Australia but returned to Canada in 2002 to accept the Canada Research Chair. He says he was attracted to UVic Law because of the faculty's commitment to social justice, its explorations of legal and political theory, and its engagement with Indigenous traditions of law and social order.

Webber is the third UVic Law pro-
It's a momentous occasion and the culmination of a great deal of hard work for thousands of UVic students. During Spring Convocation, from June 15–18, the University of Victoria will award 3,024 degrees, diplomas and certificates and formally install the university's tenth chancellor, Murray Farmer, BA ’68.

Congratulations and best wishes to all convocating students.

In the following pages, we present profiles of a few of the many outstanding members of this year's graduating class.

**Theatre grads get “bridge” to professional careers**

Thanks to adrienne holierhoek

After graduation, most theatre students expect to have to work hard and "pay their dues" to make it big. But this summer, six graduates from UVic's Department of Theatre will get an amazing opportunity to break into the national theatre scene with Victoria's newest professional theatre company, the Blue Bridge Repertory Theatre.

Blue Bridge's mandate is to mentor young theatre artists with established professionals, offering them the chance to perform major roles alongside of some of Canada's most respected theatre artists. The idea of founding artistic director and theatre professor Brian Richmond, the theatre company also works closely with the Theatre Artists. The idea of founding artistic director and theatre professor Brian Richmond, the theatre company also works closely with the Faculty of Fine Arts to present the Professional Theatre Apprentice-Scholarship Program.

For BFA recipients Rielle Braid and Brian Culp, who will play the parts of Audrey and Orlando in Shakespeare's As You Like It in Banff this summer.

Culp also realized I wanted to have more creative input into the artistic process. Switching to the comprehensive degree gave me the chance to learn theatre design and have a wide array of experiences that I felt led me to start my own company, SNAFU Dance Theatre."

Felix grew up in Victoria and wasn't sure what she wanted to do. "The professors in our department, especially Brian Richmond, helped expand my idea of what I could do as an actor and to see it as a collaboration of different art forms and styles."

Pelez and Hansen are also collaborating on the upcoming SNAFU production of Pretty Little Liars for the Fringe circuit later this summer.

Each of the students recognized that UVic was a unique environment to learn in. "You get out of it what you put in," says Hansen. Culp also made the most of his time here by diversifying his education to include set design and construction, lighting and sound design and operation, as well as acting.

Looking back on her time here, Braid wanted to recognize the support of Phoenix Theatre audience members and recalled meeting one at the Belfry Theatre. "She had followed my time at the Phoenix and recited all the plays I had been in! This city’s theatre community is so supportive and they’re keen to see us succeed."

Victorians can keep watching UVic's stars shine this summer on the stages of Blue Bridge Theatre.

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**Major medal winners**

- Governor General's Gold Medal (top PhD, all faculties)
  - Dr. Javier Tello, biology
- Governor General's Silver Medal (top undergraduate, all faculties)
  - Jennifer Christie, biology
- Lieutenant Governor's Silver Medal (top master's thesis, all faculties)
  - Leila Sannell, psychology
- Lieutenant Governor's Silver Medal (top master's other than thesis, all faculties)
  - Sarah Mead-Wille, English
- Jubilee Medal for Humanities
  - Trent Janson, Medieval Studies
- Jubilee Medal for Science
  - Eric Cormier, mathematics and statistics
- Jubilee Medal for Social Sciences
  - Haitian Xu, physics
- Maxwell A. Cameron Memorial Award in Education
  - Jessica Heppling, elementary education
- Canadian Society for Mechanical Engineering Medal
  - Jason Kerekl, mechanical engineering (co-op)
- Department of Computer Science Graduation Medal
  - Katherine Epp, computer science (co-op)
- IEEE Victoria Section Gold Medal in Computer Engineering
  - Anthony Kreutz, computer engineering (co-op)
- IEEE Victoria Section Gold Medal in Electrical Engineering
  - Yuanjie Pang, electrical engineering (co-op)
- IEEE Victoria Section Gold Medal in Software Engineering
  - Cecilia Redding, software engineering (co-op)
- Law Society Gold Medal and Prize
  - Diana Backhouse, law
- Victoria Medal in Fine Arts
  - Jennifer Cadar, history in art
Top PhD helping advance reproductive health

BY ROBIE LISCOMB

It’s no wonder that Javier Tello is this year’s recipient of the Governor General’s Gold Medal for outstanding grade point average and dissertation. He received his PhD in biology in May 2008 and has published ten scholarly papers based on his dissertation research in top scientific journals.

“I’ve always been fascinated by biological systems,” Tello explains. And that passion and curiosity has led him to make significant contributions to our understanding of hormone evolution.

Tello earned his BSc in biochemistry at UVic and then went on for his PhD in molecular biology, working with Dr. Nancy Sherwood. “What I liked about the Department of Biology was the feeling of community where fellow graduate students, post-docs and professors openly discussed their research goals and offered all earnest viewpoints that often improved each other’s work,” he says.

For his dissertation, Tello examined genes critical for controlling reproduction. In humans, a master hormone made by nerve cells in the brain triggers a cascade of events in the reproductive system essential for the maturation of germ cells and the production of sex steroids. Tello discovered that an ancient group of animals without backbones have hormones closely related to this human brain hormone. One animal he studied was the amphioxus, an ancient sea creature that has fascinated scientists for hundreds of years as a possible ancestor to all vertebrates, including humans. Tello found amphioxus not only has the specialized receptors that bind the human brain hormone, but two of these receptors foreshadow all the vertebrate-type receptors. These findings show that the origin of the brain hormone and receptors that control reproduction are more than half a billion years old.

Currently a post-doctoral fellow at the Medical Research Council’s Human Reproductive Sciences Unit in Edinburgh, Scotland, Tello is testing novel treatments to increase the fertility of patients with reproductive diseases and investigating a drug candidate that shows promise as a new contraceptive. He is also investigating the development of specialized neurons in the brain and how they form complex networks during human embryonic growth, setting the stage for reproductive onset during puberty.

Born in Oak Bay, becoming an excellent rugby player until sidelined by a back injury in his mid 20s, Tello hopes to return to Canada to set up his own lab in the field of reproductive endocrinology and neuroendocrinology. “Ideally, it would have close ties with a clinic, allowing for new discoveries to be translated into useful advances for human health,” he says.

Honorary degrees conferred on four exceptional individuals

BY MIKE MCNENNY

Four individuals with distinguished accomplishments in the fields of language, entrepreneurship, physics, and academic leadership are this spring’s honorary degree recipients. Recipients are selected based on exceptional records of distinction and achievement in scholarship, research, teaching, the creative arts or public service.

Dr. Edward Berry
Honorary Doctor of Laws (10 a.m., June 16)

Since the early 1980s, Dr. Edward Berry has taught legal writing and oral judgment delivery to hundreds, if not thousands, of judges in Canada and around the world. His work has been instrumental in reinforcing a principle at the heart of the justice system: that a judge’s reasons for decision should be clear, cogent and comprehensible.

His work with the judiciary sprang from his first career as a highly regarded UVic English professor and Shakespearean scholar. He retired from the university in 2006. His book, Writing Reasons, is in its third edition and is the leading textbook on judicial writing in Canada. It provides the foundation for the workshops and seminars he regularly leads.

In 2007, the late Dr. Beverley McLachlin invited him to deliver a writing program for judges of the Supreme Court of Canada. Over the course of two days, Berry lectured and met with individual judges to comment on their writing and give them guidance for improvement.

Ms. Rebecca MacDonald
Honorary Doctor of Laws (2:30 p.m., June 15)

Rebecca MacDonald is a self-made entrepreneur who exemplifies success in the face of adversity. Born in Yugoslavia, she came to Canada in 1974 with training in medicine and classical piano but with few resources and limited English. She discovered a natural flair for sales and started a door-to-door marketing company.

In the 1990s, when Ontario opened natural gas retailing to competition, MacDonald launched Energy Marketing. It grew to become the largest energy marketer in Ontario. Then, in 1996, she started Ontario Energy Savings Corporation, which now has annual sales of approximately $1.5 billion and has 600 full-time and 600 part-time employees.

MacDonald has been an active parent, following her husband’s death in a 1992 car accident. She has also overcome severe rheumatoid arthritis. In 2002 she gave $3 million to help build the Rebecca MacDonald Centre for Arthritis and Autoimmune Disease at Toronto’s Mount Sinai Hospital.

Prof. A.J. Stewart Smith
Honorary Doctor of Science (2:30 p.m., June 18)

Prof. A.J. Stewart Smith is a leading researcher in high-energy particle physics and is known in the United States for his influence on national science policy.

A graduate of Victoria College, he continued his education at UBC and earned his PhD from Princeton University in 1966, joining the faculty of Princeton’s physics department the following year. He has held various administrative positions at Princeton, including chair of the physics department, dean for research, and chair of the university research board.

Smith has carried out a number of major experiments and, since 1995, has served as team leader of an international collaboration of 600 scientists from 10 countries participating in a major project based at the Stanford Linear Accelerator.

Smith has also kept an interest in Canadian physics research. In 1998, he chaired a National Research Council review of the TRIUMF lab in Vancouver, with recommendations that led to a stable funding environment for the particle and nuclear physics facility. He was also instrumental in ensuring Canadian involvement (including that of UVI physicists) in the “Babar” high energy physics experiment.

Dr. David Strangway
Honorary Doctor of Science (2:30 p.m., June 17)

Dr. David Strangway is a noted scientist, respected academic administrator and a senior statesman of Canadian research administration known for his innovative leadership skills.

He joined the University of Toronto in 1968 as an associate professor of physics and in 1970 accepted an invitation from NASA to become its chief of geophysics and physics at the Johnson Space Center in Houston. He was responsible for geophysical aspects of the Apollo moon missions, including experiment selection and attendant astronaut training, site selection and real-time mission support.

He returned to the University of Toronto in 1973, holding a series of senior administrative positions until 1985 when he was named president of UBC. In his 12 years as president, UBC established itself as a world-class academic institution.

Strangway later led the Canada Foundation for Innovation, which allocated $2.7 billion in research infrastructure to universities, colleges and research hospitals during his six-year term. He also founded Quest University Canada – the country’s first private, secular, not-for-profit liberal arts and science university, located in Squamish.

Page 6 The Ring June 2009
I’m excited but a little nervous, “ says work to be done, “ she comments. Edmonton-born English student will in English. “ After my undergraduate internship at the same rare book tenant Governor’s Silver Medal for the 27-year-old. unfinished business, some academic artist and writers’ exhibit during an library that sparked her interest to cataloguer at the University of Alberta. cally looking at the way he represents study literature in BC. Armed with a bachelor’s degree in English and a study and receive individualized at- tion through independent study courses and during my honour theses. This has not only deepened my understanding of and respect for different areas in psychology, but also allowed me to mature as a student and individual.”

But her university years have not been all study. She enjoyed a one-year sabbatical from university to sail with her family to California, Mexico and Hawaii. Also during her time at Uvic Grant volunteered at the Vancouver Island Sexual Health Clinic, the NEDO Crisis and Information Line and Operation Trackshoes, a sports festival on campus for people with mental disabilities. Grant will begin medical school at McMaster University in the fall. “Whichever area of medicine choose to practice,” she says, “I know my education at Uvic and in psychology will greatly contribute to my ability to be a better physician.”

Unfinished business” leads to top graduate paper

BY VIVIAN KEREKI

UVic will surely miss Sarah Mead-Willis, this year’s winner of the Lieu-tenant Governor’s Silver Medal for best non-thesis graduate paper. The Edmonton-born English student will return to her home town in July to begin an unusual job as the rare book catalogue at the University of Alberta. “I’m excited but a little nervous,” says the 27-year-old. It was her exposure to a West Coast artist and writers’ exhibit during an internship at the same rare book library that sparked her interest to study literature in BC. Armed with a bachelor’s degree in English and a master’s degree in library sciences (both from the UCalgary), Mead-Willis came to UVic to complete a master’s in English. “After my undergraduate degree in English, I felt there was some unfinished business, some academic work to be done,” she comments. As for the prize-winning essay, Mead-Willis discussed the works of Canadian poet Don McKay, specifically looking at the way he represents nature in his poems and the idea of the sublime. Through Mead-Willis is a self-described “city person,” she says she has always been interested in the way non-human things are represented in literature.

Mead-Willis acknowledges her super-visors Drs. Jamie Dopp and Nicho-las Bradley were extremely responsive to her suggestions… I might have had more challenges had it not been for them.” Mead-Willis thinks having fun with her topic may have helped her paper emerge more readable than some. “I didn’t use words like ‘problematize’, she says with a chuckle.

Mead-Willis enjoyed her time in Victoria but admits she gets very focused when in school, leaving little time for serious hobbies. “I’d love to tell you I’m into urban hang-gliding,” instead, she practices “casual enjoyment,” hiking and hiking, and preparing dishes from her current favourite—the cookbook by the Bas-ton Square restaurant Rebar.

Though it may be sad for Victoritans to lose such a bright individual, we may catch glimpses of Mead-Willis when she comes back to visit her parents, who have decided to retire in the Garden City.

“Unfinished business” leads to top graduate paper

Helping others a driving force for psychology grad

BY ROBIE LISCOMB

A keen interest in science and a desire to help others have propelled honours psychology grad Erin Grant to the top of her class, earning her the 2009 Jubilee Medal in Social Sciences. Born and raised in Brentwood Bay, Grant rose through the ranks to become a national level gymnast before retiring from competition after being diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in high school.

Academic success was not a foregone conclusion for her. “I found my first couple years at UVic quite challenging,” she says. “But the university was very supportive and was willing to accommodate my disability. Also my family, especially my parents and husband, have provided me with incredible support.”

Grant also won several scholar- ships during her undergraduate career. “These scholarships paid for my tuition, allowing me to focus on my studies and certainly contribut-ing to my ability to maintain a high academic standard,” she explains.

At university, Grant wanted to choose a field that gave her the oppor-tunity, in her words, “to make a direct and positive impact on the lives of others. I chose psychology because I thought it would allow me to combine my appreciation of the scientific process with my inter-est in working directly with others to make a positive contribution to their lives.”

A highlight of her experience at UVic has been the opportunity to work closely with her professors. “I was given many opportunities to work one-on-one with researchers to learn more about their field of study and receive individualized at-tention through independent study courses and during my honours thesis. This has not only deepened my understanding of and respect for different areas in psychology, but also allowed me to mature as a student and individual.”

But her university years have not been all study. She enjoyed a one-year sabbatical from university to sail with her family to California, Mexico and Hawaii. Also during her time at UVic Grant volunteered at the Vancouver Island Sexual Health Clinic, the NEDO Crisis and Information Line and Operation Trackshoes, a sports festival on campus for people with mental disabilities.

Grant will begin medical school at McMaster University in the fall. “Whichever area of medicine choose to practice,” she says, “I know my education at UVic and in psychology will greatly contribute to my ability to be a better physician.”

A new world view through art

BY ROSEMARIE WESTWOOD

For most students, university is cer-tainly an experience. But for art his-tory graduate Jennifer Cador, it’s been literally life-changing.

Cador is this year’s winner of the Victoria Medal, given to the top gradu-ating fine arts student. At 39, she be-gan what she originally thought would be a history degree and then master’s on the British Renaissance. “My mother had gone back to school at the age of 39. It always seemed to me really possible; you could go at any age and you didn’t have to lock yourself into one career,” says Cador, who left a career in media to take on the new challenge.

In her first year, she discovered the lure of examining history through the lens of visual arts and switched majors to history in art. Not long after, Cador took an Aboriginal art history course with Dr. Victoria Wyatt that changed everything.

“What we talked about was world views—you can’t look at this art with-out understanding the world view that lies behind it,” she says. “To hear these world views which were so different and so holistic, they just made sense to me immediately.”

Cador is married to an Aborigi-nal man and said her “incredible” courses with Wyatt and instructor Kerry Mason on Aboriginal art not only changed how she thinks, but impacted her whole family’s approach to Aboriginal culture.

“It changed the way I see the world,” says Cador, and adds that the classes have also encouraged her husband and son to incorporate Aboriginal teachings into their lives.

In addition to the Victoria Medal, Cador has won a prestigious Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada scholarship for her master’s work, which will also be at the Uni-versity of Victoria.

She noticed that heated debates arose in class any time a teacher mentioned the infamous George Southwell murals—large frescos painted on the walls of the legislature, now boarded over, that depict Abo- riginal people in what many perceive to be a demeaning manner. Those debates became the beginnings of her master’s thesis.

“I’m interested in investigating Southwell himself as an artist. He was a giant on the BC art scene at the time,” she says.

She also aims to place Southwell’s murals in the context of the larger Canadian mural tradition of the early 1900s.

Cador says support from history in art professors was instrumental in helping her secure the grant—and in inspiring her to investigate the different perspectives held within modern Euro-Canadian and Abo- riginal art.

It’s a far cry from news media, and exactly where Cador wants to be.

A new world view through art

“Unfinished business” leads to top graduate paper
GOVERNOR GENERAL’S SILVER MEDAL

Award-winning student credits work ethic

BY ROSEMARY WESTWOOD

During her time at the University of Victoria, biology graduate Jennifer Christie found the one guiding principle that would spur her on to success—hard work.

Christie is this year’s Governor General’s Silver Medal winner—an award given to the bachelor’s degree candidate at the top of the graduating class based on grades. It’s one of many awards she’s garnered over the course of her time at UVic.

It began with the transition from high school to university. “It felt like I was making a complete change in lifestyle,” she says. “No more cramming the night before.” It took some time to get into her study habits, but Christie says that this adjustment was the most difficult and important of her university career.

Over the course of her degree Christie has won the UVic Excellence Scholarship, the Edward J. Savannah Memorial Scholarship and the Harper Scholarship among numerous other awards.

In addition to her own hard work, Christie says she’s benefited from UVic’s small class sizes and the commitment shown by her professors. “When the lecturer is genuinely interested in the subject matter and excited to be teaching it makes all the difference,” she says.

Christie originally chose to study biology with the goal of going on to medicine. “That was before I had any experience in the research field and didn’t really understand what kind of careers were available in that area.”

A job placement through UVic’s co-op program opened her eyes to the wide range of post-degree possibilities.

At UVic’s Water and Aquatic Sciences Research Program she conducted a small-scanop project that looked at the antibacterial resistance of E. coli isolates from Okanagan Lake.

“Through experience, Christie discovered a passion for research that led her on to a job at McGill University’s Centre for the Study of Host Resistance, where she worked in two areas that are of particular interest to her: immunology and molecular genetics,”

“Medicine is still an option that I’m considering, but I do know that I want to be involved in some kind of research,” she says of her future academic goals.

But for now, Christie is taking a much deserved break. She’s currently travelling through Western Europe and plans on taking the next year to recharge.

MAXWELL CAMERON AWARD IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Teaching is in her genes

BY CRYSTAL BERGERON

For Gamelle FitzGibbon, this year’s recipient of the Maxwell Cameron Award in Secondary Education, teaching excellence runs in the family.

As a young growing up in Oak Bay with educator parents, teaching was the last thing on her mind. She was set on becoming a dermatologist or a travel writer. “I was always fascinated with skin and loved to read medical books,” explains FitzGibbon.

“I also really loved to travel and had an extensive knowledge of different countries around the world,” she says. “That was before I had any experience in the research field and didn’t really understand what kind of careers were available in that area.”

A job placement through UVic’s co-op program opened her eyes to the wide range of post-degree possibilities.

Jonson moved west from Alberta to Victoria School District. “My dream is to have my own classroom someday,” she says. “I’m ready now and excited to be finished. There’s a whole world out there with endless opportunities and I’m going to take one of them.”

At UVic’s Water and Aquatic Sciences Research Program she conducted a small-scanop project that looked at the antibacterial resistance of E. coli isolates from Okanagan Lake.

“Through experience, Christie discovered a passion for research that led her on to a job at McGill University’s Centre for the Study of Host Resistance, where she worked in two areas that are of particular interest to her: immunology and molecular genetics,”

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Hard work opens doors for Aboriginal business grad

BY DIANNE GEORGE

By any measure,韦江来之女 student Lisa deWit is an inspiration. She not only graduates this June with a business degree (with distinction), but she is also close to achieving a certified general accounting designation, something normally earned post graduation.

She accomplished this while running a small bookkeeping practice, volunteering and parenting her 11-year-old daughter.

"I had a lot of support from many people, including the Native Student Union," says deWit, who served as their finance counselor. "They were my family away from home."

In recognition of their support, and in her cultural tradition, she made and gave the NSU her first blanket, which now hangs in their office.

DeWit says she treated school as a job and completed assignments and studied between classes during the day. "That was the only way for me, because I needed the evenings free for family time." She also held group meetings at her house, and swapped babysitting with other student-participants so she could get out to evening networking events.

"It’s important to connect with others, have fun and get involved," she says, speaking from experience.

Last year she won a UVic Blue and Gold award for her campus volunteer activities. She also served as a BC Chinook Scholar, one of a network of Aboriginal students studying/business full-time who also mentor and advise Aboriginal high school students.

"There are a lot of students taking law, social work or education, but not a lot of business students. I’d like to encourage them to think about business."

"My great grandmother was a witness in the Delgamuuk’w decision and the women in my family are very strong. I have a responsibility to my daughter to be a strong voice and strive for the day we as Aboriginal people are equal in this country."

"I’m at a crossroads now with a whole new set of doors opening, I want to serve the Aboriginal community and motivate others to see business as an option."

Law grad carves a new path with her studies

BY SAM VANSCHIE

Val Napoleon made many firsts while earning her PhD in Law and Society at UVic.

To begin with, she’s the first graduate of the new PhD program offered through the Faculty of Law. Her dissertation focused on a substantive and theoretical treatment of the legal traditions of a northern BC Indigenous people, the Gitksan, one of the plaintiff groups in the seminal Aboriginal title case, Delgamuuk’w. Napoleon also defended her dissertation in Gitwangak, one of the Gitksan communities. This was another first with the Faculty of Law.

"I was able to talk about Gitksan law in Gitksan territory to Gitksan people," Napoleon explains. "That’s a lot more intimidating than the classroom with a panel of professors that most PhD candidates see."

But Napoleon has never been one to follow the path of least resistance.

"When she began her studies of law at UVic, she was already a grandmother. She earned her LLB in 2001."

"I chose UVic because it has a smaller law school and a real commitment to diversity in its intake of new students," says Napoleon, who is of Cree, Saulteaux and Dunne’za heritage.

She was living in Gitksan territory prior to beginning at UVic.

Through the course of her studies she found that she was less interested in the actual practice of law and more interested in legal theory and legal reasoning processes than in legal doctrines.

"I see law as a way to understand the world it offers us a lot beyond just preparation to be a lawyer," Napoleon explains.

So in 2005 she began teaching in the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Native Studies, where she is cross-appointed at the University of Alberta. Napoleon continues her research and work on Indigenous legal traditions and issues.

Still, she stayed with UVic for her PhD.

"All the people at UVic were really terrific, which is why I continued my studies here," Napoleon said. "Everyone has been so wonderful to me."

Napoleon will convocate with the class of 2009.

Later in the summer she’ll join two other Indigenous law professors to co-teach a 300-level pilot course at UVic (yes, another first).

Napoleon’s contribution to the course will draw from her thesis research on the Gitksan law and legal theory.

The medal is recognition for years of hard work. “Because I was home schooled, I was used to setting goals for myself. I was always trying to be on the honour roll,” says Epp. “Initially, it was very intimidating to think that I would be an average student but when I saw that higher marks were achievable I started thinking about what I could obtain. The first year my GPA was 8.9 and it was the same for the second year, but in my third year I achieved a perfect 9.0.”

Epp’s determination eventually parlayed into a full-time job in her field. For the last few months she has been developing software for Victoria’s Latitude Geographics, a GIS company founded by UVic geography grad Steven Myhill-Jones.

Although further education is not an immediate plan, she is still considering it, says Epp. “In the meantime I am enjoying my job at Latitude Geographics.”

As for her summer plans, Epp says she’ll be busy working, relaxing and spending time on some of her hobbies like cooking, hiking and reading.

"Educational spy" shares top science medal

BY VIVIAN KEREKI

Haitian Xu, this year’s co-winner of the Jubilee Medal for Science, takes the term “professional development” to a whole new level.

While most top science graduates choose engineering or chemistry or physics or biology, Xu has very different plans for his degree.

Xu, born in Shenzhen, China, decided to study physics in Canada not only to have a different experience, but also to gain first-hand knowledge of the Canadian educational system. Xu works for an educational consultancy company in China and plans to help Chinese students looking to study sciences away from home.

Xu had already completed an electronic engineering degree at the University of Cambridge, so he was well aware of the educational system in the UK.

Xu is scheduled to begin his new career as an educational consultant at Victoria’s Latitude Geographics. "If you’re going to be anywhere in Canada, it has to be UVic," said Xu. "I was drawn to Victoria because of its small-town feel and British influence."

With the aim of helping Chinese students understand Canadian curriculum and course structure, Xu provided feedback to his company on a daily basis. He tested marking findings. "If you want to be a competent educational consultant, you need to understand the application process, but quickly chose UVic. "If you’re going to be anywhere in Canada, it has to be UVic. "Xu was most impressed with the flexibility regarding course selection at UVic and the ability for students to specialize early; most universities in the UK have a rigid course plan.

As for the excellent grades, Xu says scholarships motivate him to do his best. "I was nervous that I didn’t need to work as hard as I did in China. You have to go a step beyond."

Xu is scheduled to begin his master’s research here at UVic under the supervision of Dr. By- oung Chul Choi. He will be studying the dynamic properties of nanomagnets, a hybrid topic between engineering and pure physics—"a perfect fit for Xu given his background and his passion for building computers."
Graduate aims to help children on her reserve

BY SUZANNE SMITH

Lila Underwood has always known that she would work with kids. Before enrolling in the Bachelor in Child and Youth Care program, Underwood was a teaching assistant at Bayside Middle School.

“When I was a teaching assistant I found that many of my kids would come to me with social-emotional issues that were getting in the way of their ability to learn. Once I helped them with these issues they improved academically,” explains Underwood.

These experiences, along with some encouragement from the staff at Bayside, convinced Underwood to enroll in UVic’s child and youth care program. Going to UVic allowed her to continue living on the Pauquachin reserve, which was very important to her, but also sometimes difficult.

“ar the challenge for me was living in two different worlds. We have our own beliefs, values and customs on the reserve which sometimes clash with university culture. For example, when we have a death in the community everyone stops what they’re doing to help the family in mourning. Being a student I couldn’t always be there for my community because of deadlines and other responsibilities. This was hard for me and for my community, but I had to make sacrifices,” explains Underwood.

Despite the challenges, Underwood had very positive experiences at UVic. “I never felt uncomfortable or that I couldn’t have a voice,” she says. “I was part of a core group of students who stayed together throughout the program. We formed a real sense of community and this sense of belonging was really important to me.”

Underwood is now working as the Education Manager for the Pauquachin First Nation where she hopes to help more youth graduate from high school and go on to post-secondary education.

She is one of about 40 students graduating with the new title of Bachelor in Child and Youth Care. Until now students graduating from this program received a BA in Human and Social Development.

Top law grad puts litigation to the test

BY SUZANNE SMITH

This summer, Diana Backhouse, recipient of the 2008/09 Law Society Gold Medal and Prize for top GPA, plans to gain a new perspective on litigation. Through a position with the Ontario Court of Appeal, Backhouse will get the opportunity to work directly for a judge summarizing trial information from lower courts, sitting in on hearings and watching litigators in action.

Backhouse first became interested in litigation after participating in a competition at UVic.

“One of the most interesting things for me in law school was the mock trial moot court. This competition involved law schools from all over the world. Students are given questions involving international law and they answer them in front of a virtual panel of judges. My question involved terrorism and human rights, which included looking at what constitutes torture,” explains Backhouse.

Backhouse grew up in Ontario and came to UVic after completing her undergraduate degree at Queens. “I had no idea what to do after finishing my degree. I decided on law because it seemed general enough that I could still leave my doors open,” says Backhouse.

“When I was trying to choose between going to law school in Ontario or British Columbia, I decided on BC because I’d never been there before. I picked UVic Law because I’d heard that, unlike a lot of other Canadian law schools, almost all of the students who went to UVic really enjoyed all three years of the program. I also really liked the idea of being in a smaller program where everyone got to know each other.”

Now as a graduate, Backhouse can look back and see that she made the right decision. “I loved my three years at UVic. The faculty are fabulous and right from the first week of our legal process orientation I realized that this was going to be an entirely different kind of experience from what I had expected. But what stands out the most is the wonderful group of students and friends that I met during my time at UVic Law. I feel so lucky to have been able to spend three years with such a rich and talented group of classmates and friends.”

Applications via email to: climate@uvic.ca

For further information visit the web site at www.PacificClimate.org

Learning is lifelong

BY CRYSTAL BERGERON

For BEd graduate Jessica Hepting, providing a strong foundation for lifelong learning is the job of every teacher.

“My goal is to create a classroom environment where students feel safe, engaged and inspired to embrace their own individuality while working together as a cohesive community,” she says.

Hepting, the winner of the Maxwell Cameron award for elementary education, started out as a Malaspina University-College art student after graduating from high school in Qualicum Beach. After one year of studies she left college to travel and experience the cultures of Nepal, India, Thailand and South America.

“I’m glad I took a few years off to see the world. It allowed me to enter the program with more maturity and a foundation of life experiences, which personally makes me a better teacher than I would have been had I started earlier,” says the 30-year-old.

A talented artist, Hepting grew up in a creative family. Her mother was a textile artist and her grandmother a potter. Before entering the BEd program she worked in an art studio, painted designer tiles and taught art as a volunteer in several Vancouver elementary schools, which certainly explains her desire to incorporate art into the teaching of all her classroom subjects.

“I try to put a creative twist on everything I do with my students, whether it’s math, science or language arts. Children are naturally creative and curious. All too often these days wonder gets educated out of them. So for me, it’s a goal to inspire them to maintain that natural curiosity,” she says enthusiastically.

Currently on call with the Sooke School District, Hepting looks forward to gaining a few years of teaching experience before entering graduate studies. For her, learning never ends. “I’ve had a huge growth in confidence during my time at UVic. I think that, just as with any form of learning, as you learn and develop as a teacher, there is a continual growth. With this growth comes confidence, and with this confidence comes an eternal hunger for deeper understanding and continued learning.”

For Hepting, this learning, growth and development will not end with the completion of her university degree. “Each and every day that I am out in a classroom I learn so much from the children. I continue to be inspired, I continue to learn, and I continue to transform.”

LAW SOCIETY GOLD MEDAL

BY SUZANNE SMITH

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PCIC is a consortium of researchers that conducts targeted research on climate variability and change for application by climate stakeholders. PCIC collaborates with other climate centres in Canada and North America, and with academic research centres at UVic and other BC universities.

JOBS POSTING—Team Lead, Computational Support

The Team Lead works as part of a multi-disciplinary team of programmer-analysts to develop software applications that support PCIC hydrologists and climatologists, and to develop products that serve the needs of PCIC stakeholders. The candidate would support a variety of targeted research projects concerning climate change, climate analysis and climate impacts in Pacific North America.

The Team Lead provides programming support, software development and systems administration. He/She supervises team members doing similar work, as well as the PCIC website and some database management.

The Team is comprised of the Team Lead, Programmer/Analysts and research assistants as required by projects, supported by UVic systems support. The Team Lead is expected to understand project needs and is responsible for ensuring that the Team serves the needs of the PCIC projects. He/She assigns work, manages the team and contributes his/her expertise as needed. The Team Lead may also consult with stakeholders to plan, propose, and carry out projects for delivery of data, tools, and products. The work environment requires flexibility and a capability to adapt to a changing environment.

Closing Date: 26 June 2009

For further information visit the web site at www.PacificClimate.org

Applications via email to: climate@uvic.ca
UVic partners with new Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre

On June 20, when the curtain rises on BC’s newest attraction—the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre in Sidney—the ocean and its fascinating creatures will be the stars of the show, but UVic will be playing a supporting role. The University recently signed a memorandum of agreement with the society that operates the centre to jointly explore opportunities to work together to advance dissemination of knowledge about the oceans.

And the results of this partnership will be evident starting on opening day when visitors will be treated to a special exhibit that focuses on UVic’s cutting-edge oceans research, including the VENUS Project—the Victoria Experimental Network Under the Seas. VENUS is the cabled ocean observatory that, for the past three years, has been delivering real-time information from the sea floor of Saanich Inlet and, more recently, the Strait of Georgia. VENUS Project Director Dr. Verena Tunnicliffe serves on the board of directors of the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre.

The centre will showcase live marine life of the Salish Sea in 17 massive aquarium habitats. Visitors will encounter thousands of fish, invertebrates and marine plant life at home in 87 tons of seawater behind huge acrylic viewing panels.

The Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre is located in the Sidney Pier building at 9811 Seaport Place on the Sidney waterfront and will be open daily starting June 20.

More info about the Ocean Discovery Centre: www.oceansdiscovery.ca/

From June 24 to 28, the University of Victoria is hosting the second annual World Student Environmental Summit (WSES). More than 40 students from universities around the world will converge on campus to discuss one of the most pressing questions of our day: what can we do to combat global climate change?

The four-day summit will feature three key themes: energy, university sustainability and global response to climate change. Students from as far away as New Zealand, China and Ethiopia will participate in workshops, debates and other special events.

Last year, UVic biology and environmental studies student Jill Doucette and UVic business student Chantal Orr represented Canada at the first annual summit in Kyoto, Japan. This year, Doucette and Orr are co-chairs of the summit.

WikiEarth, a unique user-friendly collaborative website for earth data and peer-reviewed scientific research, will be unveiled at the summit. During the summit, a student proposal will be developed to recommend best global practices for on-campus sustainability, positive environmental policy and educational programs.

Delegates will have an opportunity to hear esteemed international keynote speakers including Dr. Rondra Pachauri, Nobel Laureate and Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), who will digitally present at the summit, and Dr. Mukesh Kapila, director of Harvard’s Green Campus Initiative; UVic business professor Dr. Andrew Weaver (IPCC author); Ms. Leith Sharp (founder of Harvard’s Green Campus Initiative). UVic business professor Dr. Ana Maria Puro (BC Institute for Co-operative Studies).

More info: www.2009wes.org

Food and drink pairing Wednesday workshops Dunlop House, Lansdowne

- June 24 – BBQ with Summer Cocktails
- July 15 – Desserts and Wine Pairings
- July 29 – Tapas and Sangria

Check camosun.ca/ce for information and registration details.

cadboro bay merchants

July 6 – 28

2009 Visual Arts Graduate Student Exhibition. A variety of works from soapstone sculptures in the form of everyday objects, to paintings of ghostly young women, to abstract soapstone sculptures in the form of everyday objects, to paintings of ghostly young women, to abstract soapstone sculptures in the form of everyday objects, to paintings of ghostly young women, to abstract soapstone sculptures in the form of everyday objects, to paintings of ghostly young women, to abstract soapstone sculptures in the form of everyday objects, to paintings of ghostly young women, to abstract soapstone sculptures in the form of everyday objects, to paintings of ghostly young women, to abstract soapstone sculptures in the form of everyday objects, to paintings of ghostly young women, to abstract soapstone sculptures in the form of everyday objects, to paintings of ghostly young women, to abstract
Solving real-world problems—by the numbers

BY MELANIE TROMP HOOVER

Numbers and estimates may not be the first tools to come to mind when you think of modern medicine, but these are the instruments that help a UVic grad solve some of the health sector’s biggest questions.

“I really enjoy using mathematics to solve real-world problems in a prestigious field like medicine—it gives you the ability to do amazing things,” says Eric Cormier, who graduated this month as co-winner of the Jubilee Medal for Science with an award in mathematics and statistics. “Statistics are a way to use math to learn from data, and their applications are everywhere.”

For Cormier, statistics’ current application is a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)-funded summer work term on campus. This is the second research award that Cormier has taken on as an undergraduate at UVic, this time working with Dr. Farouk Nathoo (math and statistics) to model multi-state processes in modern medicine.

“If there are three stages—healthy, sick and dead, for example—I work on estimating the probability of moving from state to state,” explains Cormier. “I’m trying to figure out if current estimates of, say, a recovering stroke patient moving from a poor to moderate condition, say, are accurate. This type of work contributes to a doctor’s ability to plan patient-specific recovery (based on variables like age, severity of illness, etc.).”

Cormier recently took his research on the road, presenting a case study on how climate change has affected lodgepole pine growth with partner Zheng Sun at the annual Statistics Society of Canada meeting in Vancouver on June 1.

Cormier and Sun took home first prize in the nationwide poster contest, a particularly motivating win for Cormier who was one of the few undergraduate students invited to attend.

Originally from Nelson, BC, Cormier moved west to take advantage of Victoria’s location and the reputation of UVic’s mathematics and statistics programs.

“I came to UVic and was amazed by all the opportunities presented to me, like the research projects through NSERC that allowed me to use what I was learning to make money,” explains Cormier, who also worked as a tutor, instructor and teaching assistant during his time at UVic. “It was awesome to have an opportunity to use my expertise to help people with the stuff that I find really interesting.”

Cormier isn’t sure what area of medicine his work will take him into, but he is ultimately interested in answering questions with numbers. He will begin work on his MSc in biostatistics and epidemiology this September at UBC.

Co-op leads to graduate work in nuclear physics

BY CASSIDY NUNN

When Eric Price arrived at UVic five years ago, he was steering himself toward a career as a personal trainer. After a few chemistry classes, however, his plans changed. He discovered a passion for research through four successful work terms with the Chemistry Co-op Program. Now, he aspires to graduate with his Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry, and he says he might be ready for a well-earned break. Instead, the recent recipient of an entrance scholarship for the Doctoral Program in Chemistry at UBC is already hard at work on his PhD.

Price credits the co-op program for providing the opportunity to enrich his studies and gain valuable work experience. “I think the co-op program was the best thing that I did during my degree, and it has definitely helped to influence my life after I finished my degree.”

His last two work terms at TRUMF (the national laboratory for particle and nuclear physics in Vancouver) were instrumental in landing his PhD position. Dr. Mike Adam, a senior research scientist at TRUMF, was so impressed with Price’s work term that he has become one of his PhD co-supervisors. “I’m excited about the work that he’ll produce,” says Adam.

One of the tasks that Price enjoyed most during his work terms was teaching how to use new technologies. At TRUMF he was involved in radiochemistry, something that most students don’t have the opportunity to try in school. “Working with a company or professor allows you to do a lot of things and learn how to use a lot of equipment that you wouldn’t have the time for during your degree,” he says.

While at TRUMF, Price helped develop radiopharmaceuticals used to diagnose patients with diseases such as cancer and Parkinson’s. He says the most rewarding aspect of these work terms was the impact he was having on patients’ lives.

For the next few years Price is looking forward to working on his PhD and continuing to contribute to the team at TRUMF.