UBC REPORTS

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a place of mind

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Congregation Issue

IN CEREMONIES from May 26-June 2 in Vancouver, and June 11 in Kelowna, more than 6,500 students will receive their hard-earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from UBC. For information about graduation ceremonies, visit www.graduation.ubc.ca.

Ane Launy is ready to trade the pop charts for Wall Street. PAGE 3

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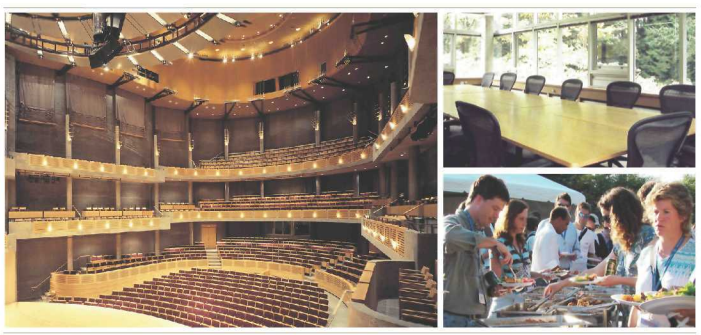

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IN THE NEWS

Highlights of UBC media coverage in April 2010. COMPILED BY HEATHER AMOS

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF PATKAU ARCHITECTS AND DEREK TAN / ANDREW TRITES / DEPT OF FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Architectural rendering of the Beaty Biodiversity Museum atrium.

Controversy over Arctic conference

Michael Byers, professor of international law and politics at UBC, discussed important issues that emerged about the Arctic from a meeting between Canada, Russia, Denmark, Norway and the United States, with ***Al Jazeera English***, ***Agence France Presse***, ***United Press International***, ***CBC*** and many others.

"We hope to see ever greater co-operation in the north, and co-operation involves building partnerships not closing doors," said Byers.

Byers' book *Who Owns the Arctic?: Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North* was named one of four finalists for this year's Donner Prize—an award that recognizes excellence in writing about Canadian public policy, as was reported in the ***Globe and Mail***, the ***Canadian Press***, the ***Toronto Star***, ***The Vancouver Sun*** and others.

UBC gets whale of a skeleton

The ***Globe and Mail***, ***CTV***, ***CBC***, ***Global***, the ***Canadian Press*** and others reported that the blue whale that washed up on a PEI shore 23 years ago arrived at its permanent home as the centerpiece of UBC's **Beaty Biodiversity Museum**.

It took a lot of work to get the skeleton ready for display; every single one of the whale's vertebra was broken and needed repairs.

"It doesn't look like the skeleton was ever broken," said project manager **Mike de Roos**. "To make it look really good was a challenge."

Looking at Sick People Can Keep You Healthy

CBS News, ***Discovery News***, ***Psychology Today***, ***Discover Magazine***, the ***Cleveland Leader*** and others reported on a new study by UBC scientists that suggests looking at people who look sick helps your immune system prevent you from getting sick.

"It seems that there is something specific about seeing people who look diseased that triggers the immune system to kick it into a higher gear," says social psychologist **Mark Schaller**.

UBC researcher in running for $100,000 prize

The ***Los Angeles Times*** and the ***Indianapolis Star*** report that UBC seahorse expert **Amanda Vincent** is among the six finalists for the $100,000 Indianapolis Prize for animal conservation.

Vincent is the co-founder of Project Seahorse, and is responsible for putting seahorses on the global conservation agenda. She holds the Canada Research Chair in Marine Conservation at UBC's Fisheries Centre and is considered the leading authority on seahorse biology and conservation.

Potentially deadly fungus spreading in B.C., northern U.S.

Science News, the ***Los Angeles Times***, ***Science Now***, ***Toronto Star*** and others reported on a potentially lethal fungus that is showing up in British Columbia and the northwestern United States in a rare but highly virulent form.

Cryptococcus gattii has caused more than 200 severe brain and lung infections and killed 24 people since 1999, and researchers have reported that a newly described strain is especially concerning.

"We don't want to overly alarm people, because it's still actually a very rare infection," says UBC's **Karen Bartlett**, an environmental hygienist who is considered one of the world's leading experts on *C. gattii*. ■

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A big heart powers his moving muscles ride

BY ERINROSE HANDY

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Engineering Physics graduate Keith Martin rode his bike across Canada in 2008 to increase awareness for muscular dystrophy.

LIKE CLARK KENT, upon first encounter Keith Martin doesn't appear to be a super hero. It is only upon reflecting on his accomplishments that you realize how special he is.

The 24-year old from Montreal, Quebec graduates this month from the Engineering Physics program. During his time at UBC, he's acquired an impressive résumé working on co-op terms for Bombardier Aerospace, General Hydrogen, Tri-Y Technologies and Ballard Power Systems. He even has U.S. and international patents pending for his work on a fuel cell seal design with Ballard Power Systems.

Martin is a founding member of the Emerging Leaders of UBC club and has held five executive positions within Sigma Chi Fraternity. He's earned numerous industry awards including the British Columbia Technology Industry Association's Technology Scholarship, the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia's (APEGBC) BC Hydro Scholarship and the APEGBC MAPS Scholarship three consecutive years. He is also a member of the Golden Key Honour Society.

But what sets Martin apart is not his ability to run faster than a speeding bullet while carrying a flame—although he was an Olympic torchbearer this winter—or Storm the Wall in a single bound, or his résumé. What sets him apart as a super man is the effect he has on others.

"It's a pretty special feeling to inspire people, to make a difference in their lives, to feel we made an impact through our actions," says Martin.

During the summer of 2008 Martin rode his bike across Canada to increase awareness and fundraise for muscular dystrophy, a condition he has.

Along with his Sigma Chi fraternity brothers Michael McDonald and Patrick Cuthbert (BASc '08) and two other friends, Jonathan Taves and Brian Sprague, the "Flying Five" raised $200,000 for Muscular Dystrophy Canada.

As part of the fundraising effort, Martin wrote *The Flying Five: The Odyssey of the Moving Muscles Ride* (Flying Five Press) detailing the 7,800 km journey. It chronicles the 85-day journey beginning with a ceremonial dip in the Pacific and ending with a shot of screech in the Atlantic, sublimely and elegantly describing the geography and culture of the nation.

The story is dedicated to the thousands of Canadians who live with muscular dystrophy and other neuromuscular disorders.

"My hope is that this story will help them and their families to better cope and encourage them to strive towards goals that might otherwise seem out of reach," says Martin.

During Martin's second year at UBC, he was diagnosed with facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy (FSHD), a muscle-deteriorating genetic condition. The condition presents itself by progressive weakness of facial, shoulder and upper-arm muscles, and affects balance.

> ***"The knowledge that confronting my ailment could inspire not only others with the disorder, but anyone who would learn about the ride, was a huge motivator for me."***

"There have been many times when I struggled to cope with the realization that my body was not going to function how I wanted it to," says Martin. "Not only did I see this trip as a way for me to deal with my affliction but I wanted to be able to turn it into something positive and help others. The knowledge that confronting my ailment could inspire not only others with the disorder, but anyone who would learn about the ride, was a huge motivator for me."

The group faced many highs and lows along the journey, the worst being two weeks of headwinds on the Prairies; one day was so bad, they rode only 60 kilometers, averaging 12 kilometers per hour.

A highpoint of the journey for Martin was a homecoming in summer community Metis Beach, Quebec—complete with fire engine escorts, ringing church bells and about 300 people cheering them on.

"I'm proud that we set a goal and we accomplished it—exceeded it," says Martin.

He refers to both the bike ride and the fundraising goal. In addition to the grueling physical endeavor, Martin engineered a significant fundraising campaign—sending letters to friends, family and corporate sponsors, creating a website, purchasing equipment and inspiring people to give money.

After the successful effort, Martin was named a Muscular Dystrophy Canada National Ambassador, has been a keynote speaker at two conferences, and received the Michel Louvain award as Client of the Year.

One young fan wrote to him, "I truly think meeting you was way better than meeting a celebrity. It makes me realize that normal people can make a difference."

Martin shares the secret of his success: "I focus on what I can do instead of what I cannot," he says.

Visit the moving muscles website at: www.movingmusclesride.ca.

To discover more Faculty of Applied Science rising stars, visit: www.apsc.ubc.ca/stars/congregation10. ■

Olympic organizer, TV ranter, Gen X author, astronaut to receive UBC honorary degrees

THE ARCHITECT of Canada's Golden 2010 Games, a much-loved Canadian comedian, an acclaimed B.C. writer and artist, and an accomplished astronaut and engineer are among the 12 individuals who will receive honorary degrees during Spring and Fall ceremonies this year from the University of British Columbia.

JOHN FURLONG is the CEO of VANOC, the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Furlong, who came to Canada from Ireland more than three decades ago, was also the President and COO for the Vancouver 2010 Bid Corporation.

RICK MERCER is the co-creator of the popular This Hour has 22 Minutes and host of The Rick Mercer Report. Mercer has received more than 20 Gemini awards. He is co-chair of the Spread the Net campaign, which provides bed nets to protect children in Africa from malaria.

DOUGLAS COUPLAND is a Vancouver-based writer and artist who is perhaps best known for his first novel, Generation X, which became a major cultural phenomenon after being published in 1990. Since then, he has published nearly 20 more works of fiction and non-fiction, and he has been involved in television, film and theatrical work.

JULIE PAYETTE, who will receive her degree in the Fall, was Chief Astronaut with the Canadian Space Agency from 2000 to 2007. In 1992, the agency chose Payette from thousands of candidates to serve as one of four astronauts. Payette flew aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery in 1999, and aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour in 2009.

Other Vancouver campus recipients, in alphabetical order:

- **DR. JAMES C. HOGG**, founder of the Pulmonary Research Laboratory at St. Paul's Hospital (renamed in 2003) and a member of the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame
- **MARIA KLAWE**, a former Dean of Science at UBC and the President of Harvey Mudd College in California
- **ALANIS OBOMSAWIN**, a distinguished documentary filmmaker and advocate for Aboriginal filmmaking
- **LOUIS NIRENBERG** (Fall recipient), an exceptional mathematician and committed educator
- **DAL RICHARDS**, the leader of the Dal Richards Orchestra, which has performed at the Pacific National Exhibition for 70 consecutive years
- **IAN WALLACE**, an artist, theorist and scholar who has taught and mentored some of Vancouver's most noteworthy artists
- **IBRAHIM GEDEON**, Chief Technology Officer at TELUS Communications Inc.
- **DR. NORA VOLKOW**, an internationally recognized leader in addiction medicine and Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

UBC's Okanagan campus holds its Convocation ceremony on June 11, and will award an honorary degree to Dr. Samantha Nutt, founder of the humanitarian organization War Child Canada.

Rick Mercer

For ceremony schedules visit: www.graduation.ubc.ca

Pharmacy grad ready for adventure

BY LORRAINE CHAN

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

FACULTY OF PHARMACY

Paralympian medalist Bobby Taylor has worked as a commercial fisherman, taught English in Japan and is now tackling the healthcare field.

LIKE MOST VANCOUVERITES, Bobby Taylor cheered himself hoarse during the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. But as a Paralympic medalist and a volunteer at Whistler, Taylor enjoyed a ringside seat.

"I could enter the field of play and it was like old times with my teammates," says Taylor, who worked on the crew that painted the blue lines bordering the ski course. "A highlight was watching Lauren Woolstencroft win her fifth gold medal during her fifth race."

Being so close to the action was a poignant flashback to his own competitive ski racing days, says Taylor, who graduates from the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences this month.

Between 2004 and 2006, Taylor was a member of Canada's para-alpine ski team as guide to his legally blind partner, Chris Williamson. They won Paralympic bronze and silver. With six per cent vision, Williamson would navigate by looking for Taylor as the shape that preceded him down the slope. The two would communicate via radio microphone and an earpiece.

Taylor had to make sure he was centimetres apart from Williamson during a slalom, a distance that would increase up to 30 metres for events like downhill.

"Depending on the race, we'd sometimes be reaching speeds of 110 kilometres an hour," recalls Taylor.

Ski racing came easily to Taylor, a West Vancouver native who took his first lessons on Cypress Mountain. His agility and prowess won him a ski-racing scholarship at the University of Alaska where he earned a BSc in biology in 1999.

While volunteering at the Paralympics this March, Taylor glimpsed possible career options that combine sports and pharmaceutical sciences. He was able to visit the "polyclinic" at Whistler's Olympic Village. These mini hospitals are equipped with emergency care, dental clinic, labs and pharmacy to provide athletes with top-notch medical attention,

"It was great to see what happens behind the scenes and especially how a pharmacist works in that setting."

And now Taylor will gain further insights into his new profession as he has won a coveted spot with the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority for a year-long residency at a hospital pharmacy.

"A lot of people think the job is about counting pills or mixing potions, but it's really more about using our knowledge of therapeutics and pharmacology to ensure patients are getting appropriate medication"

Taylor zeroed in on UBC when it came to pursuing a pharmaceutical sciences degree. "There are other faculties across Canada offering similar programs, but this is where I want to be."

UBC has always been part of his life, explains Taylor. As a child, he frequently visited his father, Steve Taylor, who taught in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture before his retirement.

Taylor says he will no doubt find great adventures and rich life experiences in the healthcare field. "My nature is that whatever I do, I like to give it all I have."

Apart from the ski racing, Taylor has also travelled the world, taught English in Japan, worked on a commercial fishing boat and has self-published a book of his photography featuring B.C.'s remarkable coastline. ■

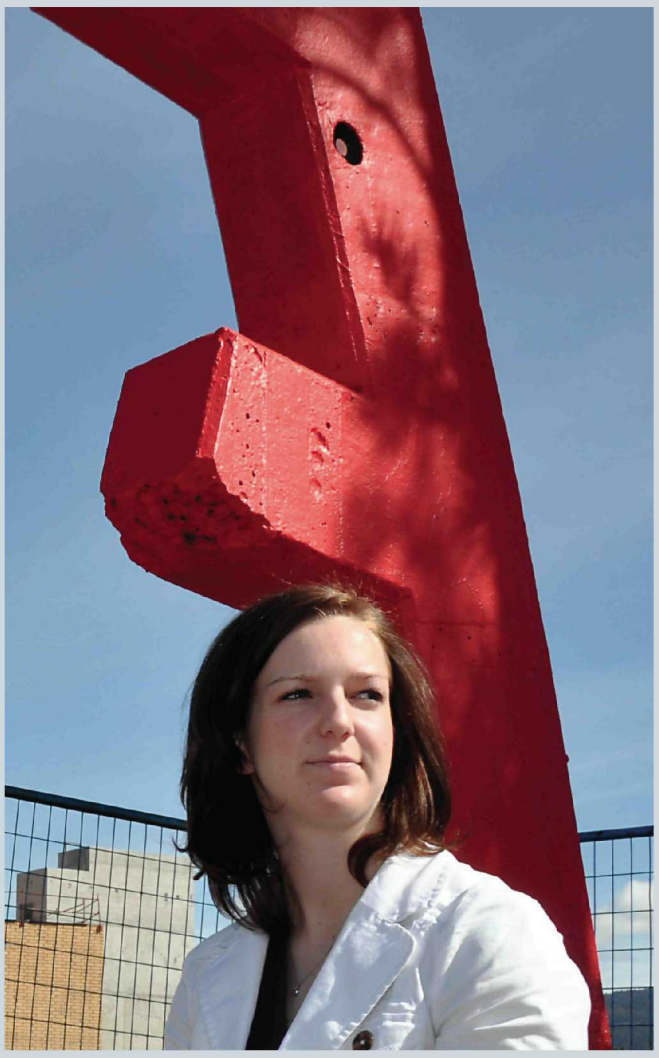

PHOTO: JODY JACOB

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING

Erin Johnston is in the first class to graduate with a Bachelor of Applied Science in electrical engineering from the School of Engineering at UBC's Okanagan campus.

Engineering a first in the Okanagan

BY JODY JACOB

WHEN ERIN JOHNSTON steps across the stage this June to accept her degree in electrical engineering, she will be part of the first graduating cohort of the School of Engineering at UBC's Okanagan campus in Kelowna.

"It's been a really amazing, somewhat unexpected journey," says Johnston. "I'm really glad I chose to come through this program. The small class sizes were a huge benefit to me, and I built some really great relationships with both classmates and professors."

A lot of changes have taken place since the School of Engineering was established in 2005, and Johnston has witnessed many of them. The Kelowna native arrived for her first year of studies with a UBC Major Entrance Scholarship of $20,000, and as a student added other awards including the Stantec Scholarship in Engineering, a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) Undergraduate Research Award, Canadian Tire A.J. Billes Scholarship, and, most recently, Co-op Student of the Year.

"Definitely I would have to say that co-op education has played a big role in my development," says Johnston. "When I came to university I wasn't even sure what stream of engineering I was interested in. I dove in and discovered through co-op education that electrical engineering is where my passion lies."

Johnston participated in five work terms as an engineering student. They ranged from working with an IT department at an oil mine in Fort McMurray to research-intensive work opportunities in a lab at UBC.

"To be honest, I wasn't expecting research to be my thing," says Johnston. "But once I became involved with it, I found I really liked it."

Johnston had such a great experience working as an undergraduate researcher that she has decided to return this September to the Okanagan campus to pursue a master's degree in electrical engineering. Her interest lies in digital design and micro-computers.

"The co-op opportunity was so valuable. You get the experience and really understand what you want to do," says Johnston, who has acted as an ambassador for the co-op program over the last few years, mentoring her fellow engineering students. "The School of Engineering is able to connect students with engineering professionals in so many disciplines."

Over the past five years, some of Johnson's best memories come from the close-knit bonds with faculty and classmates.

In March, Johnston was part of a group of graduates who traveled to Vancouver to receive their Iron Rings.

"In Canada, when you graduate from engineering you get an Iron Ring," said Johnston, adding that it is a tradition unique to Canada that serves as a reminder for engineers to live by a high standard of professional conduct.

"I know everyone in the graduating class, which is really nice, and it was a very memorable experience to travel down to Vancouver to get our rings—everyone was so excited. Some engineers from companies in Kelowna came down with us to do the presentation."

Johnston hopes that after her master's degree she can use the local connections built through the School of Engineering to find work in the Okanagan, and find a way to give back to the community her heart has always called home. ■

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Teklemichael Sahlemarian relishes the opportunities he has to help fellow Ethiopians.

FACULTY OF LAW

Law grad had to flee homeland

BY LORRAINE CHAN

TEKLEMICHAEL SAHLEMARIAM never takes justice for granted.

The UBC law graduate knows too well the costs of injustice.

In 2001, Sahlemariam was in his fourth year and president of the student government at Addis Ababa University Law School when he learned that the government was arresting students. Sahlemariam and other activists were speaking out for greater academic freedom and human rights.

With the help of a friend, Sahlemariam fled the country.

"In a dictatorship, there is no other opinion except for the government's," he says. "That is why I love Canada. Here, you can leave your home in the morning and know that you'll be able to return safely that night."

Sahlemariam escaped the fate of 40 youths who were gunned down in the streets of Addis Ababa in April 2001.

He made his way to Kenya where he stayed "in limbo" at a refugee camp for four years.

In 2005, his story took a happier turn. Sahlemariam was sponsored by the Dunbar Heights United Church for permanent residency in Canada. In Vancouver, he was "adopted" by a Canadian family that he continues to live with.

Sahlemariam initially attended Langara College and Royal Roads University, and in 2007 was accepted into law at UBC.

"I really wanted to study here because of the reputation of UBC and the close ties I have to my Canadian family," he says, adding that Vancouver's mild weather and stunning views also sweetened the deal.

Throughout his studies, Sahlemariam has worked nights and weekends to earn money to support himself and to send funds to his family as well as friends living in refugee camps in Kenya, Eritrea, and Uganda. He currently works as an attendant at a residence for people living with mental illness and addiction.

"Two hundred dollars a month can support a large group of people," says Sahlemariam, who was born in Negelle Borena, and raised in Arsi Negelle, small towns that are 600 kilometres and 225 kilometres respectively from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital.

> ***"In a dictatorship, there is no other opinion except for the government's," he says. "That is why I love Canada. Here, you can leave your home in the morning and know that you'll be able to return safely that night."***

With a Juris Doctor in hand, Sahlemariam says he hopes to find an articling job in possible areas that include criminal law, immigration, administrative or human rights law.

What fuels his hopes and dreams is to help free his country, says Sahlemariam. But at this point, he has no plans to return to Ethiopia "since I would be required to renounce everything I believe in and tell the government that I totally agree with them."

Instead, Sahlemariam is plugged into a network of Ethiopian activists across Canada and abroad. This month, he is organizing a fundraiser to sponsor a candidate for Ethiopia's upcoming federal election although "no one expects the election to be free and fair by any standard."

With a couple of friends, he co-hosts two Co-op Radio programs, Meleket Radio and Radio Ethiopia.

Sahlemariam is also a member of the Ethiopian Canadian Citizens League. The organization is working with Burnaby-New Westminster MP Peter Julian to sponsor a private member's bill for supporting human rights in Ethiopia and freeing political prisoner Birtukan Mideksa, a 36-year-old woman who is the president of the main opposition party in Ethiopia.

"This is what gives me happiness. These are the ways I try to make change." ■

School of Engineering graduates first Okanagan cohort

BY JODY JACOB

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT NUMBERS have exploded since the School of Engineering at UBC's Okanagan campus opened in 2005, going from 76 students in the first year to 482 students currently studying toward their Bachelor of Applied Science degrees in Civil, Electrical or Mechanical Engineering.

This June, an important milestone will be reached with the graduation of the School's first cohort of students, who began their studies in 2005.

"The ultimate goal of the School of Engineering is to graduate people who will make a difference in the world," says Spiro Yannacopoulos, Associate Dean and Director of the School of Engineering. "As a school, we will measure our success by the success of our graduates."

Today, the School has 36 master's students and 34 PhD students, and the graduate program has received hundreds of applications from all over the world this year alone.

To accommodate the ever-expanding group of students, faculty and staff, a new $68-million dollar building will soon become home to the School of Engineering, the Faculty of Management and the Faculty of Education.

"We have evolved into a program that is garnering a reputation for excellence across the globe," says Yannacopoulos. "We have worked very hard to create a first-rate program with an international scope that focuses on things like team work, research opportunities, design, technology, and industry experience." ■

PHOTO: JODY JACOB

Spiro Yannacopoulos, Associate Dean and Director of the School of Engineering, has seen tremendous growth in the Engineering program.

Determination to start over

BY HEATHER AMOS

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Nantha Rajkumar practiced dentistry in Sri Lanka for 10 years before moving her family to Canada because of social unrest and violence.

WITH THE PILES OF HOMEWORK, hours of lectures and lots of stressful exams, most students can't wait to escape school at the end of the day. For Nantha Rajkumar its different—she can't stay away.

Last year, Rajkumar was forced to take a year off of school for medical reasons. But every day, she would walk to the Nobel Biocare Oral Health Centre, on UBC's Vancouver campus, to visit with the faculty and staff from her dentistry program.

"They took the time every day. They felt like friends and family," says Rajkumar. "I appreciated all they did to help me get through a difficult year, they were very supportive."

Finding a network has meant a lot to the UBC Dentistry graduate. Seven years ago, Rajkumar had two well established dentistry practices in Sri Lanka and was surrounded by family and friends.

But social unrest and violence were escalating. Rajkumar and her husband decided to leave the country with their children, then aged two and four.

Scarborough, Ontario was a big change from Sri Lanka's capital of Colombo. In Sri Lanka, Rajkumar had been so busy with her practices that her children had to spend a lot of time with their grandparents and extended family. Now in Canada, the children found the separation hard and worried about their relatives back home. Plus, the parents realized they'd have to upgrade their credentials in Canada.

For two years, Rajkumar stayed home with their children as they adjusted to Canadian life. Her husband, previously an electronic engineer, worked as a technician to support the family.

By 2005, Rajkumar was ready to start work again. She took eligibility exams and asked around about dentistry programs. Canadian dentist friends suggested UBC. She researched and found out it had a good reputation as a learning institution, and decided it was the best place for her to continue her career.

"When I came for the interview, they knew how I felt as a dentist from another country," she says. "They respected that I was a dentist and made me feel very comfortable."

The family packed up again and moved to Vancouver in 2007 so Rajkumar could do a two-year International Dental Degree Completion Program leading to a Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) degree.

She wasn't upset about having to come back to school despite having practiced dentistry for 10 years in her home country. She's learned about new technologies, new approaches to dentistry skills, how the insurance process works and how to manage a practice here in Canada.

The smiling grad says the process of establishing yourself as a professional in a new country was more challenging than she expected including the illness that forced her to take a year of medical leave. Luckily, her children and her husband have been there to cheer her on.

"They knew how important this was to me," says Rajkumar, who returned to her studies this September, and will be walking across the stage on June 1.

After a few years of working for someone else, Rajkumar would like to open her own practice again. This would make her 10-year-old daughter happy. Having always looked up to mom, she hopes to become a dentist and inherit a family practice some day.

Rajkumar would also like to come back to UBC and teach part-time in the school's clinics. "I'd like to keep these friendships," she says. ■

An appetite for service

BY CHRIS BALMA

CALLING ALIA DHARAMSI A 'FOODIE' would be a bit of an understatement.

Dharamsi, a fourth-year Integrated Sciences Program (ISP) student, has turned her passion for all things nutrition-related—the, social, cultural, physiological and developmental impact of food—into a guiding principle.

"We can't have civil society, we can't have children learning well in school, we can't have families functioning together, if people don't have food," says Dharamsi, who graduates this month. "Food is the basis of our society—we gather together to share meals, to learn about each other. And it's at that basic level that I want to have an impact."

That passion has guided the Wesbrook and Premier Undergraduate Scholar throughout her studies, community service and travels. In 2007 she took on the presidency of the UBC Meal Exchange Chapter, leading the student-driven chapter of the national non-profit to raise more than $54,000 worth of food for local families—placing the UBC Chapter amongst the most successful in Meal Exchange history. The experience—along with volunteering with the Alma Mater Society Food Bank—connected her studies in nutrition and physiology to the day-to-day impact that food security and hunger has on individuals and families.

"I got involved in ISP shortly after joining Meal Exchange. I'm fascinated by the impact that food and nutrition have—not only on society—but on our ability to fight disease, to learn, and to function as living, breathing units. And the great thing about the ISP is that you build your own program, and then rationalize why."

Dharamsi has also made food a key ingredient in her work as a mentor and tutor in Vancouver's inner city schools. Through the UBC Learning Exchange's Trek Program and the Let's Talk Science program, she not only shares her expertise in science and math with high-school and junior high school students, but also makes sure she conveys the importance that nutrition plays in learning.

"Children need food and proper nutrition to think, and they need to know the importance of this directly. You can't learn if you're hungry and can't be expected to participate in class if your stomach is empty."

Most of the students Dharamsi mentors are girls, many of whom have all too common mental blocks associated with math. "It's one of those things that I struggled with immensely early on and had to conquer. And what frustrated me was hearing girls say: 'Oh girls aren't supposed to be good at math.' Math can open so many doors, though young students might not see that immediately. It's vital to let them know, and see, that university is cool, being smart is cool, and that post-secondary education in science is entirely within their grasp."

In 2007 she took on the presidency of the UBC Meal Exchange, leading the student-driven chapter of the national non-profit to raise more than $54,000 worth of food for local families.

Dharamsi capped off her four years as a UBC undergrad with a service trip to a small village just outside La Antigua, Guatemala—an experience that tied together her passion for helping people acquire the food, water and shelter they need, along with building knowledge and capabilities. Mornings were spent painting the learning centre, updating school electrical systems, and completing cement work at local schools. Afternoons were spent teaching literacy to local students.

To someone already well versed in the impact that food scarcity and poverty have on Vancouver communities, the trip was an uneasy analog. "The parallels between the inner city and developing world are striking. Kids who don't see their parents. Children who can't

Music, TV entertainer has talent for business

BY BASIL WAUGH

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Ane Launy will trade the pop charts for Wall Street after steering a $4-million stock portfolio through extreme market conditions.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO READ TABLOIDS to know that child entertainers don't have the best track record for adjusting to life after show business.

Just don't tell that to Ane Launy, a former TV and pop star from Norway, who will trade the pop charts for Wall Street after she graduates from UBC in May.

The 23-year-old Oslo native is moving to New York City after being headhunted by financial giant Goldman Sachs on the strength of her performance steering a $4-million stock portfolio through the recent global financial meltdown as an undergraduate student in UBC's Sauder School of Business.

The move to the Big Apple completes a transition out of a music career that started before she entered her teens. After singing and playing in a band and orchestras, Launy was handpicked at age 13 from auditions across Norway for the teenage pop duo, Lollipops.

"We were definitely unlike today's child stars," she says, laughing. "We were just singing disco and pop music versions of traditional Norwegian children songs, but being able to record albums and tour around for concerts at such a young age was a lot of fun and a pretty maturing experience."

After releasing three albums for Sony BMG and performing to audiences of more than 18,000, TV was next. In her final year of high school, camera crews followed Launy and friends through to graduation in a 12-episode documentary-style TV show on Norway's equivalent of the CBC.

"By the age of 16, I had already experienced what many artists work years to get," says Launy. "Because of that, it was easier for me to walk away when I grew older and wanted to try new things."

That's when Launy started looking at universities abroad. She says UBC was recommended by friends who had just graduated from Sauder. "At Sauder I could get a comprehensive business degree that I couldn't get at many American universities as an undergraduate," she says. "Being in a beautiful city so close to mountains for skiing was just an added bonus."

Launy's path to Wall Street began in her first year at UBC, thanks to a chance encounter. On a whim, she and a friend attended an information session for the UBC Portfolio Management Foundation, a two-year extracurricular program where business students gain hands-on experience managing a real portfolio of stocks and bonds, currently valued at $4.1-million.

"I was just blown away by the responsibilities these students had," says Launy, who has since interned with Norwegian oil giant Statoil in China, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and Phillips, Hager and North Investment Management. "I was in awe of how these students got to manage real money, work and intern in cities around the world and be mentored by such experienced alumni and business professionals."

Accepted into the program with six other students a year later, Launy and her classmates steered the 24-year-old fund through some of the most extreme market conditions in recent history. Over the past year, the fund is up nearly 50 per cent, better than the market, which has grown less than 30 per cent.

"Over the past two years, we were fortunate to experience both a boom and a bust," says Launy, whose team met regularly to discuss investment strategies in new social spaces created by Sauder's $85-million expansion and renewal. "Experiencing such unprecedented market conditions was an unbelievable learning opportunity, and definitely taught us to be humble."

Launy credits her team's success to a network of faculty, alumni, fund managers, and mentors that guide the students through their investment research and decisions. Her chief mentor was Justin Roach of Bank of America and Merrill Lynch, who she met with often for personal guidance and career advice.

"Whenever I had an investment idea or was struggling with something, I had these amazing business leaders who were so generous with their time, experience and expertise," says Launy. "I just feel really privileged to have had this opportunity."

Inspired by mentors, Launy and her peers have started donating their own time to causes, most recently organizing a fundraiser for Room To Read, an international charity that builds schools and libraries in developing countries. They have also volunteered with the Down Syndrome Research Foundation and the annual Ride To Conquer Cancer.

"The amount of giving back that I've seen over the past few years at UBC was very new to me—you just don't see the same widespread involvement in Norway," says Launy. "Seeing first-hand how such busy people make time to give back, and the impact it can have, I hope one day to be able to do the same."

Learn more about the UBC Portfolio Management Foundation program at ubcpmf.com. ■

> ***"At Sauder I could get a comprehensive business degree that I couldn't get at many American universities as an undergraduate."***

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Alia Dharamsi wants to make a positive impact on food—the basis upon which civil society is built.

read. Children who don't have three meals a day. Children and families not meeting their protein or calorie requirements. It was an amazing, humbling experience."

It's also an experience that might have helped cement Dharamsi's long-term plans.

Dharamsi will be moving on to medical school to focus on paediatrics. But her eventual goal is to secure a position with an organization like the World Health Organization or Médecins Sans Frontières, with an eye to help bring a clinical balance to public health policy planning.

"I live and breathe food all the time, and UBC and ISP have enabled me to combine my passions. So I can talk about the science—why our bodies actually need nutrition and the impact it has developmentally—but I can also talk about food from the social sciences perspective, from the humanities and developmental angle." ■

FACULTY OF ARTS

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Inspired by the memory of her grandmother, Stephanie Charlie plans to run for office in Cowichan First Nation's next election.

Pursuing education to serve

BY BASIL WAUGH

WHEN HER FIRST NATION signs its first-ever treaty, Stephanie Charlie wants to be there.

"I want to help my community," says Charlie, a graduating UBC arts student and member of Cowichan Tribes, one of Canada's largest First Nation communities, located in Duncan on Vancouver Island. "That is why I plan to run for councilor in our next election."

Although just in her 30s, Charlie is no stranger to the campaign trail. Last year, she ran to be a band councilor – up against more than 70 candidates – while juggling classes at UBC.

"That was such a busy time for me," says Charlie, one of 120 Aboriginal students graduating from UBC this academic year. "I was commuting from the Island to UBC, working evenings, doing my school, and raising my daughter," she says, referring to Kaitlyn, her four-year-old.

Charlie likes her chances better next time around. After graduation in May, she will return to Cowichan where she, her partner Gerald and Kaitlyn have a house. But more importantly, she says there is a generational shift occurring in many Aboriginal communities across Canada.

"There is a movement to have more young people taking on leadership roles," says Charlie, noting her band and the province have begun treaty negotiations. "As leaders get older, there are more opportunities for young people with higher education and skills to make a positive impact. Elders are encouraging youth to take on more leadership roles."

Charlie credits her grandmother, Lillian, a well-known community health representative who worked closely with residential school survivors, for inspiring her to serve her community. "I was raised by my grandparents and loved watching them helping people," says Charlie, whose grandparents recently passed away. "My grandmother taught me that true communities help each other and never look down on anyone less fortunate. She really inspired me to do what I am doing."

Before coming to UBC, Charlie studied at Malaspina College and Vancouver's Institute of Indigenous Governance, and is now considering graduate programs in First Nations governance. "I am kind of addicted to education," she says. "Part of it is wanting to better myself, but I also want to be able to look my daughter in the eye when I tell her she's got to go to university."

Charlie says the UBC Museum of Anthropology attracted her to UBC, along with the Faculty of Arts' First Nations Studies Program, which explores aboriginality through a variety of disciplines, including law, history, education, and fine arts. She credits a special teacher for igniting a special passion for history.

"Professor Coll Thrush made history come alive for me," says Charlie, who stayed with Musqueum relatives while attending UBC. "He is just so passionate about what he teaches and opens up so many ideas. In our first history class, he welcomed us in Hunquminum, a Musqueum dialect, and Lushootseed, the indigenous language of Puget Sound. That really had an impact on me."

At UBC, Charlie did a practicum with a First Nations health organization, researching documentation of traditional medicine practices and uses. Her thesis advisor was Linc Kessler, a professor of Oglala Lakota ancestry who is leading UBC's Aboriginal Strategic Plan to increase financial support for Aboriginal students and the recruitment of First Nations students and faculty.

Outside school, Charlie consults for Stantec, a company that performs environmental assessments for businesses in resource industries, including mining and oil. The experience, which involves minimizing environmental and community impacts, will serve her well in politics.

"My job is to facilitate the consultation process," Charlie says. "I communicate potential impacts of a project on communities, and bring concerns and wishes back to the planners. My main concern is always that First Nations people are being heard and that they understand the project and the process."

Political aspirations aside, Charlie also plans to put her passion for history to good use. One day, she hopes to write the history of Cowichan.

"Do you know Coast Salish chiefs travelled to England by steam ship to protest their treatment by B.C. settlers to then King Edward VIII back in 1902?" Charlie says. "Or that Sir James Douglas began selling Cowichan land to settlers without any negotiations?

"These are things you don't read in most history books and it would help if everybody did," she says. "I want to foster pride, especially among our youth, by telling the story of our people and our achievements."

Learn more about the First Nations Studies Program at arts.ubc.ca and UBC's Aboriginal Strategy at aboriginal.ubc.ca. ■

Charlie credits her grandmother, Lillian, a well-known community health representative who worked closely with residential school survivors, for inspiring her to serve her community.

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UBC Media Group

A passion for the Arctic

BY LORRAINE CHAN

PHOTO: COURTESY ASHLEY TUFTS

Ashley Tufts found UBC intimidating at first, especially since there are more people on campus than in all of Nunavut.

AS GLOBAL ATTENTION ON THE ARCTIC heats up, Ashley Tufts is all the more eager to return home to Iqaluit.

Her passion is protecting the delicate ecosystems and uniqueness of Arctic life, says Tufts who grew up in Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, located on the south coast of Baffin Island.

While outsiders may shudder at the minus 40 Celsius cold and barren vistas, Tufts says she loves the endless horizon of newly fallen snow, pristine stillness and strong community ties.

"Some of my best memories are of getting up at 4 a.m. and jumping on the back of the snowmobile with my Dad to go caribou hunting."

A Canadian Merit Loran Scholar, Tufts is graduating from the Global Resource Systems program in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems where she focused on environmental studies within the Circumpolar North.

"I would like more than anything to work towards ensuring we maintain the integrity, serenity and pure beauty the Arctic has to offer," says Tufts, who aims to find a position with the federal government, either Environment Canada or Indian and Northern Affairs.

"A changing climate will inevitably alter the balance that has been in place for centuries."

This past December, Tufts' firsthand knowledge of Canada's north stood her in good stead when she traveled to Copenhagen. Selected from applicants across Canada, Tufts co-led the Arctic team as one of 30 Canadian youth delegates at the 15th United Nations Conference on Climate Change.

"I would really like to see our federal government enforce stricter environmental regulations within the Northwest Passage, while making it internationally known that the Northern arctic archipelago and all waterways in between are internal waters," says Tufts.

"This would allow us to regulate the number of ships entering and determine whether or not they pose a significant threat to the marine ecosystem."

Tufts' present poise and confidence would have surprised her younger self. She admits coming to UBC was a bit intimidating at first, especially given the size of the Vancouver campus.

"There are more people at UBC then there are in all of Nunavut."

However, Tufts quickly found her feet and began to thrive especially after getting involved as a resident advisor for UBC Student Housing and Hospitality Services.

"It is not only the academics here at UBC that have prepared me for what I want to do following graduation, but it was the learning experiences and opportunities that have really enabled me to grow as a person."

Tufts' advice for other UBC students is never to settle for anything less than what they truly want to do.

"It makes a world of difference if your heart is into everything you are working towards, and whether it takes you four, five, or six years to graduate, you will be that much more passionate at the end when you know you have spent your time working towards something you love!" ■

Selected from applicants across Canada, Tufts co-led the Arctic team as one of 30 Canadian youth delegates at the 15th United Nations Conference on Climate Change.

Helping others move beyond trauma

BY HEATHER AMOS

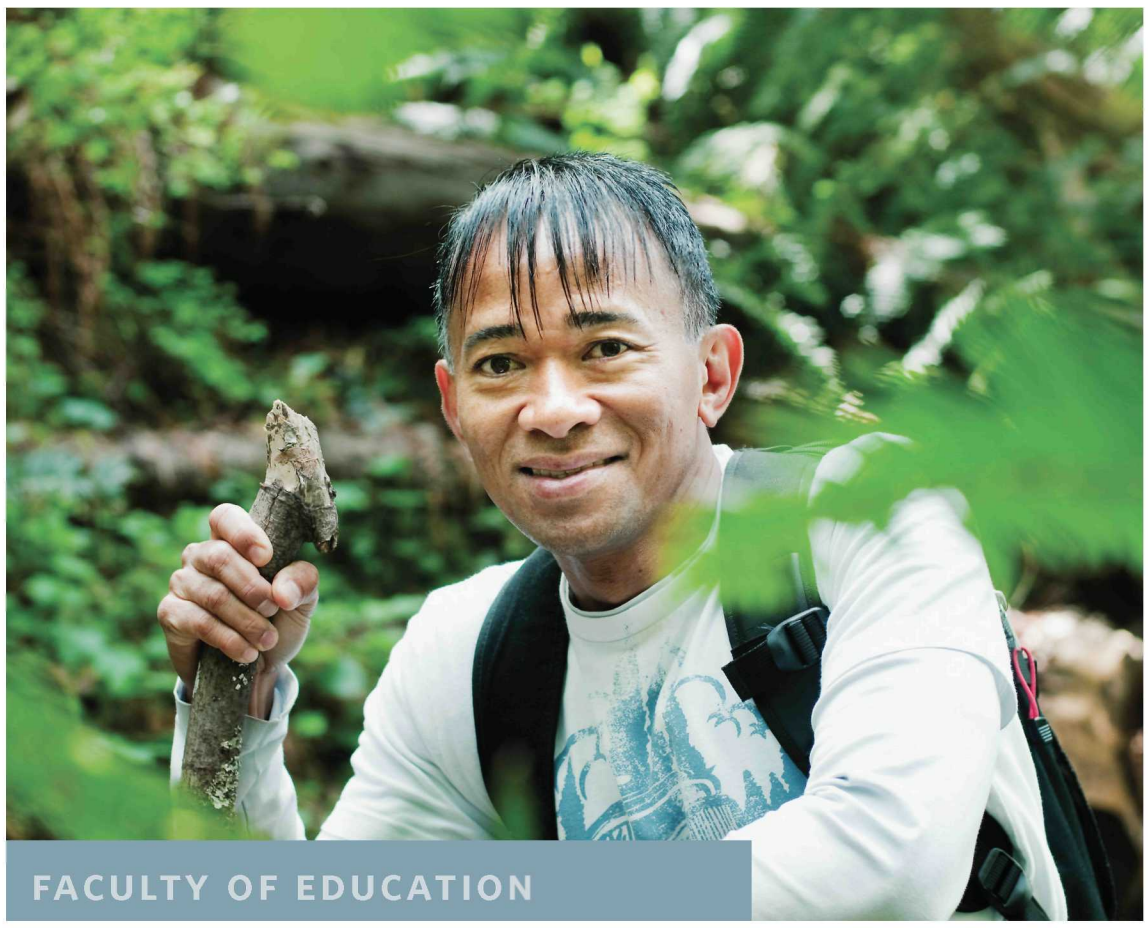

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

From activist in the Philippines to trauma psychotherapist, Mok Escueta is now working with veterans and their families.

CEMETERIES are what made Mok Escueta realize he was onto something.

Every member of his group of trauma patients shared a similar desire to seek solitude and peace in cemeteries. This kind of unexpected commonality helped Escueta understand how important it is to bring together people grappling with similar problems and get them talking.

"It's more powerful than I originally thought it would be," says the PhD graduate of the Department of Educational Studies.

For his PhD research, Escueta brought together a group of trauma patients, most of whom had experienced neglect, physical or sexual abuse as children and had difficulty coping with the affects.

Having developed mental health concerns, this group of patients met Escueta once a week at the Centre for Concurrent Disorders, a community mental health clinic that is part of Vancouver Coastal Health.

A trained psychotherapist, Escueta wanted to see if techniques used in popular education, a field that brings together politics and teaching, could contribute to his patients' trauma recovery.

Popular education is a way of teaching that involves participation, dialogue, and united action. The idea is to translate learning into action. Instead of being told what issues or problems exist, group members work together to identify these problems and do something about them. Popular education often involves using the arts. As part of his project, Escueta researched the use of visual arts.

"The use of visuals is quite powerful in trauma work," says Escueta, who had his patients draw visual representations of their emotions and experiences. In one exercise, the participants drew images that were saw-toothed with jagged lines bouncing all over the page. "For many it describes their entire lives," he says.

Growing up in the Philippines,

continued on page 11

BREATHLESS DAYS 1959 - 1960

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Image detail: Jess, *Untitled (Eros)*, c. 1956. Collection of the Belkin Art Gallery. Gift of Robin Blaser and David Farewell. Photo: Howard Ursuliak. © Jess Collins Trust.

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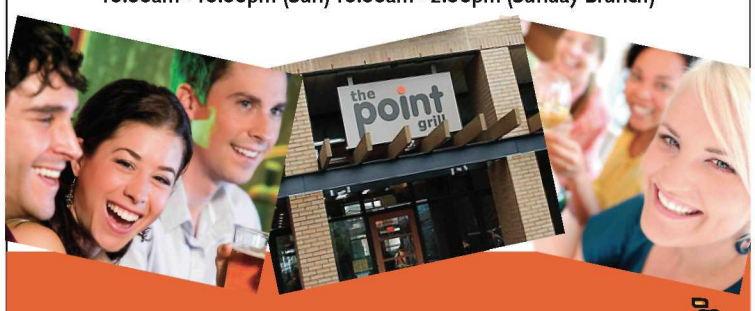

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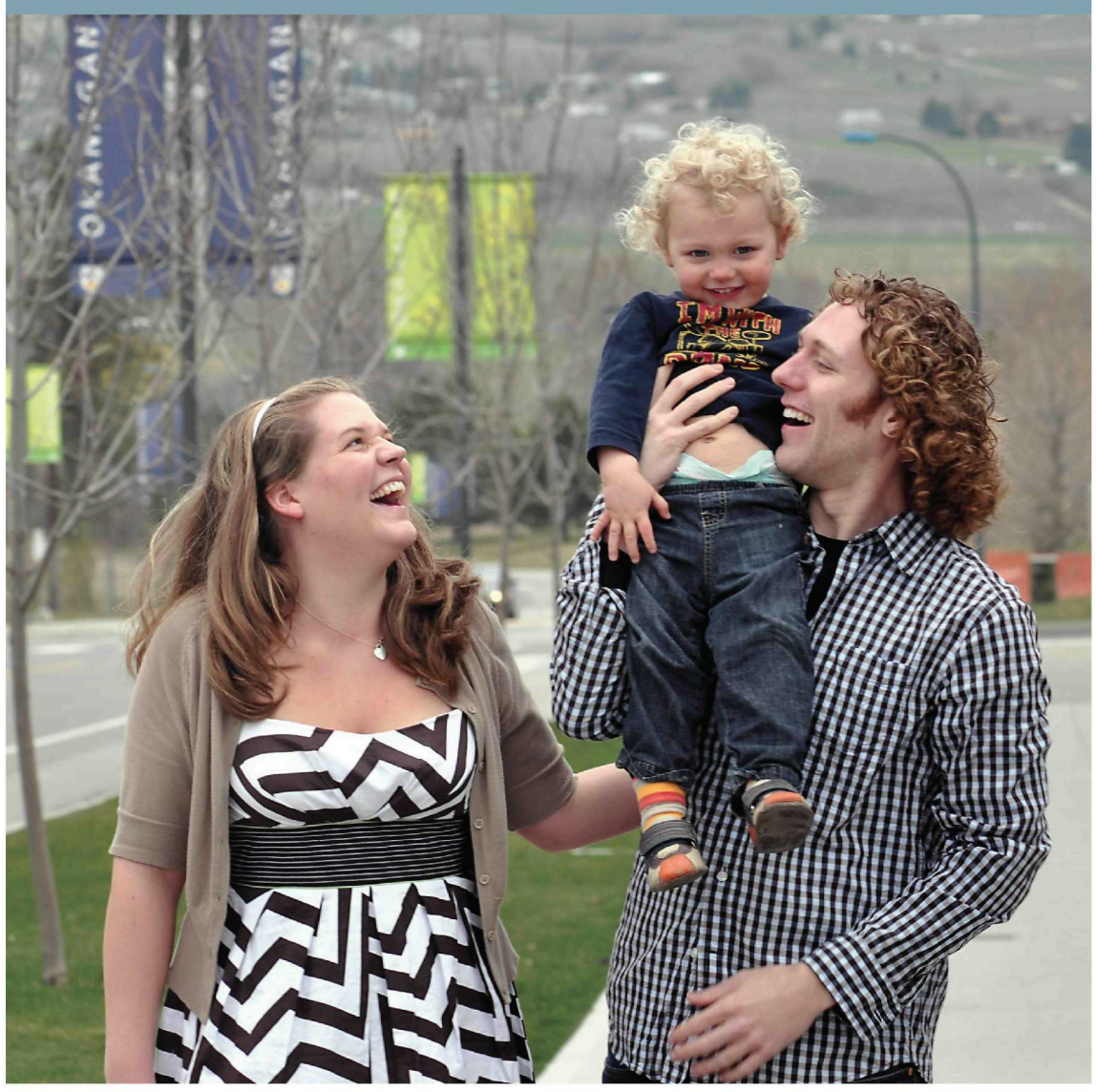

PHOTO: JODY JACOB

Kelsey Wheelhouse and husband Kevin Robertson have attended classes at UBC's Okanagan campus since it opened in 2005. Son Quinn has attended the campus daycare.

Critical and Creative Studies: a family affair

BY JODY JACOB

GROWING UP in Vernon, B.C., husband and wife Kevin Robertson and Kelsey Wheelhouse never expected to become students on UBC's Okanagan campus.

They also didn't anticipate that a campus could become a community. Robertson never imagined himself developing into an artist, and the couple certainly didn't predict emerging as two of the most involved students within the Faculty of Critical and Creative Studies (FCCS), while also becoming new parents.

But life is unpredictable. And when Robertson and Wheelhouse accept their UBC degrees this June, they will have both accomplished a long list of things they had never expected to do.

"Our experience has shaped our lives in so many ways," says Wheelhouse, who will receive her Bachelor of Arts in English (honours). "We really made a connection. I consider a number of my profs to be friends. And we've been able to experience so many things here that likely we wouldn't have had the opportunity to experience at other universities."

Robertson and Wheelhouse have attended UBC's Okanagan campus since it opened its doors in 2005.

Since 2007, Wheelhouse has worked as an undergraduate teacher's assistant tutoring her peers in English. She also received an Undergraduate Research Award last summer, and developed her honours thesis researching a series of heritage murals located in downtown Vernon, B.C., and their relation to multiculturalism, colonization and "whiteness."

Robertson, a cultural studies major, has helped produce the FCCS's online promotional videos over the past two years, combining his love for technology with his recently developed interest in artistic expression.

"I never thought art was an option for me," says Robertson. "I didn't draw or paint or anything along those lines. I just made connections with my professors, opened up my options, and took an unexpected path."

Being able to work and study on campus has been a big bonus for the couple, who's two-year-old son Quinn attends the campus day care.

"We're taking away so many good memories with us," says Wheelhouse. "The birth of our son, the friendships we made, the opportunities I've had to become involved, and even running on the trails behind campus. That's one of my best memories: getting away between classes for some 'me time' on the trails."

Robertson shares these sentiments, but adds one of the biggest lessons he will take from his undergraduate studies is that learning goes far beyond the classroom walls.

"Although the professors teach a specific course, it is amazing how multi-faceted they are," says Robertson. "My advice to new students is that you need to become involved -- make connections, apply for awards and campus jobs; put yourself out there and network.

"You just never know where it will take you. There are so many unique opportunities available to students here, and I can't stress enough how much support and insight the faculty is willing to give, whenever you ask."

Robertson, Wheelhouse and Quinn will be moving to Edmonton this fall so Wheelhouse can pursue a law degree at the University of Alberta. Robertson expects to eventually obtain a master's degree, but first plans to focus on getting his family settled, immersing himself in the Edmonton art scene, and exploring work options.

"We're a little nervous to move on, of course, and we'll miss this campus and the people so much," says Wheelhouse. "It really has been our home for the last five years. And although we are moving on, I feel like we have a connection with this campus that won't just go away after we leave." ■

Wheelhouse developed her honours thesis researching a series of heritage murals located in downtown Vernon, B.C., and their relation to multiculturalism, colonization and "whiteness."

FACULTY OF MEDICINE

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Marie Westby pursued a PhD while working as a physical therapist and caring for her autistic son.

Hard work and reward in doctoral challenge

BY BRIAN KLADKO

TWO MONTHS after Marie Westby embarked on the long journey toward a doctorate in Rehabilitation Sciences, she and her husband received confirmation of something they had suspected for months: Their son, Mattias, was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

"I said to myself, 'What have I done? I need to drop out. This is obviously not going to work,'" Westby recalls thinking in 2004. "I thought I was being selfish by going back to school—I knew how much time it was going to take to do everything for him. But then I thought, 'This is going to be my saving grace.' I thrive on challenges, and I thrive on learning. I had to drop the guilt that I wasn't going to be able to do enough for him, or be there for my daughter, Delaney, and my husband."

Westby, who earned a bachelor's degree in Physical Therapy from UBC in 1988, was able to forego a master's degree through a special "fast track" option and continue straight toward her doctorate while working part-time as a physical therapist at Vancouver's Mary Pack Arthritis Centre.

But her accomplishment goes beyond earning a new credential—Westby's dissertation might also improve outcomes for the hundreds of thousands of North Americans who receive knee or hip replacements each year.

At Mary Pack, which is operated by Vancouver Coastal Health, Westby routinely received calls from B.C. therapists wanting to know the best practices for helping people recuperate from these surgeries—the number of visits, the duration of post-operative monitoring, what exercises to prescribe, whether there should be aquatic therapy, and whether there should be home care.

"There were no best practices," says Westby, a clinical associate professor in the Department of Physical Therapy. "We could say what surgeon X, Y and Z preferred, but that didn't mean the surgeon they were working with would like that. We did a survey of the Lower Mainland to find out what every site was doing, and there were more differences than similarities. It was all over the place."

Westby organized focus groups of patients, therapists, orthopaedic surgeons and other physicians in Canada and the U.S. to find out what was working and what wasn't. Westby also conducted a systematic review of research, though the most reliable data—randomized, controlled studies—were sorely lacking.

She then assembled two North American panels of experts and patients, one for knee replacements and one for hip replacements, each with about 40 members. Through an elaborate back-and-forth process that lasted several months, she sought to establish consensus on as many issues as possible.

"There aren't enough high-quality research trials, so you have to base the guidelines on expert opinion, and you want to make that process as transparent and rigorous as possible," she says. "It's better than what is out there now, which is nothing."

Each panel reached consensus on about two-thirds of the questions presented to them. The panels didn't reach consensus on how much rehabilitation should be given, but they were clear that three visits—the current standard used in some B.C. hospitals following hip replacement surgery—is not sufficient.

One of Westby's panel members was Pat Carney, the retired Senator from B.C., who learned of Marie's research after undergoing hip replacement surgery.

"Marie's innovative work is crucially important to physiotherapists, surgeons and patients since it will give them clear guidelines for successful physiotherapy," Carney says. "I have known of patients who were improperly advised on their exercise program and suffered poor outcomes. How she did it, given her workload and domestic responsibilities, is an amazing story."

Westby was fortunate to get a two-year leave from the arthritis centre during her studies. She also had to adjust her timetable after realizing how much of a "juggling act" her pursuit of a PhD would be, and that it would have to accommodate such things as children's colds and sleepless nights.

She also learned something else on her way to the degree: To ask for help. With no relatives in Vancouver, she asked friends for assistance in picking up and looking after her children, or even cooking the occasional dinner.

"I literally put out the call to friends via e-mail, saying, 'I need help,' and that was not easy," she says. "It's harder for people to take both kids, but there are a few friends who know Mattias well and feel comfortable with him, allowing me to stay a bit longer and work." ■

> ***"Marie's innovative work is crucially important to physiotherapists, surgeons and patients since it will give them clear guidelines for successful physiotherapy."***

HELPING TRAUMA *continued from page 9*

Escueta planned on becoming a lawyer. Instead, partially in response to the violent oppression of the Marcos regime, he became dedicated to community development work and initiating change.

Starting in university, he became part of activist organizations. At one point, he was beaten and brought to a hospital for trying to prevent the government from demolishing the neighbourhoods of poor and marginalized citizens.

"We couldn't respond just with what we knew then," says Escueta. "I felt there was something else I could learn that would help."

Escueta left the Philippines and moved to San Francisco in 1999 to get a Master's degree in social work. After graduation, he started working as a trauma psychotherapist, but five years in, Escueta felt he wanted to do more.

Escueta had always wanted to formally conduct research in the use of popular education in a trauma psychoeducation setting. At UBC, he found a program and an examining committee that valued and supported this innovative exploration.

"The program is concerned with education in various contexts, where education happens and how that affects people and communities."

Escueta wanted to complete his PhD in four years and was able to finish earlier despite starting to work at the new BC Operational Stress Injury Clinic on campus. He's now working full-time with veterans, RCMP, Canadian forces, members of the Reserves, and their families who are caught in cycles of trauma.

Escueta wants to stay in Vancouver—he has a loving spouse, he has a great job, he loves the city and the mountains, he hikes, he's joined a men's choir, he's made some amazing friends and has fabulous local in-laws. ■

Five who have made a difference

BY RANDY SCHMIDT

FIVE STAFF MEMBERS at UBC's Vancouver campus are receiving the 2010 President's Service Award for Excellence for outstanding contributions and personal achievement. Each recipient receives a gold medal, and $5,000, in a presentation during Spring Congregation ceremonies.

Maura da Cruz, an organizational and learning consultant in the Dept. of Human Resources, has worked at UBC since 1989. Widely credited for her generosity of spirit, she has helped launch Most, UBC's first training program for staff; BEST, an English language skill staff program; the student volunteer UBC Equity Ambassadors program and the Community Learning Initiative Leadership program.

Paul Lawson has worked as manager of the Malcolm Knapp Research Forest since 1999. Held in high regard by the B.C. forest community, he is recognized for his insights into sustainable forest management including building strong relationships with local communities and First Nations, championing a partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society to locate Camp Goodtimes at Loon Lake, and hosting many field schools for UBC and other organizations.

Director of Classroom Services Justin Marples began working at UBC in 1981. He is recognized for contributions across the campus, including volunteer work in the Association of Administration and Professional Staff (AAPS), and as a founding member of the Coaches Services Program. Colleagues credit him for strong leadership of Classroom Services to greatly enhance campus learning spaces.

Serving UBC for more than 21 years, Andrew Parr, Managing Director, Student Housing and Hospitality Services, has built innovative campus services. He is honoured for leading the growth of UBC Food Services and its sustainability initiatives, chairing two United Way campaigns, and for volunteer service to the Canadian College and University Food Service Association.

Gerald Vanderwoude was first employed at UBC as a box office clerk in the Frederic Wood Theatre in 1996. Today he works as administrator and business manager of the Department of Theatre and Film. He is recognized for his hard work, care for others, and professionalism and exceptional skill at making improvements to the department's program administration. ■

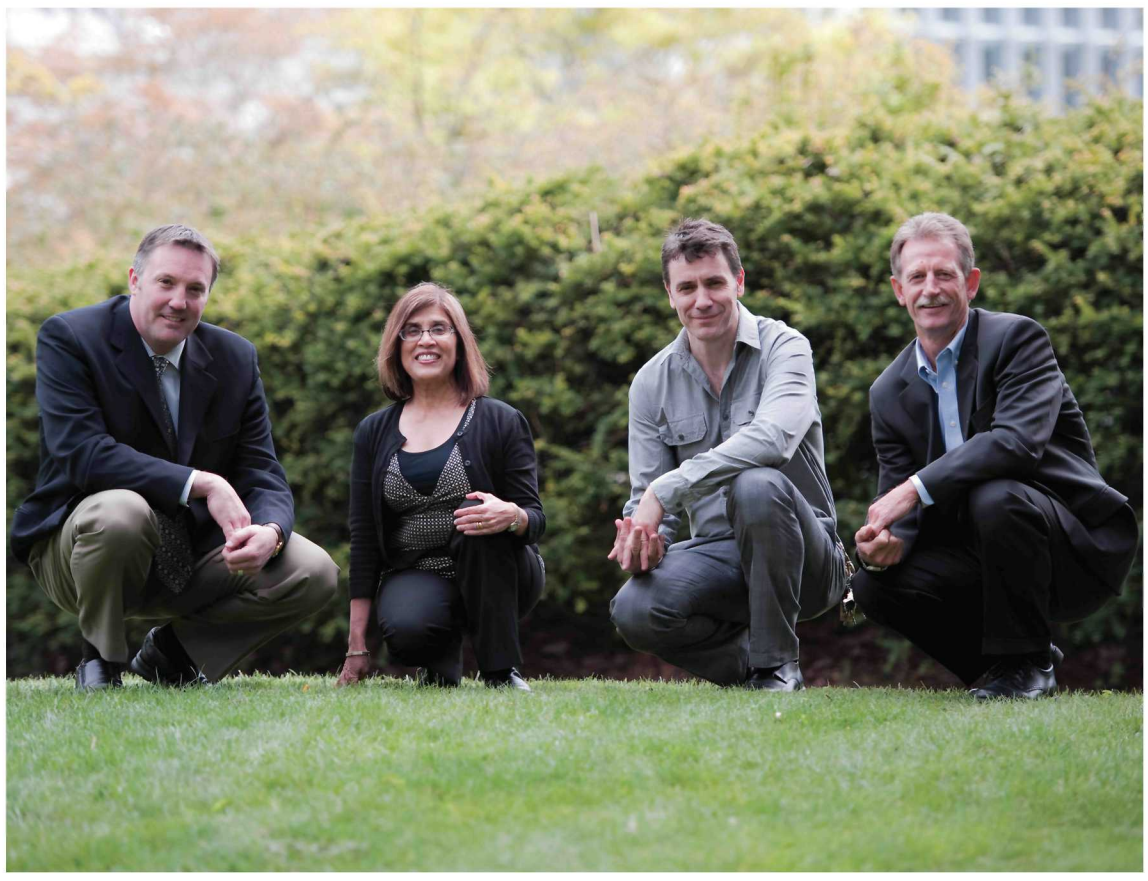

PHOTO: DON ERHARDT

Andrew Parr, Maura da Cruz, Gerald Vanderwaude and Justin Marples (Paul Lawson missing from photo).

Returning from illness, grad savours degree

BY LORRAINE CHAN

CALGARY is known as a work-hard, play-hard city and Peter Doelman is ready to "give'er."

Doelman starts articling this month for Burnet, Duckworth and Palmer LLP, one of Calgary's largest law firms.

"I've got a different perspective on stress," says Doelman. After all, he has survived brain surgery that many doctors termed too risky or impossible.

In 2006, between his first and second year of UBC law, Doelman was diagnosed with a golf ball-sized tumour in his brain stem. Attached to the spine, the brain stem relays sensory and neural information between the brain and the body. Although Doelman's tumour was treated with drugs and radiation, he still felt pain and nausea.

In December 2007 Doelman returned home to St. Thomas, a small town near London, Ontario, where his father runs a farm. "I was in palliative care and the nurses basically told me that I would most likely die within a year."

Unable to sleep much during this period, Doelman would fire up the computer and "frantically search the Internet for a miracle cure, some way to suck the tumour out of my head."

One December morning Doelman stumbled across his medical doppelganger, a New Yorker who had blogged: "At age 25, I was diagnosed with a brain tumour in my brainstem. I was supposed to be dead by 27. I am still alive. This is my story."

"It was surreal," says Doelman. "I posted on his blog and he called me that afternoon about his miracle neurosurgeon in Phoenix, Arizona. Less than two months later, I was on the operating table having my tumour removed."

After the operation, Doelman experienced numbness on the left side of his face and had little movement in his right hand and arm. It took time, healing and intensive physiotherapy to regain his balance and strength. "Although I'm right handed, I had to retrain myself to become a leftie."

In January 2009, Doelman returned to his law studies, thrilled to learn that UBC had changed the designation of Bachelor of Laws (LLB) to Juris Doctor (JD) in 2008. Doelman had initiated the campaign to do so upon arriving at UBC. He argued that the LLB degree worldwide generally requires a high school diploma whereas UBC's first law degree requires previous undergraduate studies.

"Given UBC's stature as a global university, it makes sense for our law school to adopt the more globally-recognized moniker for law degrees requiring previous university studies," says Doelman, who holds a BA from McGill University in philosophy and political science.

Now embarking on his career, Doelman is eager to cut his teeth on a mix of general business, commercial real estate and infrastructure financing law. He recently won a Canadian Tax Foundation Award for best student tax policy paper on "improving the urban environment through the tax system."

"It was pretty sweet getting the award because it meant that my brain function wasn't compromised by the surgery and radiation."

Doelman says coming through his own life and death story reinforces a sense of compassion for others, an attitude he will take into his law practice.

"Most people are touched by cancer in some ways, either themselves or a loved one. I'm not that unique or particularly outstanding – just grateful." ■

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Off to Cowtown, Peter Doelman aims to take into his first year of articling a sense of compassion and perspective.