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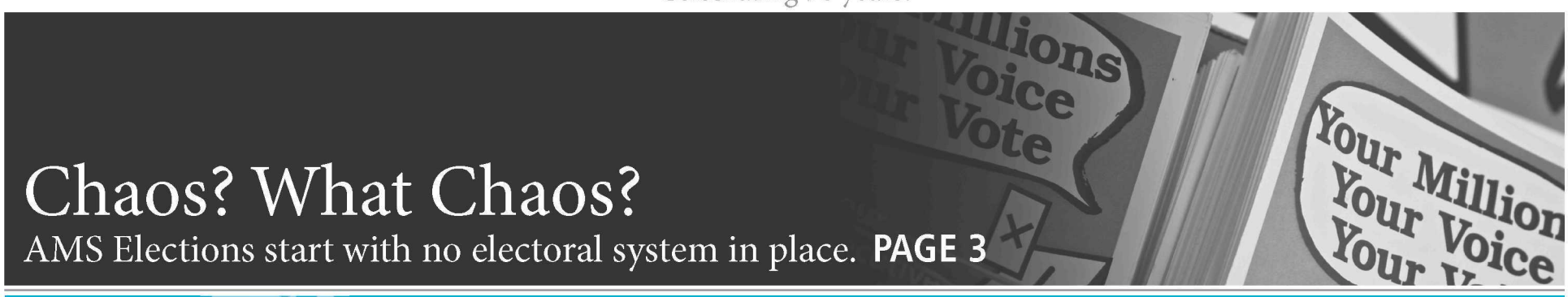

Chaos? What Chaos?

AMS Elections start with no electoral system in place. PAGE 3

THE UBYSSEY

January 16, 2009 | www.ubyssey.ca
Swearing to destroy Chris Berube since 1918 | volume xc, number 30
UBC's official student newspaper is published Tuesdays and Fridays

2010 THE YEAR OF BROKEN PROMISES

"My name is William Dawson and I want a place to live!" The assertive voice of this stern-faced 48-year-old rose above the chorus of truck engines and car horns near the corner of Main and Powell.

BY MATTHEW RATZLAFF

"I don't want to be relocated just because we're homeless and the Olympics is coming," Dawson said with escalating volume. "I live in the East End. I want to stay in the East End. There's housing down here. Let me have it!"

Dawson had his arms folded across his chest as he stood outside the office of the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (MEIA) in November. Two other homeless men stood beside him with hoods on to repel the steady drizzle of the rain. This was their chance to have their voices heard by the small gathering of news reporters that encircled them with video cameras, voice recorders and notepads in hand.

Activists had organized a press conference outside a "squat." Squats are temporary shelters the homeless set up in vacant doorways or alcoves, only to be disassembled and relocated when authorities demand that its residents move on. But for the past month, William and about a dozen others seemed to have finally evaded this nomadic lifestyle. Employees at the MEIA had used internal funds to create a squat by removing boulders that decorated a rectangular concrete ledge outside the office's main entrance.

With the Olympics coming, there's a lot to be gained—politically and financially—in cleaning up the Downtown Eastside (DTES), Dawson's squat included. However, Olympic organizers, the city and businesses are pushing this through the changes without addressing the problems that make the squat necessary in the first place.

"We want to have a nice fulfilling life," Dawson says. "The means to do that, to start with, is a place that you can call home. There's your basis, right? You can build everything else from your home."

Those attending the press conference shuffled up the concrete steps to peer at the squat, which was approximately twice the width and half the length of a bowling lane. A long office window separated the squat from the throngs lined up inside, waiting to get their welfare cheques. Bordering the other side was a green wire fence that prevented new residents from falling off the ledge onto the sidewalk ten feet below. The concrete floor was completely covered with cardboard and cluttered with plastic bags and stained blankets. Several residents lay bundled up, trying to sleep amidst the commotion of the onlookers.

"We're sleeping next to each other [but] we have our own lives," Dawson said. "We just happen to be living in a little alcove at the same time, that's all. Sharing space, keeping body heat and warmth."

Although protected from the rain, the squat was not immune to the cold of winter, car exhaust or the blaring sirens of fire trucks frequently dispatched from the No. 2 Downtown Eastside Fire Hall across the street. This had been "home" for Dawson since October. Six short years ago he was enjoying a successful life.

Between 1996 and 2002, Dawson's company, Vending Placement Services, successfully installed vending machines in 12,000 locations. "I saturated the industry and we got the Americans out of the vending industry on the west coast," he said with a grin.

But following a separation with his wife and disagreement over a settlement, things quickly took a turn for the worst. "I was emotionally distraught, shook up over the separation. I couldn't take it. I was a little bit suicidal. I wanted to destroy everything I had and destroy my life. So I spent all my money from my corporation [on] wine, women, and song....I got involved in drugs. It was a bad part of my life....I ended up in the street."

Since 2002, Dawson has made numerous unsuccessful attempts to maintain long-term residence around inner-city Vancouver. He tried a backpacker's lodge called the Ivanhoe Hotel, which proved too expensive to be sustainable ("At $1200 a month rent, its expensive"), Hildon Hotel ("They were doing renovations and moved me out"), Rooms ("I got out of there because of the bed bugs"), The Balmoral ("There was too much drugs there so I wanted to move out"), and Wonder Rooms ("They evicted me").

"[They're] infested with bed bugs and mice," Dawson said. "You share one washroom per floor, and there's probably 15 to 20 rooms on each floor.

SEE "OLYMPICS" ON PAGE 5

CANADA IS NOT FOR EVERYONE

PAGE 7

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Index

Events	2
Games	2
Comics	2
News	3
Features	5
Editorial	6
Streeters	6
Letters	6
Culture	7
Sports	8

Events

If you have an event, e-mail us at events@ubyssey.ca

January 16

Critical Thinking and Learning • Develop critical thinking strategies and enhance your academic performance: an introduction to the Strategic Content Learning Model. This workshop is part of the Emerging Scholars Program. • *Jan. 16 5-6:30pm, Register at www.students.ubc.ca/workshops, Location: Dodson Room of the Chapman Learning Commons* •

Gigantic Annual Booksale • There will be a wide variety of subjects, from cookery books to classics of fiction, from history and political science to books on astrology, home decorating, and Greek philosophy. All books are 50 cents each; proceeds go to awards and scholarships in the UBC Writing Centre. • *Jan. 16 @ 10-4pm, Location: UBC Writing Centre, Ponderosa Annex C, 2021 West Mall* •

Women's Basketball • UBC Women's Basketball vs. Winnipeg Wesmen • *Jan. 16 @ 6pm, Location: War Memorial Gym, Tickets: $10 adult/$4 youth & senior/$2 UBC student* •

Beijing Performance Photography • Performance Photography emerged in China to forge a new artistic direction within a rapidly evolving society. Numerous Chinese photographers will have their work presented • *Jan 16 - Apr 20, Free Admission, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery* •

Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired • Polish-born director, Roman Polanski, endured the Holocaust, survived under a Communist regime, killed his pregnant wife, and established a "relationship" with a 13-year-old girl named Samantha Gailey. The film harshly critiques Polanksi's crimes while expressing remorse for his twisted mental state • *Jan. 16, 18, and 20 @ 8:45pm, Location: Vancity Theatre* •

January 17

FLicKeR • A drug-less high Brion Gysin stumbles across as sunlight flickers at him as his train speeds forward. An unsuccessful attempt to build a machine that recreates the expierence gains traction in art's underground. Questions and ideas flow as artists seek to confirm whether the machine, for example, could induce visionary thinking • *Jan. 17 and 19 @ 9pm, Location: Vancity Theatre* •

January 18

Last Day to Shop UBC Rec's Programs • Over 30 programs ranging from dance to yoga to marital arts are open for free to potential "shoppers." • *Jan. 18, Location: check http://www.rec.ubc.ca/ for location(s)* •

January 19

Last Day for Changes to Your Registration • Planning on withdrawing from a course? Do so before Jan. 20 to ensure you avoid getting a "W" on your academic record • *Jan 19, To deregister: https://ssc.adm.ubc.ca/sscportal/servlets/SRVSSCFramework* •

Organization at Home and in the Classroom for Learning • Learn how to improve your organizational skills • *Jan 19 @ 1-2pm, Location: First Nations House of Learning, 1985 West Mall* •

Islam Awareness Week 2009 • Student-staffed booth that offers free books, pamphlets, translated QURANS and countless displays on a wide range of issues regarding Islam • *Jan. 19-22, Location: SUB Main Concourse* •

January 20

Info Session for Undergraduate Aboriginal Students • Interested in garnering a master's or Ph.D.? Free pizza provided too. Aboriginal master's and Ph.D. candidates will discuss their experiences. • *Jan. 20 @ 11:30-1pm, Location: First Nations House of Learning, Cost: Free* •

Women: Discuss Gender Issues at UBC • All female students at UBC are invited to discuss the environment that UBC is for them • *Jan. 20 @ 12-2pm, Location: Thea's Lounge, Graduate Student Centre, 6371* •

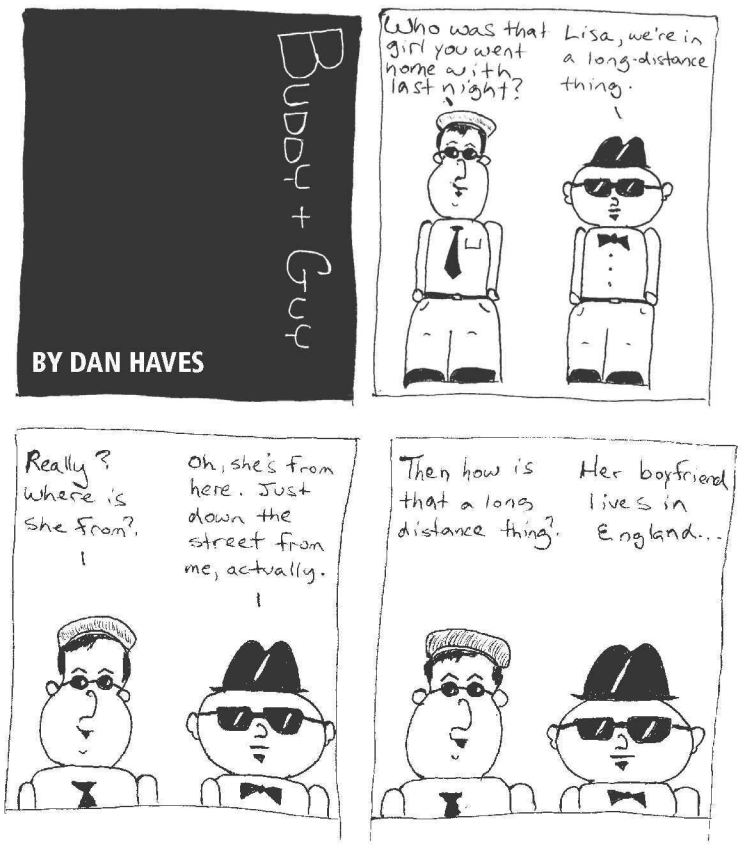
Feeling Stressed? • Learn how to juggle your commitments better! • *Jan. 20 @ 12 - 1:30, Admission: Free, Register at https://secure.students.ubc.ca/workshops/health.cfm#1534* •

Trying to Decode a Mystery • Honey bees are a dying breed. The Mountain Pine Beattle is destroying Alberta's and BC's forests. Learn how three professional employing genomics research seek to aid the Honey bee and stop the Pine Beattle's proliferation • *Jan. 20 @ 7-9pm, Location: Science World at Telus World of Science, Cost: Free* •

January 21

Tutorial on Photoshop Level 2 • Learn about Adobe Photoshop 6.0 and its tools to resize and rotate images and ensure they are sized for the web • *Jan. 21 @ 12-1pm, Location: Koerner Library Room 216, Free Admission* •

Arts Career Expo • Attend two interactive alumni panels and later mingle with alumni while enjoy refreshments • *Jan. 21 @ 5-8:30pm, Location: SUB Ballroom, Cost: $5-10* •



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THE UBYSSEY

January 16th, 2009
volume xc, nº 30

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Contributors

Gerald Deo married Stephanie Findlay. Kellan Higgins objected. Goh Iromoto, Tara Martellaro, and Kyrstin Bain tried to seduce Paul Bucci. Trevor Record fought Trevor Melanson in a battle of Trevors. Joe Rayment, Drew Thompson, and Shun Endo are jealous of the love between Ricardo Bartolon, Kathy Yan Li, and Dan Haves. Matthew Ratzlaff, Katarina Grgic, Sarah Ling,Drake Fenton, and Ian Turner all secretly peed in the soup of Kalyeena Makortoff.

Canadian University Press

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AMS elections officially begin today

Debates kick-off in the Student Union Building Conversation Pit at noon

BY KATARINA GRGIĆ
News Staff

This morning marked the official start of AMS elections.

Blake Frederick, Paul Korczyk, and Alex Monegro will be skirmishing against each other in the upcoming weeks as they hope to be the next president of UBC's student society.

Korcyzk, a residence coordinator, will have a tough struggle to match his two opponents, both with AMS council experience. However, he thinks he can overcome this disadvantage, stressing that his leadership experience as a residence coordinator has granted him the ability to "build successful teams, and chair successful committees." He wants the AMS to "be a strong advocate on the student's behalf."

Monegro, Commerce Undergraduate Society VP External, is centreing his platform on improving education, feeling that the current council has "lost focus on internal lobby for better education." He also wants to create an ease of access to the AMS, believing that the current council is "sluggish" towards students' needs when they come up and that current executives have their own "very strong interest" on what they want to happen.

> AMS has lost focus on internal lobby for better education.
> —*Alex Mongero, presidential candidate*

Frederick, associate vice-president, external affairs, is arguably the most experienced of the three candidates, having also been AVP academic, as well as a student senator. Frederick is arguing for the AMS to play a much more agressive role in advocating for students. "This government shows a fundamental disrespect for students," he said.

In the VP Administration race, Crystal Hon, Jeremy "Kommander Keg" McElroy, and a mysterious someone by the name of "Water Fountain" will all be vying to unseat current incumbent Tristan Markle, who has decided to run again.

Ale Coates, vice-chair of the Student Administrative Commission and Tom Dvorak are running for VP Finance. The position of VP Academic and University Affairs is between David Nogas, Sonia Purewal, Johannes Rebane and Jeremy Wood.

Finally, Tim Chu and Iggy Rodriguez will be competing against two joke candidates, "Fire" and "The King's Head" for the spot of VP External.

Bijan Ahmadian, Andrew Carne, current AMS President Michael Duncan, Blake Frederick and Tristan Markle are contesting to be one of the two members on the Board of Governors. Of the five, only Ahmadian is an incumbent.

As for race for the five student senator positions, only Geoff Costeloe, the current Science faculty representative, and Sonia Purewal decided to run. As a result, both will be acclaimed; there will be no election.

Mitch Wright, Voter Funded Media administrator, commented on the lack of candidates for senate. "If we had advertised the open and close of nomination more, then we could have had more people out," he said, but added, "I think the type of students who run for BoG and senate election tend to be engaged in student life enough that they are aware of the nomination deadlines."

Online voting runs from January 29 to February 4, with ballot voting on the final day.

DEBATES

Friday, January 16th: President

Monday, January 19: President,

VP Administration, VP Academic, VP Finance

Wednesday, January 21: Board of Governors, VP Finance, VP External (TBD)

Friday, January 23: VP External, VP Administration, VP Academic

Tuesday, January 27: Board of Governors, President
Thursday, January 29: All Candidates (Irving K. Barber, 12-2pm)
Unless noted, all debates are from 12-1pm at the SUB Conversation Pit

Candidates will be explaining their platforms. GERALD DEO PHOTO/THE UBYSSEY

AMS elections off to shaky start

Election begins without electoral system in place, online versus paper debate

BY JUSTIN MCELROY
News Editor

Campaigning for the 2009 AMS elections may have officially begun today, but as of yet, there's no voting system in place.

Although the AMS Council passed a motion in March of 2008 mandating that the Condorcet method of voting be used in all subsequent elections, the Elections Committee isn't sure whether they will be able to implement an online system in time.

"Council implemented Condorcet voting, however we don't have means of conducting that online, we don't have a system that facilitates the right voting," said Sarina Rehal, elections administrator for the AMS. "Because [implementing the system] isn't anyone's job, it hasn't been done, so they told me just after I was hired, which was about a week into December."

Rehal told council at last Wednesday's meeting that the Elections Committee will know by this Tuesday whether they will be able to find a way of managing online voting under the Condorcet method, a voting system where candidates are ranked by the voter. However, if they are unable to find an appropriate online system by Tuesday the AMS elections, scheduled for January 29 to February 4, will be held under the traditional First Past the Post electoral system, where the candidate with the most votes wins.

In past years, AMS elections have been riddled with difficulties more often than not. The 2008 elections were especially noteworthy, with one election—that of VP Administration—cancelled a day before the polls closed due to "campaigning irregularities." And another, the election of VP Academic and University Affairs, marred by the casting of multiple ballots by eventual winner Alex Lougheed.

"The key to running the AMS elections smoothly is to have both time and resources available as needed," said Chris Anderson, the elections administrator for the AMS in 2006-07. Anderson said that in his case, being hired in October for the position was essential to his success.

"This year...the EA was hired at the start of December, which I can only imagine puts an unfair amount of pressure on [Rehal], considering how difficult it was for me two years ago," he said.

Mitch Wright, VFM coordinator and Sarina Rehal, elections administrator discuss. GERALD DEO PHOTO/THE UBYSSEY

For his part, Lougheed, who chairs the appointments committee that eventually chose Rehal as EA, admitted "we were late in hiring an elections administrator," but said that a number of reasons prevented them from hiring earlier, including a lack of qualified candidates.

For her part, Rehal isn't letting the lack of time in her job act as an excuse. "I don't think its fair for any faults, anything that I drop the ball on or don't get done, for me to point that back to a late hire," she said, though she admitted that overall success of the election was diminished with limited time.

Regardless, the campaign might have begun—but it won't be for a few more days until voters know what electoral system they'll be using when polls open in two weeks.

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The Education Insider

BY MAAYAN KREITZMAN
Columnist

From halfway across the world, AMS elections still have the ability to morbidly fascinate me. There I was, on a year of travelling, sequestered on an isolated kibbutz in the the southern Negev desert in Israel herding goats, pruning palm trees and eating silent communal meals, when I was immediately jerked back to UBC with my dear editor Justin's email, which read thus (I paraphrase): "the AMS is sucking at elections again. Want to write a column?"

How could I refuse? Especially when the suckage at hand relates to the Condorcet election system which (full disclosure) was passed by council through the committee I used to chair at the AMS. So—first, a summary:

Last March, AMS council passed a new chunk of code that my committee had written up mandating that the Condorcet method be used for AMS executive elections instead of the much-reviled first past the post system. As anyone who followed the Canadian elections knows, FPTP is rife with anti-democratic problems: it allows vote splitting and results in the need for strategic voting and representation that is very disproportionate to the actual preferences of the electorate.

Condorcet is a system that solves these problems. By using a ranked ballot (where the voter ranks their candidates from first to last), each ballot is used to create a round-robin score. Basically, every possible one-on-one match-up between candidates is evaluated. If candidate A was ranked higher than candidate B on a given ballot, then the match up of A vs. B will be tallied as a win for A. The number of wins each candidate has earned are then compared. After all the ballots are counted and tallied, the candidate that wins against every other candidate separately in one-on-one match-ups is the Condorcet winner.

What this means is that there is no vote splitting of any kind. You can vote for your first choice and still express a preference that will be counted just as strongly between two perceived "front runners." There are no wasted votes. Narrow niche campaigns are also discouraged, since second and third-place rankings are very important.

Originally, our committee attempted to pass the Condorcet code in the fall term, in time for last year's executive elections. We eventually realized that this was impossible, due to the tight council schedule and the task of implementing a system that neither WebVote nor WebCT can easily handle. When it finally passed in March, I was confident with a whole year to plan for the new system, this year's elections would go smoothly.

Which brings me to where we are now. The elections administrator (EA), who was hired deplorably late (as usual), was thrown into the position without being supplied the information and connections regarding implementing a system for Condorcet voting. Never mind that we had already recommended an implementation system to the president a year ago. The executives, who were aware this system (developed by a former Dalhousie student) could handle both voting and counting since last March, didn't bother to actually do anything about it in a timely fashion, or even inform their EA about it after she was hired. Not that this particular system is the only option; there are various online calculators and voting sites that could be modified for voting or be used for the counting if they weren't secure enough for voting. It's a bit absurd that I need to get an email from a distressed EA who is at her wits' end to find a system (scant weeks before the vote), when all the information necessary to plan for this election was in the hands of the executive so many months ago.

The elections committee has informed AMS Council that a system may not be in place in time, in which case they will have to switch back to FPTP. Is this just a case of incompetence, or is there something else? I think that, in general, progressive voting systems are mostly misunderstood and ignored, simply because they may be challenging to wrap your head around. Witness the uphill battle Fair Voting BC is fighting to counter misinformation about STV. That even this very small change in this very small democracy at the AMS was so fully botched is pretty sad. U

Maayan Kreitzman is herding goats in the desert while all you suckers sweat over books.

Quotes of the day

I remain skeptical that the voter turnout will change that much on the internet.

—Alex Lougheed, VP Academic

Currently we're working on getting online voting setting up, however, none of them are 100 per cent right now. In the next couple of days we will know.

—Sarina Rehal, Elections Administrator

Olympics organisers neglecting Vancouver's homeless

CONT'D FROM "OLYMPICS" ON 1

Generally, someone's either gone and defecated on the toilet or they've urinated on the toilet or the floor. There's germs. There's disease in these bathrooms," Dawson recalled with a look of disgust. "They should clean it at least once a day, but these washrooms are not getting cleaned on a regular basis." Thus, he ended up on the ledge outside the MEIA office.

"There's no bed bugs, for one," Dawson said glancing into the squat. "Nobody's stealing from me in here. It's free. For the most part it's pretty safe."

Dawson's struggle to find housing highlights some issues still facing Vancouver's homeless. While the government is not responsible for Dawson's downward spiral to the streets, its efforts to help the city's homeless haven't helped him. The coming Olympics have made the situation more adverse. By the 2010 Olympics, according to predictions by Pivot Legal Society, the homeless will triple the number of athletes at the Winter Games.

William Dawson standing in front of his "squat"—a semi-permanent place of residence for the Vancouver's homeless. MATTHEW RATZLAFF PHOTOS/THE UBYSSEY

In February 2003, the city held a public vote to gauge support of the Games. Sixty-four per cent of voters were in favour of hosting the 2010 Games and that following July Vancouver won the bid. The Vancouver Organizing Committee's (VANOC) 2006-07 Sustainability Report to the International Olympic Committee stated that "the level of public support for hosting the Games can be attributed...at least in part to the resulting commitments in Vancouver's bid to economic, environmental and social sustainability."

In its original bid, Vancouver included a list of commitments to maximize the benefits and minimize the negative impacts that hosting the Games would have on inner-city residents. This list of commitments, called the Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement, was agreed upon by VANOC as well as the municipal, provincial and federal governments. These four entities are collectively known as the "Partners."

The statement includes five commitments related to housing and homelessness: to "protect rental housing stock"; "provide as many alternative forms of temporary accommodation for Winter Games visitors and workers"; "ensure that people are not made homeless as a result of the Winter Games"; "ensure residents are not involuntarily displaced, evicted or face unreasonable increases in rent due to the Winter Games"; and "provide an affordable housing legacy and start planning now."

With just over a year remaining before the Olympic opening ceremonies at BC Place, what have the Partners accomplished in regards to their public commitments to inner-city residents? "You'd be hard pressed to find much that is specific to the Inner City," said Dr Jim Frankish, director of UBC's Centre for Population Health Promotion Research. "If you talk to the Partners, they would say they're doing a lot. But it is hard to determine what new things have been done for each commitment."

A report on the Partners' actions on the commitments (due last October) has not yet been released. Nor have the Partners been clear on how they define success relative to the fulfillment of each commitment.

Frankish was previously the chair of the Impacts On Community Coalition (IOCC), a community-based Olympic watchdog group that has been tracking the commitments included in Vancouver's Olympic bid. One of the group's ongoing concerns is the lack of a budget for the commitments. "It is hard to judge the resources put toward fulfilling the commitments," Frankish said. "Some people have expressed disappointment that the commitments did not get their own budget, [nor did they get] clear publicly determined goals or markers of success."

In May 2007, the IOCC released a report card evaluating the Partners' performance in planning and executing the Games: D minus. "They weren't very happy," Frankish said.

The IOCC report card stated since that since winning the Olympics in 2003 there have been more than 800 illegal evictions and closures of single resident accommodation (SRA) units in the DTES. Furthermore, an additional 541 units in 22 hotels were in danger of closing because developers are now interested in converting these hotels into condos or other types of buildings.

SRAs are small rooms in residential hotels with no kitchen and a shared bathroom on each floor. More than 100 of these hotels were built a century ago to house visitors and workers that frequented the DTES, which was then Vancouver's vibrant core. In the last few decades these SRAs have become a last resort for the working poor and those on social assistance, like Dawson.

A February 12, 2007 article by *The Tyee* reported that in 2006 alone developers bought more than 20 SRA hotels in the DTES to capitalize on rising real estate prices. This represents approximately 1010 of the estimated 5000 SRA rooms that remain in the area. In a lagging effort to prevent further loss of housing for those on the verge of homelessness, the provincial government purchased 16 SRA hotels between 2006 and 2008 (925 rooms) to preserve them for social housing. However, several thousand tenants in privately-run SRAs still remain at risk of homelessness due to eviction.

The developers sometimes use renovations as a pretext to expel low-income tenants. "It's a loophole that allows [owners] to say, 'We're going to renovate the apartment, so we're going to evict you,'" Dawson says. "Which basically allows them to evict you and not get the repercussions for evicting you."

Dawson claims that when he talks to hotel owners some of them tell him police instruct them not to rent rooms to individuals who appear to be homeless.

"They want people from the West End that have high-profile jobs that are going to be wearing a suit and tie," Dawson said. "That's what they want down here because they're going to change the look of the East End. It's no longer going to be the East End; it's going to be the yuppie East End."

The squat residents are constantly reminded of this every time they look down Powell Street. A stone's throw away, Concord Pacific continues construction on "Smart," a nine-story condominium complex due to open in 2009.

Dr Chris Shaw is a professor in UBC's faculty of medicine. He's also founder of the fiercely anti-Olympics "2010 Watch" website and author of *Five Ring Circus: Myths and Realities of the Olympic Games*.

"It comes down to politicians who are doing the developers' bidding," Shaw said. "The 2010 Games in Vancouver were basically started by a series of developers, including Jack Poole, who is the king of developers in the city. He did it in order to goose the housing market and the real estate development market and he even said so back in 2002."

According to Shaw, Vancouver's efforts to strengthen its economy by focusing on housing developments have forced more and more people into the margins. "Young people can't afford to buy houses. Working poor can't afford to rent. So its driving a lot of people out of the city, creating a more gentrified city, which is increasing the disparities. It's pushed a lot of people out of their minimal housing already, so we have an enormous increase in homelessness."

Wendy Pedersen, an advocate for low-income housing in the Downtown Eastside, stood among Dawson and her other homeless friends at the press conference. "We heard a rumour that the head honcho at the Ministry of Income Assistance wants to block off this area," Pedersen said pointing to the squat above. "They want outreach workers to find homes for people that live here but it's not happening fast enough and there's no rooms for people to go to."

Pedersen's concerns are backed by a report entitled "Disappearing Homes: The Loss of Affordable Housing in the DTES" that she co-authored in April 2008 as part of the Carnegie Community Action Project.

Pedersen believes that Vancouver's hosting of the 2010 Olympics has exacerbated the shortage of low-income housing in the DTES by catalysing increased land prices and condo development in an effort to clean up the neighbourhood. "The biggest pressure that we have in our neighbourhood is the pressure to look pretty for the Olympics," Pedersen said.

Since winning the Olympic bid, VANOC has trimmed the number of commitments originally agreed upon to those they now define as being within their scope. In regards to housing, VANOC has agreed to contribute 250 units of "non-market" housing at the Athletes Village in False Creek and 1000 units of "affordable resident worker" housing in Whistler, but an April 15, 2008 article by The Tyee reports that these are too expensive for the types of people who occupy the SRAs. The same article points out that VANOC's announcement that they would spend $500,000 on local homeless shelters means they are only spending half of what they originally planned to spend on homelessness.

Less than a week after the November press conference, the squat residents were ordered to leave. As they gathered up their belongings, a nine-foot fence was being installed around the area. Today, the fence remains bolted, chained and locked to what used to be the squat's entrance and the squat itself remains empty. A security guard claims that all the squat's residents, including Dawson, were offered housing, which may mean a happy ending for these particular people. The construction up the road continues, however, and the problems that affected the squatters remain. U

VANOC's announcement that they would spend $500,000 on local homeless shelters means they are only spending half of what they originally planned to spend on homelessness.

Election clusterfuck: redux

In anticipation of the AMS elections, *The Ubyssey* has devoted a significant percentage of its publication enumerating some concerns about the organization's progress.

We have reason to be concerned. Last year's election was riddled with suspicious decisions based on convoluted truths, and the student body was left with a contentious administration, if only by virtue of a controversial hiring procedure. The drawn out saga also managed to put into question the utility of the Student Court.

Last year there had been an established need for clear code, clear procedure and clear communication. Whether it was explicit policy on cancelling campaigns, or unambiguous code regarding ballot counting, it was apparent that, had the right regulation been in place, it could have saved many people a whole lot of grief. With crystal clear rules to play by, the game wouldn't have gotten so dirty—it wouldn't have had to, the candidates would have been able to get on with their job and serve the student body, as opposed having spent their time defacing their opponents' posters.

This isn't to discredit the complexity of last year's issues but rather to illustrate that lessons needed to be learned. We had hoped that this year would have a clean slate. We had hoped that the mechanism would be put into place to keep the election democratic, or the closest thing to. We thought that last year's debacle might have given the executive some impetus to ensure that this year's elections went without a hitch.

We were met with let down. The foundation of the current electoral system is shaky at best. Currently, an electoral system is undecided. Online, paper, who knows how we're going to vote? We don't, and neither do they. Still jaded from last year's electoral disaster, last night's AMS council meeting was disheartening to see. Far from remedying the voting system, the executive had neglected it; VP Academic Alex Lougheed sheepishly admitted that the onus was on him to secure an elections administrator earlier and that he may have dropped the ball.

Council has essentially trusted Rehal to bail them out for this, hoping that she'll make the Condorcet system work in time. Having just being hired at the beginning of December, a full ten months after the last election, Rehal was put between a rock and a hard place. And though she's been dealing with her situation as best as possible, she's been fighting an uphill battle and it's not apparent whether AMS has addressed its voting ineptitude.

With a surfeit of statements like archivist Sheldon Goldfarbs last night ("We can't change the rules during the campaign period," he said. "But the campaign hasn't begun yet. So we can change them,"). We're thinking, riiiiggghhhht. We're bracing ourselves AMS elections 2008 2.0. It's gunna be a messy one. U

UBC campus needs giant dome

One *Ubyssey* editor became the victim of umbrella-ruining wind while walking across campus this past Saturday. The precipitation changed from rain to snow and back again and this vicious cycle continued all day. A particularly strong gust of wind snapped the aforementioned editor's supposedly formidable umbrella like a twig.

It was an agonizing experience, and one that many, if not most, UBC students have been through. Three quarters of the year it rains more often than not. In addition, UBC, being nestled by the ocean, is prone to suffering frequent and strong winds. The combination is nasty, and the result is a lot of broken umbrellas.

But what's the solution? A tough question, but we here at *The Ubyssey* believe that we have the answer: a giant dome.

The record-setting dome would cover the entire campus, protecting it from wind, rain, hail, snow, volcanic ash, acid rain, etc. The campus would be safer and far more comfortable.

If the dome were sealed off, temperature inside could become controlled—just think, T-shirt weather every day!

"But where on Earth would UBC acquire the money to fund the construction of this dome?" you might be asking. Well, to start, each student could contribute about $20 a year (approximately the money we'll be saving from not having to replace umbrellas).

Of course, that wouldn't even account for a million dollars, and this project will certainly cost much, much more.

But where there's a will, there's a way.

Fortunately, UBC students aren't the only people who would appreciate the dome—it would be a spectacle to see. UBC could become an internationally famous tourist attraction. The farm could be turned into a theme park and more condos could be put up at grossly higher prices as well.

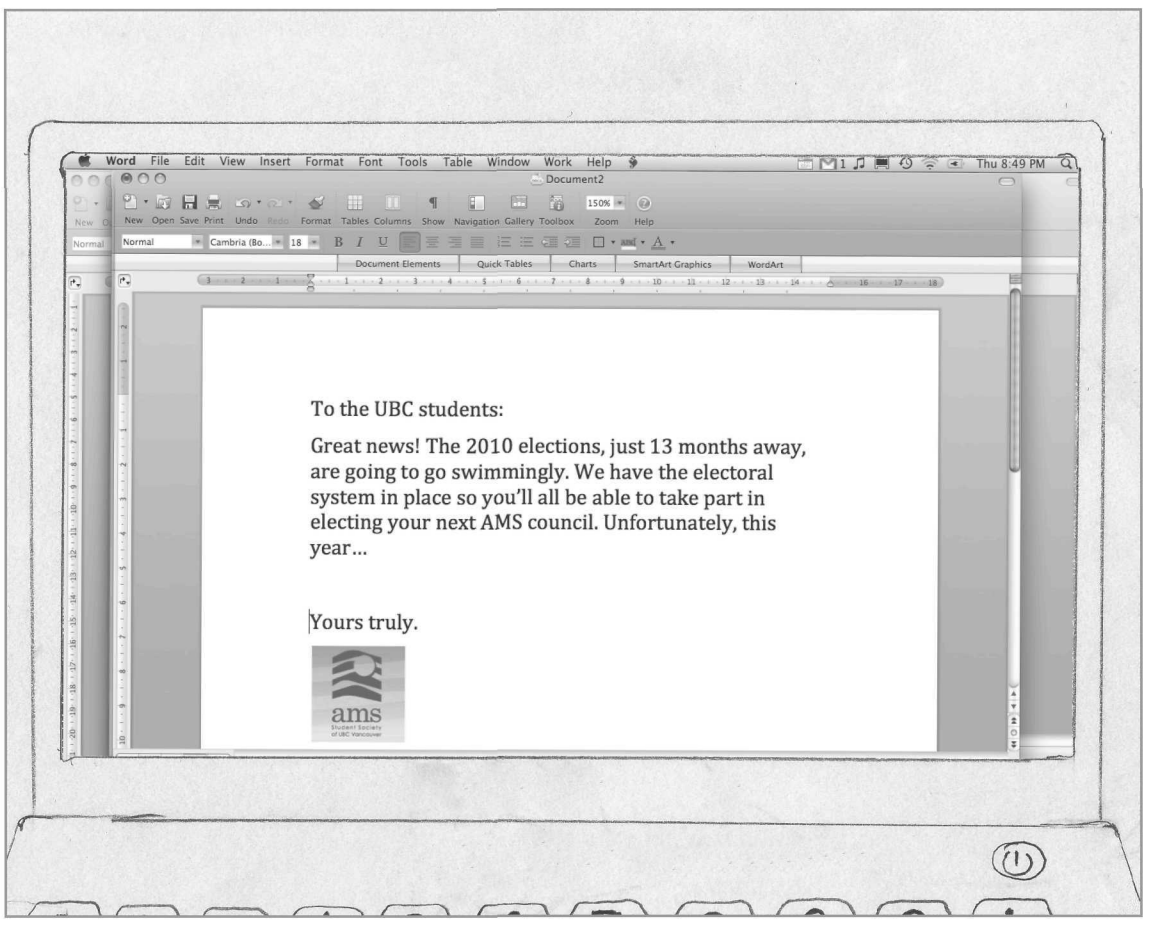
Also, with the weather now under control, Arts classes could be taught outdoors—with students sitting on grassy patches in communal circles, with fiddles and acoustic guitars. Accordingly, Buchanan could be sold, perhaps turned into a profitable prison.

Think about it. What have we got to lose? Let's give the U in UBC new meaning: *utopia!* U

Guess what?

"Because fish drink salt water, they ingest a lot of calcium that needs to be removed from their bodies or they get renal stones."

—UBC Associate Professor Villy Christenson



by Dan Haves

Letters

CHOOSING SPEAKERS MORE CAREFULLY COULD CURB CONTROVERSY ON CAMPUS

There is no doubt that the November 7 event held by UBC's Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights club (SPHR) generated much controversy on campus. It was the subject of a recent letter in *The Ubyssey* by Dina El-Kassaby, who criticised the alleged actions of Israel Awareness Club (IAC) members during this event. As vice-president of AEPi, UBC's Jewish fraternity, I feel I have an obligation to address these issues in the hope of dissolving tensions and setting the record straight.

The SPHR event centred around a presentation by the self-described "freelance writer and photojournalist" Jon Elmer, a highly contentious figure and the centre of much debate in the academic community. Elmer has spent a large portion of his career in the Middle East, where he has become notorious for taking highly biased positions in his choice of work. His material specifically praises the actions of Hamas, a group listed as a terrorist organization by Canada, the US, Japan, the EU, and which is banned in Jordan, Australia and the UK. While Elmer tends to avoid referring to religion specifically, he regularly uses euphemisms to blame the Jewish community for the Middle Eastern conflict. He also claims that the Israeli government funds Jewish campus groups, a claim that UBC's cash-strapped IAC would probably find quite discomforting.

At this event tensions ran high and accounts of events vary wildly. There are confirmed reports of an audience member having to be forcibly removed by UBC Security after attempting to physically assault IAC president Corey Lerman. There are also accusations of IAC members making rude comments during the presentation. Regardless, it is my sincere hope that future events will take place in a manner that is more respectful and likely to foster cooperation. To choose a speaker as notoriously biased as Mr Elmer is to invite controversy to UBC. It would lend the SPHR more credibility if they chose their guests more carefully.

The IAC and other Jewish organizations at UBC are committed to open and respectful debate regarding Middle Eastern issues and how they relate to Canadians. However, we find it especially difficult to do so when those entrusted to represent the Palestinian community insist on such devastatingly troublesome presentations.

—Jonathan Lerner
Philosophy Honours 4

Streeters

Would you be more likely to vote in AMS elections if they were online?

Karana Harry
Education 2

"I'd be more likely to vote online because it's easily accessible and it's available to every student so we don't have to make the effort to come to campus."

Emma Myers
Arts 4

"Probably. I don't think it would make much of a difference. Actually maybe. Maybe if it was online it might be easier, but to be honest I don't really follow AMS elections very much."

Simon Suh
Commerce 1

"Because I'm too lazy to vote on paper, that would be easier for me."

Julian Markowitz
Arts 1

"No, I would prefer to vote on paper, as it is....There's something gratifying about checking a box on a piece of paper when making a decision."

JungHee Jung
Commerce 3

"People check their emails all the time, so they would notice the election faster...so I think it would be better."

—Coordinated by Tara Martellaro & Liz Park, with photos by Gerald Deo

Canadian lifestyle is not for everyone

Members of UBC's Africa Awareness club consider Canada too materialistic for them, miss Africa's family-oriented lifestyle

BY IAN TURNER
Culture Staff

UBC's Africa Awareness club, which boasts just over 50 members, is the campus nexus for many Africans studying abroad. Though the members focus on eroding African stereotypes, the club also acts as an escape from Western culture, which allows members to mingle on a different level.

Naliaka Odera, the club's chair, hesitantly used the word "patience" to describe the endless stream of questions regarding Africa's state. However, she further noted that as a clear minority at UBC, she had an obligation to represent herself, her country (Kenya), and her continent well. "You are representing something that is bigger than you and once you get over that it actually becomes liberating."

Thato Makgolane, VP Finance, said that when a Westerner mentions Africa, "it makes me shiver....All the African stereotypes are wretched. However, Africa is a very diverse continent," noting vast cultural differences between Africa's four corners and Capetown's resemblance to many European cities.

The club has been working to break African stereotypes by establishing an African studies major. The endeavour has not yet been fruitful (the Faculty of Arts did not comment on this issue by press time).

"I think that most of what people base Africa on is what they see on the TV," said Ejemen Iyayi, the club's VP Administration. "You get people who think it's a country with dusty roads, people are poor, and everyone is HIV-positive. It's just a lot of negative images; you hardly find positive images being projected out there."

Along with Makgolane and Iyayi, Odera noted that "the hardest thing they had to adjust to was North America's emphasis on individualism instead of working for the family." For Odera, a "way of life that is not centred necessarily around economic gain but more centred around family and social systems" is a necessity and said, "I feel I cannot live without that type of a structure for too long."

Makgolane concurred, noting, "many Africans are used to living life in a simpler manner, living life through seeing challenges and hardships." However, he said that there is a shift toward placing more value on material things that, "personally, I do not like."

The club also serves as a pseudo-home for the members. Makgolane said that in Africa,"there is this sense of culture and community, you connect with people on a different level." That cultural history, he believes, of songs, dances, religion, and the mentalities that are subsequently created, develop more seasoned ties, which could not take root in the more ethnically diverse Canada, with its lack of emphasis on cultural heritage.

When asked what Western mentalities they would miss (they all said they would go back to Africa eventually), none could even venture a response. However, later in the interview, Makgolane said, "me coming here, being exposed to the lifestyle here, made me appreciate not only more who I am, where I come from, my background, my language, my family, I think it also helps to contrast the differences."

Members of UBC's Africa Awareness club are concerned with African stereotypes and creating a home away from home. DREW THOMPSON PHOTO/THE UBYSSEY

> "The hardest thing they had to adjust to was North America's emphasis on individualism instead of working for the family."
>
> —*Naliaka Odera*
> *Africa Awareness club chair*

If Humans Are Inevitable, What are the Theological Implications?

Simon Conway Morris

Thurs., Jan. 22 @ 4 p.m.

Hennings Room 202

Evolutionary Paleobiology, Earth Sciences, Cambridge

Author of *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe.*

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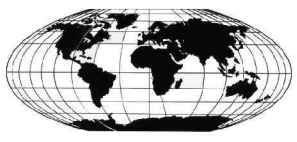

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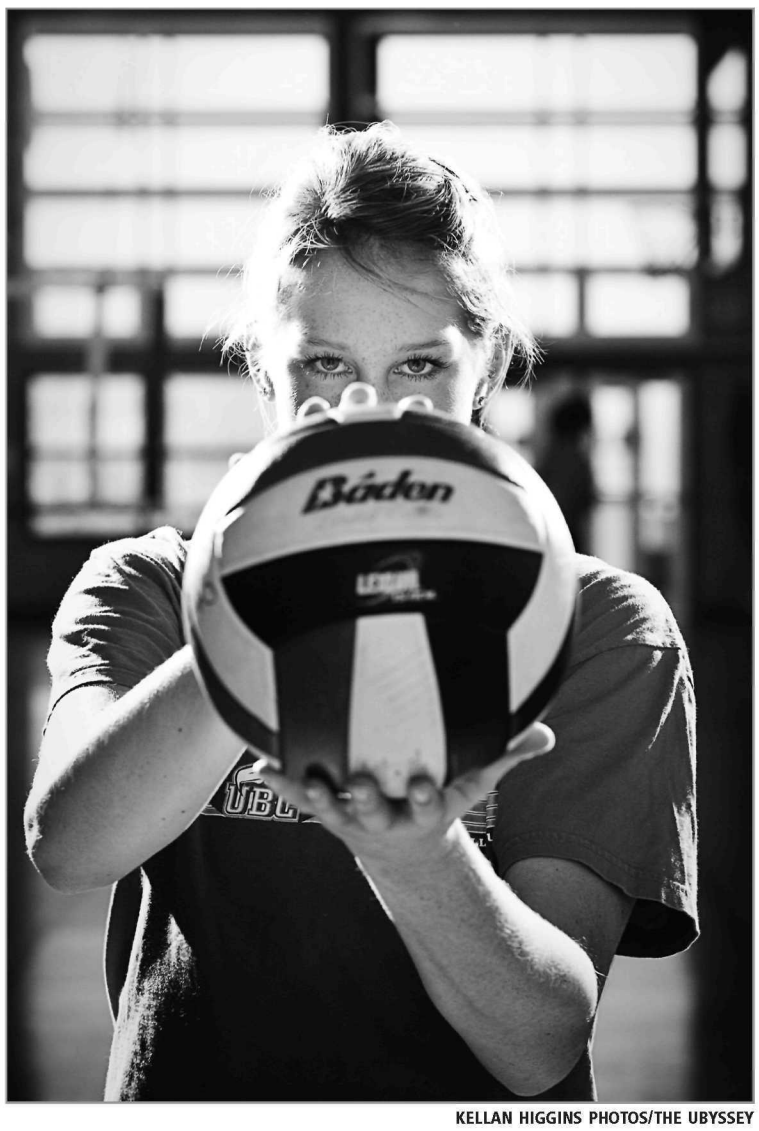
coordinating@ubyssey.ca

Athletes of the Week

BY CLAIRE HANNA
Thunderbird Athletic Council

KYLA RICHEY

This past Saturday, the UBC Women's Volleyball team fell narrowly short of a victory over the Calgary Dinos. Despite the loss, the Birds' standout right side hitter Kyla Richey had an exceptional game. Notching 18 kills, the technical hitter provided solid offence. Having just made a smooth transition from outside hitter to the rightside, Richey appeared to be at home on the other side of the court. She also led a secure defense of her court with 13 digs. Not only was her performance outstanding on Saturday, but on Sunday, in an even shorter game, she again provided 18 kills. This weekend's performance has placed Richey amongst the conference's best, sitting in the top ten for kills per game with 2.84/set and top ten for points per game with 3.3/game. This past summer, Richey trained with Team Canada in Winnipeg, and at the young age of 19, she is amongst only a handful of athletes under 20 that have been selected for this team. Richey and the rest of the lady Birds are Saskatchewan-bound this upcoming weekend, looking to hold their top five ranking in CanWest against the University of Saskatchewan Huskies.



KELLAN HIGGINS PHOTOS/THE UBYSSEY

ANNAMAY PIERSE

A top-ten finish in not one, but two Olympic events. A Canadian record-breaking 200m breaststroke swim. And then she beat her own record again. This past weekend, Annamay Pierse was recognized as Canada's top female swimmer, receiving the Omega Female Athlete of the Year award. By tallying up the

points of the swimmers who have the most points in international competition, Pierse had the most international success as a female Canadian swimmer this past year. In Beijing, she was sixth in the 200m breastroke and seventh along with her teammates in the 4x100m medley race. Pierse's signature style is dancing to the music every time she walks out on the pool deck to take her spot behind the starting blocks. She is definitely an athlete to watch in the future of Canada's Summer Olympic games.

Throwing out the UBC jock

BY DRAKE FENTON
Sports Writer

Imagine yourself as a person with no inclination to participate in sports. You are walking from the SUB to the bus loop after a long day of classes. While walking you pass by the BirdCoop gym and see a young male of substantial mass emerging through the doors. He is wearing his team affiliated T-shirt and matching toque. His sweatpants are rolled up to expose his calves and his biceps seem to be pulsating. Before averting your eyes from his direction you see him spitting dark brown fluid out of his mouth. You think to yourself: what a jock. How do these guys even get into UBC?

This "jock" I just portrayed could be any number of individuals that belong to our athletic community. From person to person the details may vary but the jock image stays in place. At UBC being branded with the jock stereotype isn't a positive boost to your image. In high school if you were a jock you most likely had a decent amount of friends, were considered cool and probably lost your virginity before the end of your senior year (if not much earlier).

Yet the benefits of being a jock in high school do not transfer over to the Canadian university level. At UBC, especially in upper-level courses, your peers judge you on your intelligence, not on your athletic prowess or ability to make comically stupid remarks in class. At a school where questions like "Who is the quarterback of the football team? What is the men's basketball team national rank? Name two players on the men's hockey team?" would produce more failing grades than Math 180, it becomes apparent that being a jock isn't necessarily cool.

Individuals at UBC who value intelligence would most likely think of someone with the jock stereotype to be stupid. A more sports-oriented term for this would be meat-stick. Yet behind the tight T-shirts, headbands and Copenhagen smiles, these "jocks" are for the most part not the "meat-sticks" that people believe them to be.

Athletes, like the rest of their peers, need to have a high average to get into UBC. Granted, some get in with a lower average if they possess high athletic potential, but coaches are limited in the amount of these exceptions that they can offer to prospective students. For example, the Men's Rugby team, out of a roster of 50 individuals, is only allowed to get a single player into UBC with an average below the accepted standard.

Moreover, it is a myth that athletes only scrape by in the classroom. To go back to the Men's Rugby team as an example, there are four players on the varsity roster who are all fourth-year engineers. Their averages are all above or around 80 per cent. On appearances alone you might think that these four have the combined intellectual capabilities of a lab rat being tested for mental handicaps. Yet these four excel in the classroom and their sport simultaneously.

As cliché as it sounds, appearances are deceiving. Not all athletes, not all "jocks", are idiots. There are athletes throughout our entire athletic community who manage to succeed in the classroom and within their respected sport. So next time you sit down in class beside someone who you instantly perceive to be a jock, do not be so quick to think that the only topics they are capable of talking about are protein bars, the new issue of *Men's Health,* variations in power-clean techniques and flavours of Skoal. You might be surprised to find that the person beside you is nowhere near as intellectually shallow as their appearance may suggest.

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