Our Afghanistan feature touches base in Kandahar on page 7

THE UBYSSEY

MARCH 21, 2011

VOLUME 92, NUMBER XLIII
ROOM 24, STUDENT UNION BUILDING
PUBLISHED MONDAYS AND THURSDAYS
FEEDBACK@UBYSSEY.CA

EVACUATED

UBC students pulled from Tokyo, Northern Japan

MICKI COWAN
mcowan@ubyssey.ca

Though UBC's response to the danger in Japan has been swift, at least one student isn't happy to be sent back home.

UBC decided Friday to send 19 students from what the Canadian government has deemed level three and four risk areas in Japan back home in urgency. The flights have been arranged and paid for by Go Global, and their return is mandatory.

Elsa Chanez, a student who was on exchange at Sophia University in Tokyo, said she feels she has been given no options. "I do understand their decision, but when I see that my European friends are given the choice to either stay or go, I feel patronized. I have no voice and it's a bit upsetting."

Chanez said it is hard to watch the news in Tokyo and wonder if the decision they made was too rash. She had been told the decision would be made on March 21 rather than on the 19th. "Some of my friends in Tokyo are telling me the situation is fine and that we could have come back with no problems. Once again, we cannot be too sure but I feel time would have been able to tell us. But we were not given the option to wait."

Janet Teasdale, senior director of Student Development and Services, recommended on March 17 to require UBC students to return home under Policy C69, which gives the university the right to remove students from high risk areas overseas.

CONT. ON PAGE 3

> "She discovered that she was not allowed to return to Japan at all to pick up her belongings or say good-bye to her friends and was to immediately fly back home to Marseilles."

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EVENTS

ONGOING EVENTS

***UBYSSEY* PRODUCTION** • Come help us create this baby! Learn about layout and editing. Expect to be fed. • *Every Sunday and Wednesday, 2pm.*

RESOURCE GROUPS • Are you working on a progressive project, but need funding? Do you have an idea, but can't get it off the ground? Apply to the Resource Groups for funding! Come in, pitch your idea to us and we will consider fully or partially funding your project. • *Every Monday, 11am in SUB 245 (second floor, north-east corner). For more info email* resourcegroups.ams@gmail.com.

POTTERY SALE AT SPROUTS • The UBC Pottery Club is now selling their work at Sprouts, and have donated some pieces to Sprouts in return for space. It brings a new addition to the Sprouts atmosphere and allows potters space to showcase their pieces. • *Mon–Fri, 9:30am–4pm, Sprouts, SUB basement.*

MONDAY, MAR. 21

STORM THE WALL • Be part of the biggest intramural event in North America! Join the action as UBC participants swim, sprint, bike and climb over a 12-foot wall. This is a UBC experience that is not to be missed. Registration deadline is March 21. • *Mar. 27–Apr. 1, 10am–4pm. $29–$96, min–max registrants: 5–6. Go to* rec.ubc.ca *for more information.*

UBYSSEY ELECTIONS!

Think you have what it takes to run this rag? We're electing the following positions for the 2011–2012 year.

Coordinating Editor
Managing Print Editor
Managing Web Editor
Art Director
News Editor (x2)
Culture Editor
Features Editor
Sports Editor
Video Editor

All positions are full-time beginning in September, with possible part-time work during the summer to be determined. Candidates must apply by 5pm on Friday, March 25. For more information, email elections@ubyssey.ca

JUSTIN MCELROY | coordinating@ubyssey.ca
THEUBYSSEY.ca

TUESDAY, MAR. 22

THREE COURSE CONNECTION DINNER (3CC) • 3CC is an annual UBC event that brings together three faculties at UBC: Science, Arts and Commerce. It connects UBC students with outstanding alumni and facilitates relationship building over a three course meal. The dinner is an exciting and unique opportunity for students to not only grow and strengthen their interest in their own field, but also to broaden their perspectives in other fields. There will also be a very special performance by UBCimprov! 3CC is created and organized by students, for students. • *6–8:30pm, Sutton Place Hotel, 845 Burrard St, registration details on Facebook group: Three Course Connection or on Twitter* @UBC_3CC.

WEDNESDAY, MAR. 23

PARTNERS IN HEALTH REPORTS ON POST-EARTHQUAKE HAITI • Partners in Health is a non-profit healthcare organization dedicated to providing a preferential health option for the poor. In collaboration with Help Hear Haiti (UBC coalition) and Haiti Solidarity BC, they are presenting a report on post-earthquake Haiti. This event is sponsored by the Terry Project. • *4:30–6:30pm, Room 200, Hennings Building, free admission.*

IMPULSE IMPROV FESTIVAL • UBCimprov will host IMPULSE, an epic five-day improv festival, this year presented in partnership with The Instant Shop. The nights will be filled with unscripted magic featuring performances from members of UBCimprov, visiting groups from across Canada as well as some of the most respected acts from the Vancouver improv world. • *Mar. 23–26, 7–9pm, doors open at 6:45pm, Room 100, Neville Scarfe Bldg. $5, $8 festival pass, free preview on Mar. 23 at Place Vanier Commonsblock.*

THURSDAY, MAR. 24

GREENSPEAK SUSTAINABILITY CAREERS DAY • With the support of UBC Sustainability, students are organizing Greenspeak, an event about careers in sustainability. They will be hosting speakers who have integrated sustainability as a crucial part of their business vision and have also incorporated it in their careers. • *4:30–6pm, Room 261, Irving K Barber.*

ENVIRONMENT CHANGE & DARFUR • STAND UBC presents a discussion and presentation on regional climate change to help us understand the effect of environmental factors in perpetrating conflict in Darfur, Sudan. Light refreshments will be provided. • *5–6pm, Global Lounge, Marine Drive Building 1.*

FRIDAY, MAR. 25

UBC POTTERY CLUB GALLERY SHOW • The UBC Pottery club is having a gallery show with live music and appetizers. It's open to everyone and is free! • *7:30–10pm, Room 205, SUB.*

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UBC absent from provincial protest

Students from the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island protesting at the provincial legislature. **EMILY LIANG/**THE NEXUS

TAYLOR LOREN
Contributor

On the Parliament lawn in Victoria on Wednesday, nearly 800 students rallied against increasing student debt—but only eight of them were from UBC.

The protest marked the first time in four years that students from across BC have come together. Organized by the student societies of Camosun College, Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria, they were joined by a dozen other student societies from across BC. Noticeably absent was the Alma Mater Society of UBC, which represents over 46,000 students and is the largest student union in Western Canada.

BC currently has the highest interest on student loans, and the highest accumulated debt per student in the country, averaging $27,000 for a four year degree.

"This is an issue so pivotal to the education system in BC, it's almost deplorable that the AMS isn't here. Any organization that represents post-secondary education should have a presence," said Eli Zabar, media liaison for the Langara Students' Union.

AMS President Jeremy McElroy said that the AMS wasn't in a financial position to attend.

"We supported the rally with a motion at Council, but the planning for it happened well in advance and we didn't have money to sponsor a bus. We encouraged all councillors and undergraduate societies to participate."

McElroy added that the elections and referendum had been the top priorities for the AMS, but that the AMS is working on future lobby plans.

"The lack of UBC involvement is a real shame," said Kyle Acierno, External Relations Officer for the Simon Fraser Students Union.

"[The SFSS] is going through everything that the AMS is going through. It's a real pity that the AMS didn't come behind this and support it more, for $800 to rent a couple buses."

When running for VP External in 2010, McElroy stated that "the AMS should be putting far more energy into meeting with officials and people that have influence and less into protest tactics."

The Social Justice Centre sponsored travel for students, but only eight came. Arielle Friedman, financial co-ordinator for the SJC, was in attendance.

"It was really cool to see all these students from across BC coming out, the message was really positive and there was just a great energy to it. However, the UBC contingent was so small, it made the AMS look pretty bad, especially compared to SFU," said Friedman.

Earlier this month, a referenda question asking whether the AMS should lobby for lower tuition fees passed, with 87 per cent voting in favour.

Despite this, the AMS has not been actively lobbying at a provincial level over the last year, focusing instead on forming a BC student lobby group, which has yet to be created.

"Lobbying should be a huge priority for the AMS, in a way that it clearly isn't," said Friedman.

During the student rally, McElroy and VP External Katherine Tyson were hosting the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, a federal lobbying group.

The AMS is voting this week on whether to become full members at a cost of $46,000.

Friedman wished the AMS would focus more on BC and uniting with other local universities.

"Provincial lobbying is the most effective as they give out the most student loans, and they fund our universities. The AMS has done very little provincially.

"It just shows that affordability of post-secondary education is not a priority for them right now, and it has to be."

"I feel patronized. I have no voice and it's a bit upsetting."

Continued from cover

"I think you see all universities, all organizations, all governments working to get their citizens and students out of the area," she said. "We also look at the assessment other countries make—Italy, France, the UK—these countries have different kinds of ways of making these assessments. Some are more or less conservative."

Teasdale said the level of urgency increased with the nuclear reactor situation at Fukushima. Those who are not in high risk areas will be allowed to stay, but also assisted if they choose to return home.

"We really quickly removed any barriers so that if a student anywhere in Japan wanted to return home or to Canada, they could do that immediately," she said. Students that were taking advantage of Japan's mid-semester break to travel throughout Asia were asked to remain where they are and not to return to Japan.

Sophia University in Tokyo. **COURTESY OF JOE HENDERER/**FLICKR

After the quake, Chanez's parents flew her to Hong Kong temporarily. When she was contacted by Go Global, she discovered that she was not allowed to return to Japan at all to pick up her belongings or say good-bye to her friends and was to immediately fly back home to Marseilles.

Chanez said that her year in Japan was the best of her life, and she was upset at having to leave so suddenly. "I tried arguing with the advisor but she said the 'situation was final.' Since I left Tokyo in a hurry, all my belongings are still there. I could not say goodbye to my friends, I still have a bank account and a phone to take care of—these may seem trivial but [they] will become annoying things in the future," she said.

Teasdale said that while the university is working with Japanese counterparts to ensure the safe return of belongings, the scale of UBC's actions is unprecedented.

"[Of] decisions in the past ten years, we have never refunded tuition, arranged for travel and required students to leave an area," she said. "For the most part, the students have been great in understanding the situation and quickly mobilizing themselves in what is a very distressing situation for many of them."

Students who were planning to leave for Japan were asked to remain home. For these students, and those who were going to start their second semester in Japan in April, it means a semester of classes will be lost.

"We all just lost a semester since we cannot take courses at UBC now until the summer semester," said Chanez.

Teasdale said the university still made the best decision for the safety of students.

"The university moved quickly and appropriately. Obviously there are some students who are upset that their ideas of studying abroad so quickly ended. But we can work with them on alternate arrangements and alternate plans."

NEWS BRIEFS

MOA TO HOLD DIALOGUE TO ADDRESS CANCELLATION OF CONTROVERSIAL EXHIBIT

UBC's Museum of Anthropology (MOA) is planning to open up discussion at a two-day dialogue in May regarding the "The Forgotten" exhibit. The exhibit was initially set to be on display at the MOA in the middle of February but was later cancelled by the MOA after concerns were raised by community groups.

"The Forgotten" is a collection of 69 portraits of missing or murdered women from the Downtown East Side. The controversy surrounds the issue of violence against women and racialized violence, and the lack of family consultation in artist Pamela Masik's process. Many of the portaits were based on mug shots from the Vancouver Police Department.

MCGILL INVESTIGATES STUDENT OVER TWITTER THREATS

A McGill student allegedly posted threatening comments to Twitter while watching the documentary *Indoctrinate U*, at a film screening hosted by the groups Conservative McGill and Libertarian McGill last week.

The student, Haaris Khan, has since deactivated his account, and said to the *McGill Tribune* that the comments were not intended as genuine threats.

In Khan's tweets, he threatened to shoot the roomful of students at the screening. "My blood is boiling," he wrote at 6:38pm "I want to shoot everyone in this room. I'm frightened, alarmed and downright pissed. Never been this angry." An hour later, he posted, "this experience has hardened me into a soldier for freedom and truth." He posted his last tweet, about bringing "an M-16," minutes later. McGill Security contacted the Montreal Police Department after a Conservative McGill member reported Khan's tweets. Khan did not have any registered weapons and no arrest has been made.

VIU FACULTY GO ON STRIKE

VICTORIA (CUP)—Last week, the Vancouver Island University's (VIU) faculty association went on strike over a labour dispute with the university administration.

The strike began on March 10, though rumours of a strike had been circulating for months, after faculty members were slated for a number of layoffs and certain classes were in jeopardy of being cancelled.

Both sides met for mediated negotiations on Friday, March 18.

While the faculty said they were willing to settle on a wage freeze with no greater pay for two years, the group is asking for other benefits, including security in class and course offerings, greater release time for teachers, increased involvement in selection of top administrators and using layoffs as a supervised last-resort tactic, not a first response method to budgeting.

CULTURE

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UBCimprov making it up as they go

THEATRE

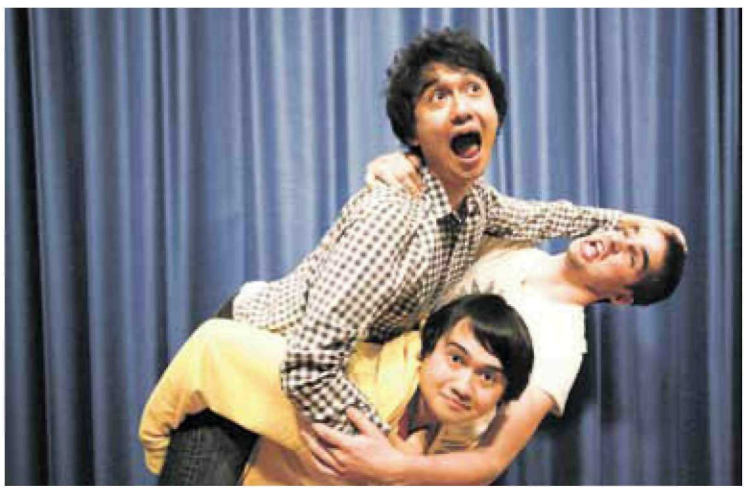
MIKE DICKSON
Contributor

The UBCimprov Club may take to the stage without any plan whatsoever, but when it comes to spreading the funny word, their plans are set in stone.

The third annual Impulse Improv Festival kicks off this week, running March 23-26 here at UBC.

"It's definitely our biggest event," said club co-president Nick Harvey-Cheetham. "We're trying to create a national community of university-aged improv groups, and I'm very excited about what's going to be the biggest Impulse festival yet."

More than 60 performers from 20 teams hailing from BC, Washington, Alberta and Ontario will showcase their quick thinking and comedic timing in nightly performances at the Neville Scarfe building, with a free show on March 23 in the Place Vanier Ballroom.



Improving every day. **PHOTO COURTESY UBCIMPROV**

In addition, there are introductory and advanced improv workshops for people to hone their craft or pick up a new one.

A couple of changes have been made to the format of this year's event, which will feature UBCimprov members performing largely as duos. More importantly, the competitive element of the festival has been given the axe in favour of more teams, more performers and more laughs.

"It wasn't worth being competitive about because that aspect was often lost anyways in this type of setting because people come here to laugh and learn improv," said Stefana Fratilla, the club's promotions officer. "We thought it was a subtle change that no one would notice," she added with a laugh.

"I'm really excited because I feel it gets more popular every year and gets more people looking forward to the next year of Impulse," she said.

Fratilla said fostering an inter-university improv community has been one of the club's long-term goals. The immense size of some universities often doesn't lend itself to fostering improv like the more intimate setting of high school, she said.

"There's a terrific high school network of improv, but once you get to university there's not that same infrastructure in place," said Harvey. "We're very excited about building a stronger community and getting the name out there."

All-day passes are $8 and can be purchased at the SUB.

FOOD WITH KAIT BOLONGARO

EXPLORING CANADA'S WEST COAST WINE

Since 1995, there has been a substantial increase in the number of wineries in BC. This growth is most obvious in the Okanagan, where acres of orchards have been converted into vineyards. While there is debate to what caused this growth, the rising demand for BC wine across North America is certainly a factor, said Dr David McArthur, coordinator of UBC's Understanding Wine Program.

"From 2001 until 2011, in Vancouver, wine has become a major player in many social circles and especially in our food culture," explained McArthur. "Over the past ten years, the number of wine festivals and wine and food pairing events coming through Vancouver has increased. The Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival is one of the biggest wine tasting and education shows in North America, likely the biggest in Canada."

There has also been an increase in the demand for wine education. "People are very interested to know what wine is all about," said McArthur. "I teach an introductory wine overview course at UBC and about 500 students attend each year."

"Wine is definitely part of the culture in BC," said Bronwyn Coyne, a fourth-year dietetics student at UBC and one of McArthur's former pupils. "I am from the Okanagan and because we grow the grapes there, I think it has a strong culture and growing [grapes] is part of Canadian pride. I wouldn't think it's the same as beer, but it's definitely part of the foodie culture."

Another important reason for the growing demand for BC wines is due to the further integration of wine into Canadian food traditions. Furthermore, wine customs from Italy and France have been absorbed into the Canadian social fabric. Wine is now thought by many Canadians to be a key part in a social gatherings and parties.

"Wine is both a specialty food and catalyst for social interactions," said McArthur. "Good wine paired with good food takes the whole dining experience to a higher level—both gastronomically and socially. It does help people slow down, and think about the aromas, mouthfeel, sweetness-acidity-bitterness of what one is eating and drinking—at the same time helping people to relax and share something of themselves, their thoughts, their day, and perhaps their plans for tomorrow."

"Wine is a social drink," said Asuka Ichikawa, a fourth-year international relations student at UBC. "There's something different about sharing a bottle. It brings people together."

UBC
Looking for Healthy Research Volunteers

The **Mood Disorders Centre** at **UBC Hospital** is conducting a study to assess the potential benefits of drinking water in healthy men.

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If you are interested or have any questions, please contact the study office at **604-822-0332**.

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MUSIC

Blowing up

YouTube takes UBC flutist down under

Hung, tongue-tied. **GEOFF LISTER PHOTO**/THE UBYSSEY

CATHERINE GUAN
Contributor

"This is big. Really big," said Paul Hung. The usually soft-spoken flutist, currently in his third year in UBC's School of Music, couldn't hide his excitement.

At the time of the interview, he was in Australia performing with the YouTube Symphony Orchestra 2011 for a series of concerts on March 14–20. Hosted by YouTube and the London Symphony Orchestra, the orchestra composed of players from around the world. They performed the grand finale at the Sydney Opera House yesterday. It streamed live on Youtube and was broadcast live on Australian TV networks.

Hung was intrigued by the idea of a collaborative, online orchestra when a professor encouraged him and his classmates to apply. He posted two video clips of himself playing a symphonic piece and a solo.

"I wasn't expecting too much, to be honest…knowing the chances of getting it were quite low," he said.

Yet from among thousands of entries, Hung's audition videos won him a seat in the three-person flute section.

Hung switched to the flute from the recorder at age 12, at the urging of his mother.

"I didn't like it at first, but it wasn't long before I got into it," He recalled with a laugh. "It felt like I was hyperventilating when I first started."

Hung made his first concerto debut at the age of 16, performing with his high school orchestra at the Whistler Music Festival. Numerous accolades followed, including the *CBC* Radio Rising Star Award at Musicfest Canada 2007.

A typical day for him involves seven hours of rehearsal, three hours of class, two hours in concert and practicing for the rest. "I don't actually have a life right now," said Hung wryly.

He said he hopes to find work in a professional orchestra and perhaps do some teaching. Young flutists are already peppering him with questions on YouTube. One asked about 'tonguing.'

"Tonguing is when you attack each note, so every note has definition," Hung explained. "You say 'too-koo' really fast. The question is how do you make it clear and make it sound easy?"

Playing with the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, he is excited to meet over 100 musicians from 33 different countries and to be visiting Australia for the first time in his life.

Hung will be back at UBC to play a recital at Roy Bennet Hall on March 24 at 8pm. The flutist was bashful, asking for a mention of the event. But he admitted, "I wouldn't mind having a bigger audience."

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SPORTS

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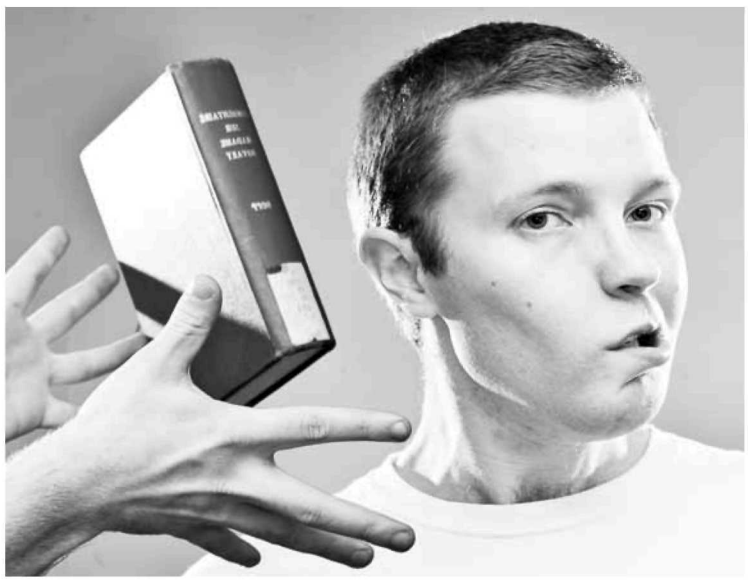
Burshtein: Head injuries have impact outside the rink

PERSPECTIVES

NOAH BURSHTEIN
Contributor



JOSH CURRAN PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/THE UBYSSEY

Injuries have always been—and will always be—a significant part of sports. Whether at the high school, college or pro level, injuries are bound to happen and are an accepted part of the games we know and love. Knee injuries are considered "serious," back injuries are even worse but what we have long ignored is perhaps the most dangerous of them all: brain injuries.

Concussions, or swelling of the brain inside the skull, are a result of a mild to severe impact or blow to the head. They range in grade from one to three, and are medically considered quite dangerous. Yet the sporting world seems to be behind the times. In a field (sport science) that is so absolutely technologically and intellectually advanced, it seems almost absurd that such a serious injury would go overlooked, yet this phenomenon occurs up to this day. When a player suffers a concussion, their brain reduces itself to a coma-like state in an attempt to preserve all possible brain function. Headaches, dizziness and vision problems often follow for weeks or even months. Even when these symptoms are recognized and the right medical measures are taken—it is the long-term effects that are being consistently ignored.

A report in *Brain*, a medical journal focused on cerebral health, compared 19 athletes who had sustained concussions more than 30 years previous with 21 athletes who had a clean history of health. These formerly concussed athletes consistently scored lower in memory and motor function tests across the board. Clearly the long-term dangers of these injuries are all too real.

Looking to the pros, athletes such as Sidney Crosby, Chris Paul and Brian Dawkins have all sat out weeks' worth of games and even considered retirement at the peak of their careers for fear of these long-term effects. Even now, Max Pacioretty from the Montreal Canadiens is out indefinitely after a vicious late rubout into the glass divider between the team benches. And yet, for an injury that is now starting to be taken seriously in the pros, we are not doing enough to protect our college players. Just this past hockey season, an ugly incident between UBC forward Mike Liambas and Alberta Golden Bears captain Eric Hunter flew relatively below the radar and was a prime example of a lack of protection for our athletes.

During the late February game, Liambas took offense to a slash from Hunter and caught him from behind, slamming his head into the ice and leaving the Golden Bears' best player concussed. Liambas received a game misconduct and a two-game suspension from the CIS, but is that truly punishment enough? Alberta head coach Eric Thurston certainly didn't think so.

"I have a kid [Hunter] in business, an honours student and an academic all-Canadian. What happens with him going to school? With his exams?" Thurston asked. "Hockey is hockey. These guys are preparing for academic life. What if he has to sit out the semester?"

And he's right. Ninety-nine per cent of all CIS athletes are not going to ever play sports professionally. They are all enjoying their time competing at a high level but, more importantly, are focused on the opportunity to receive a degree from a university that will help further their careers. A two-game suspension cannot be considered punishment enough for slamming a player's head to the ice—especially for Liambas, a player who was kicked out of the Ontario Hockey League for fracturing a player's skull.

Violent and dangerous plays like this cannot be let off the hook when it comes to concussions. University sport must step up and step in while it still has a chance to prevent further brain injuries. They owe it to the student-athletes who give every last ounce they have to their programs. Don't make them give their future health too.

ams student society | Insider weekly
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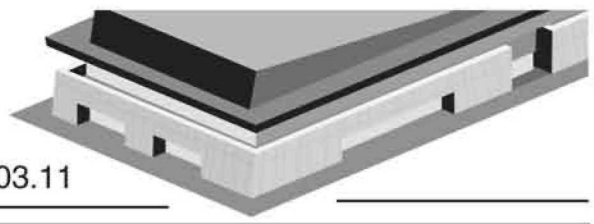

Spring Shopping Spree
March 22nd to 26th
10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
SUB Main Concourse

AMS Internship and MyGradGuide present:
VOLUNTEER CONNECT
Professional and Career Development Workshop Series.
This workshop series will focus on topics valuable in preparing for summer employment or volunteer positions as well as gaining an introduction into career development.
To sign up for workshops, please visit: *http://tinyurl.com/amsinternworkshops*.
There are limited spaces. For more info email: *internship@ams.ubc.ca*.
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OPINIONS

DO YOU CARE? WRITE US A LETTER » feedback@ubyssey.ca

EDITORIAL

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SKIN A CAT. OR LOBBY A GOVERNMENT.

Last week, as Christy Clark was officially appointed Premier and Naomi Yamamoto became our new Minister of Advanced Education, students who were wondering what was being done to advance their interests could see two very different methods of persuasion in action.

In Victoria, hundreds of students chanted and rallied on the lawns of the legislature on Wednesday. They demanded the government address the fact that a doubling of tuition and a stagnation on increasing funding for student aid over the past decade has made BC perhaps the least affordable place in the country to get a degree. These students were loud and garnered media attention.

While these protests were taking place on the island, student leaders from universities across the country met at UBC and discussed lobbying and policy aims at the annual general meeting of CASA, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. Aside from partying it up with a bunch of 19-year-olds at The Pit on Wednesday, they were a fairly quiet bunch.

That's the dichotomy in post-secondary advocacy at the student level: protest publicly, or lobby quietly. A focus on tuition, or a focus on student loans. Fight The Man, or try and change his mind over a meeting.

Of course, those that champion one tactic tend to dismiss out of hand all benefits of the other. In UBC's case, while the Graduate Student Society sent a small contingent over to the Victoria protest, the AMS was the only large student union in the lower mainland that didn't attend the rally.

By being entirely absent from what was the largest student action in years, the AMS has eroded goodwill with other student unions. And with the oft-promised creation of a provincial lobby group initiated by UBC looking increasingly unlikely, the AMS appears to be willing to go it alone on provincial lobbying.

There are many options available to convince those in power that the current funding model for post-secondary education in BC is out of whack.

But with an overwhelming majority of voters saying the AMS should be lobbying for lower tuition, as evidenced in the recent referendum, the AMS's behind-the-scenes lobbying might give students the impression they're not doing anything at all.

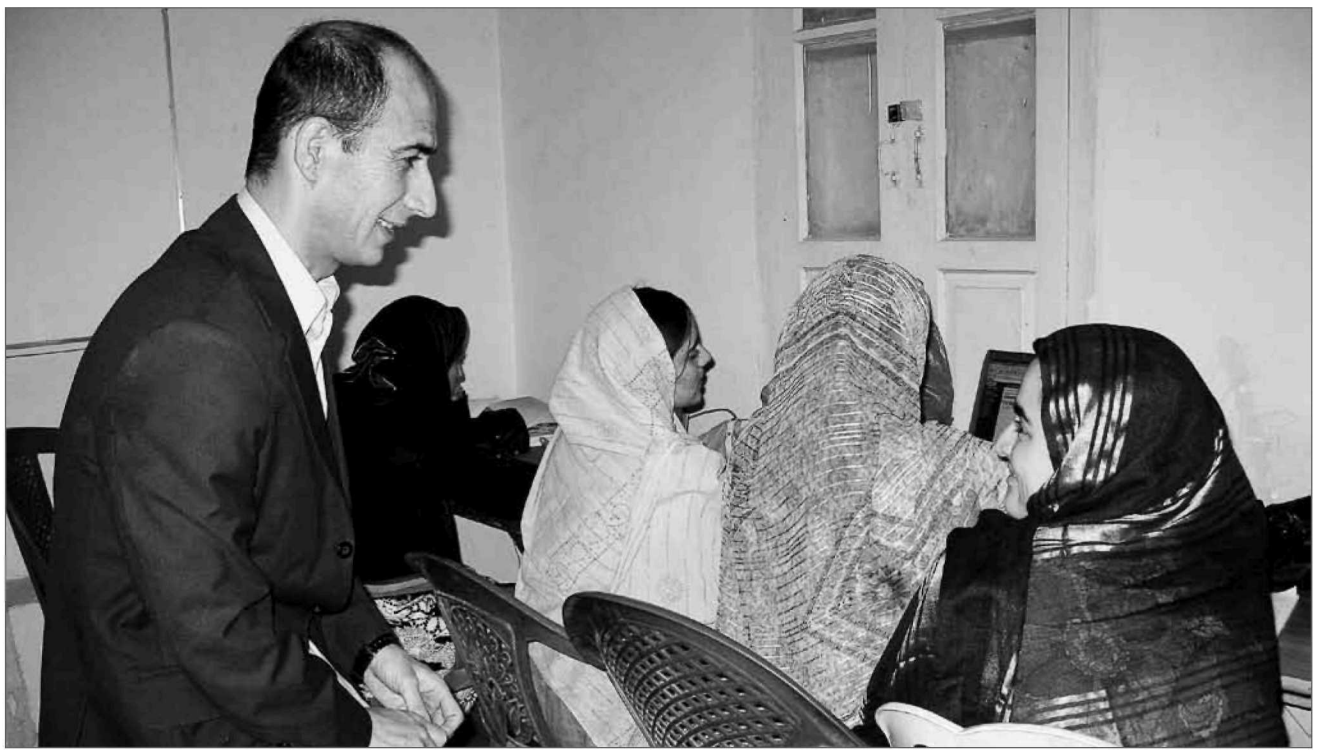
ON LIBYA AND WORLD POLICING

Those not paying full attention to the news cycle last week might have missed the fact that we have entered another war. Yet with Canada sending six aircraft and one warship to the Mediterranean to assist in the United Nations campaign to remove Moammar Gadhafi from power, that's exactly what our country has done. Prime Minister Stephen Harper may have been acting correctly in persuading the House of Commons to support the use of military force—or might have been, had any discussion or consultation within the legislature taken place.

Of course, this international intervention into a Middle Eastern country *feels* okay, because we're the unambiguous virtuous ones. This is a murderous dictator, after all. It's a war of choice—but a good war of choice. Albeit, one our elected representatives didn't choose. But still. It's a get-in, get-out, make-the-world-better operation. The people are clamouring for our help and will greet us as liberators. There was no alternative political structure before the rebellion began, but don't all rebellions in destabilized states result in democracy eventually? Rest assured, the people who replace Gadhafi can't be worse. And most importantly, this was a principled, inevitable decision that was clearly outlined by our government as the consequence for Gadhafi's actions days beforehand. There is a clear plan here which we all know about and which will assuredly be followed.

We hope.

The plight of the Libyans is a serious matter that deserves attention. So are decisions to deploy our military. All international interventions can be justified depending on your point of view, and they can be quick, low-risk and low-casualty operations that make the world a better place. But the batting average isn't high for that type of success, even with the United States. Though a terrible ordeal may now have consequences for all of us, our thoughts and hopes are with the people of Libya.



Ehsanullah Ehsan, the school's director, talks with a student. **BRIAN PLATT PHOTO**/THE UBYSSEY

OPINIONS

In Kandahar, education a battleground

BRIAN PLATT
Contributor

Kabul is a much safer city than most Canadians think, though one can never be complacent about the danger that still exists. I noticed that a supermarket which I visited on my trip in October was blown apart by a bomb on January 28; it was a senseless attack that mostly killed Afghan civilians, as most Taliban attacks do. But the vast majority of Kabul's four million residents, including many foreigners, carry out their work unharmed.

Kandahar, on the other hand, is more dangerous than most Canadians know, and there is no one in more danger there than an Afghan student going to a secular school. I spent one day in Kandahar visiting some of these students at the Afghan Canadian Community Centre (ACCC).

Ehsanullah Ehsan is the principal of the ACCC, which has been written about many times in Canadian newspapers, including a few outstanding stories by Paul Watson of the *Toronto Star*. It operates as a cross between a primary/secondary school and a community college, graduating its students with degrees in literacy, business management and computer skills. It operates in two shifts, with girls attending during the day and boys in the evening.

Both because of the reputation of the school and the chance to see a different part of Afghanistan, I was greatly anticipating my trip to Kandahar.

Incredibly, booking a domestic flight is really no different than in Canada. One morning I walked a few blocks from my guest house to a travel agency in downtown Kabul, and booked a flight to Kandahar City. A round trip costs just over $200.

At the Kabul airport, Afghan security staff wearing crisp blue uniforms worked alongside their American trainers inside a brand new Japanese-built terminal. The flight took about an hour. The Kandahar airport, with its retro Sixties architecture and leafy gardens, was a surprisingly pleasant place considering it is located on a sprawling NATO military base in one of the most violent provinces in the country.

Ehsan, our host for the trip, lives in a newly built community outside the city which requires passing through multiple layers of checkpoints to gain entry. He changes cars often and never takes the same route into the city on successive days. In conversation, Ehsan can give you long monologues on the effect Shakespeare has had on Pashto literature. During the Taliban era, he insisted on reading poetry on bus rides between Kandahar and Pakistan, a habit that almost got him arrested by the morality police on multiple occasions; during one such confrontation, he punched his Taliban accuser in the face, breaking his nose. Ehsan rocks.

Like all schools in Afghanistan, the physical infrastructure of the ACCC is woefully sparse. There are a few computer labs with painfully slow internet connections—but the fact that Afghan students can even go on the internet is still a revolutionary development, and it wouldn't be possible at all here without the support of the Canadian government. The ACCC has a partnership with the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, and I watched in awe while one girl discussed her lesson plan over Skype with a professor in Calgary.

Ehsan had set it up so that we could see a graduation ceremony for a class of girls. During this ceremony, he gave a speech that was more passionately progressive than anything I've ever heard in Canada. "You have proven a lot of people wrong who think that women are second-class citizens," he said, pounding his fist on the podium. "You are fighting for enlightenment. You are fighting for civilization. You are citizens of the world."

You don't have to spend long in Kandahar before noticing the differences between it and Kabul. The level of patriarchy and repression towards women is overwhelming. It is taboo for a young girl to even make eye contact with a male who is a not a relative, and though I could feel the students' eyes on me when I walked into a room, they quickly looked away when I turned towards them. But there were also a few girls who came up to me with big smiles and talked my ear off about all of their post-graduation plans.

In significant ways, Kandahar City is more symbolically important to the Taliban than Kabul is. Kandahar is where the Taliban movement, made up of reactionary male religious students, first took hold, and it was from Kandahar that they used Pakistani-supplied weapons to lay siege to the rest of the country. Since 2006, there has been an overt, but so far unsuccessful, Taliban effort to reoccupy the city.

In recent years, the Taliban have waged a ferocious assassination and intimidation campaign in Kandahar Province, and schools have been on the frontlines of this assault. In an infamous incident in November 2008, 11 Kandahari girls were sprayed with acid as they were walking to school. Many schools have been burnt down, many more are shuttered due to security threats, and principals and teachers commonly receive death threats, often known as "night letters."

The ACCC has operated for years with a small level of funding from the Canadian International Development Agency, but CIDA has recently been threatening to cut this funding off. Watson's *Toronto Star* articles were key in getting the funding extended for at least one more year.

As Canada winds down our extremely expensive military mission, we must increase funding for schools in Afghanistan. The only long-term hope for Kandahar to escape the grip of violence and religious fanaticism is for students, especially female students like those at the ACCC, to gain independence through a decent level of education. Canada's financial support for this is absolutely crucial, and the cost to CIDA is negligible compared to the huge effect it has. If CIDA does cut off the funds, help raise a storm about it. Consider making a donation yourself through the Canadian International Learning Foundation. This is about keeping our promises to the Afghan people.

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