JULY 25, 2017 | VOLUME XCIX | ISSUE III
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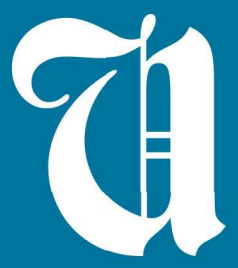


THE UBYSSEY

P / 03
NEWS
AMS VP Academic Daniel Lam resigns

P / 05
CULTURE
Why Being a Teenager Sucked: The Musical

P / 09
OPINION
Their Campus: Changes in Cape Town

P / 10
SCIENCE
Med students support Nepalese sickle cell patients

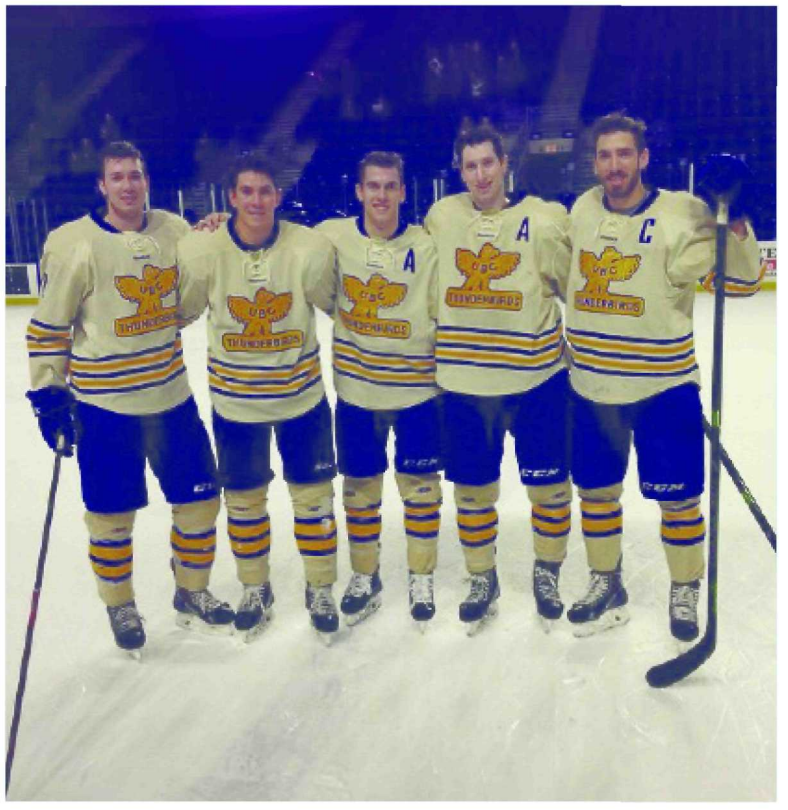
P / 11
SPORTS
The 'Birds turn out world class athletes

CANADA 150

The Ubyssey looks back on our country's history and culture to see how the past has formed today.

// Page 6

Over nine per cent of people in the indigenous Tharu community in Dang, Nepal have sickle cell disease.



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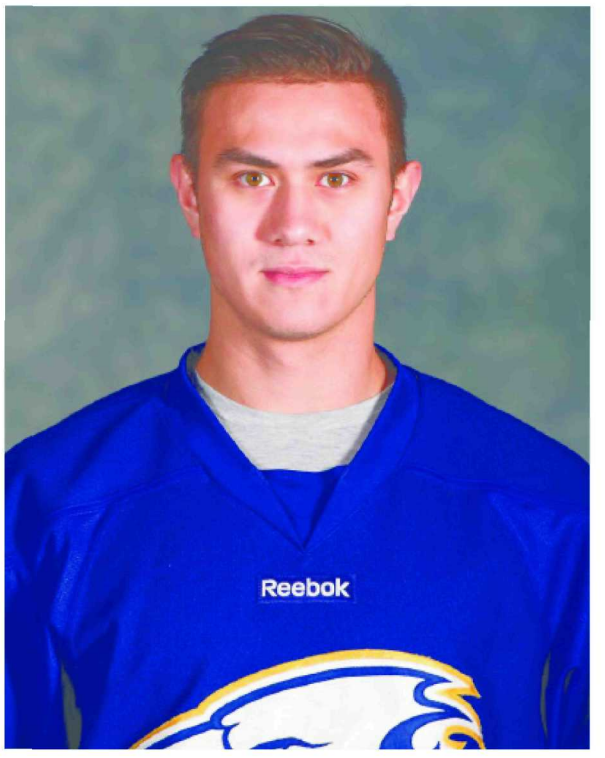
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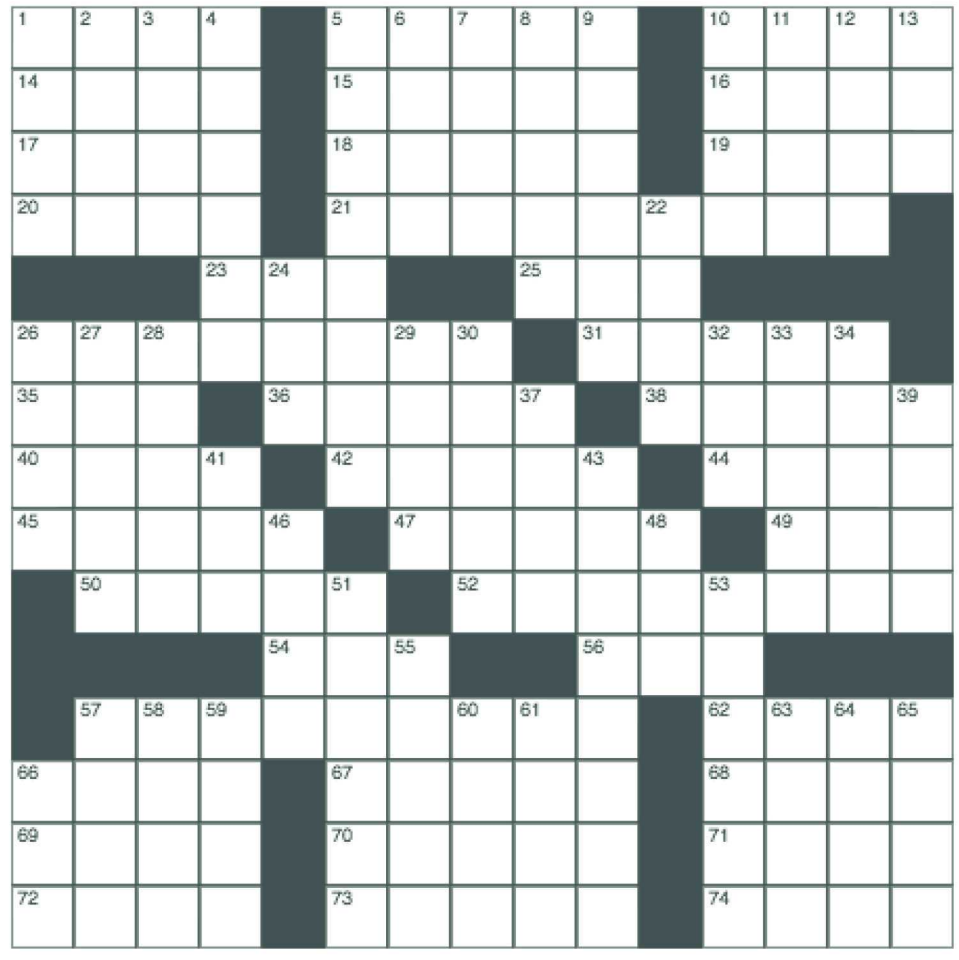

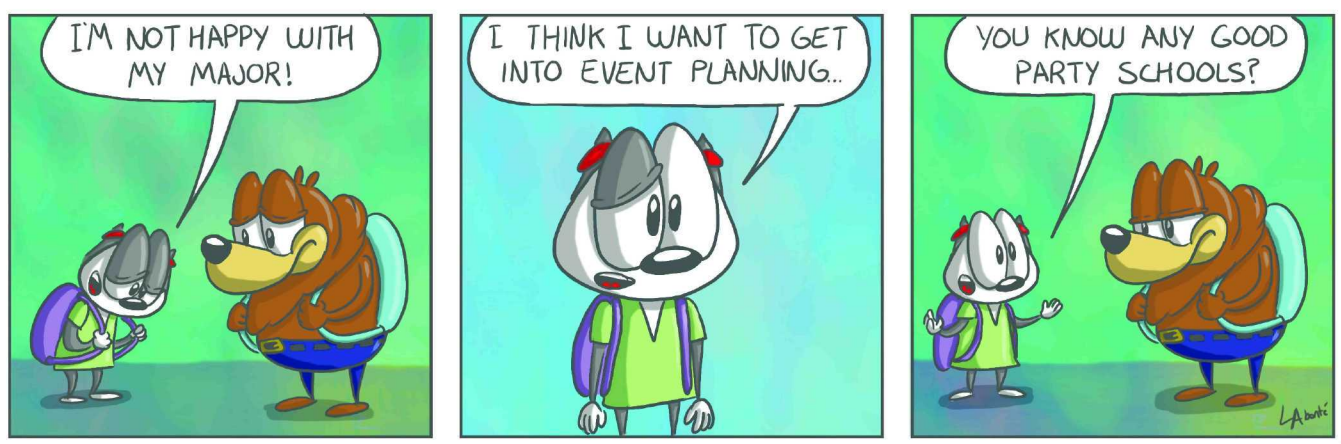

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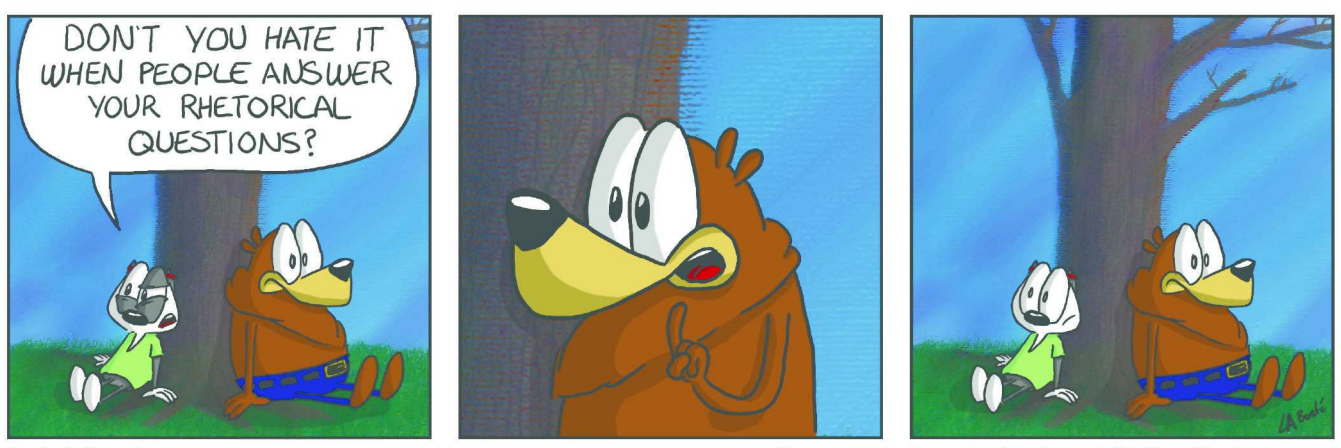

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EVENTS

JUNE 24 TO OCTOBER 1

CLAUDE MONET'S SECRET GARDEN @ VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Visit the works of the founder of Impressionism.

STUDENT TICKETS AT $17.14

FRIDAY AUGUST 4

DAVIE STREET PARTY 6 PM TO MIDNIGHT @ DAVIE ST

Vancouver Pride holds the biggest party in the West End, including an eight DJ line up.

FREE ENTRY, DRINKS NOT INCLUDED

FRIDAY AUGUST 11

AN EVENING WITH BILL NYE & GEORGE STROUMBOULOPOULOS @ ORPHEUM

Meet the Science Guy.

TICKETS STARTING AT $60

ON THE COVER

COVER BY
Natalie Morris

Want to see your events listed here?
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THE UBYSSEY

JULY 25, 2017 | VOLUME XCIX| ISSUE III

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LEGAL

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The Ubyssey is a founding member of Canadian University Press (CUP) and adheres to CUP's guiding principles.

The Ubyssey accepts opinion articles on any topic related to the University of British Columbia (UBC) and/or topics relevant to students attending UBC. Submissions must be written by UBC students, professors, alumni, or those in a suitable position (as determined by the opinions editor) to speak on UBC-related matters. Submissions must not contain racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, harassment or discrimination. Authors and/or submissions will not be precluded from publication based solely on association with particular ideologies or subject matter that some may find objectionable. Approval for publication is, however, dependent on the quality of the argument and The Ubyssey editorial board's judgment of appropriate content. Submissions may be sent by email to opinion@ubyssey.ca. Please include your student number or other proof of identification. Anonymous submissions will be accepted on extremely rare occasions. Requests for anonymity will be granted upon agreement from four fifths of the editorial board. Full opinions policy may be found at ubyssey.ca/submit-an-opinion

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OUR CAMPUS

Alfred Hermida and Mary Lynn Young are "turning journalism on its head" with *The Conversation*

COURTESY REILLY LIEVERS/RACHEL NIXON

"Anyone can take this material and publish it on their website, and that's part of the power here."

Joshua Azizi
Staff Writer

At a time when digital media is constantly expanding and the need for critical journalism is as high as it's ever been, UBC Associate Professors Dr. Alfred Hermida and Dr. Mary Lynn Young are seeking to provide media consumers with informed explanatory journalism to make sense of the world around them.

The two professors at the UBC School of Journalism recently launched the Canadian branch of *The Conversation*, a non-profit journalism site originally founded in Australia that bridges the gap between academia and journalism. Although the site is organized and edited by professional journalists, its articles are written by scholars who are already experts on the topics they're writing about

According to Hermida, who is the current director of the UBC School of Journalism, this model is a good way to get important critical research out of academic journals and into the public's consciousness.

"There's a depth of research at Canadian universities, but often the challenge is 'how does that research then get presented in a way that is accessible to the public?'," he said. "And that's what journalists are very good at."

Although academics are frequently quoted and referenced in the media, Young explained that they're often hesitant to talk to them out of a concern that their work could be misrepresented through the filtering and gatekeeping of journalists and editors.

"The media studies literature is clear that often people can have problematic experiences with being misquoted or feeling like their ideas weren't fully represented," she said.

By allowing the academics to write the articles themselves, *The Conversation* sidesteps this issue.

"They're supporting academics who might not normally be able to make it through the gatekeeping process or may not want to," said Young.

In order to proliferate the academic information as much as possible, *The Conversation* permits other media sources to republish their articles, as long as they leave the story untouched and note at the top of the page where it came from.

"Anyone can take this material and publish it on their website, and that's part of the power here," said Hermida. "We're turning journalism on its head because, traditionally, when you set up a journalism organization, you're trying to attract readers and viewers to your product and you're trying to keep them there.

"Our model is almost the reverse ... it's more about taking this independent informed journalism to the audiences who have an appetite for it rather than saying to the audiences 'you have to come to us.'"

For example, an article that Hermida wrote for *The Conversation* in November about Trump supporters and the media was republished in *Salon*. Other sources that have republished articles from the platform include *Business Insider*, the *Washington Post*, the *National Post* and *Maclean's*.

Both Young and Hermida worked as professional journalists before becoming associate professors at UBC. Young worked for various newspapers such as the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Houston Post* and the *Globe and Mail*, but she later decided to pursue a Ph.D in criminology from the University of Toronto in order to get a better understanding of her craft, particularly the connections between power relations and newsrooms.

"It helped me make sense of what journalism could be doing and should be doing and some of the gaps that I had observed," she said.

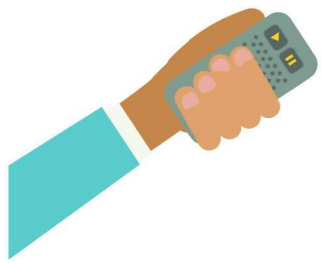
After completing her Ph.D, Young went on to become the director of UBC's School of Journalism from 2008 to 2011. In co-founding *The Conversation*'s Canadian site, she's continuing her work connecting higher education and academia.

"I'm not making any money from this, I'm not getting a job from this — it's just purely a way to try to support a model that seems to have relevance and importance at this time and stage in journalism and in higher education."

Before becoming the current director of the School of Journalism, Hermida had already established himself as a pioneer in the world of digital journalism. He worked for *BBC* for 16 years, where he served as a foreign correspondent in North Africa and the Middle East and worked as a founding news editor of their first news website.

Through *The Conversation*, he is working with yet another shift in the ever-changing world of digital journalism.

"I've been in digital journalism now for 20 years, working in this field, and it's fascinating to see it's growth and evolution and how it's developed," he said. "It's also what I research to make sense of what's happened to journalism and how people are getting their news today."



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CANADA 150

For over 100 years UBC has shaped Canadian politics — and as Canada reaches 150 years since its confederation, the university is not slowing down.

Moira Wyton
Features Editor

Founded in 1908 and becoming independent in 1915, UBC has had a significant impact on Canadian politics as both a cradle of research and the alma mater of prime ministers, governor generals, premiers and mayors.

It was here where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau earned his education degree and where the first female Prime Minister, Kim Campbell, graduated. When former premiers, who are sometimes also alumni, like Mike Harcourt find new projects, it's UBC that they seek out to help them get it off the ground.

But unlike many Canadian universities who have traditionally found niches of impact through informal partisan alignments, UBC is focusing instead on educating the people and parties who practice politics from across the political spectrum.

"Our view is that we are 'cross-partisan,' which is a little bit different from saying we're bipartisan or we're non-partisan, right?," said Dr. Maxwell Cameron, a UBC professor of political science and director of the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions (CSDI). "We want to create a space in which any one from any place on the political spectrum can feel comfortable — provided, of course, that they are prepared to work with people from across the political spectrum."

How then has UBC exerted such influence 4,364 kilometres away from the nation's capital and does it matter at all?

A LESSON IN HISTORY

According to Dr. Barbara Arneil, head of the department of political science, the areas of research expertise present at UBC are part of the reason it continues to be a cradle of knowledge that decision-makers turn to. Here, topics of research range from Asian politics to democratic theory to the study of multiculturalism.

One particular area of study stands out to Arneil — historical Canadian political theory. Spearheaded by UBC Professor of political science, Dr. Samuel LaSelva, the field focuses on issues of historical importance to the country, like colonialism and indigeneity.

"They're almost at the nexus between Canadian politics and political thought," said Arneil. "It's kind of the history of Canadian ideas."

Within the context of Canada 150 celebrations — which have spurred criticism and protest from many Indigenous, Métis and Inuit communities who felt the celebration pushed the genocide and mistreatment of their peoples under the rug — Arneil acknowledged that the presence of UBC on the traditional, ancestral and unceded Musqueam and Coast Salish land is also a significant guiding factor to its research interests.

"We focus on the question of settler colonization as it's manifested itself in the relationship between the settler state of Canada, and even the colonial state of Britain which preceded that and the Indigenous peoples," said Arneil.

"As historical political theorists, we're trying to see how the history of [colonialism] developed, what were the ideas and the ideologies that sought to justify the relationship, so how do we critique it now looking back at how it developed and how that leads to [present day] forms of decolonization."

She further noted that the department is now graduating more and more Indigenous political science Ph.D students, who then go on to influence and transform the research communities they work in.

POLICY, POLICY, POLICY

Theory isn't the only element that UBC is using to help guide Canada through its most challenging questions.

"There's a phrase that some people use in other universities when they talk about their work, which is 'publicly-engaged research.' The idea is to do work by starting with people in the community and asking them what are the problems that they think need to be addressed," said Cameron. "And then beginning to think about ways in which as academics we can respond to those social needs."

With the launch of the UBC School of Public Policy and Global Affairs (SPPGA) in May 2017, UBC is now creating a centre to build on its "long history of involvement in public policy," according to Cameron.

"One of the reasons we're excited about this is UBC has always had a big impact on our community," he said, citing the Great Trek in 1922 that founded the university on Point Grey and the growth of the faculty of forestry in order to incorporate Hungarian students and academics fleeing conflict in 1957 as examples.

"Our hope with the SPPGA is that we'll be able to bring those contributions together because all of those things are connected."

Part of the success of bringing the academic and the political together at the SPPGA will be the expertise of political practitioners contributing to its work, including that of former Mayor of Vancouver and Premier of BC Mike Harcourt.

Since 2009, Harcourt has been the associate director of the UBC Continuing Studies Centre for Sustainability, where he uses his position to advocate for responsible city development and energy sustainability.

With an estimated population of almost 10 billion on Earth by 2050 — seven billion of whom will live in cities, particularly in the Global South — Harcourt is adamant that UBC needs to examine issues of sustainability as they relate to the politics practiced at home and abroad.

"Welcome to the urban age, the urban century," he said. "One of the things that really struck me when I was starting to study this really intensely in the 1990's was ... just how massive the urban populations are around the world."

When a massive raised highway was proposed to be built along the Waterfront and through Stanley Park in 1967 — Canada's centennial year — Harcourt used his law degree to act as an unofficial counsel to the group of activists organizing against it due to concerns for the loss of natural areas and the displacement of Downtown Eastside communities. Eventually, the organizers were successful in convincing the city not to proceed with construction.

Later, as mayor of Vancouver during the 1986 World Expo — which brought challenges to the city including financial strains and dislocation of residents on the Eastside — he further saw how small decisions can have a lasting impact on the characteristics of a city.

"Cities are about choices — they're not pre-ordained — and you better make the right choices," said Harcourt. He later advised current Mayor Gregor Robertson and former Prime Minister Paul Martin on sustainability and transit. "I realize how important cities were in being sustainable, it's essential."

Now, at UBC, he is focusing on translating his experiences into research and policy that would help municipal, provincial and national governments create and maintain sustainable cities.

"UBC has become certainly renowned as a world-leading institution around sustainability issues, both by example with the sustainability initiatives and by bringing sustainability principles into every faculty and into many courses as well," said Harcourt.

"The flip side of leading by example at UBC campuses is to be involved in community engagement of working with people in the city of Vancouver and elsewhere to become equal world leaders in building communities with sustainable practices."

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

When research and policy proposals go as far as they can, UBC is also trying to change theframework entirely. Under Cameron's leadership, the CSDI — which will be housed under the SPPGA — is looking to improve Canada's institutions by educating the elected officials who act within them.

"It's hard to change institutions, and in some ways we've got fairly good institutions [in Canada] anyway," said Cameron. "So perhaps a better way to make an impact is to change the practitioners."

The CSDI's Summer Institute for Future Legislators (SIFL) hosts students and professionals alike to learn how to be better politicians and public servants for the past five years. With the support of Preston Manning of the Calgary-based think tank the Manning Centre, the SIFL is hoping to increase cooperation and compromise in politics by teaching participants about the "workspace of politics."

"We aspire to encourage people to reflect about the kind of practitioner that they want to be, to experiment and to look at different ways of doing politics, and then make some choices about how — if they go into politics — they want to behave," said Cameron.

"The hope is over time that might help to improve the tone of politics ... [and create] more of a willingness to work across party lines, more capacity for listening and empathy and more ability to work collaboratively.

Part of that change is also diversifying the variety of people who are elected. Cameron noted that while the CSDI doesn't collect enrolment data on the gender, race or age of participants, he certainly sees a much more diverse group of participants than compose the Canadian parliament.

Currently, only 26 per cent of Members of Parliament (MPs) are women, while only 14 per cent are visible minorities with three per cent of MPs identifying as Indigenous.

"It's wonderful you know when we start these up each year to look up and to see reflected the many faces of Canada from the perspective of gender or race or ethnicity or levels of income or geography," said Cameron.

While still in its early years, the SIFL is already looking for national reach. After one of its alumni, Heather Sweet, was elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in 2015, Cameron is hoping to offer similar programming in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec.

"UBC is really a place that wants to be a pioneer of thinking of how we can improve the practice of politics by creating opportunities for people to learn experientially and to learn by doing," he said.

THE NEXT 150

Given UBC's illustrious past, many believe that the university will continue to have a major influence on Canadian politics and society for the next 150 years.

"You see when you actually add up all the things that UBC has been involved in since the Great Trek of 1922 to today, it's deeply involved with BC and the rest of the world," said Harcourt. "I think people at UBC sometimes underestimate the tremendously positive influence that UBC has had."

Cameron agrees.

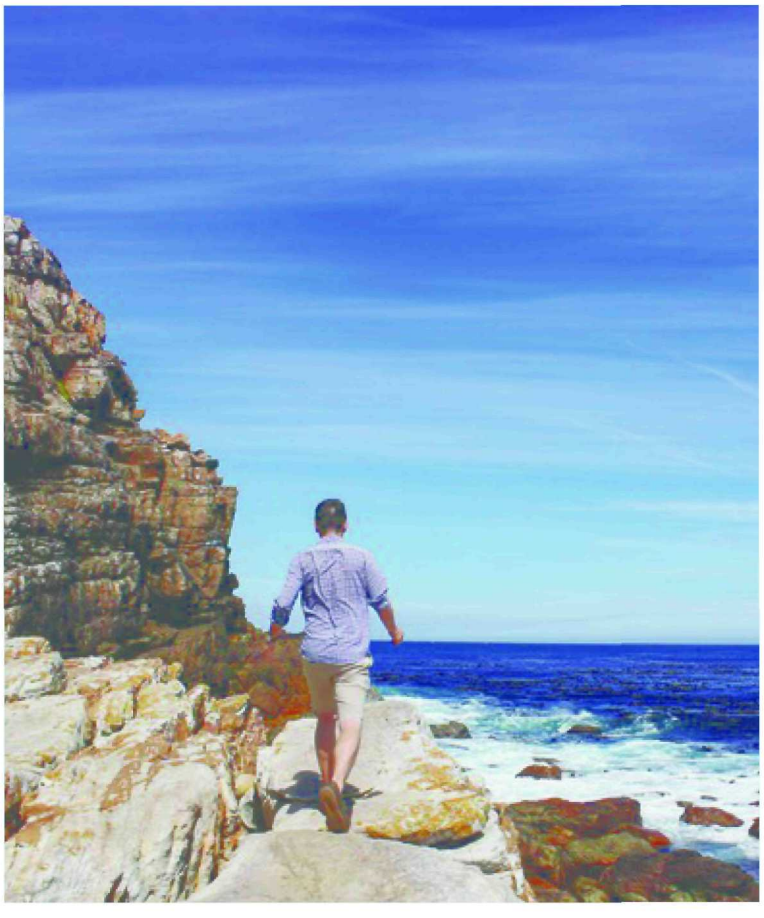
Whether it's the involvement of some faculty of the School of Community and Regional Planning in the anti-highways protests, the work of members of the faculties of science and medicine in the response to the overdose and healthcare crises on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside or simply the work of educating local students to be better community leaders, UBC has been there since the very beginning.

As the SPPGA develops, the challenge will be to continue pushing these efforts beyond the classroom and the research lab, as well as bringing in the Liu Institute of Global Issues and the CSDI under its roof.

"We're trying to break down the wall between the ivory tower and the broader political community and to recognize that there is a role for thinking about politics as a practice — not just as theory, not just as political science, not just as reading textbooks and writing papers," said Cameron.

"We'd like to create a place at UBC where we make it our mission to think about how we can have an impact on our community both locally and globally."

More Canada 150 content is available online at *ubyssey.ca*.



Oh my, have you been working out?

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