

THE UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA ALUMNI MAGAZINE

AUTUMN 2022

UVIC TORCH

The Media Issue

Great UVic minds in the media help us know the truth about our beautiful, embattled world



CBC journalist Laura Lynch talks shop



Friday Night Heights

The UVic Vikes men's soccer team were elated after landing their first win of the season Sept. 9 in a home game against the University of the Fraser Valley Cascades. In the foreground, Vikes midfielder **DUSAN MITROVIC**, who got an assist in the game, celebrates the 2-1 victory.

Credit: APShutter



Table of Contents

UVic Torch Alumni Magazine • Autumn 2022



CHIEF FLOYD JOSEPH walks through the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) estuary in the film *Walking with Plants* by UVic alumni TREVOR DIXON BENNETT and LEIGH JOSEPH.

23

Features

6 The Media Issue

We explore the great UVic minds at work helping to keep us informed and entertained while battling the forces of misinformation.

8 Law and the Land

CBC journalist Laura Lynch, LLB '88, uses her legal knowledge to tackle the pressing stories of our time.

10 Team Player

UVic grad Manusha Janakiram applies lessons learned on the rugby pitch to the award-winning programs she produces for CBC Radio.

12 Hope and Story

UVic grad and professor Sean Holman brings a human face to the way the media covers climate change.

15 Making News

CHEK television anchor Stacy Ross, BFA '97, is a fierce proponent for local news.

17 Camera Ready

UVic contributes talent, technical and creative power to Victoria's burgeoning film industry.

21 The Freelance Life

Writing graduate Jenessa Joy Klukas covers child welfare, education and Indigenous issues as part of her freelance career.

23 Nature in Focus

Trevor Dixon Bennett, ES '12, explores the cultural connection to environment through his company, Kingtide Films.

UVic alumna and news anchor **STACY ROSS** is a trusted source for local news in Greater Victoria.



15



Mechanical Engineering grads **BRANDON FRY**, BEng '10, and **DARCY LANE**, BEng '06, run the new business Revival Stillworks.

28

Departments

4 EDITOR'S NOTE

5 PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

By Chris Horbachewski, Vice-President External Relations.

26 PRINT MATTERS Tanya Lloyd Kyi, BA '96, is a superstar children's author.

28 MY BUSINESS Darcy Lane and Brandon Fry lead Revival Distillery.

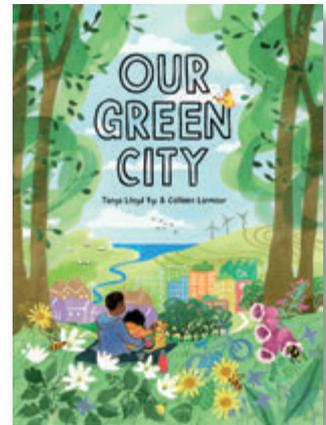
29 THE CHANGE-UP UVic writing grad Allyson Kenning became a peer-support worker.

30 GIVING BACK Claire and Will Cupples support a Life Sciences Innovation Fund.

31 CLASS NOTES

36 VOX ALUMNI Martin Bauman, MFA '21, took an emotional journey on his bicycle.

40 OFF CAMPUS UVic grad Danielle N. Grenier, MA '12, says yes to the call of adventure.



26

A new book by **TANYA LLOYD KYI**.

Learning about Trauma

UVic's **Tim Black** says exposure to disturbing influences does not mean a person will be traumatized. And how we all respond can help or hinder.

BY JENNY MANZER, BA '97



Trauma specialist
TIM BLACK.

My friend held up a phone, showing me images from a disaster that had struck their family's home. They'd woken up to the sound of their neighbour's screams, warning them to flee the house.

"I'm so sorry that happened to you," I said, fighting an ingrained impulse to start asking questions. At the time, I remembered some key messages from a UVic Education podcast featuring Tim Black, a trauma specialist at UVic who works with former service members experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Black advised that if a friend or loved one has witnessed a trauma, it's best to simply be supportive with responses such as: "I'm so sorry you had to see that" or "I'm so sorry you went through that—how are you?" He notes that's very different from asking: "And then what happened? What happened after that?"

Black says there's a chance that asking questions about the event could be received very badly. However well-intentioned, those queries might come across as blame or judgment. It's safest to express concern, listen and let the person talk if they wish. People just need to know you care about them, says Black. The good news is that exposure to a traumatic event does not mean a person will be traumatized. It is far from a *fait accompli*.

"If there's a public-service announcement I'd want people to understand, it's that exposure doesn't equal traumatization. That's the thing I think a lot of people are confused about. They think if I've seen a trauma or been exposed to trauma, that means I'm traumatized," says Black, an associate professor of Counselling Psychology at UVic.

This issue of the *Torch* focuses on the media—and a recent study, "Taking Care: a report on mental health, well-being and trauma among Canadian media worker," shows journalists experiencing high rates of mental-health conditions. The survey of more than 1,200 media workers found the group was suffering from anxiety (69 per cent), depression (46 per cent) and post-traumatic stress injury (15 per cent). Many had experienced harassment and threats, either online or in the field. The ongoing exposure to trauma was also taking a toll—with 80 per cent of respondents experiencing burnout as a result of reporting on stories about death, injury and suffering.

Workers in all trauma-exposed professions should take it as a point of professional pride to monitor their responses and safeguard their health, Black says. "Track it. If it goes away, it's likely gone—if it doesn't go away or if you find you're avoiding it and putting it in your hurt locker and never looking at it because it's too emotional—it's already stuck."

If, after 30 days, a person is still grinding over past events, not sleeping well, or upset by certain sights or sounds—that may indicate "a sticky bit" that needs attention. Black says it's important to address these issues—as they tend to snowball and collect more sticky bits. So, people who may be exposed to disturbing influences—like Black himself as a trauma specialist—need to check in with themselves often. He says it's natural to be affected by trauma, and it can take a while for the body to calm down—so watch, wait and see. †

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ADDRESS UPDATES AND CORRECTIONS
alumni@uvic.ca

LETTERS
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UVic Torch Alumni Magazine
PO Box 1700 STN CSC
Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2
Phone: 250-721-6000
Toll-free: 1-800-808-6828
E-mail: torch@uvic.ca

EDITOR
Jenny Manzer, BA '97

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION
Rayola Creative
Clint Hutzulak, BA '89

CHANCELLOR
Marion Buller, BA '75, LLB '87

PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR
Kevin Hall

VICE-PRESIDENT EXTERNAL RELATIONS
Chris Horbachewski

PRESIDENT, UVIC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
Gerry Bliss, BSc '77, BSc '87

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Media Momentum

UVic-trained professionals are on the rise, making vital contributions in the fast-paced world of modern communications, helping to connect, educate and keep the truth in focus.

BY CHRIS HORBACHEWSKI, VICE-PRESIDENT EXTERNAL RELATIONS



“The fostering of free inquiry and the critical interpretation of ideas is fundamental to a healthy and flourishing democracy and vital to a healthy and diverse media environment.”

This summer, I had the opportunity to disappear into the backcountry near Quesnel, BC for 10 days. It was wonderful to be unplugged, and I commented how grounding it was to be more mindful and “live in the moment.” I wasn’t distracted by media in all its forms and was spared the resulting anxiety that comes with depressing headlines and doom-scrolling. As soon as I was able, though, I plugged back in and caught up on what I missed. My reflection on this is a reinforcement of how important media is in my life. I suspect it is in yours, too.

Some of Canada’s finest media professionals attended this university, as you will read in this magazine. UVic faculty and staff are now educating and mentoring the next generation of media professionals. They contribute to the development of the platforms that will continue to shift the media landscape and the communications business overall. The UVic community provides active voices in our political and research arenas—as public figures providing commentary, interpretation or contradiction and as purveyors of discovery.

UVic students also lend a prominent voice in this landscape. Students are active on social media, challenging assumptions and norms, asking questions and holding people in power accountable. Our campus student newspaper, the *Martlet*, is an important and relevant voice in the region. The news team breaks important stories that bring awareness and attention to issues and topics that may otherwise be lost in broader media narratives. The *Martlet* is also an entry point for people interested in a career in journalism, storytelling or making our society more inclusive and more just.

UVic alumni, some of whom you will learn more about in this issue, are leaders and change-

makers in their space within the world of media. They are the voices we hear and trust on the radio and on TV. They are in the mainstream and independent media. They are creators, personalities or educators. What binds them all is their UVic roots and their passion and commitment to keeping us informed and entertained all while striving to protect our planet and our democracy.

In Canada, everyone has the fundamental freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, which includes the freedom of the press and other media of communication. This means that in addition to what we may want to hear, we are also exposed to views we may not agree with: news that is not real and messages that are divisive or propagate discrimination or hate.

Here is where I believe the most important contribution that UVic (and any individual or institution engaged in education) makes—the nurturing of an informed and engaged citizenry. The fostering of free inquiry and the critical interpretation of ideas is fundamental to a healthy and flourishing democracy and vital to a healthy and diverse media environment. To ensure the seeds of division and hate don’t take root, we must collectively ensure they do not fall on fertile ground.

I’m reassured by the articles that you’ll read about in the pages that follow. These stories illuminate the remarkable leaders doing their best to ensure we have an informed and engaged citizenry. In doing that, they are actively contributing to the health of democratic governance in Canada. We all need a break from the news now and then, but while I may not always like the headlines in my news feed—I am grateful for those who work each day to bring me the truth. ¶



The Media Issue explores the fine UVic writers, journalists, film and content makers helping to keep us informed and entertained while battling the forces of misinformation that threaten our democracy—and our collective health and well-being.

UVic alumni are leading documentaries and podcasts about a planet in peril, shining a light on urgent issues, powering a local film industry and uncovering the hidden corners of our changing culture.





PHOTO BY JEFF TOPHAM

Law and the Land

CBC journalist Laura Lynch, LLB '88, uses her legal knowledge to tackle the most pressing stories of our time, from Supreme Court cases to climate change to the devastation of war.

BY JENNY MANZER, BA '97



It was a beautiful, bright day in September. Laura Lynch bicycled to her office at the press building in Washington, DC, where she served as a CBC foreign correspondent.

“I looked up at the bank of televisions, and I saw one of the towers in New York on fire, and I thought, ‘Oh, it’s going to be a long day.’ And then I went upstairs to my office and the second tower got hit, and we were on the air for the next... I don’t know how long...”

Lynch and the CBC team stayed on the air for 48 hours, long through the night, reporting on the aftermath of 9-11, the terrorist attack that shook the foundations of the world. “When I finally went home, I broke down in tears from the whole overwhelming experience,” Lynch recalls. Covering the story dominated her time in Washington.

Throughout her career, she has had a tendency to take on tough subjects. Lynch began her reporting career for the CBC in Ottawa, covering the Supreme Court, including emerging case law on the Charter of Rights. “Oh my god, it was so much fun. I really felt as if I had landed in clover.”

Lynch, who grew up in North Vancouver, earned a degree in journalism at Carleton University in 1983 before studying law at UVic to gain expertise in legal reporting. The synergy of skills meant she knew how to craft a story and how the law works. “The ability to tell a story, I think that informed my legal work at law school and vice versa... being able to see a story from three sides or four sides, you have to do that when you’re preparing a case.”

Lynch is drawn to controversial, complex stories. “Throughout my career, I have always savoured stories that have a legal angle. I’ll wade right in where others might not, because I feel so comfortable in that area. I can speak the language that lawyers speak. I think that’s intimidating to some people, and it’s not for me.”

She loved her classes at UVic, making strong connections. The late Dr. Joe Arvay, who holds an honorary Doctor of Laws from UVic, taught her charter law and later became a cherished friend and mentor. When she was articling with the BC government, Lynch worked on a case with Arvay. “He’s meant a lot to me over the years,” she reflects. His death in 2020 was heart-breaking to her.

Lynch studied environmental law at UVic with BC politician Murray Rankin and public law with Andrew Petter, the former MLA and past president of Simon Fraser University, as well as taking a course in Indigenous law with Jack Woodward. “All of these classes mean so much to me,” she says.

One of her memorable assignments at law school was to draft a shield law for journalists—a provision Canada does not have to this day. “I still do sometimes get anxiety dreams that are about taking one of the law exams, and I show up and I haven’t studied or haven’t been to class,” she laughs.

Petter, former law dean at UVic, recalls Lynch as a strong student who was a tremendous contributor and intensely engaged in the program. Her real-world experience and perspective as a journalist benefitted the class. Lynch clearly understands how law impacts public policy and is able to draw on her knowledge to help others understand it, too.

Lynch’s mentor, Joe Arvay, exemplified how law can be harnessed as a social instrument—and used it to drive change in Canada, Petter observes. “Laura has used her legal knowledge to drive people’s understanding in a way that is hugely important.”

In 1999, she won a Nieman fellowship to Harvard University to study the history of human rights. The fellowship was a springboard to becoming a foreign correspondent in the US,

which involved covering *Bush v. Gore*—the Supreme Court case that settled the 2000 US presidential election.

Lynch went on to report from London, England in a “fire-fighting bureau,” meaning she travelled as needed—to Spain for a terrorist bombing, to Scotland for a G7 summit, back to London following an attack on the transit system. Lynch recalls covering the fledgling elections in Ukraine, standing in a freezing Maidan Square with protesters as they fought for democratic processes. In 2007, Lynch went undercover to report on the Zimbabwe election at a time when Western journalists were barred from entering the country.

When she covered war in Afghanistan or Syria, or the insurrection in Mali, Lynch focused on the real people, particularly women, who were suffering. “Just trying to give the world a sense of what it was like for these people who never chose war but were having to live through the violence and destruction and uncertainty of it all. That stays with me still as vivid and vibrant as it ever was.”

She details many close calls, including in Mali—when her team travelled with a French convoy along on a dangerous road. She woke to the sound of explosions from roadside bombs and sheltered in a house riddled with bullet holes. They left just before militants crossed the river to reclaim the contested area.

Petter has followed Lynch’s career over the years, and the two have stayed in touch. As president of SFU in 2016, he recruited Lynch to lead a conversation in front of a live audience on “Big Data, Security and Human Rights” with controversial figure Edward Snowden, who was being streamed in from Moscow.

“She’s an incredible journalist. She’s a very courageous journalist. She’s done international work in the field under very challenging circumstances,” he says. Petter happened to be visiting Lynch and some other colleagues in London when she was called to report on the terrorist bombing in Madrid. “She picks up her bags and she flies to Madrid. She’s fearless as a journalist.”

Of all the stories Lynch has covered, one close to her heart involves a woman from Afghanistan named Shakila Zareen, whose Taliban-connected husband shot her in the face. Zareen almost died several times. “Shakila has obviously suffered physically and mentally, and I have to report in a different way, as a human being, not just a reporter. She’s got a reserve of strength in her.” Zareen’s story was a different experience for Lynch—normally she reports on a subject and then it’s done, but her friendship with Zareen endures. “I’ll never be done with her.”

Lynch knew when she returned from overseas that life might seem flat—which is common for foreign correspondents—so she threw herself into new challenges, including guest hosting flagship CBC radio shows *The Current* and *As it Happens*. From there, she decided to scale another big topic.

She now hosts *What On Earth*, a radio show and podcast about finding solutions to climate change. She and UVic alumna and senior producer Manusha Janakiram created the program together. Lynch is a big fan of Janakiram. “She’s a natural leader, and I see her rising and rising as high as she wants to go in the corporation. I’m just lucky to have had her for two years,” says Lynch, as Janakiram heads to Toronto for a new role.

What On Earth won a Canadian Journalism Federation Climate Solutions Reporting Award in 2021. In April of this year, it became a weekly hour-long show. Their aim is to inform, offer viable solutions to climate change—and instill some hope. Misinformation isn’t new, Lynch notes, and you have to have a thick skin to deflect the barbs of social media.

“I do hear from climate deniers. But from the outset we were not interested in false balance or presenting what some might call the other side. When it comes to climate change we’re very clear: there’s no other side. Climate change is happening, climate change is real, climate change is human caused—that’s the baseline.”

Lynch suggests if she’d become a practising lawyer, as originally planned, she would have been an activist. “I probably would have worked with Joe, because of the kind of cases that he used to tackle. Those would have been right in my wheelhouse. I relish that kind of challenge,” she says. Her determination—and her love of a challenge—has defined her career.

“To me, it’s what I’m here for. It’s nice to have that much certainty about what you do for a living. I feel really lucky... I’m grateful.”

When she’s not working, her lucky life includes hiking, biking and hours of yoga. She grew up at the foot of Grouse Mountain, playing in the forest. She moved from Toronto to North Van in 2016—having never expected to return home to the ocean and mountains. “Surprise, surprise, I’m back where I began,” she laughs. †

Team Player

UVic grad Manusha Janakiram, BA '04, applies lessons learned on the rugby pitch to the award-winning programs she produces for CBC Radio.

BY MICHAEL KISSINGER, BED '94

Manusha Janakiram is on the move. After an action-packed decade-and-a-half on the West Coast, the seasoned CBC Radio producer has a new job in a new time zone.

In September, she reported for duty as Executive Producer of Programming and Audio at CBC Toronto—a big step in an already highlight-filled career producing such programs as *BC Almanac*, *All Points West*, *The Early Edition*, *On the Coast* and, most recently, the award-winning *What On Earth*, hosted by UVic law grad Laura Lynch.

“The opportunity to be part of the leadership team at CBC Toronto was just one that I really wanted to take on,” Janakiram says.

In fact, “team” is a word that comes up frequently when talking with the UVic political science grad, although Janakiram admits she wasn’t always a team player. Growing up in Guelph, Ont., she says she and her older sister were high achievers and hated the idea of teamwork.

“We were the kids in school who were smart and often ended up doing a lot of the work in group projects and things like that. And I remember my dad being like, ‘You two just need to figure this out.’” It wasn’t until she started playing high-school sports such as rugby that she began to understand the value of working with others towards a common goal.

“Life is a lot of teamwork... And sports really taught me that, and in hindsight as someone who now leads teams and is going on to lead bigger teams in Toronto, I think a lot about that all the time—like how do you get people to gel? How do you create an environment where people feel safe enough that they can bring their best ideas and do their best work and perform at their highest potential?”

TOP OF THE PROPS

Those lessons learned on the playing field were further cemented when Janakiram enrolled at UVic and joined the Vikes women’s rugby team. Although not large in stature, she took her licks, mostly playing in the prop position, forming part of the front row of the scrum to push against the opposing teams’ props. Because a prop’s main role is to provide stability at the scrum, they are often among the strongest players on a team. Over the course of her rugby career, Janakiram experi-



CBC Radio producer **MANUSHA JANAKIRAM**, BA '04, recently left the West Coast for a new challenge at CBC Toronto.

enced her share of injuries, including a broken collarbone, separated shoulder, concussions and chipped teeth.

“The women I played with were—and many of them are still—good friends, people I really admire. It’s a tough sport, and it requires a lot, but there’s a sense of teamwork. And comradery... That group of women for me were really key to that

experience of being at UVic... I wasn't the captain of the team or anything like that, but I was part of it. And I think that you always know your value and how things as a group get accomplished."

Janakiram had initially enrolled in the kinesiology program with her sights set on medical school, but a political-science elective changed everything. She found the course really interesting—and never looked back.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in 2004, she moved back to Ontario. Unsure of what to do next, she applied to Concordia's Graduate Diploma in Journalism program where she won the Gordon Fisher Prize for Journalism, awarded to the most outstanding student.

"There was something that just felt so natural and so exciting... Really, none of the other programs [I had considered] felt like the right fit... It just crystalized."

Near the end of her studies, and at the urging of a friend, she applied for the Joan Donaldson CBC News Scholarship—a four-month paid summer internship with the national broadcaster. "I won the scholarship and I haven't left CBC since then."

THE PRODUCER

Janakiram describes the role of a producer as "a bazillion jobs all at once."

"It's a planner, problem solver, creative director, show runner, logistics, coach, team leader, mom, counsellor, teacher. It's a huge mix. Researcher, fact checker, keeper of journalistic standards and practices. The list goes on and on."

She says the relationship between a program's producer and its host is essential, as is the case with *What On Earth*, a weekly radio show and podcast that focuses on climate change and potential solutions. Although Janakiram and host Laura Lynch are UVic graduates, they attended at different times and hadn't worked together until *What On Earth*. "The program was her idea," Janakiram says. "And the level of trust she placed in me and that we've established together as a team is something I'm really proud of."

She describes Lynch as "a total professional," unflappable and a joy to work with. "She's a journalist to the nth degree. She is a critical thinker, and she's fun to work with and has a great sense of humour and a real heart that I don't know if everyone gets to experience because they don't get to work with her in the way that I do."

Janakiram says the key to reporting on climate change in a meaningful and impactful way that resonates with audiences is relatively simple, even though it can be a fraught topic to cover because it requires extensive research and fact checking. She says the program takes an approach laid out by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

"They talk about five facts and 10 words and it's: 'Scientists agree. It's real. It's us. It's bad. There's hope.' And I think that as a framework for how we go forward, it's been knitted into how the show thinks and talks about climate change from the beginning... When you say it in that framework, I think it's actually not that complicated."

She adds, "I think the key is knowing that our audience is diverse and sophisticated... Sure you may need to explain some lesser-known term or some jargon or something like that. But part of our duty, like the CBC's mandate, is to enlighten, inform and entertain."

CREATIVITY AND RISK

As for her move to Toronto, Janakiram calls it a two-stage process—her husband and eight-year-old daughter will join her once the school year is out. In the meantime, she'll be kept on her toes, leading a larger team in Canada's biggest news market. She'll also have to hit the pause button on completing her master's degree in executive leadership from Royal Roads University while she gets up to speed.

However, the principles of effective leadership and the value of teamwork won't be far from her nightstand. She's currently reading *Creativity, Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration* by Ed Catmull, co-founder of Pixar Animation Studios and past president of Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Much of the book focuses on how Catmull cultivated a creative work culture and environment in which people felt empowered and safe enough to put their ideas forward, even if they went against the grain.

"It's all about how you as a leader, how do you create and foster the conditions for creativity and risk," she says. "It's really good. It's what I think about all the time." †

Hope and Story

UVic social sciences grad and Crookes professor **Sean Holman** works long hours trying to bring a human face to the way the media covers climate change—and build communities of action.

BY MICHAEL KISSINGER, BED '94



SEAN HOLMAN oversees the Climate Disaster Project in which journalism students compile firsthand accounts of people who have survived climate disasters.

Growing up in the 1980s, Sean Holman found solace in fantasy. Role-playing games like Dungeons & Dragons offered an escape from the reality of school bullies and isolation—an alternate narrative, limited only by his imagination, where the playing field was level and justice could be meted out with the roll of a 20-sided die.

The University of Victoria history and political science graduate still enjoys the creativity of gaming, going so far as inventing his own D&D-inspired game called Yore & Gore, which he plays online with friends across the country.

“Interestingly enough, it’s set in a post-apocalyptic environment that works from the premise of an early Industrial Age war that included a chemical gas causing a long-term apocalypse that also resulted in the degradation of technology,” Holman says with a grin.

The far-reaching implications of environmental disaster and what society can do about it are reoccurring themes in Holman’s new role at UVic as the Wayne Crookes Professor of Environmental and Climate Journalism. The long-time investigative reporter has been putting in 15-hour days since returning to campus last year and launching the Climate Disaster Project.

The ambitious, multi-pronged initiative will see students and faculties from 13 post-secondary institutions around the world tackle what Holman says is the defining problem of our times. The project aims to collect and compile firsthand accounts of people who have survived climate disasters and, through the sharing of these stories, “build communities of action” around climate change.

However, it’s not a lack of information that led us to the dire situation we find ourselves in today. It’s the way information around climate change has been conveyed, argues Holman, who’s especially critical of media coverage on the topic.

“We talk about it as an environmental issue. We talk about it as a political issue. We talk about it as a large-scale issue. But we really have failed to humanize, individualize and collectivize the experience of climate change... so can we feel less alone, and in that less-aloneness take action.”

Taking on climate change and the role of the media is no easy task. But Holman has never been one to back down from a challenge.

FIGHTING BACK AGAINST BULLIES

A self-described “introspective kid” who grew up in Kamloops, Kitimat, Prince George and Victoria, Holman says his grade-school years were defined by bullying. He was picked on by the popular crowd, didn’t have any friends and had an adversarial relationship with his teachers, whom he viewed as dictatorial.

But his outsider status also made him a keen observer of human behaviour and power dynamics. “And very highly attuned to risk,” he adds. “A lot of the work of journalism is imaginative empathy and risk assessment—being able to predict what’s going to happen before it’s going to happen. And the experience of being bullied very much sharpened that... It’s trauma response.”

When it came to dealing with bullies, Holman’s parents, both UVic graduates, stressed the importance of fighting back. “I was able to get efficacy from that in a way that could have been very disempowering otherwise,” he says, sitting outside UVic’s Fine Arts Building and dressed in hiking shoes, khaki shorts, tropical shirt and straw fedora reminiscent of a more eco-conscious Hunter S. Thompson. “So when I came to choose a career, from a psychological standpoint, essentially what I was doing as an investigative journalist was holding the bullies and teachers to account—just in the form of politicians.”

After high school, Holman enrolled in UVic for an undergrad in history and political science, with aspirations of becoming a war correspondent or a diplomat. The film *The Killing Fields*, about a *New York Times* reporter covering the civil war in Cambodia, had a profound impact on him, he recalls. A television commercial for *Time* magazine that played a montage of historical events to the Byrds’ “Turn! Turn! Turn!” was also memorable.

“History was my first love, and journalism is the first draft of it,” Holman says. “Combined with my experience of bullying, that was the stew that led me to journalism.”

A UVic course in military history taught by Dr. David Zimmerman also proved formative. Holman recalls the thrill of getting to pore over primary-source material from Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Second World War and writing an essay about what he had learned. He enjoyed every minute of it. “I loved going to the source, and journalism is a lot of that.”

While at UVic, Holman also briefly served as news director at CFUV and became involved in youth politics in the form of the Federal Young Liberals, where his cohorts were a “Murderers’

Row” of soon-to-be Liberal insiders and strategists—including many who became embroiled in the BC Rail scandal of 2003. “That ended up cinching it for me that I should go into journalism... And I decided I would much rather be on the outside of that—holding power to account—than on the inside of that.”

TRUTH TO POWER

After graduating in 1999, Holman headed to Carleton University in Ottawa for his Master of Journalism. For one assignment, he wrote an investigative piece on a fledgling internet company and was surprised to receive a C+ grade. He took the story to another professor who thought more highly of it and helped him pitch the tech editor at the *Globe and Mail*. The newspaper published the feature, which was one of the first investigative pieces on the controversial file-sharing service Napster. From that introduction, Holman started working as a stringer for the *Globe and Mail*’s tech section, followed by an internship at Dow Jones Newswires.

He returned to BC to work in government communications before realizing he would rather hold power to account than work for the institutions that wield it. He left with an insider’s knowledge of how government PR worked and a Rolodex of contacts he would rely on as he launched the online public affairs news service Public Eye—one of the first of its kind at the time. “I didn’t want to spend time climbing the ladder, so I created my own ladder.”

Holman filed mountains of Freedom of Information requests and closely examined government contracts to sniff out anything fishy. He quickly made a name for himself—and ruffled more than a few government feathers along the way. Over a 10-year period and some 6,000 stories later, with bylines in the *Times Colonist*, *Vancouver Sun*, *24 Hours* and *Globe and Mail*, Holman’s investigative reporting would result in the departures of eight different public or party officials, as well as major policy and legislative changes.

“Whenever I went down to the legislature you were required to put on a suit,” he recalls. “And it always metaphorically seemed to me like I was putting on armour.”

His efforts didn’t go unnoticed. In 2005, he received a Jack Webster Award—BC journalism’s highest honour—for an investigation that resulted in multiple resignations as well as the firing of a deputy minister. In 2012, he received a special mention in the Canadian Newsperson of the Year competition for

“using new and emerging media technologies to expand the number of journalistic voices in this country and to redefine the relationship between journalists and citizens.”

During all of this, Holman hosted a political radio show on CFAX 1070, taught journalism at UVic for a stint and made the documentary *Whipped: The Secret World of Party Discipline*, exploring the inner workings of block voting in BC politics and its impact on the democratic process.

However, the stress of breaking stories and battling the powers that be took its toll. Holman remembers looking in the mirror after a particularly gruelling day ensuring a story was airtight, and his entire left eye was full of blood from a burst vessel. “It was 10 years of doing that... every single day and it just wore on me.”

He shuttered Public Eye and took a job teaching journalism at Mount Royal University in Calgary. It was during this time he penned an open letter to mainstream media in the online news outlet The Tyee, urging journalists to start reporting climate change as an emergency.

In the widely circulated missive, Holman castigated the media’s ineffectiveness and outright dereliction of duty in properly covering and contextualizing the climate crisis. “These are unconscionable failures of journalism, nothing more and nothing less,” he wrote. “If we continue in these failures, we could be contributing to the deaths of millions.”

PROBLEM OF OUR TIMES

In many ways, Holman’s open letter served as a blueprint for his Climate Disaster Project and helped punch his return ticket to UVic. He says the university’s Sustainable Development Goals align with the mandate of the project.

“It’s been wonderful,” he says about returning to Victoria, where he lives with his wife, whom he met at a UVic atheist club 15 years ago. “UVic is an extraordinary place to undertake work related to climate change. There are so many communities of action on campus that are dedicated to trying to solve what is the defining problem of our times.”

David Leach, a professor of creative non-fiction in UVic’s Department of Writing, has known Holman personally and professionally for nearly 20 years. Leach calls his friend and colleague “a connector” who possesses a boundless enthusiasm and belief in the power of journalism and storytelling to change

the world for the better. “But I think Sean has also made an interesting shift when he began covering climate change more and this realization that there’s a limit to the power of journalism—that getting the facts out there... often isn’t enough to change the dialogue of public information when there’s so much going on and so much misinformation.”

BUILDING HOPE AND COMMUNITY

The proliferation of misinformation, combined with the declining state of journalism, further underlines the urgency of the Climate Disaster Project. What was once a hallowed institution has become disregarded, devalued, underfunded and increasingly under attack—the ramifications of which we’re witnessing firsthand on a daily basis, Holman notes.

“Ralph Nader used to describe information as the currency of democracy,” he says. “And maybe it never was, but what I have seen is the degradation of the value of information across society. And that has flow-through impacts on the media and democracy. Democracy is based on the idea that we will use information to make rational and empathetic decisions about the world around us. Empathetic is especially important because democracy assumes we are governing ourselves for the common wealth... the common good... And when we don’t use information that way, democracy breaks down, which is what we’re seeing, as does the role of the media.”

The climate crisis is a perfect example of the devaluing of information, he adds. “We have scientific evidence, and we have anecdotal evidence and we have firsthand evidence about what is happening to this planet, and yet the needle isn’t moving. And if it is moving, it certainly isn’t moving fast enough.”

So, what’s the solution when the science and evidence all point in the same direction, yet progress remains slow as we accept that summers will be hotter, wildfires will be deadlier, flooding more frequent, polar ice caps will continue to melt and more species will face extinction? For Holman, it comes back to story.

“I knew I was going to be situated in a writing department in a Faculty of Fine Arts, so what I was really interested in was how can story help at this crucial moment in time,” he says. “And story is really the only thing we have to build community. And community is the only thing we have to build hope.” †

Making News

CHEK television anchor **Stacy Ross, BFA '97**, is a fierce proponent for local news. In 2009, she and her colleagues made a bold and risky move, buying the station to save it from closing.

BY JENNY MANZER, BA '97



Television journalist **STACY ROSS** volunteering at Convocation.

Stacy Ross did not grow up giving pretend interviews and dreaming of being a television anchor. In fact, the Metchosisin-raised Ross had her heart set on a life in theatre.

“My first love was always theatre and musical theatre... I always thought my dream job would be a soap-opera actress. It was a little more stable, there was a regular pay cheque. I could be somebody nasty. I always thought it would be fun to be the villain on a soap opera.”

Ross attended Camosun’s Applied Communication Program and worked in television before the call of the theatre drew her back to Vancouver Island and UVic. Ross earned a theatre degree at UVic, then her career took an interesting turn in 2000. Her mini-van was burglarized on the same night she auditioned for a coveted job as weekend sports anchor/reporter at CHEK News. She muses that may have won her some sympathy votes. In any case, she got the job, and Ross has been a well-known figure in local media ever since.

Island viewers might spot Ross or her CHEK colleagues at a HarbourCats baseball game or at the grocery store. “People come up to me constantly when they see me doing regular things outside the newscast to say how important we are to them and how we’re part of their routine. In a way, we’re part of their family—they turn us on at dinner time and catch up on what’s happening in the day. They need to have that in their lives.”

The value that the community—and the CHEK crew—places on reliable, local news became clear when the station was in danger of closing. CHEK first went on the air in 1956, but in 2009 its corporate owners, Canwest, put it on the chopping block. Community reaction was swift and decisive. A full-fledged “Save CHEK News” campaign ensued, with T-shirts printed and the power of social media and local celebrities put into high gear.

Ross remembers being “terrified.” She knew she would never leave Greater Victoria due to her family connections, so if the station closed, that was going to mean a career change.

“I can’t even explain the tension as we came up with a way to save the station,” says Ross. “Oh, my God, it was just awful going through those weeks, but you know, it paid off in the end.” Each employee-owner was required to invest \$15,000 of their own money—in a hurry.

“Of course, there’s no guarantee we’d succeed. Once we managed to come together in that incredible time of people literally running to the bank at the last moment to make their contributions so we could do this... it was incredibly stressful,” recalls Ross. The employees raised half a million dollars in 24 hours. CHEK became North America’s first employee-owned TV station.

Then the team had to figure out all the intricacies of producing the news. “Who knows how to run a TV station? There was so much to learn... We had no programming, we had no technical support. We were just kind of flying blind. It was far from a sure thing when we bought that station, and we went through a lot of tough times.”

At one point, staff took pay cuts to keep the station afloat. But they made it through, eventually buying the Kings Road property that houses the station, with CBC Radio as an anchor tenant. “We ended up buying the building and succeeding and we’re making money. It’s an incredible story, really.”

She says being independent means the team can be fluid and react quickly. She can have a conversation with her station manager, and they can get the board together in a half hour—that would never happen in a corporate-news environment. CHEK also has a mandate to serve the community. “Any time we have a chance to do good, we do it.”

Now, one of their biggest challenges is fighting fake news. “There’s this battle on for those of us who are responsible journalists to remind people there are far more irresponsible journalists out there.”

Covering the COVID pandemic has been “interesting.” She has never felt as threatened as a journalist as she did by the Freedom Convoy protesters. “The vehemence, the aggression. The naked anger directed at us was unbelievable,” she says. “I’ve never felt fear for being in my profession and felt fear for my family—and I did in this case. It was awful.”

She’s in a prime position as the 5 p.m. news anchor, but future dreams include hosting a show about the local arts community. Ross says her own theatre training at UVic was instrumental to her career.

“I think it was integral to me getting the job and being successful. Being in theatre taught me so much self-awareness, taught me all the mechanics about voice control, how to manage non-verbal communication, the physicality.”

She says while she’s not acting, her work is still a show. “What I do every day is a performance, for sure. It’s not fiction, I’m not pretending to be somebody else... I’m still presenting. It’s a performance, and my time at UVic taught me how to do that.”

But the performance is not always easy. In fact, some days, the news is devastating—and that comes with a cost. For example, Ross covered the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. “It took a toll on me. As a mom, that was really, really difficult to manage.”

The school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, and the recent horrific fatal bank robbery in Saanich were also extremely tough to cover. “I definitely have become a harder person, a less emotional person than I used to be, because you just have to be... You have to protect yourself.”

Some days, though, her job is pure fun, like the time she toured Bear Mountain with golf legend Jack Nicklaus and his son. Ross enjoys golfing, though she’s usually too busy to hit the course. When she does have free time, she spends it with her husband and their daughter, 14, and son, 22.

Ross also devoted some of her free hours to volunteering as a UVic Alumni Association (UVAA) board member from 2016 to 2021. Brian Cant, BA ’03, Cert ’08, MBA ’18, is past president of the UVAA. He says Ross is proactive, easy to work with and truly committed to the community.

“She champions CHEK in a way that makes you confident in the work they’re doing. She’s built a lot of trust with people,” says Cant, who serves as Vice President, Business Impact & Engagement at 4VI (formerly Tourism Vancouver Island). Cant says having robust community media is critically important. “You just don’t get a perspective that is needed if you don’t have local news.”

Ross advises her own children to be aware of what information they’re consuming online.

“When you’re online watching, make sure it’s responsible journalists—research the source,” she tells them. “A lot of it is just smoke and mirrors.” †

Watch “Reality CHEK: 10th Year Anniversary Special” to learn about the station’s history and how it was saved: cheknews.ca/about-us/

Camera Ready

UVic contributes talent, technical and creative power to Victoria's burgeoning film industry.

BY JOHN THRELFALL, BA '96

Connect to any streaming service and it's not hard to find UVic alumni on screen, thanks to busy actors like **ERIN KARPLUK** (*The L Word*), **PETER OUTERBRIDGE** (*Orphan Black*) and **EMILY PIGGFORD** (*Umbrella Academy*). Less obvious is the behind-the-scenes talent, like visual-effects artist **MICHELLE LO** (*Black Panther*) and production coordinator **AMANDA VERHAGEN** (*Jurassic World: Dominion*).

Yet while Vancouver's Hollywood North casts a mighty shadow over Vancouver Island, alumni filmmakers continue to contribute technical and creative power to Victoria's steady and growing TV and film industry.

WRITING THE LIFE OF AN INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR

In many ways, award-winning director **CONNOR GASTON**, MFA '14, is typical of the quiet talent UVic produces. After directing a string of short films, his 2015 debut feature—*The Devout*—pre-



UVic alumni **AMANDA VERHAGEN**, BFA '12, **CONNOR GASTON**, MFA '14, and **DANIEL HOGG**, BFA '04, on the closing night red carpet of the 2015 Busan International Film Festival with their feature film, *The Devout*.

miered at Korea's Busan International Film Festival. It then earned him the BC Emerging Filmmaker Award at the Vancouver International Film Festival before it went on to receive Best Picture and six other honours at BC's own Leo Awards.

Gaston, who is also a graduate of Norman Jewison's Canadian Film Centre, is currently working on his second feature film.

"Getting your first feature made is never easy—but it's really difficult to make your second," he admits. "Your first film really has to blow people out of the water to activate the next round of funding, which is usually a big step up, budget-wise." By way of comparison, *The Devout* came in at \$150,000, while his in-progress feature, *Baby Tooth*, is budgeted at \$1.7 million: still a bargain compared to typical Hollywood productions.

"Even at \$1.7 million, it's almost like having no money again—all your budget goes to paying people very little for what they're actually doing... and then all your money is gone," he says. "But most people work on independent films because they want to be there—to learn, to help—so some money for them is better than no money at all."

While BC's film and digital-media industry generates \$3.2 billion and 71,000 jobs annually, the vast majority of that work remains in Vancouver. The Island received roughly \$55 million in direct spending of that amount and about 800 jobs in 2021, with 40 different productions shot across the region.

But a typical day in Gaston's life mainly involves a lot of writing, not bean counting. "Working on the screenplay, writing grants... it's very much a slog," he says. Gaston keeps his cinematic chops in shape with short films—2022 saw him direct both *Year of the Tortoise* and *The Cameraman Chapter II* (a sequel to his 2016 short *The Cameraman*, inspired by the book of the same name by his novelist father, Bill Gaston). But unlike some directors, he doesn't work on other peoples' films. "I'm actually quite useless," he laughs. "I wish I could do something more practical."

While it's a medium he clearly loves, Gaston acknowledges being a filmmaker comes with serious challenges. "Directing is so strange. If you're a painter, you can paint every day, but with directing you need money to even practise your art," he explains. "Writing helps, but you can only envision your screenplay so much."

SNAPSHOT OF A WORKING FILMMAKER

As a self-described "working filmmaker," **CHEN WANG**, BFA '18, is on the move. After a "quick" visit home to China in February 2020 turned into a two-year, COVID-restricted stay, Wang is happy to be back on campus to both complete his MFA in



CHEN WANG on set.

screenwriting and continue his work as cinematographer on the interdisciplinary research documentary *Four Stories About Food Sovereignty*. The project started in 2018 and includes UVic professors Elizabeth Vibert (History), Maureen Bradley (Writing), Matthew Murphy (Business), Astrid Pérez Piñán (Public Administration) and a team of international partners.

It was specifically thanks to his involvement with *Four Stories* that he was finally able to leave China in 2022 to film the latest installment, *Aisha's Story*, in Jordan. “Aisha is a Palestinian woman who lives in the Baqa’a refugee camp,” Wang explains, “and she’s trying to keep her Palestinian culture alive through food: growing, cooking and passing that knowledge along to the next generations.”

Wang also shot the short film about UVic’s Voices In Motion intergenerational choir for adults with memory loss—one of the many pre-pandemic projects that kept him hopping on campus and in the community. As an undergrad, he founded the UVic Film Club, joined the CineVic Society of Independent Filmmakers, started his own commercial production company and created over 20 commercials with CHECK TV’s production team, as well as crewing on both professional and independent-film productions. “Before COVID, I was quite busy: features, shorts, docu-

mentaries, music videos... generally, I do camera, cinematography, director of photography, sometimes directing,” he says.

In addition to completing his MFA, Wang is also keen to finish the international *Four Stories*, which has shot in Sooke, Jordan and South Africa, with only Colombia remaining. “We’ve captured such an amazing story, I now want to complete it,” he says. “Not only is it the project that got me back to Canada, but I was so fascinated by what I saw in Jordan: I want people to see this film.”

Despite the proximity of Vancouver’s studios, Wang likes the idea of staying in Victoria. “I could shoot in other cities, but I like it here,” he says. “I like the environment, and there are so many talented people who work very hard.”

MENTORING FUTURE FILMMAKERS

If you want to get a feel for the homegrown film scene, look no further than the CineVic Society of Independent Filmmakers. Founded in 1991, the artist-run society provides affordable professional-grade equipment, facilities, training and screening opportunities to local filmmakers and media artists; previous members—like South Island Film Commissioner Kathleen Gilbert



DAVID GEISS at CineVic’s Short Circuit Pacific Rim Film Festival in May 2022.

and longtime Victoria Film Festival director Kathy Kay—make a clear case for CineVic’s importance as a local training ground.

Current executive director **DAVID GEISS**, MFA ’13, has spent the past six years furthering the cinematic ambitions of CineVic’s 125 members. “I realized it was actually more satisfying to help other people with their work than spend an inordinate amount of time and money to make my own short films, which then may—or may not—be screened at a film festival,” he says, with a chuckle.

Geiss is no stranger to the indie film world: his films and documentaries have been broadcast nationally and seen worldwide, he’s taught screenwriting and served as programmer for the likes of the Short Circuit Pacific Rim Film Festival, National Student Film Festival and Queer City Cinema Film Festival, among others. But it’s only by running CineVic that his past experiences and skills have really been spliced together.

“In many ways, it feels like this was the job I was born to do,” he admits. “I realized I actually like the support work—the planning, the advising—more than making short films. I no longer wake up at three in the morning with ‘Eureka!’ ideas... As an arts administrator, I now just get a good night’s sleep.”

Geiss says CineVic has a diverse membership from students to hobbyists, and from people looking to break into the film industry to those already working—like local photographer and director Arnold Lim, whose award-winning 2020 feature film debut *All-In Madonna* was penned by screenwriter and UVic alumna **SUSIE WINTERS**, BFA ’16.

DANIEL HOGG, BFA ’04, is another local filmmaker who focuses on both teaching and creating. Currently completing his screenwriting MFA at UVic, he has twice been part of Telefilm Canada’s Talent to Watch program and his credits as producer include the award-winning feature film *Two 4 One* (the world’s first transgender romantic-comedy, directed by Writing professor Maureen Bradley) and both the animated feature *Esluna: The Crown of Babylon* and the original nine-episode animated web series *Esluna: The First Monolith*. He was also executive producer on Connor Gaston’s *The Devout*.

Hogg is an experienced cinematographer and screenwriter as well as producer and has been teaching the Writing department’s film-production classes for years. The class is modelled on a professional film set, and students take on all the individual roles in a production—from director, producer, camera operator to editor, sound work and even catering.



Producers Harold C. Joe and **LESLIE BLAND**, MFA ’99 pictured with Academy Award nominee Graham Greene on the set of their recently filmed comedy-heist feature, *The Great Salish Heist*.

“It’s not a production program per se, it’s a screenwriting program—it’s just supposed to give them a taste of the industry,” Hogg says. “Certainly, we’ve had students move into film and TV where they work as production managers, assistant directors or screenwriters.” (*All-In Madonna*’s Susie Winters is a good example of students making this leap.)

Hogg is excited for the future of Victoria’s burgeoning film industry. “It’s growing and will continue to grow, but a lot of the community aren’t necessarily connected and integrated: not everyone knows everybody else. A lot of people are doing things independently while others are connected through organizations like CineVic,” he says. “But either way, we’re living in a time where people are actively trying to find ways to tell their stories.”

PUTTING INDIGENOUS STORIES ON SCREEN

After spending 30 years producing and directing hundreds of live plays, UVic grad **LESLIE BLAND**, MFA ’99, started his own film company—Less Bland Productions—in 2011. “I felt like I was hitting the ceiling of what could be accomplished with live theatre, but film and television offer a bigger, broader canvas,” says the producer of popular documentaries like *Gone South: How*

Canada Invented Hollywood and the all-female comedy series *She Kills Me*. “There’s a complexity in working with film that I really enjoy.”

Sporting a solid track record of film-fest screenings and experience with broadcasters CBC, Discovery Networks, Super Channel, Knowledge Network and Télé Quebec, Bland has partnered with fellow producer Harold Joe, a member of the Cowichan Tribes, in a joint venture, Orca Cove Media, which focuses exclusively on celebrating First Nations storytelling.

So far, the producing pair have had hits with hot docs like *Dust n’ Bones* (examining the preservation and rededication of First Nations remains and artifacts) and *Tzouhalem*, a cinematic investigation into the story of legendary Cowichan Chief Tzouhalem. “Orca Cove’s mandate is to allow Indigenous creators to tell the stories they want to tell,” says Bland. “A lot of the stories are hyper-local, but they also have broader appeal and a point of authenticity.”

That broad appeal can either come through subject matter—their current documentary, *A Cedar Is Life*, explores the cedar tree’s pivotal role in the cultural life of coastal First Nations from Alaska to California—or narrative approach. The team has completed filming *The Great Salish Heist* (starring *Dances with Wolves*’ Graham Greene and *Battlestar Galactica*’s Tricia Helfer), set to be the world’s first comedic Indigenous heist film; also in development is *Pow Wow Summer*, a coming-of-age romance set on the Canadian pow-wow circuit.

TALENT ON THE RISE

With alumni talent both on- and off-screen, and the next generation of young filmmakers being mentored to tell their own stories, the future looks bright for Victoria’s film scene. As plans for production facilities continue to evolve with hoped-for studios in both Saanich and Langford, director Connor Gaston’s optimism is reflective of the local industry as a whole.

“In film, there are so many things that need to go right and so many elements you need to put it all together, but I still have fun doing it,” he reflects. “Being on set is still my favourite thing. I can’t imagine doing anything else.” †



One to Watch

Letay Williams

New grad **LETAY WILLIAMS**, MFA '22, is a screenwriter who is intentional about creating stories that resonate with a global audience but are also infused with the diverse, vibrant culture of her Jamaican heritage. In 2021, her project *Traytown* won the Audience Choice Award at the Creators of Colour “Big Pitch at TIFF” competition, and she was one of only eight writers chosen to participate in the 2022 Toronto-based BIPOC TV & Film Episodic Writers’ Lab.

In May 2022, she produced a live public reading of her as-yet-unproduced MFA script, *Inheritance*, a feature-length film set in both Jamaica and Canada. Described as a “heartwarming, LGBT/family drama,” the script was read by a cast of local and out-of-town talent (Kelowna, Toronto) who said they’ve “never read a story like this” and that it’s “the movie intersectional communities are longing to see on screen.”

The Freelance Life

Recent Writing graduate **Jenessa Joy Klukas** covers child welfare, education and Indigenous issues as part of her busy freelance career.

BY JOHN THRELFALL, BA '96



Given the 24-hour global news cycle, we're living in a time of rapid media consumption, but freelance writer Jenessa Joy Klukas is finding success by keeping her focus tight and building relationships one story at a time.

A recent Department of Writing graduate, Klukas, BFA '21, finished the final year of her degree by interning at independent media outlet The Tyee as part of the Indigenous Reporters Program with Journalists for Human Rights (JHR), followed by a short posting at the equally independent IndigiNews as an education and child-welfare reporter.

Now freelancing for a variety of outlets—including expanding her work with The Tyee and IndigiNews, but also publish-

ing with the likes of *the Watershed Sentinel*—Klukas has had no trouble keeping busy. “It’s been very steady since I graduated last year, but I’m enjoying the freedom that comes with freelancing: it allows me to take on stories I’m really passionate about,” she says.

Of Xaxli’p and Métis descent, Klukas grew up on the land of the Haisla Nation in Kitimat before moving to Victoria and transferring from nearby Camosun College into UVic’s Writing department, where she focused on creative nonfiction. She’s managed to develop her own beat by focusing on stories about child welfare, education and Indigenous issues, and has also maintained ties with JHR through their Indigenous Media Collaborative.

“Because of these connections, stories are finding me a lot faster than I was anticipating—specifically in terms of Indigenous stories,” she says. “I find I get a lot of outreach on those.” Case in point? Her recent *Watershed Sentinel* story about Tea Creek Farm—an Indigenous-led, culturally-safe, land-based Indigenous food sovereignty and trades-training initiative located near Gitwagak in Gitxsan Territory (near Hazelton). The group reached out to her for coverage.

“Agriculture isn’t something I’ve really written about before, but because it was specifically Indigenous agriculture in a specific location—northern BC, near where I grew up—they felt I was the right person to contact,” she explains.

Another similar story focused on cultivating kelp resurgence in W̱SÁNEĆ waters via a partnership between the S̱ÁUTW̱ (Tsawout) First Nation and the Cascadia Seaweed commercial farm. And Klukas is currently researching a story about how asthma is affected by climate change, specifically looking at the impact of wildfires. “With our changing climate, we’re seeing a real uptake in wildfires and it’s having a significant impact on people’s health,” she notes. “I’ll be taking a deeper look at how ceremonial burning can have a positive effect on wildfires.”

Klukas is grateful for the support of JHR’s Indigenous Media Collaborative to develop stories like these. “It’s a funded initiative that allows journalists to take the time to invest in stories,” she says. IMC’s reporters are focused on solutions-based journalism and can pitch any media outlet as they develop their concepts into whatever shape best suits the story, be that a one-shot, longform or a series. “Since it’s funded, they help guide you through the process of getting your stories out into the world.”

Given the societal changes that coincided with her degree studies—including reconciliation, COVID, the rise of recent social-justice movements and the continuing climate crisis—Klukas feels the time is right for her to tell stories that matter.

“I came into journalism at a good time to have my voice heard,” she says. “In Canada, we’re at a point in history where people are more accepting about creating space for Indigenous voices—which, in the past, didn’t happen very often.” Klukas pauses and offers a wry laugh. “Of course, that doesn’t mean everyone is always receptive to it.”

This deepening of voices is indicative of a cultural shift that she’s proud to be part of. “I would have really valued seeing Indigenous voices in journalism when I was a teenager—that

representation would have meant a lot to me—so I’m totally willing and available to write stories on Indigenous matters,” she says. “It’s incredibly valuable to have Indigenous voices in the media space, not only for the average person to hear but also for Indigenous youth.”

But Klukas does admit that there’s a fine line between representation and tokenism in mainstream media. “Indigenous people shouldn’t be delegated to write only Indigenous stories if it’s part of a beat they’re not wanting to take on. As with any journalist, I always consider if this is the right story for me—I mean, I’m happy to cover Indigenous stories, but it’s important to have boundaries.”

Boundaries are especially important for her when writing about sensitive issues, like Indigenous child welfare. “It’s a passionate topic for me, so I don’t think I’ll ever stop writing about it—but it can be difficult to not feel overwhelmed,” she says. “There’s a heaviness that comes with it that can be emotionally draining. But that’s one of my favourite things about freelancing, spacing those stories out with a variety of topics: it helps me take care of my mental health.”

Another way Klukas keeps herself in balance is by having at least one creative project on the go, whether that’s “dabbling” in fiction via short stories or screenplays. “It’s important to have something for myself, just to keep flexing my creative muscles.”

While she’s still relatively new to the world of freelancing, Klukas feels she’s found her niche. “It takes a lot of initiative to be a freelancer, and it’s a constant process of learning something every day. That’s something the Writing program taught me: it’s important to pitch everywhere, send those emails in and just follow up. It can be scary—some days I feel very confident, while other days I have total impostor syndrome—but that’s very normal... writing is a very secluded endeavour, so it’s easy to fall into the ‘why am I doing this?’ mindset.”

Klukas finds success by giving her attention to one story at a time.

“I’m very proud of the work I do, and I’m really happy with the trajectory my career is taking, but I try to keep the focus on each story,” she says. “In journalism, sometimes you write for quota, sometimes you write for money... there are always going to be pieces you’ll like more than others, but I feel most successful when there’s a story I’m really proud of: building relationships is one of my favourite parts of journalism.” †

Nature in Focus

UVic Environmental Studies alumnus **Trevor Dixon Bennett, ES '12**, explores the cultural connection to environment through his production company, Kingtide Films.

BY ANNE MACLAURIN, BA '91, CERT '00

Filmmaker and UVic alumnus **TREVOR DIXON BENNETT** draws inspiration for his work from his Environmental Studies degree.



When Trevor Dixon Bennett was growing up in Vankleek Hill, a small town in Eastern Ontario, his father and other family members would create slideshows to watch together. Making fun videos of trips was a common pastime for Bennett. Eventually, he would turn that hobby into a career—which came with its own challenges.

“I started at ground zero when I launched Kingtide Films,” says Bennett. The craft film-production company focuses on cinematic storytelling at the intersection of culture and environment. “My focus is on those unique relationships with place and the cultural connection to place,” he adds. “I also love mountain and ocean, ski and surf cultures.”

The skill set in running a production company is quite eclectic, explains Bennett. You are part business person, a camera and technology specialist, sound engineer, as well as having to be a gifted storyteller. For Bennett, film is about bringing sound and visual imagery together in a unique way that transports people to a new and fascinating place.

Bennett earned a degree in Environmental Studies at UVic in 2012. The program had a direct impact on his path towards filmmaking. “I did my Masters in Arts in ethnoecology with Dr. Trevor Lantz and a small group of nine or so students,” says

Bennett, over an afternoon coffee. He remembers his fellow grad students as a small, adaptable team.

“There was a lot of freedom to experiment in the program. There was a sense of choose your own adventure. It started an entire new career for me,” adds Bennett.

Bennett’s interest in ethnoecology—the cultural connection to and relationships with surrounding environments—led him to finding culturally appropriate research methods through collaborations with Indigenous communities to document their Traditional Knowledge and observations of environmental change.

“My ethnoecology work led to using photos, video and stories as a way to engage with elders and youth out on the land, as a research method,” says Bennett. The experience of using a visual medium to tell stories is what eventually led Bennett toward film. “My first video was shot on a phone and I got paid in pottery.”

GROWING A FILM

His cohort included UVic PhD candidate, **STYAWAT/LEIGH JOSEPH**, a Skwxwú7mesh Nation ethnobotanist who would later be featured in Bennett’s award-winning film, *Walking with*



STYAWAT/LEIGH JOSEPH
walks in the Sk̓wxwú7mesh
(Squamish) estuary.

Plants. “Leigh and I became friends during our program and stayed in touch after graduation,” says Bennett.

“After Leigh was accepted into the PhD program at UVic’s School in Environmental Studies, we started filming some of the work she was doing as a way to communicate her research—this eventually led to the making of the film, *Walking with Plants*.”

The project was an unique opportunity for Bennett to collaborate with Styawat/Leigh Joseph and do research with Indigenous communities.

“I had seen a short film Trevor had done for one of the Indigenous communities on southern Vancouver Island, and I loved his approach. The imagery was beautiful and powerful, but there was also a distinct element of letting the images and people being filmed tell the story without narration or outside commentary,” says Joseph.

Joseph reached out to Bennett and asked if he would be interested in collaborating in some way. After agreeing to the project, Joseph and Bennett co-applied to Telus Storyhive and secured a grant to make a short documentary film together. Joseph would be co-director.

The film is cinematic and intimate as the viewer learns about Indigenous plant relationships alongside ethnobotanist Styawat/Leigh Joseph in the territory of the Sk̓wxwú7mesh Nation. The connection to place is evident as the viewer sees mountain ranges, sweeping estuaries and underwater scenes. Bennett was acutely aware during filming of his role as a settler telling a story

about an Indigenous woman. “I had a lot communication with Leigh on how to tell the story— a story her community would be proud of,” says Bennett.

“It was such a unique collaboration and Leigh’s community connections were totally essential and critical to that storytelling and that area,” adds Bennett. He is proud of the result. “It is a film that came together in a special way.”

Walking with Plants premiered at Hot Docs in June 2020 and won international accolades and continues to be screened at film festivals and events. “It was particularly special to have Leigh and her family attend two of the in-person screenings at film festivals in Whistler and Vancouver,” says Bennett. “It is such an intimate film that dives into her story and family. It was powerful to have them in the audience.”

Leigh’s sister, Salia Joseph, appears in the film, and also worked on the project as a cultural consultant, an Indigenous language expert and as a musician.

“Due to the timing of the film release and the pandemic, many of the film premieres were virtual, but I was able to watch the film with my family and hear my kids gasp with excitement when they came on the screen. Seeing the plants displayed in such a beautiful way was very special for me,” says Joseph.

A BUSINESS IS BORN

It took Bennett a few years of consulting work before launching Kingtide Films in 2015. He says his supportive family and friends made his success possible. “I think being adaptable and having a huge amount of tenacity is a prerequisite for this kind of career,” explains Bennett. It’s not always easy—and there has been no shortage of hard lessons.

Bennett is modest about his success, but it is clear that Kingtide Films is gaining momentum in the industry. Projects are getting bigger and more exciting. “I have worked super hard and have been a bit lucky,” he reflects.

He has been also clear from the start about his values and the kind of stories he wants to tell. “I have been surrounded by strong, talented, kind and supportive people with excellent skills and good intentions.”

Moving forward, Bennett says he wants to direct more creative film projects and try new things. “I want to push myself creatively, raise awareness of important issues and have fun.” †

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Constantly Curious

Alumna **Tanya Lloyd Kyi, BA '96**, is a superstar children's author—keeping the focus on fun and trusting in her young readers' innate curiosity about the world.

BY JENNY MANZER, BA '97



Teen Julia Kyi (left) co-authored a book on girls and activism with her mother, **TANYA LLOYD KYI**.

Tanya Lloyd Kyi has written more than 30 works for children—including picture books, science non-fiction, young-adult novels and middle-grade mysteries. Her book *This is Your Brain on Stereotypes: How Science Is Tackling Unconscious Bias*, illustrated by Drew Shannon, was embraced by teachers and librarians and received a positive review in the *New York Times* books section.

“With amiable authority, Tanya Lloyd Kyi explains how natural it is for humans to ‘sort and label the world around us,’ and what dire consequences can occur when we put people into categories that weaken their social standing, as witnessed by the horrors of Nazi Germany,” wrote *Times* reviewer Abby McGanney Nolan.

Yet, even after all this success, Lloyd Kyi is forthright about how difficult the writing life can be. She says for those debating between being a writer, or something else—the something else is likely easier.

“It’s not the most talented writers in the class who become professional writers, it’s the ones who are absolutely unwilling to stop writing,” says Lloyd Kyi, speaking from her Vancouver home. Tenacity is the number-one quality needed to be a successful children’s writer, she says, followed by some kind of writing talent and the ability to collaborate.

That said, Lloyd Kyi loves her job, and is thrilled to share her passion by teaching children’s writing at the University of British Columbia. Kyi was raised in Creston, in BC’s Kootenay region, and did not grow up thinking that writing was a viable career. But then, a teacher-librarian started a small writing group and shared the book *Runaway: Diary of a Street Kid* by Evelyn Lau with Lloyd Kyi. It showed her the power of storytelling.

Lloyd Kyi (then Lloyd) went on to study at UVic’s Writing program with a double-major in English, focusing on professional writing and publishing in

the co-op program. “I didn’t know I wanted to become a children’s writer when I was at UVic. I knew I wanted to be a writer of some sort, but doing the co-op program at UVic was amazing.”

Her co-op experience led to a job at Whitecap Books. The Vancouver-based publisher needed someone to write a non-fiction book, and she became a debut author at age 23. The book, *Canadian Girls Who Rocked the World*, profiled young women who did amazing things before they turned 20.

“It was the way I discovered that I love writing kids’ books. I got to be curious about a new thing or a new person every few days while I was writing that book. Just that idea that you could be constantly curious about new things and create these exciting books for kids set me off on the kids’ books trail.”

Since then, Lloyd Kyi has written a small library of books, many with some kind of real-world issue serving as the spine for the story. She has specialized in children’s non-fiction, a field crucial for teaching kids to think critically in a landscape choked with the weeds of misinformation.

“I think there is increasing respect for children’s non-fiction for exactly that reason. Fiction does

amazing things: it gives us windows into other parts of the world and other experiences and it helps us build empathy. But non-fiction teaches us to constantly ask questions, and it teaches us to see different sides of the same issues.”

She points out that no one in media who’d read good children’s non-fiction would have accused pandemic researchers of “flip-flopping” in their messaging. Arguing and testing and debating is simply part of the scientific process until one side emerges as correct, she notes. The trend towards conservative groups (particularly in the United States) trying to remove books about difficult issues from public libraries distresses Lloyd Kyi.

“This is a really, really important thing. We’re trying to teach kids to think critically and if they don’t have all the information, we’re taking that ability away from them.” She says in the face of threats to award-winning books, particularly those with an LGBTQ focus, readers need to support teachers and librarians and purchase the books of diverse authors.

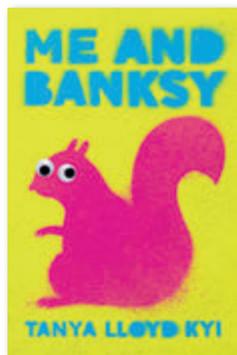
“The world is a scary place and sometimes people are trying to protect kids. But the best way to protect them is to equip them to deal with a scary future, in my opinion.”

What’s the most common mistake new kid-lit writers make? “I think they underestimate their audience. There are a lot of things that kids can understand and that kids will be interested in if they are presented in the right way.”

Kids have a lot of curiosity and natural willingness to explore and question, she says. “If we can draw on those things, there’s really no limit as to what we can inspire kids to think about and accomplish.”

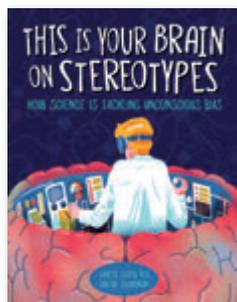
Lloyd Kyi is married to Min Kyi, who bills himself as the world’s only Burmese occupational therapist, and they have two children, a 15-year-old son and a daughter, Julia Kyi. (For the record, they also have a dog named Cobra Kyi, a nod to the *Karate Kid* reboot.)

One of Lloyd Kyi’s recent books is a collaboration with her daughter, who is 18 and studying political science at Sciences Po in France. *Better Connected: How Girls are Using Social Media for*



Penguin Random House
Canada

A middle-reader novel by
Tanya Lloyd Kyi that
includes a Banksy-esque
protest against cameras
in the classroom.



Kids Can Press

A non-fiction book by
Tanya Lloyd Kyi providing
an overview of the
science behind
stereotypes, including
why our brain forms them
and how to be less
biased.

Good explores the ways young women are harnessing the power of social media to better the world.

Adults are right to be cautious as there are lots of dangers online, says Lloyd Kyi. “But I think if that’s all we focus on, we take away the opportunity for girls to share their interests and their passions with the world.”

We’re giving youth a lot of responsibility to fix the world for us, she observes. “We’ve set them up for a difficult future, and we’ve asked them to take a lead of activism on things like climate change and feminism and social justice. And if we don’t give them the tools to use social media wisely, then we’re taking away their tools for making their voices heard. I love that social media is available to almost everyone. I think that girls around the world have proven that they can do pretty amazing things when they’re given a voice.”

When the duo started working on *Better Connected*, she could see the positive things her daughter was doing online—which gave her hope for the world. “Julia is quite fierce in her feminism and her activism, but that made it really fun for me to explore more of those things through the activists we got to include in the book.”

Lloyd Kyi is the type of person who gets angry about injustices. “I can’t live in that sort of storm of outrage and anger, so I do try to channel things into my books in more kid-friendly and funny ways—that’s the way I deal with the problems of the world, by balancing them out with humour. Hopefully that helps kids to deal with them, too.”

Her upcoming works include *The Best Way to Get Your Way*, about debate skills, and two picture books: *What Will I Discover?*, about great discoveries yet to be made, and an as-yet-untitled collaboration with David Suzuki on the importance of insects.

That’s a growing bibliography for a writer who went to UVic thinking she would eventually be an editor or an English teacher. “Writing didn’t seem realistic,” she muses. Now, a teacher-librarian could be handing a student one of Lloyd Kyi’s books and setting them on their own journey of discovery. †

Distill My Beating Heart

Mechanical Engineering grads **Darcy Lane, BEng '06**, and **Brandon Fry, BEng '10**, are helping fuel the craft distilling revival with their custom-made stills.



(L-R) **BRANDON FRY** and **DARCY LANE**, owners of Revival Stillworks, design and fabricate custom distillation systems for craft distilleries around the world.

We profile enterprises run by UVic alumni.

My business: Revival Stillworks

Where it's located: Sidney, BC

What we do: Revival Stillworks designs and fabricates custom distillation systems for craft distilleries around the world. From pot stills to continuous columns, our engineering team loves taking our customers' unique challenges and designing stills tailored to their needs. From there our team of skilled fabricators and coppersmiths combine copper with stainless steel to turn the engineering designs into beautiful, high performance works of art. We love helping to fuel the revival of craft distilling as this industry continues to show impressive growth in virtually all communities across North America.

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- Create an efficient still that requires fewer resources and costs less to operate.
- Create a still that maximizes production of the distillers preferred spirit(s).

Our ideal customer is: Any craft distiller with a passion and love for the industry.

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Where to find us:

RevivalStillworks.com

instagram.com/revivalstillworks

A Good Listener

UVic writing grad **Allyson Kenning's** lived experience with the mental-health system helps her create unique connections with the people she assists as a peer support worker.



ALLYSON KENNING, BA '98, says having good communication skills is essential as a peer support worker, and her writing degree laid the foundation for that.

We profile UVic alumni who recently made a bold life change.

Name: Allyson Kenning

Age: Rapidly approaching Ye Olde Middle Age (OK, I'm 48).

Hometown: Rossland, BC, and currently living in my suburban lair in Delta, BC.

UVic degree: Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts/Writing, 1998.

What I used to be: Chapters retail slave, small town newspaper reporter and columnist, cook and baker.

Then I had the idea to: become a mental health peer support worker.

Why I did it: I was inspired to do this by a friend of mine who trained as a peer support worker,

and she thought I might be good at it. So, I found training in my area (I was living in Surrey at the time) and completed that, and was hired on in March 2015 by Communitas Supportive Care Society as a part-time peer support worker. I am now an assistant program manager for Communitas' Peer Support Program, and I work in the Fraser Health Authority.

How I did it: I have had a long history with depression and anxiety, and have been in and out of mental-health systems and hospitals since my teen years. All those experiences turned out to have value, since peer support workers share their experiences and stories with the people they support, and it's that lived experience with a mental-health diagnosis and the mental-health system that helps us create unique connections with the people we support.

What I love about my new life: As a writer, I love hearing people's stories! Every single last person I have worked with over the years has some kind of story behind them that is inspiring and worthy of hearing. I would love to write some of them down, in fact, but confidentiality policies make that hard. Also, before I became a psw, I lived on disability income for many years—all of them well under the poverty line—and that changed my world view in so many ways, but I am happy to say I am working full time in this field and no longer live on assistance.

What I miss about my old life: Not much at all, actually. I was under-employed a lot before, and this job makes me feel successful, productive and valued.

One lesson learned: There are so many psychological pros to working full time. I never thought I would ever work full time again and be able to provide for myself in the way I do now. The biggest boon of having this job is that I no longer spend hours in my head ruminating about life or having all kinds of existential crises, wherein I would question my value as a person and find myself coming up short. I don't have time for that anymore!

One person who helped me: Shout out to my friend Tara W. who blazed the trail for me, and to my coordinator, Patrick R., who has mentored me a lot along the way.

One trade secret: I'm not sure what secrets there are to what I do, but I will say that having good communication skills, both written and verbal, are very important, and I feel like my writing degree laid the foundation for that. ¶

Sharing a Love of Science

UVic alumni and scientists **Claire and Will Cupples** pledged \$2 million to support a new Life Sciences Innovation Fund.

BY ERIN HALL



WILL and CLAIRE CUPPLES
stand in Finnerty Gardens.

The story of Claire and Will Cupples making a life together begins at the University of Victoria and, through a variety of ways, finds its way back here. The two met during their final years as biology students. They bonded over a mutual love of science and research, often over food and drinks at the Student Union Building.

Pursuing sciences was a natural choice for Will, BSc '73, given the way his mind works. "I have to have the whole animal in front of me," he says about becoming an integrative physiologist. "I really took off in John Hayward's third-year physiology class, and knew where I was going after that."

Claire, BSc '74, ultimately chose sciences over modern languages because she thought there would be more job opportunities. During her undergrad at UVic, she was inspired by Michael Ashford-Smith and a book by James Watson (known, along with Francis Crick, for discovering the double helix structure of DNA)—both influences that led her to become a molecular biologist.

"Claire was a good undergraduate student, and I was a very bad student," Will says. "I majored in rugby and beer." The two balanced studying together in the research carrels of the Cunningham building with evening trips to the SUB pub with a group of fellow students. "Gradually it became more *us* and less *them*," Claire says about how their relationship blossomed. Over the next decade the couple married, earned their master's degrees and PhDs at Canadian institutions and moved to Los Angeles for post-doctoral fellowships.

Despite the challenge of finding employment at the same city at the same time, Claire and Will built their careers in the life sciences and academia. Between 2003 and 2010, they found themselves back at UVic, where Claire served as the chair of biochemistry and microbiology and dean *pro tem* in the Faculty of Science and Will was a researcher and teacher in the biology department and the Island Medical Program. At the end of 2019, the pair retired from Simon Fraser

University as professors emeriti, where Claire had been SFU's first female dean of science.

Throughout their time as scientists, grant reviewers and administrators in academia, the Cupples saw a big discrepancy between the funding available to researchers in medical schools to generate pilot data for grant applications compared to comprehensives. Determined to bridge this gap, they came up with the idea for the endowment. "The short answer for why we've decided to support research is because it's fun," says Will. "The joy of being a scientist was that every day I was dealing with something I didn't understand and I had to figure out."

They've pledged \$500,000 to start an endowed fund and plan to add a bequest gift of \$1.5 million in their wills. Their generous donation establishes the Life Sciences Innovation Fund, which will provide one-time grants for scholars to initiate new life science research projects. Due to the nature of the endowment, this crucial financial resource will be available in perpetuity.

"It was always in our minds that we would do something for universities because we believe in them and we've made our careers with them," says Claire. "We've always been fond of UVic because that's where we met. And it gave us an excellent education." †

Class Notes

News and photos from around the alumni world

1970s

The Hon. **MARION R. BULLER BENNETT**, BA '75, LLB '87, was appointed a member of the Order of Canada. UVic's chancellor was recognized for "her leadership in Indigenous rights advocacy as the first woman of a First Nation to be appointed to the Provincial Court of British Columbia."

DR. ROBERT C. DAVIDSON, BA, '71, Dipl. Ed, '75 and Hon. DFA '92, was appointed an officer of the Order of Canada. He was recognized for his continued excellence as an artist and as an advocate of Haida culture.

1980s

STEVEN BAILEYS, BA '86, BEd '90, received a Saanich 2022 Arts, Culture and Heritage (ACH) Award in the Lifetime Achievement category. Baileys was cited as a creative and enthusiastic leader and dedicated volunteer. He served as the community development coordinator at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) since 2005. As an educator, he developed and delivered cultural competency and anti-racism training. The awards are presented by the District of Saanich and the Saanich ACH Advisory Committee.

MICHAEL DOHERTY, BA '80, LLB '88, has published *TEN: Rules for Being a Good Person in the 21st Century*. The book poses the question of what it takes to be "good" in an era of existential



MICHAEL DOHERTY

threats to life on Earth, and proposes a new "Ten Commandments" for our modern world. Doherty is a litigation lawyer who has spent half of his career working for not-for-profit public interest organizations and half working in public service.

From biryani to borscht, the food was always fabulous in **MARIAM S. PAL**'s Polish-Pakistani family. In her new memoir, *Ballet Is Not for Muslim Girls*, Pal, BA '80, details growing up in Victoria in the '60s and '70s while navigating three cultures: her Pakistani father's, her Polish-Canadian mother's and Canada's, where she was born and raised.

UVic Fine Arts grad **VALERIE SING TURNER**, BMus '84, is the recipient of a Lieutenant Governor's Arts and Music Award. The awards recognize individuals, groups and organizations throughout British Columbia who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, creativity, community engagement and commitment through fostering and mentoring others in the fields of visual arts, music or performance. Turner is an award-winning multidisciplinary artist who performs, writes, directs, dramaturges and produces.

1990s

LAURIE BRINKLOW, BA '93, was recently appointed assistant professor in Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island. Brinklow moved to PEI in 1983, and utilized skills learned in Dave Godfrey's publishing courses to become part of Canada's publishing industry, founding Acorn Press in 1993 before embarking on a career in academia. After completing her Master of Arts in Island Studies (MAIS) at UPEI (2007) and her PhD in Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania (2015), she worked her way to becoming the coordinator of the MAIS program and chair of the Institute of Island Studies. Her favourite course to teach is



LAURIE BRINKLOW

"Islandness"—something imprinted on her from early years growing up on Vancouver Island. She has since published several academic articles focused on island art and literature and is the author of two books of poetry, *Here for the Music* (Acorn, 2012) and *My island's the house I sleep in at night* (Island Studies Press/Walleah Press, 2021), which recently won the PEI Book Award for Poetry. She is also the president of the International

Small Islands Studies Association and Iceland's Honorary Consul to Prince Edward Island.

ELLA HARVEY (formerly Elaine), BSN '96, has released her second travel memoir with Rocky Mountain Books. *A Time of Light and Shadow* is the story of a young woman chasing adventure, stumbling into love and working in dire circumstances in Asia and Africa.

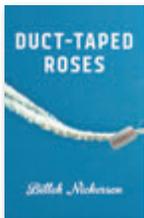


Four decades later, she returns to India and reflects on poverty and privilege, youth and aging, longing and belonging. More information at ellaharvey.ca.

PETER HILTON, MPA '96, returned from 13 years in Sweden as Dean of International Relations at Jonkoping University to become the executive director of the Upper Nicola Indian Band. Now residing in Kamloops, Hilton is the regional director of the Thompson-Okanagan for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. He is married to **SOFI ALMERS**, MEd '96.

Kwagijulth artist and Distinguished Alumni Award recipient **LOU-ANN NEEL**, Cert '95, was commissioned to provide an Indigenous version of CHEK News' new logo to be used when Indigenous-produced shows air on the Victoria television station.

Duct-Taped Roses by **BILLEH NICKERSON**, BFA '98, was included in the CBC list of 26 Canadian books to read for Pride Month list. While on a flight to



Cairo, Nickerson listened to the Bee Gees' hit song "How Deep is Your Love" 20 times in a row. It inspired him to write about the depth of his own love in his poetry collection.

Canadian lawyer and former politician **JODY WILSON-RAYBOULD**, BA '96, has been appointed to the Order of British Columbia. Her third book, *True Reconciliation: How to Be a Force for Change*, is slated for release in November.

DEB WHITTEN, BEd '93, MEd '02, is the Superintendent and Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Victoria School District. Whitten's experience includes nearly three decades of work in the education sector. She taught in the Saanich School District and was an adult educator at Centre College in Kentucky.



DEB WHITTEN

2000s

UVic alumna **DAMINEH AKHAVAN**, BEng '05, BSc '06, MBA '11, was just awarded the McLachlan Award for Outstanding Achievement in Engineering. A senior engineer,



DAMINEH AKHAVAN

she has been an advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion for women in STEM, and a champion for women in engineering. Akhavan has received many honours, including a 2022 UVic Distinguished Alumni Award.

BRIAN CANT, BA '03, Cert '08, MBA '18, is the Vice President, Business Impact and Engagement at 4VI, a social enterprise for Vancouver Island. The organization was previously known as Tourism Vancouver Island. Cant is the former president of the UVic Alumni Association. He previously served as Director, Communications and Engagement for the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority. He is also a member of the UVic Board of Governors.

ARNO KOPECKY, BA '02, received Honorable Mention in the Long-Form Feature Writing category at the National Magazine Awards for the story "Three Days in the Theater of Old-Growth Logging and Protest."

NATHAN MEDD, BFA '01, has been appointed as the CEO of the Victoria Conservatory of Music. Medd received a Distinguished Alumni Award in 2019 from UVic and has since received a Master's degree from

Harvard University in non-profit management. He will be working towards achieving the goals of the Conservatory's 2025 strategic plan.

TROY SEBASTIAN, BA '05, MFA '20, won gold at the National Magazine Awards in the fiction category for the story "The Mission."

2010s

CARLEIGH BAKER, BFA '11, won silver at the National Magazine Awards in the fiction category for the story "Outraged on Your Behalf."

UVic's **DR. NICK CLARKE** and UVic double grad **ALI BAGGOTT**, BSc '11, MEd '22, share their expertise as board members with the Greater Victoria Sports Hall of Fame. Clarke is currently Varsity Performance Sport Director with Vikes Athletics and Recreation, while Baggott, a former top Vikes athlete, manages the digital-media team in University Communications & Marketing. Baggott holds a UVic Bachelor of Science (Biochemistry) and this past spring received her Master of Education (Coaching Studies).

DIANE BUTCHER, MN '13, PhD '17, actively pursued an alt-academic position to disrupt assumptions surrounding where PhD-prepared nurses are "expected to be." She has been working as a medical adjudicator since 2019, and is now on assignment with National Headquarters at Employment and Social Development Canada



DIANE BUTCHER

(ESDC). In her current role as a medical adjudicator consultant reviewer for ESDC, she conducts analyses of both the quality of available evidence and analytical decision making related to disability adjudications. This work supports strategic quality improvement initiatives for the federal government.

UVic political science and history alum and former Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives international student intern **GEORGE BENSON**, BA '14, has been named as a member of the BC Climate Solutions Council, the senior-most advisory body to the Minister of the Environment on all climate and environment issues. He is one of the body's two youth representatives. Benson currently works as the Manager, Economic Transformation (Decarbonization and the Just Transition) with the Vancouver Economic



GEORGE BENSON

Commission, volunteers as the managing director of the Climate Displacement Planning Initiative and was recently appointed a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Commission on BiodiverCities by 2030.

Writing grad **SOPHIE CROCKER**, Cert '19, BFA'19, has released a new collection of poetry via Gordon Hill Press. *brat* is billed as "an anthology of forest creatures, lost girls and tiny precious moments where smallness begets uprising, rats signify life rather than death and



SOPHIE CROCKER

bunnies are slutty woodland sprites."



KATIE GAMBLE

Nature Bee Wraps founder **KATIE GAMBLE**, BCom '18, was selected in the Rising Stars category of this year's *BC Business Magazine* Women of the Year Awards. Gamble started her reusable beeswax food wrap business in her parents' basement. Now Nature Bee can be found in 350 retailers across North America and she has launched a dishcloth collaboration with Kelowna-based interior designer Jillian Harris.



RAIN CABANA-BOUCHER

Faculty of Fine Arts grad **RAIN CABANA-BOUCHER**, BFA '19, was awarded the sixth annual Tanabe Prize from the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria in the emerging artist category. Cabana-Boucher is a Michif/British settler interdisciplinary artist whose practice explores autobiographical themes in relation to place and politics. The Tanabe Prize is an annual award given to artists whose primary medium is painting and who are residents of British Columbia.

CATHERINE M. GILBERT, MA '18, has reason to celebrate. Her recent book, *A Journey Back to Nature: A History of Strathcona Provincial Park* (Heritage House Publishing, 2021) was a third-place finalist for the Lieutenant



CATHERINE GILBERT

Governor's Award for Historical Writing, sponsored by the BC Historical Federation. The book was largely based on Gilbert's master's thesis, written under the supervision of Dr. Rick Rajala.

MICHAEL LAPOINTE, MFA '15, received Honorable Mention in the fiction category at the

Reach for the Stars

UVic alumna **JANIS DUNNING**, Cert '98, believes there's no expiration date in trying something new—as evident by her remarkable accomplishments and commitment to lifelong learning.

In her teens, she apprenticed with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and had a principal role in *Anne of Green Gables* in London's West End. Dunning performed musical theatre across Canada, and directed and starred in over 300 episodes of children's programming for CTV. In 1990, she created the Spirit of a Nation national touring program, and in 1998, co-founded the Canadian College of Performing Arts (CCPA) to provide opportunities for emerging artists.

She was already highly accomplished, but decided to feed her curiosity by becoming a UVic Continuing Studies student. In 1997, she took the Business Administration Fast Track program. In 2019, she also enrolled in Spanish courses at UVic.

Dunning is a living example that feeding your curiosity opens doors. "When you're struggling, it's hard to believe your dream profession is possible. You need to remember that nobody enters any profession from the same door," she says. "Get the learning, love the work and be fearless."

In 2021, Dunning was appointed to the Order of Canada in recognition of her contributions to the performing arts and young artists in Canada.

—SARAH ANDROSOFF



National Magazine Awards for the story "Private Hands."

SAMARTH MOD, MBA '15, and **ROHIT BOOLCHANDANI**, MBA '14, announced in July their Victoria-based design and development consulting firm FreshWorks Studio had joined forces with EY Canada. According to an EY press release, "the move will expand the depth and breadth of EY Design Studio digital strategy, design and development capabilities."

Victoria rowers **LINDSAY JENNERICH** and **PATRICIA OBEE**, MA'19, were inducted into this year's Greater Victoria Sports Hall of Fame in the team

category. The rowing duo won World Championship silver in 2011 and 2014; and World Cup gold in 2016. They represented Canada at the 2012 London Olympic Games, finishing seventh, and then brought home a silver medal at the Rio Olympic Games in 2015.

EVE OLYNYK, BCom '17, and **SIMON PARK**, BEng '19, flew onto *Douglas* magazine's 10 to Watch list for their company MeepMeep, which launched a Bluetooth tracker that lets disc golfers locate their wayward discs.

MORGAN TATE, BCom '17, co-founder of DealBuilder, was

recognized on *Douglas* magazine's 10 to Watch list. Launched in 2021, the tech company assists small business owners sell their businesses as quickly as possible for maximum value.

TIMOTHY VERNON, Hon DMus '17, received a Lieutenant Governor's Arts and Music Award. Vernon is a founding artistic director with Pacific Opera.

2020s

PAUL ROBERTS, a 2021 graduate of Gustavson School of Business's Weekend MBA program, recently accepted a

position as the Vice President of Operations with Murchie's Tea and Coffee. Murchie's is a prominent British Columbia brand that has been in continuous operation since 1894. "I am very proud and excited to be taking this role and utilizing the skill set that my MBA education has brought to me," Roberts says. ↑

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**RONALD (RON) GEORGE,
TSASKIY** BSW '06, MEd '17

Sunrise: May 30, 1945
Sunset: June 20, 2021 (age 76).

A Hereditary Chief of Wet'suwet'en descent, George was a prolific lifelong advocate for Indigenous peoples across BC and Canada. As National President of the Native Council of Canada, a role he would serve until 1994 (prior to it being renamed the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples), he led the team that would successfully negotiate Indigenous peoples' right to self-government in the Charlottetown Accord. He was a regular and respected guest lecturer at UVic, Camosun College, Vancouver Island University, UBC and Simon Fraser University. George and his spouse, Arlene, worked together on K-12 presentations and loved creating Indigenous/Settler banter to educate youth through an expanded lens of Canadian history.

George transitioned surrounded by his spouse Arlene, daughters: Heather (Gerry), Vicki, Rachel (Gord), Allie, Rowyn, grandchildren: Candice, Gordie, Veronica, Vincent (Vinny) and Corina, and siblings Peter and Cheryl.

UVic geography professor and alumnus **HARVEY JAMES "JIM" HARROLD**, PhD '17, passed away on July 27, 2022 and is remembered as a true "gentle man," explorer and adventurer who passionately shared his time and wisdom. Harrold believed in lifelong learning. As editor of his high-school yearbook, he wrote, "Don't let your schooling interfere with your education." Yet Harrold pursued ongoing formal education receiving his Honours

BA and MA from York University, a mediation certificate from Harvard University and then his PhD from the University of Victoria in 2017. In December 2021, as a Professor of Geography-adjunct at UVic, he was still teaching and mentoring students in the Health, Environment and Community course.

Harrold is missed by his family, including his loving wife of 40 years and best friend Mary Claire; his beloved son Matthew (Megan) and his best bud, grandson Manny; big brother Doug (Elsa); favourite sister Lynda (Phil); brother-in-law Barry (Pat) and his nieces and nephews: Alex (Sara), Greg (Rebecca), Steve (Joselyn), Bryan (Kristal), Kyle (Emily), Lynsey (David), Kelsey (Michael), Debbie, and Kevin (Tammy); and numerous great nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his parents Harv and Betty Harrold and his nephew, Michael.

Born in Sarnia, Ont. in 1950, **BRYAN WADE**, BA '74, husband, father, friend, educator, mentor, coach, volunteer, supporter of the arts and accomplished Canadian playwright and dramatist, passed away unexpectedly on Feb. 3, 2022 due to coronary-artery disease.

Wade grew up in Esquimalt and had his first play produced in Toronto before he even finished his time at UVic. Degree completed, he moved to Toronto where he wrote for theatre, television and radio. He did his MFA at UCLA in film and eventually settled at UBC teaching in the now School of Creative Writing. For over 30

years, he mentored many to professional writing careers and founded the Brave New Play Rites Festival where his students could see their plays in production.

His wife Johane, sons Harrison and Duncan, sister Debbie and a collection of brother and sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews and many good friends from home, across the country, and abroad will miss his laugh, his stories, keeping an eye on his counting at cribbage, his homemade chocolate-chip cookies and his words— his wise, sometimes wild, wonderful words.

"Words mean so many things to so many people... I do believe in what I'm doing now... That's all I know. This is all I can believe in. My voice. My words."

—Al from *Underground* (1975), a play by **BRYAN WADE**

CLINT GARY MEGAFFIN, LLB '02, passed away suddenly, though surrounded by his family and their love, on June 22, 2022, in Victoria. He was born Oct. 29, 1977 in Prince Albert, Sask. He obtained his Bachelor of Commerce (Finance) degree from the University of Saskatchewan and was accepted into the College of Law at the University of Victoria in 1999. He received his Juris Doctor, Law in 2002, and was called to the bar after articling in Vancouver in 2003. He then returned to Victoria which he would call home. Megaffin worked for the Province of British Columbia in various departments for more than a decade before venturing out to private practice. He loved the research involved in supporting and arguing his cases.

He was predeceased by his mother Jeannine, niece Rebeca Durand, grandparents Eleutheria and Thomas Dewey and Geneva and Albert. He is survived by his son Nolan, ex-wife Courtney, father Gary, sister Jennifer (Cory) Durand, brother Scott (Sarah Tait), nieces Cory Jo Durand, Brianna and Brooke and nephew Austin.

DR. JOHN HAROLD MOLYNEUX, who spent a year as a visiting scholar at UVic, passed away last October. Born in 1933, Molyneux won an open scholarship to read Classics at Christ's College, Cambridge (1951-4). He graduated with a double first and won the Chancellor's Medal for Greek verse composition. In 1957, he took a post at the University of Sheffield. In 1987, he moved on to the University of Nottingham, from which he retired in 1996.

The late Olympic gold-medallist rower and Vikes alumnus **KEVIN NEUFELD** was remembered at a celebration of life in May as an absolute monster on the water in his rowing days and a gentle and devoted family man off it.

"We called him the Specimen. Kevin taught me how to be an elite athlete. I had no concept until I saw him train," said Olympian Nick Toulmin in a *Times Colonist* article. Three members of the UVic rowing team—Neufeld, Grant Main and Dean Crawford—won Olympic gold at Los Angeles in 1984 with the Canadian men's eight edging out the American team by 0.4 seconds in the thrilling final. †

Wheels, Words and Healing

Martin Bauman discovered the life-changing power of stories during a cross-country bike ride for mental health.

BY MARTIN BAUMAN, MFA '21



I was in the dawn of my 20s and halfway across the country on a bicycle when I came to appreciate the power of stories—that is to say, to carry them the way a palm does a fingerprint, or one heart nurtures another.

It was the summer of 2016. I was pedaling across Canada to raise funds for community mental health services—a nod to my late cousin, I told others, but in truth it was more about my own internal battles. I'd been shadowboxing with depression for years. I knew the insecurities, the self-doubts, the dull rain that rolled in and filled my head for weeks like Pacific Northwest fog.

But I wasn't much good at talking about it.

I'd been on the road from Vancouver to St. John's for some weeks when the stories found me. Long enough for the knees to wear and the dirt to find its way into every pore, every saddle pouch and every piece of clothing I carried. It was a solitary ride—a reality brought on by the bull-headed belief that some things must be faced by ourselves alone.

But then, something wonderful and unexpected happened. It changed my life.

I was used to hiding my depression. It was safer that way, I felt—easier to keep the mask on than to peer beneath it. But I wasn't yet used to meeting others whose stories resembled my own: people who welcomed me in, shared freely.

My perspective changed over a prairie evening under a marmalade sky, on a Quebec rooftop by the St. Lawrence, on a Cape Breton afternoon when the power was out. For the first time in my life, I heard stories that echoed my own. Stories of fears kept privately, of wishes, of worries, of hopes and dreams and long-whispered prayers. And each time I heard them, I could feel the weight of my own mask dissolving.

There is a magic—real, unparalleled magic—that comes when we share our stories with one another. When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable. When we throw away the mask and let ourselves shine through.

There is an honour, a deep privilege, in hearing those stories shared, too. And there's a responsibility that comes when passing those stories onward. It's one I don't take lightly as a writer, nor as a podcaster. It's a trust I endeavour to uphold.

Now that I report for a living, I think back to those summer evenings. I remember the gift that comes with each story offered; the obligation to hold it gently as you might another's hand.

I remember the simplest truth carried within each story from one to another, too: none of us are alone. And we are all we have. †

Martin Bauman (MFA Writing, '21) is a writer and podcaster in Victoria and Halifax. His work has appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, *Capital Daily*, *Calgary Herald* and *Waterloo Region Record*, among other places. In 2020, he was named one of five "emergent" nonfiction writers by the RBC Taylor Prize. He's on Twitter @martin_bauman.



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Moving Mountains

UVic grad **DANIELLE N. GRENIER**, MA '12, says yes to the call of adventure. The political-science major summited Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, seen here, to raise funds for Right to Play, a global organization that protects, educates and empowers children. Then the Himalayas called, so in spring of 2022, Grenier, a writer, made the two-week trek to summit Everest Base Camp in Nepal. The New York City resident then set her GPS on Peru, and recently roamed along ancient Inca ruins to reach the fabled Machu Picchu. “Trees, streams and fresh air help me recharge and better connect with my highest self, other people and our planet,” she says.



Alumni House
Ian Stewart Complex
3964 Gordon Head Road
Victoria BC V8N 3X3