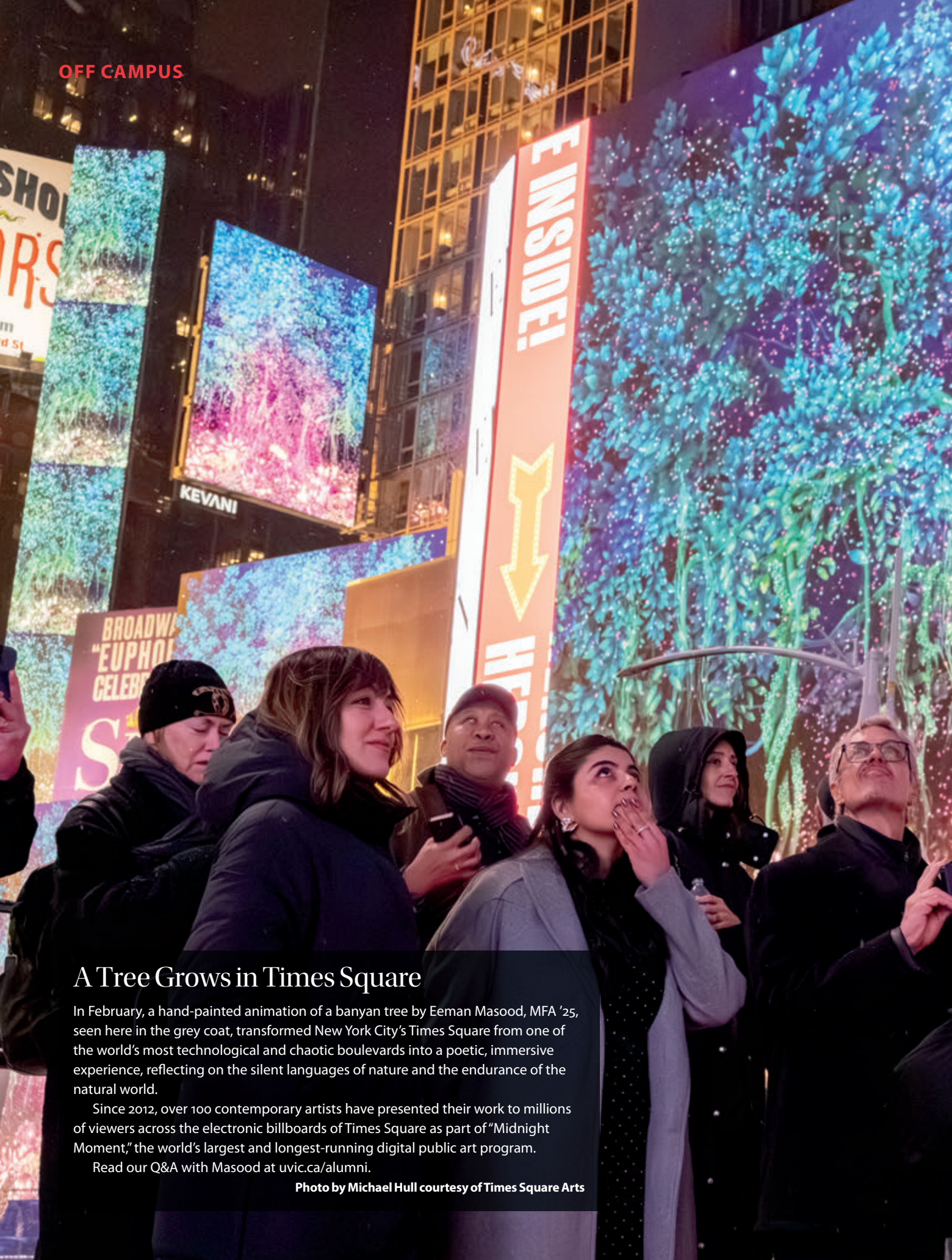


UVIC TORCH



Bold Types

Photographer and conservationist **Paul Nicklen**, seen in the Bahamas, is one of many UVic grads doing important, inspired work.



A Tree Grows in Times Square

In February, a hand-painted animation of a banyan tree by Eeman Masood, MFA '25, seen here in the grey coat, transformed New York City's Times Square from one of the world's most technological and chaotic boulevards into a poetic, immersive experience, reflecting on the silent languages of nature and the endurance of the natural world.

Since 2012, over 100 contemporary artists have presented their work to millions of viewers across the electronic billboards of Times Square as part of "Midnight Moment," the world's largest and longest-running digital public art program.

Read our Q&A with Masood at uvic.ca/alumni.

Photo by Michael Hull courtesy of Times Square Arts



INSIDE!



HERSHEY'S

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Alumni Awards

In March, recipients of the ʔa kʷs ʔa kʷs ʔa kʷs Skʷukʷalstəŋəʔ | SIÁMĆEĚ | 2026 Distinguished Alumni Awards were celebrated at the Victoria Conference Centre.

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UVic social sciences grad, Vikes star, Olympian and activist **PAMPHINETTE BUISA** fought her way back from the heartbreak of injury to make a new start playing pro rugby in the United Kingdom.



UVic grad **MARK PERKINS** loved baseball, his Métis heritage, his family and helping others.



PAUL NICKLEN spent five years trying to achieve his dream image of narwhals on sea ice. Extreme patience, and often failure, is part of the job.

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UVic's **DAVID LEITCH** is inventing new chemistry to create medicines with less waste.

The Game of Life

UVic alumnus **Mark Perkins, Dipl '74**, was a firefighter, a proud Métis and a fierce competitor on the ball diamond who never passed by someone who needed help.

BY JENNY MANZER, BA '97



Mark and Fern Perkins together
by First Peoples House

Being off duty never deterred Mark Perkins from stopping to rescue someone in harm's way. On a family trip to a zoo in Portland, a little boy put his head through the wrought-iron railings of a cage and became stuck.

Mark's wife **FERN PERKINS**, MEd '06, pushing their own baby in a stroller, suggested her husband, a firefighter, could free the boy. Trained in child-birth, Mark tilted the boy's shoulder and wiggled him free. Another time in the Redwoods of Oregon, Mark carried a woman with a broken ankle up a hill. After retiring, he was driving home in Greater Victoria with takeout fish and chips when he spotted a car on fire with a man trapped inside. He stopped to help before returning home.

Mark earned a diploma in Education at UVic in 1974, but decided to help children another way. "That's why we have the joke that he'd rather face burning buildings than a classroom full of children," says Fern. Firefighters have a "special capacity for caring for others," she adds. Even

though his vocation contributed to the cancer that ended his life—Fern insists, he would have done it all again.

The two met on the playground at Victoria's Frank Hobbs Elementary School. "We were 10 years old. He had a Roy Rogers lunch kit. Roy Rogers was my hero and that was that," Fern recalls. They remained together—as they married, earned UVic degrees and both later discovered that they had Indigenous roots—a fact obscured by their families, in part because of the risk of residential schools.

Mark climbed the ranks as a firefighter, eventually becoming a Battalion Chief. "He was real, authentic, dedicated, disciplined, cared about others always. He wasn't perfect. He was a different person on the ball field. He took his baseball seriously."

Besides Fern and their three children, Mark's other great love was baseball, which he played semi-professionally. He was scouted by the San Francisco Giants and earned a scholarship at Lewis-Clark State College in Idaho. Mark's father was an umpire and believed baseball was an allegory for life. It was about development and discipline, not the outcome. It is, like life, a game of failure, says Fern, where achieving one hit out of three is a success.

After retiring, Mark delved into his newly discovered Indigenous heritage. The couple taught Indigenous education in local schools and at UVic, where they met former Chancellor Shelagh Rogers, who turned out to be a relation of them both. He called this exploration of his Métis family "the best retirement gift he could hope for."

Mark was fastidious, verging on compulsive. Fern and the kids would remind him that he wasn't the boss once he got home. "And we would tell him, 'We're not the fire department and you're not in charge here,'" she laughs.

Mark was her everything. "I would never have been able to accomplish my own personal life if it hadn't been for him. He was my safety and my protection, my best friend. He never ever stood in my way, he always encouraged me to do anything and everything I wanted."

UVic alumnus Gordon Mark Perkins, a retired Battalion Chief of the Victoria Fire Department, passed away on Dec. 22, 2025 at age 76. He is survived by Fern, their three children and their grandchildren." †

TORCH

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Showing up with Intention

From her days as an undergrad, to PhD student, to eventually leading the university, **Qwul'sih'yah'maht, Robina Thomas** learned to be bold, brave and have big dreams.

BY QWUL'SIH'YAH'MAHT, ROBINA THOMAS, BSW '93, MSW '00, PHD '11



“...Leadership is relational and expressed in how we show up for one another: with intention, purpose, care and accountability.”

Being asked to reflect on the milestones of my career is no small task. Big moments feel like watermarks on a page spreading out with a splash of randomness. During my earliest days as a student, I thought I'd be an accountant. I really don't know why. I certainly never imagined I would one day serve as Acting President of the University of Victoria. My career path was never about a title or a position; it was always about the work that needed to be done, and the people to whom I was accountable along the way.

My educational journey began when I was working part-time at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre as a teaching assistant. That experience guided me toward becoming a classroom counselor, and it was my first real understanding of what it meant to walk alongside Indigenous students. That experience changed me and I felt pulled, like a river's current, toward social work at UVic.

After completing my Bachelor of Social Work, I worked in school districts and witnessed a level of racism towards Indigenous students that shocked me. That was when I knew I needed to strengthen my voice, not just for myself, but for the students and communities. So, I went back to school and experienced both the most important and most difficult work of my life.

My Master of Social Work thesis focused on Kuper Island Indian Residential School. While I had known about Residential Schools, I'd never sat down and listened to the stories. Listening to Survivors changed me. The research emboldened me to continue using my voice to protect Indigenous communities and led me to graduate with a Master of Social Work. The Indigenous courses taught us to fiercely focus on ensuring that no more Indigenous children would be removed from their homes, communities and their culture.

When it came time to pursue my PhD, I looked inward for answers. I was having a quiet mental conversation with my grandmother, asking for guidance, and it just clicked—it had to be about Indigenous women and leadership. Work that is grounded in teachings, relationships and the

Sacred Cycle—shaped not only my research, but how I lead. It taught me that leadership is relational and expressed in how we show up for one another: with intention, purpose, care and accountability.

Being an academic has been an absolute privilege. I have been blessed with many colleagues and mentors—too many to list—but they know who they are. They were my conduits to knowledge, the trusted rudders and strong paddles that helped me navigate the waters of the institution, teaching me to be bold, be brave, and really, just be me.

One of my fondest memories was the opening of the First Peoples House, or as Late Dr. Skip Dick always referred to it as, “a space that provides a home away from home for Indigenous students.” The Elders in Residence program, their presence, established the space as a trusted community, and their wisdom keeps the past, the present and the future connected—the Sacred Cycle.

Stepping into the roles as Vice-President Indigenous, and later Acting President, was something I approached with humility and a deep sense of responsibility. These roles affirmed for me that leadership is not about authority—it is about relationships. The perspective I gained taught me that we can always be learning, growing and leading better, even at the end of a career. I feel blessed to have had this opportunity and will retire with so many beautiful memories. They will warm my heart forever.

My next steps will likely include more work in Child Social Welfare, and I would still like to expand on my PhD work, speaking to Indigenous women in Australia and Aotearoa (New Zealand). But for the immediate future, my focus will be my grandchildren. They give me strength and hope, because they are the future.

Looking back at ripples I've made in the water, I see how important it was to always have a vision. Don't give up on what you believe in, work hard, and change will happen. And never be afraid to have big dreams. †



The UVic
community
is doing bold,
inspired work.

One Wild Life

UVic biology grad and conservationist Paul Nicklen is one of the world's top wildlife photographers. His new book, *Reverence*, caps decades spent with bears, penguins, wolves and whales, and is a love letter to the planet.

BY JENNY MANZER, BA '97 • COVER PHOTO BY JOHN KELSEY. ALL OTHER IMAGES BY PAUL NICKLEN

Let's begin in 1972, when *The Godfather* ruled the box office, Trudeau senior was PM, and Paul Henderson scored the famed winning goal for Team Canada in Moscow. That was also the year Paul Nicklen's family moved from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan to a row house in Iqaluit on Baffin Island. Nicklen was four. The family later settled in Kimmirut, a small hamlet that at the time had around 200 people, a place without television or telephones.

At age nine, he climbed behind his own snowmobile and travelled out on the ice with his father and the Inuit hunters. Temperatures dropped to -40° Celsius. "I was learning how to be tough," he says.

He was also soaking in the area's stories—such as the Inuit myth of *Qalupalik*, the sea monster, who was said to snatch kids off the ice and eat them. The story served a purpose to keep children safe in a land with no swimming pools, where children often couldn't swim, reflects Nicklen.

He remembers the time as a rich mental journey. "And when your head is so full of dreams and visions, and thoughts, and stories, and colours, and shapes and patterns, and I really thrived on it. My brother hated the North. He didn't like it at all. He thought it was hard, and he couldn't wait to get out of there, and I couldn't wait to just spend the rest of my life there."

Growing up among the Inuit, he learned to listen more, talk less and not to brag. In Kimmirut, a traditional, sharing community, it was considered rude to knock on a door. The custom was to walk in. There would be blizzards that engulfed buildings in snow. "I remember our dog disappeared for a week in the storm and came back eventually. And you just learn to be tough. It's just a really tough environment. And I loved it. I thrived in that."

This early trial-by-ice made him "really good at being miserable." He experienced frostbite with the regularity that others get a sunburn—perhaps 50 times. He learned patience from the Inuit. "Most of all, what I learned was storytelling, and I love it how they're very much a visual culture. They tell their stories through lithograph paintings, through soapstone carvings... we would carve things out of snow and ice." When they weren't carving, they'd be telling stories. That's how it was in the North.



Growing up on Baffin Island meant **PAUL NICKLEN** spent his time out on the land.

OBSESSED WITH THE OCEAN

Nicklen's schoolteacher mother, an accomplished photographer, kept a darkroom during his childhood, which fascinated him. She eventually lent him a Pentax K1000 during a family trip to Italy when he was 15. When Nicklen first stepped onto the UVic campus at age 18 to study biology, he was still struggling to get his photos sharp and in focus.

At UVic, he discovered scuba diving and became obsessed, strapping his gear to his motor bike and driving to dive sites. He spent time at Bamfield Marine Station, where he was known for scuba diving and underwater photography. He recalls his biology professor, Dr. Arthur Fontaine, praising his underwater photos. But he did not earn good marks. He wishes he knew then that he has Attention Deficit Disorder. Still, Nicklen graduated with a Bachelor of Science in 1990. When he was contacted by UVic in 2017, he thought they might be revoking his degree. Instead, he was to receive an honorary doctorate.

"That was a proud moment. Because, OK, I followed my path. They're not recognizing me for my grades... I have made some sort of a difference. I am very proud of my relationship with UVic."



Paul Nicklen and his partner, Cristina Mittermeier, spent weeks in a blind in the Great Bear Rainforest to gain the trust of the sea wolves. A mother wolf eventually dropped her pups off for them to babysit while she hunted with the pack.

ALONE IN THE BARREN LANDS

After graduating, he went north to work as a biologist, but found himself managing hunters' rights. Disillusioned, he arranged to have a pilot drop him off at the Barren Lands, a largely unpopulated area of vast tundra between Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. He spent three months on his own, hiking and canoeing among the musk ox and the moose, trying to photograph tundra wolves.

"I lost 50 pounds, carrying these heavy packs everywhere. I hiked over 1,000 kilometres. I felt amazing. I felt like a wild animal myself. I had such incredible encounters. I was sitting in a nest with golden eagles, and... being alone with animals. And by the end of it, I knew very clearly what I was going to do with the rest of my life."

Nicklen wanted to give a voice and a face to the species most affected and at risk in our changing planet. When he returned to civilization, he had photos and a purpose. Along the way, he was mentored by top nature photographers Flip Nicklin and Joel Sartore. He began shooting regularly for *National Geographic*.

Nicklen's photos are close and intimate with nature, evoking emotion and awe. He tells stories about wolf pups playing or narwhals in formation or elephants sheltering their young—but

he's not afraid to punch us in the gut. It's difficult to forget his image of a polar bear stumbling along Somerset Island, ragged and starving. Or his famous photo "Ice Waterfall," with its sinister beauty and devastating message of relentless climate change. The image was taken in Svalbard, Norway, just 800 km from the North Pole. It was 20° C that day and everything was melting. It was beautiful to look at—but gut wrenching, reflects Nicklen.

Over the years, he has collected duffle bags of awards, more than 30, including the UVic Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award and the 2017 honorary doctorate. "If people have seen a photograph set in the polar regions that filled them with awe, a photograph they shared with the person next to them, and remember to this day, it was probably taken by Paul Nicklen," said Dr. Kieka Mynhardt, when giving the oration before Nicklen received his UVic honorary degree.

He also earned the Order of Canada, BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year and the World Press Photo for Photojournalism. In 2019, he became the youngest person ever inducted into the International Photography Hall of Fame.

He loved working for *Nat Geo*, and did so for 20 years. But he wanted to do more. "And that was an amazing journey, but then that wasn't enough for me. It's great to have 100 million people



Paul Nicklen's spirit bear image was on the cover of *National Geographic* in 2011. The story bolstered the campaign to keep tankers away from the Great Bear Rainforest. He spent three months in the rainforest to get the photos, which were taken in the final hours of the expedition.

plus see your story on *National Geographic*, but if you're not affecting change, then what's the point?"

MEETING CRISTINA, CREATING SEALEGACY

Our story shifts to Washington, DC, at the headquarters of *National Geographic*, where Nicklen meets Mexican-born photographer and marine biologist Cristina Mittermeier. Nicklen recalls her as a beauty dressed with Mexican flare, long skirt and jewellery. She remembers him in plaid, corduroy, a cute Canadian.

At the time, she had started up the International League of Conservation Photographers. He agreed to join a group assignment documenting environmental changes to the Yucatan Peninsula. The two ended up diving together, taking photographs together and eventually becoming partners in life and in conservation, founding SeaLegacy in 2014.

Mittermeier and Nicklen were honoured together in 2018 as *National Geographic's* Adventurers of the Year. *Nat Geo* made a documentary about the couple as part of their Photographer series, following their conservation efforts in the Bahamas to protect the area from oil drilling—particularly the beds of sea grass, which Nicklen dubs “the lungs of the Bahamas.” As Mit-

termeier said in the documentary, “The only way you can change the world is with stories.”

Mittermeier and Nicklen have figured out how to make the attention economy work for conservation. Nicklen tries to earn the trust of the people who follow him, before sharing the darker side of animal suffering.

“And it's by doing all the beautiful, engaging work, that you gain the trust of your audience,” says Nicklen. Then when he shares a heavy image, such as a starving polar bear or the slaughter of dolphins with drift nets off California—the audience is with him, because they trust him.

He posted a graphic, bloody image on social media of dolphins slaughtered in the Faroe Islands, which gained attention from celebrities like Tom Brady and Gisele Bündchen, ultimately drawing 110,000 comments. The rise of Instagram means they can “beat the drum everyday” as Nicklen puts it. There's no waiting for a magazine to publish.

While his photos sometimes show animals and the environment in peril, they also reflect his deep love for his subjects. Nicklen reviewed 2.5 million images to create his new book, *Reverence*, which he describes as a love letter to the planet.

“I think there's so many dark moments on my journey of seeing animals suffer, and that this book is just a love letter to



Nicklen spent six weeks in Africa earlier this year, taking photos and collaborating on conservation projects with local groups.

the planet and to the people of the planet to fall in love with Earth again and all these creatures and these habitats and these ecosystems.”

Our story shifts to the damp, moody beauty of the pristine Great Bear Rainforest, with moss carpeting the ground like green fairy hair. That’s where Paul Nicklen photographed a spirit bear, a rare subspecies of the black bear, with the help of Gitga’at guide Marven Robinson. The image of the giant bear landed on the cover of *National Geographic* in August 2011. The publicity, alongside with the work of the Gitga’at and Kitasoo/Xais’xais First Nations, helped put a pause on the Northern Gateway pipeline.

Nicklen recalls going to visit the Elder Helen Clifton, BSW ’93, of the Gitga’at Nation in Hartley Bay, where they sat down together. She held up the article and smiled and said, “We did this together.” He says remembering this story, and their success, sends chills down his spine. “It just feels so good to have somebody of such stature and respect in their community, such an Elder and a leader, and to know that I played a small role in that.”

For him, a powerful image needs to go on and work in service to the ecosystem forever. “So that’s what I am proud of. A lot of these images are really sort of representations or ambassadors of their habitat or ecosystems, and if you can protect a spirit bear and keep oil out of the area, you’re protecting every-

thing—from helping First Nations protect their land to all the creatures that live below the spirit bear—and around them.”

AT HOME IN NATURE

Collecting these wild stories has sometimes meant facing situations that would terrify most of us. Nicklen has been among thousands of bears, including being charged by a grizzly. A southern right whale, which is longer than a BC Transit bus, steamrolled him underwater. It was trying to shove him in the sand at 12 metres deep. “I think it was just playing,” he says.

He was attacked by a leopard seal in the Ross Sea in Antarctica, which he deems “a case of mistaken identity.” The seal had been looking for penguins. “And it came flying out of the water, and they knock them over like bowling pins, and so I had this 600-pound seal, approximately 20 miles an hour, fly out of the water and hit me in the face and just lay me out, knock me down, knock the air out of me. I was pretty banged up.” The seal instantly knew it had made a mistake, says Nicklen.

A curious four-metre-long tiger shark knocked his camera housing from his hands and tried to swim off with it. “It wasn’t trying to be malicious. What’s amazing for me about wildlife is all the mistakes I’ve made. I’ve made so many mistakes around them, and they’re so forgiving. These animals just they look at

The leopard seal that came flying at Paul Nicklen in the Ross Sea of Antarctica was likely trying to ambush some penguins to feed on. Nicklen has no hard feelings.



your stupidity, and they just sort of casually walk around you..." He believes no photo is worth stressing out an animal. Animals are very consistent and predictable in their behaviour, he observes—humans, not as much.

Nicklen is at home in nature, whether that's in BC's coastal ecosystems or walking in Antarctica among 400,000 king penguins.

"So, home is wherever I'm happy, and generally, I guess home for me is nature. Anywhere I'm in the world where I'm nature bathing, I'm surrounded by loons, bears, wolves howling, towering cedar trees, standing next to an iceberg or walking on the sea ice, I'm home."

He feels most lonely in hotel rooms, in big cities, after giving a talk. That's when he feels anxiety and fear creep in. "It's when I'm in nature, I'm never lonely. I always feel complete and full and satisfied and satiated and good."

He calls himself "semi-retired," though he just spent six weeks in Africa taking photos and doing conservation work. The late actor and activist Robert Redford had led them to the Africa project. Nicklen, also a videographer and pilot, is spend-



ing more time creating fine art, and has several shows coming up. His most recent expedition for SeaLegacy was to Indonesia.

"It's whatever feeds my soul, and that's why my new book coming out, *Reverence*, is a collection of 30 years of work, of my most emotive images that just really make me feel an emotional reaction, and I hope the reader does as well."

HOW TO HANG ON TO HOPE

Working on a story 25 years ago, he couldn't get one scientist to go on the record to say climate change was caused by humans. So, he takes heart from the little conservation wins as they happen. He just bought 700 acres in Africa to donate back to conservation and the animals. Mittermeier uses the analogy of a choir—when one singer tires, or is discouraged, another can take over so the conservation choir keeps singing.

He describes Mittermeier as a "one-woman wrecking crew." She is always willing to help and fight for a cause. "I'm so proud of her, and she's my biggest inspiration." They are involved with

This female polar bear peeked through, curious, while Nicklen was waiting out a blizzard in Svalbard, Norway.



over 300 other organization and initiatives. They lend their voice, their images, their power of storytelling.

“I think for me, like everybody, I feel the anxiety. I feel the fear, I feel the sadness, I feel the anger. When I watch the news and I hear what’s happening, but I also know that becoming paralyzed and doing nothing is the worst feeling in the world, because then the anxiety just rockets off the scale. And the only way to make a difference is to get involved in things that are important to you and when you start to see little wins it really helps with the anxiety.”

The two can deliver a social media punch with their combined followers of more than 10 million people. They often collaborate with other organizations and can help push an issue to the finish line faster, and they’ve helped move the needle on grizzly hunting, ghost nets harming dolphins and they kept oil out of the Lofoten region in Norway.

The couple have a home on Vancouver Island, where Nicklen is hanging out with their two dogs, whom he fondly calls “spoiled, entitled rescue brats” as the labs snooze near his feet on two circular beds. He wears a ball cap with a Canada maple leaf on the front and a zip-up fleece. His familiar photo “Face to



Face,” of a polar bear peeking in a cabin is visible—the only one he’s ever put on a wall.

“I’m proud of my pictures, but I don’t ever look at my pictures and go, wow, those are good... I think nature is perfect. It is so refined and it’s beautiful and powerful. And I think that all I’m doing is it trying to do it justice and capture it, and I often fail.”

The perfect day for him is a moment to slow down, breathe, look around and have gratitude. He does a hike every morning up a local mountain with the two dogs. He appreciates a

hammock, a book and a lake. Perhaps the tough kid raised on Baffin Island can sometimes take a moment or two of ease. He has a message for young people starting out.

“In life, we get so focused on charging ahead and achieving things. It’s so important to just to slow down and look backwards at the journey so far. It’s not a race. On your death bed, you’re not going to be surrounded by awards or money. You’ll be surrounded by friends and family and an amazing life lived. Hopefully at the top that list is going be where you’ve made this a better planet... It’s the purpose that’s going to feed your soul.” †



Pursuing the Truth

Kim Bolan is a fearless veteran news reporter, spending years digging into Canada's most thorny stories, including the aftermath of the Air India bombing and the roots of organized crime.

BY KATY DECOSTE, MA '22

Not long after joining the *Vancouver Sun* as a reporter, Kim Bolan took on a controversial story. A single mother had been stripped of her welfare benefits after going public about her decision to take on sex work to buy winter clothes for her kids. Her family could not survive on social assistance alone.

After interviewing the woman, Bolan wrote a story that ran on the *Sun's* front page. "The exposure and resulting political pressure led to a direct change for her and her life," says Bolan.

The mother's benefits were reinstated. Since joining the *Vancouver Sun* in 1984, Bolan, BA '81, has taken on tough stories. She's tackled in-depth, long-form investigations with serious political and social implications, including the bombing of Air India Flight 182. She followed the work by exploring the dangerous world of BC's gangs and criminal organizations.

The Air India bombing in 1985 was the worst terrorist attack in Canadian history, resulting in the death of all 329 people on board. Bolan's extensive reporting on the investigation in the 1990s led sources to come forward to the police and charges being laid—even though the accused were acquitted.

"The Air India bombing was a real milestone in my career, because I had done so much in-depth reporting that actually had some kind of impact on events that followed." But that impact brought risks. Bolan received death threats, and *Indo-Canadian Times* editor and publisher Tara Singh Hayer, whose work helped inform her own, was shot dead in his garage—a case that remains unsolved.

Since that landmark work, which culminated in Bolan's 2005 book, *Loss of Faith: How the Air India Bombers Got Away with Murder*, she's spent 15 years focusing on gang violence, "another

community issue,” as she describes it. “I wanted to find out what the genesis of this issue was, and find the problems with the way police investigate these cases.”

That work led her to become the 2023 Lieutenant Governor’s British Columbia Journalism Fellow. She spent months traveling and researching to complete a five-part series examining the effectiveness of Canada’s efforts to tackle organized crime.

Bolan’s goal with such complex subjects is for the public to understand them with more nuance and sympathy. For instance, she’s interested in how young people get involved in organized crime, sometimes recruited by higher-ups to do violent work. Bolan’s reporting examines how police and courts fail to investigate conspirators, instead focusing on the direct perpetrators of violence. “You see patterns. And you see that it’s not black and white, bad guys and good guys. The issues that have led to the place we’re at now are so much deeper, and there’s tragedy across the board. As long as it’s oversimplified, we won’t get real solutions.”

THE ROAD TO JOURNALISM

Bolan always wanted to help make change. As a teenager growing up in Courtenay on Vancouver Island, she tuned in to the Watergate hearings every day on television. “It was kind of amazing as a kid to see journalists having so much impact that they basically forced a United States president to resign,” she recalls.

Around that time, she started writing for Courtenay’s local paper, sending stories to *The Colonist*—a predecessor to *The Times Colonist*. The drafts, which she would type out after school, travelled on the bus from Courtenay to Victoria. Bolan continued her journalism journey at UVic, taking creative writing and English. “There was never another path that I was on,” she says. “It was this one. And many decades later, it continues to be this one.”

Bolan kept writing, working as a sports editor for *The Oak Bay Star* while attending UVic full time. She would spend Sundays going to sporting events, writing and taking photos, and learning all the terminology of whatever sport she was covering. She recalls developing film at 3 a.m., rushing home to sleep, and waking up a few hours later to make it to her classes. “That’s what you do when you’re young, right?” she jokes.

Her sense that journalism was an important, meaningful career was bolstered by influential instructors in the writing

department, including award-winning authors David Godfrey, who co-founded Canadian publisher House of Anansi, and Matt Cohen.

“At UVic, it was drilled into me that journalism was a rewarding, fulfilling career. It was treated as an honourable profession, which I believed at the time that it was, and which I still believe it is, despite all the pressures that journalism has been under for the last 20 years, if not longer.”

Bolan has won multiple accolades for her fearless reporting, including a lifetime achievement award from both World Press Freedom Canada and the Canadian Journalism Foundation, as well as the Charles Bury Award from the Canadian Association of Journalists, and a Webster Award for excellence in legal reporting. She is the first Canadian to earn the International Women’s Media Foundation Courage in Journalism Award.

JOURNALISM TODAY

Today, Bolan still believes that learning journalism is arguably more important than ever, even with all the obstacles deterring the kind of investigative work that she has built her career on. Understaffed newsrooms, decreased earning power and pressure to constantly produce daily stories can prevent journalists from reporting on long-term, in-depth investigations.

She also sees journalistic work as coming with a great deal of responsibility: “I’ve always felt that if I write someone’s story, which in itself can be traumatic, I have an obligation to follow up with them and stay in touch with them.” It’s a relationship. Bolan is still in contact with sources that she spoke to for her initial reporting on the Air India Bombing 40 years ago.

“You need to be curious, too. I always want to know more, I assume there is more to know,” she says. “Always ask some hard questions. We always say, there are no stupid questions in journalism.” She’s still drawn to shining light on dark places and trying and ignite real change in public issues.

As an instructor at Langara College, Bolan has thought a lot about what new journalists need to succeed. “Young journalists have to be a lot more creative and entrepreneurial than I ever was,” she reflects. “But it’s a big tent.” Journalists today are podcasters, filmmakers, beat reporters and long-form feature writers. “There are so many stories you can tell and ways you can tell them.” †



JAMES HAMILTON and his wife **JENNIFER** on their boat, the *MV Dirona*, in Barbados.

Hamilton!

UVic Computer Science alumnus **James Hamilton**, BSc '87, fed his dual passions by working as the top engineer for Amazon Web Services—while travelling the world by sea on a trawler yacht, the *MV Dirona*.

BY JENNY MANZER, BA '97

James Hamilton was always innately curious—and a little lucky, as least how he tells it. Growing up, he was sometimes cared for by his maternal grandmother who would allow him to take apart mechanical clocks. He recalls doing this with “great joy.”

“I have to admit, none of them got back together, but I totally learned a ton. It was a great experience,” says Hamilton.

Then, at age five, he experienced university for the first time. His mother worked, and his father was a student at the University of Oregon. Their solution for child care was to have the preschooler hang out at the campus—“the richest environment on Earth,” as Hamilton calls it. His father, who was earning a business degree, would arrange to reunite with him after the class bell.

“And I would meet people, like the computing centre would invite me in and show me changing tapes, and the student press would bring me in to watch them setting type for the student newspaper,” recalls Hamilton, his voice cracking with emotion at the memories.

“I had a physics professor just teaching me why it’s hard for a car to accelerate at more than one ‘G’ and why it’s possible that drag racers do that. What an environment! Some of the smartest people on Earth saying ‘Let’s see if we can teach this kid something.’ It was fun.”

So, that was also lucky. And an early sign that James Hamilton will always make the most of an opportunity to learn. That curiosity and drive to solve problems ultimately led him to become the Senior VP and Distinguished Engineer at Amazon, reaching a summit of cloud computing. Hamilton is recognized as an architect of the massive infrastructure that powers Amazon Web Services and keeps it running smoothly. In a LinkedIn post, one business connection referred to Hamilton as “the Mick Jagger of computing systems.”



Jennifer and James met at UVic while taking Computer Science.

FROM DROPOUT TO STAR STUDENT

But before all that, he would return to a university campus. His learning journey in enterprise software started at the University of Victoria’s Computer Science program. But it was not a straight line. Amazingly, Hamilton never completed high school. The rigid, rule-based style of learning just wasn’t for him.

By then, his family was living in Victoria, and after leaving high school he worked as a mechanic. Unlike his grandmother’s clocks, the cars did get put back together—with such competence that the teenaged Hamilton began working on imported cars like Lamborghinis and Maseratis.

His boss at Eurocar, Andrew Hagen, perceived his young employee’s vast potential. Hagen began collecting references on Hamilton’s behalf, telling him, “I’ll make sure you get in... You make sure you try hard.” So, Hamilton became a Computer Science student at UVic.

“It was a super transitional time for me. It almost brings tears to my eyes. Super important in my life. I didn’t actually finish high school. I’m going to university... I’ve never passed grade 11 math or grade 12 math. I’ve never done these things before,” he says, speaking from Amazon’s offices in downtown Seattle.

“So, I’m stepping into this computer science program. I’m taking first-year calculus, I’m taking algebra. And without the commitment of the professors around UVic to answer questions and provide a rich environment and challenge me, and be willing to work with me, no way would I have been as successful as I was, no way. My time at UVic was absolutely transformational.”

On campus, he discovered professors willing to let him follow his curiosity and to answer questions. He became a strong student, earning multiple A+ grades. He is grateful to all his professors. One was David Parnas, a pioneer in applying engineering principles to software—whom Hamilton was able to thank in person during a recent visit to Ottawa.

A FATEFUL ALGEBRA EXAM

At UVic, he realized he could learn and succeed. But something else seismic happened: he met Jennifer, who was also a Computer Science student. They had classes together and conversed occasionally. One morning, they both wrote an algebra exam.

“First-year algebra for someone that didn’t finish high school is totally challenging. And I *know* I passed that exam. I know I

James Hamilton gets some help from their cat in the navigation department.



did pretty well on that exam. And so, I'm just smiling ear-to-ear. So, I saw Jennifer at the bus stop, and I said 'Come on, let's go to the SUB pub.' So, we met with a bunch of my friends. I think it was about a 13-hour lunch or something like that. We left around one in the morning."

They've shared their lives ever since, including puzzling through engineering problems together. "Always and in incredible detail. We've done it for 44 years. Anything hard one of us is working on, the other one is poking and challenging and questioning and suggesting answers. It's been that way forever, and it's still that way today."

The two also fulfilled a dream to sail around the world in their single-engine yacht, the *MV Dirona*, a Nordhavn 52. They spent a decade on the sea while he continued to work as a top engineer at Amazon which, he admits, was difficult. He had pondered

leaving his post and even mentioned it to his CEO, but ended up continuing his duties with the help of onboard communications equipment. During that time, Hamilton only did three things: worked on engineering problems, fixed the boat and stood watch during the day—a necessity on the open ocean.

At a certain point in the Pacific, the demands of living on the sea were such that Jennifer, who also earned a Bachelor of Science from UVic in 1987, wound down her work to focus on boat duties—so they could live out their dream to travel.

"Because of the nature of the life that we've been leading for a long, long time, we like to jam a lot in. The two things we like to do, and we've always liked to do, are 1. Travel and 2. Work on engineering problems at work. I love both of those. Not a lot else fits. You've got to be selective when there's more to be done than there are hours in the day. That's basically what we do."

CALAMITY ON THE SEA

Hamilton loved the freedom and flexibility of life on the boat—being able to leave a location at 4 a.m., or decide to stay two weeks longer. Norway, with its mountains and fjords, was a particular favourite. But the voyage was not always smooth sailing.

He recalls one stormy night on the North Atlantic, travelling from Rhode Island to Ireland. The *MV Dirona* was about 1,200 km offshore. He was awakened by alarms going off. There was a massive leak. The engine room had two feet of water in it. The duo had to battle leaks and try to figure out the cause. "It's a long deal. It ends up being 11 hours before we had things under control again. And you know, 11 hours when you're in 20-foot seas and the boat is really active in a big storm. It was challenging."

Still, it was a short period of distress over a 10-year adventure. These days, the couple spends more time on land, living in a Seattle apartment. Hamilton can glimpse their home from his office at Amazon. "I'm now a block-and-a-half from work rather than halfway around the Earth," he muses.

Hamilton, who also earned a Master of Mathematics at Waterloo University in 1997, held positions at IBM and Microsoft before landing at Amazon, where he now works across the company. He spends his time on his own projects, advising on other endeavours in the company, or addressing specific problems the CEO brings to him.

He holds more than 200 patents. His most valued discoveries are the simple solutions that move the needle for customers—the

ones that seem obvious and cause people to ponder how it could even be a patent. “Of course, that’s the way you would do that. Those are the ones that are great. The ones that are ‘of course.’”

He’s not certain what it takes to be good at what he does. “Things that really help is curiosity, a real hunger to dig into details of everything around you. A drive for simplicity. And a commitment to find solutions that really make a difference for customers.”

SUPER CURIOUS, HUNGRY TO LEARN

A key step in his journey as a learner and engineer was his time at UVic. He deeply appreciates the influence of professors such as Ali Shoja, Pauline van den Driessche, Nigel Horspool, Michael Levy, Frank Ruskey and John Ellis.

“They spent time with me. Because I’m super curious, I’m super hungry to learn, they allowed me to take the education to a higher level... I always wanted to dig deeper, and these folks always had time to let me dig deeper with them,” he says. “It made a huge difference for me.”

Hamilton stresses that as a society, we’re on the cusp of great change and possibility.

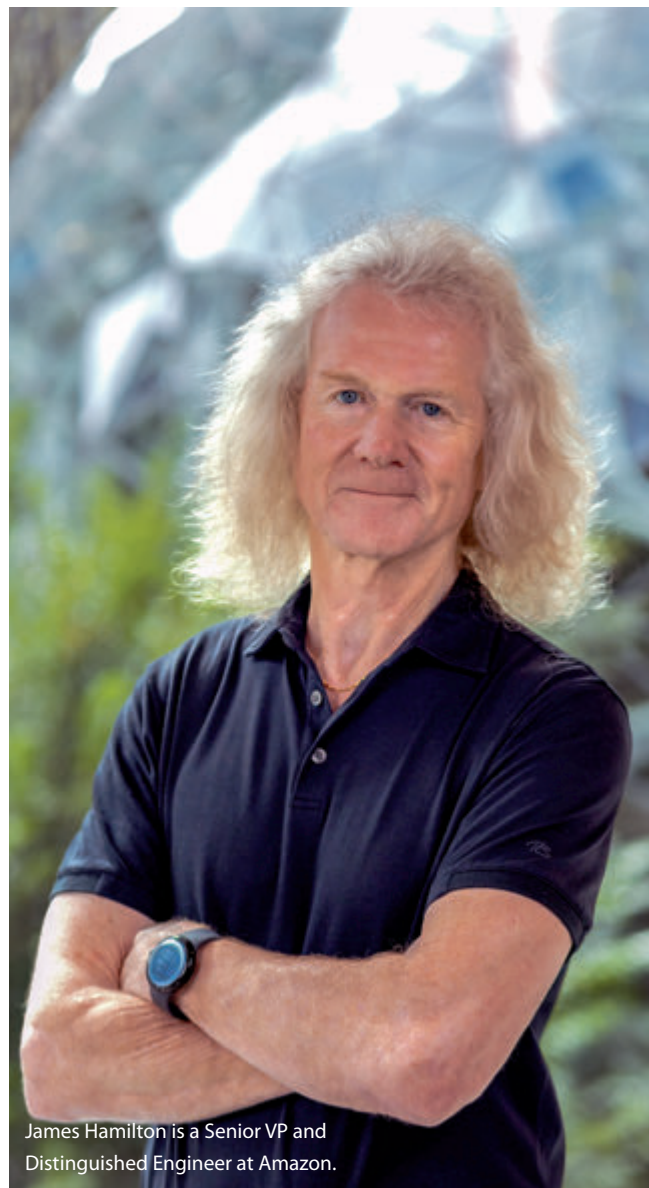
“We’re at a point in time where machine learning is changing pretty much every business on Earth. There’s innovation happening in insurance, in car sales, innovation happening in molecular investigations in bio pharma—across the board we’re at a time when there’s more change and more is possible than I’ve ever seen at any other time in my lifetime.”

Machine learning means everything is fluid and possible. “And by fluid, I mean you can actually make ideas happen in so many different domains so rapidly right now. At the same time, it’s super exciting, and also a little scary, because with great change comes sometimes surprising outcomes—and sometimes there’s things that need to be learned.”

Many innovations that have seemed unaffordable or too difficult are now looking possible, he adds. “We’re going to see more successful start-ups and more innovation. We’re going to see more change in the next five years than we’ve seen in the previous 50.”

His own personal mantra is simple: “Work with great people.”

“Some people work really hard to get titles and some people are really hungry for promotion or other advantages. I’m totally



James Hamilton is a Senior VP and Distinguished Engineer at Amazon.

convinced: work with great people, you end up delivering more, you end up learning more, you end up on more successful projects,” says Hamilton. “And every company on Earth loves hiring successful people. And so, work with great people and everything else follows.” †

Pitch Perfect

UVic social sciences grad, Vikes star, Olympian and activist **Pamphinette Buisa** fought her way back from the heartbreak of injury to make a new start playing pro rugby in the United Kingdom.

BY ANNE MACLAURIN, BA '91, CERT '00



PAMPHINETTE BUISA, representing Team Canada, tears down the field against France.

Pamphinette Buisa recalls being told at age three that she was “too loud” or “too much.” As a child growing up in Gatineau, Quebec, she was energetic and exuberant. She played sports, but it wasn’t until a coach suggested rugby that she found her true joy and calling. “My basketball high-school coach encouraged me to try rugby,” recalls Buisa. “In rugby, you are allowed to hit people.”

Buisa played basketball, volleyball and rugby in high school until her parents explained the practicality of choosing one sport. “We were not wealthy, not like some other athletes, so I picked rugby and sold T-shirts to pay for my first out-of-province trip,” says Buisa, who joined Quebec’s provincial team.

Buisa is now an elite rugby player as well as an Olympian, speaker, storyteller and media pundit. “With rugby I can bring my whole self—all of me can exist in the same place—the aggressive, the loud, the soft; I don’t have to shrink myself,”

says Buisa, speaking from Bristol, England, where she plays rugby professionally.

Her first ever plane trip was travelling to Vancouver for provincials, which were hosted by the University of British Columbia. “That trip opened my eyes to the potential of exploring the world with rugby,” she says.

While at UBC provincials, Buisa was scouted by Canada’s national team for the Youth Olympic Games in China. She flew again, this time across the world—an astounding opportunity. Suddenly, rugby had opened up Buisa’s life to travel and adventure.

LIFE, WORK AND SPORT AT UVIC

Buisa wanted to live on the West Coast, so she chose the University of Victoria to be part of the Vikes. “My time playing with the

Vikes was very foundational,” says Buisa. “So many memories and lifelong friends.” Buisa suited up for the Vikes for about a year before joining the national team.

Having grown up with a lack of Black female athletes as role models, Buisa was now able to be one herself. She was raised to be strong. Her parents grew up in the Democratic Republic of Congo, then lived in South Africa during Apartheid before immigrating to Canada. “I watched them overcome daily challenges. They taught me resilience, how to keep going.”

During her time at UVic, Buisa worked at the Alumni Relations office while studying Political Science with a minor in social justice. She quickly became a call-centre supervisor and taught other students how to fundraise. “I learned a lot about storytelling and what skills go into making connections with people over the phone in under seven minutes,” reflects Buisa.

After joining the national team, Buisa travelled extensively with Rugby Canada. “My political science degree took a bit longer to complete,” says Buisa. “I was emailing assignments from around the world, Dubai, Peru, wherever the team was playing.” Luckily, her professors were supportive.

ACTIVISM TAKES ROOT

As a university student and athlete, Buisa started to find her voice on social media while advocating for BIPOC rights on campus. After the pandemic postponed the 2020 Olympic Games and in the aftermath of George Floyd’s death, Buisa turned to organizing Black Lives Matter rallies in various cities across Canada. “Fighting racial injustice was a way to translate my academic learning into real life,” she says.

Buisa posted about a Black Lives Matter rally—her first—and over 2,000 people attended. When she used her platform to promote a second rally, 20,000 people showed up. Speaking with BBC Sport Today, she said, “I was dressed head-to-toe black, had my afro out, fist up, with all my people. It was so empowering.”

After Rugby Canada’s lacklustre performance in the 2020 Olympics, Buisa knew she needed to dig deep to find the confidence needed for the next international match—the 2025 World Cup.

Canada’s team trained hard in preparation, and Buisa was ready, but then in February 2025 she injured her wrist during the HSBC World Series Sevens tournament in Vancouver.

Undeterred, she tirelessly did her rehabilitation exercises. A week before the World Cup, during a practice match against Ireland, Buisa was hit hard in a tackle, this time injuring her shoulder. “I was ruled out—after all those months of rehab. It was devastating to miss the World Cup.”

BATTLING BACK FROM INJURY, AGAIN

Sidelined, Buisa turned to her Instagram platform posting about her injury, recovery and how she faces adversity. BBC Sport heard Buisa had been ruled out and contacted her about being a commentator for the 2025 World Cup. “It was a crazy position to be in,” she says. “I was the first Canadian who was also an active player to be a pundit for the World Cup match.”

Being a commentator helped her heal. “I had to think on the fly and look at the game in a different way. It was emotional not to be on the pitch, but I had to compartmentalize and focus on the analysis of the game.” The BBC had over six million viewers for the World Cup—so she started in the deep end.

“I found a new respect for broadcasting; the preparation reminded me of high-performance sport, all the work happens beforehand,” says Buisa. “No one sees what goes on behind the scenes.”

In an historic win, Canada beat New Zealand in the semi-final of the 2025 World Cup. This was a landmark victory ending New Zealand’s reign as world champion, and it secured Canada a spot in the World Cup final.

“Our win against New Zealand was one of the happiest days of my life, even though I was on the sideline. I found another platform—a sports commentator—to highlight elite women’s rugby.”

A NEW START IN BRISTOL

For Buisa, rugby is the only sport in which she can be her true self: confident, aggressive, joyful. “Rugby is an inclusive sport. It requires all sorts of body types to work. Every position requires something unique,” she observes.

After playing for Rugby Canada for over a decade, Buisa recently made a leap across the pond to join UK’s Bristol Bears. “I have played for Canada for 11 years; it was time to get outside my comfort zone. Choosing a new country and a new team is deeply challenging, but I wanted to try living in Europe.”

Buisa is now connecting with her new team and exploring Bristol’s history. As she trains with the Bristol Bears, she has set her sights on the 2027 World Cup and the 2028 Olympics.

During this new chapter, Buisa is developing her identity as a speaker, organizer and media commentator. Her Instagram feed is rich with inspirational and motivational videos.

She remembers the day a sports agent told her, “You are not marketable.” In an Instagram post, Buisa told her followers: “I believed him. For months. Not because he was right—but because I let one person’s opinion become the story I told myself. Here’s what I learned: The problem isn’t what they say. It’s how fast we believe them. Who are you still trying to prove wrong?” †

Lessons in Chemistry

UVic researcher and associate professor **David Leitch** is inventing new chemistry to create drugs and medicines more efficiently and with less waste.

BY MICHAEL KISSINGER, BED '94

David Leitch is a tall, energetic man with an easy smile and the horn-rimmed glasses of a classic movie scientist. He's a gamer, a musician, a dad and a chemist—but at his core, he's also something else important. He learned from great teachers and that, in part, lead him to decide to be one.

As a researcher and Associate Professor of Chemistry at the University Victoria, Leitch leads ground-breaking work in chemical synthesis that aims to revolutionize how molecules are made and lead to breakthroughs in the production of life-saving drugs and medicines.

As an educator, he's training future scientists. And like many of his students likely will, he credits a handful of teachers and mentors—two UVic grads in particular—for activating his interest in chemistry.

CHEMICAL REACTION

Leitch's journey began in the mid-Island fishing and logging town of Port Alberni. His father had studied chemistry in university and worked at the local pulp and paper mill doing various chemistry-related jobs before shifting to an occupational health and safety role. However, it was a grade 12 class, taught by UVic chemistry grad Brent Clark, BSc '91, that firmly set Leitch down a scientific path.

"He was really excellent, super enthusiastic and steered quite a few of us into chemistry," Leitch says. "[In fact], there are four tenured Canadian faculty in chemistry that were within a two-year span of each other from Alberni District Secondary School, and I think it was all because of that high-school teacher."

After graduating, Leitch headed for the mainland where he played in an indie rock band called the Hotel Lobbyists, sharing stages with the likes of the Pack A.D. and Japandroids. At the same time, he also earned a Bachelor of Science and PhD from the University of British Columbia, where another UVic grad proved pivotal in his scientific development—Dr. Laurel Schafer, PhD '99.



DAVID LEITCH is an Associate Professor of Chemistry at the University Victoria.

Leitch did his undergraduate research in inorganic chemistry and later his PhD under the direction of Schafer, a UVic alum award recipient and the current head of UBC's Department of Chemistry. The crux of his studies focused on molecular structure—how chemical bonds are formed, their composition and how that influences how they react.

STRIVING TO CUT CHEMICAL WASTE

After UBC, Leitch criss-crossed the continent working for the pharmaceutical industry in the field of chemical synthesis—investigating new molecules and ways of making those molecular structures more efficiently and with less waste.

"A good analogy is we're constructing a building—that's molecular architecture," Leitch says.

What goes into constructing a building isn't just the finished product, he explains. It's also all the unseen things that go into the construction—the labour, the tools, the fuel for those tools. But in chemical synthesis, most of those tools can't be re-used or reclaimed. "It's not like we can say, 'Well, we're done using the crane for the day, we're going to send it back.' This stuff all becomes chemical waste."

Leitch says the amount of waste in the pharmaceutical industry is particularly high.

“It’s like 500 to one even at the best of times. For every kilo of a drug, there is 500 kilos or more of waste. And one of the reasons is that these are incredibly complex molecular structures.”

The processes to create these molecular structures, he adds, require a significant amount of water and other chemicals—all byproducts that become waste.

NEW CHEMISTRY, MORE SUSTAINABLE MEDICINE

In 2019, Leitch returned to Vancouver Island with his wife and son to teach and lead research teams at the University of Victoria.

He describes his team as “chemical cartographers, striving to map and understand chemical reaction space in the realm of organic synthesis and catalysis.”

A current focus of his research is how to get better efficiency out of precious metal additives, known as catalysts—key components of the overall building process that are not incorporated in the final structure. “These are like the little bit of cayenne pepper that you put in a recipe, and if you don’t put it in it’s just not the same,” Leitch says.

“In our case, we put in small amounts of these things that contain metals like palladium, platinum, iridium—super rare, incredibly expensive precious metals that are critical to make the chemical reactions that we want to do actually happen.”

One of truisms of chemical synthesis, Leitch says, is that the more chemical steps you have, the more reactions are needed, and the more waste it creates.

“One of the things that we need to really move the needle, especially on some of these pharmaceutical processes, is we need to invent new chemistry. New chemical reactions, new ways of putting atoms together to make those desired molecules at the end. And we need to develop new tools, like catalysts... Developing new chemistry means we can reduce the number of steps by doing more complicated bond forming processes.”

Leitch says the potential real-world impacts of his research is more sustainable and economic production of medicines. In a nutshell: it could bring down the price of medicines, and the production of these medicines will have less negative impact on the environment.

GLOBAL IMPACT

Since coming to UVic, wherever Leitch’s research has gone, accolades have followed. In 2025, he received a prestigious Dorothy Killam Fellowship for exploring a new approach to platinum group metal catalysts to develop medicine without depleting non-renewable resources. The award is given to lead-

ing researchers “whose ground-breaking, best-in-class research stands to have significant impact on a national or global scale.”

The same year, he was recognized with a REACH Award for Early Career Excellence in Research, the Keith Fagnou Award from the Canadian Society of Chemistry and the Faculty of Science Excellence in Research Award. In 2023, he received a Cottrell Scholar Award and was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure. Leitch is also one of only a handful of Canadians to hold funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In addition to a curious and analytical mind, a collaborative approach is essential to his work and success, Leitch says.

“You don’t need to become a deep expert in all the things that your group does. It’s not incumbent upon the laboratory director to know absolutely everything. Part of this training process is to get your group members, your students and researchers, comfortable to the point where they can start running ahead of you. If I had to have everything in my head, I don’t think we would be able to do half of what we do.”

TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION

When he’s not poring over data or deep in the molecular weeds of creating new chemistry, Leitch likes to dust off his guitar and jam with his teenage son, who’s “getting really good,” he says. He also likes to play old video games from the NES (Nintendo Entertainment System) era such as Sonic the Hedgehog, Super Mario and the Mega Man series.

“I tend to get a little motion sick with a lot of the modern over-the-shoulder sort of games. So, there’s a nostalgia and a Zen to it.”

Chemistry, however, is never far from his mind.

“From a purely selfish perspective, I like puzzles and I like figuring out things that are mysterious and unclear,” he says. “My group and I spend a lot of time looking at lots of scientific data and trying to puzzle out what could be going on. The best results are the ones where ‘this did something weird and I don’t understand why.’ I love that kind of stuff.”

Although much of his work concerns efficiency and economy, reducing steps and minimizing waste, there is one byproduct of Leitch’s research that he whole-heartedly welcomes—a new generation of scientists.

“What really brought me back into academia is that I really like teaching, and I like training researchers how to be scientists,” he says. “We publish papers, we get awards, we give talks, but really the main research output that we put out are trained scientists. Seeing folks develop from pretty green, first-year graduate students or undergraduates who maybe don’t even know what a research lab is to being able to design their own studies and research questions by the end is the most rewarding part.” ¶

UVIC



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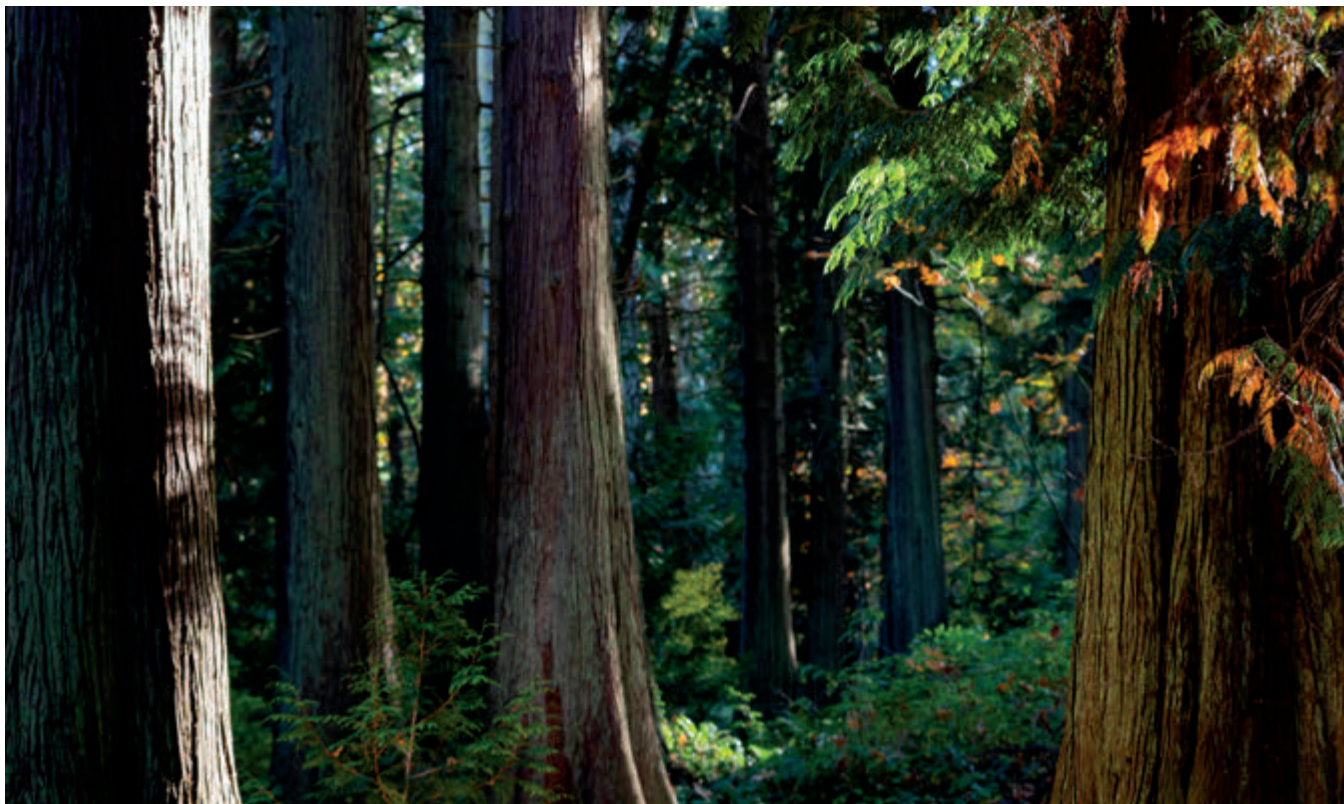
CONTINUING STUDIES @UVIC

UVIC

Nature as Healing

Certified forest-therapy guide **Nadia Frost** touts the health benefits of branching out and taking a forest bath.

BY JENNY MANZER, BA '97



Name: Nadia Frost

Expert in: Forest therapy

UVic degree: BCom '02

Other degrees: Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology from Yorkville University, 2018

Current job: Certified forest-therapy guide, trail consultant and registered psychotherapist

What do you want people to understand about forest therapy?

Forest therapy feels like coming full circle: we're using science to validate healing practices that Indigenous communities never needed to question. While we celebrate the Japanese term *Shinrin-yoku* (meaning bathing in the essence of the forest) and the research that has scientifically validated nature's healing properties, it's important to recognize that Indigenous communities worldwide have been practising nature-based healing for millennia. Today's forest-therapy practice represents a rediscovery and validation of these Indigenous practices through a scientific lens.

Forest therapy is also one of the most rapidly growing fields in the world. PaRx Canada is an initiative of the BC Parks Foundation and driven by healthcare professionals to improve patients by connecting them to nature (parkprescriptions.ca). Any healthcare professionals, including psychotherapists, can become a prescriber and give their clients access to free or discounted nature partners across Canada, including Parks Canada, the Toronto Zoo, Victoria Butterfly Gardens and more.

What benefits will people experience when engaging with forest therapy?

Time in nature always forms part of my treatment plan with my clients and they consistently report feeling less anxious and less tired when they start spending

more time outside. Overall, immersing yourself in nature can help reduce stress, lower blood pressure and boost the immune system by exposing the body to phytoncides, natural compounds released by trees. My ultimate goal with encouraging people to spend time in forests is to help them foster a deeper connection with nature and in doing so, making sure they take care of it.

How should people get started?

Go outside, sit by a tree, focus on what you see, what you hear, what you smell. Touch the ground, touch the tree. Stay put for a little while. Repeat. You can also find a trail close to home and walk along the trail slowly, noticing details you might not see if your goal was to get your heart rate up. Slowing down tells your nervous system that you are safe and it will help you feel more relaxed. In that state, you will better benefit from what nature has to offer.

What do the studies tell us about this approach?

Thousands of studies have been conducted on nature-based therapies with a strong focus on forest therapy (*Shinrin-yoku* or forest bathing). The studies show that forest therapy will reduce stress (by reducing cortisol concentration in the body), boosts immunity (by increasing natural killer cells in the body) and improve mental health, such as decreasing symptoms of depression and anxiety, reducing feelings of anger and improving fatigue and concentration (subjective reports from thousands of participants).

What are some dos and don'ts of forest therapy?

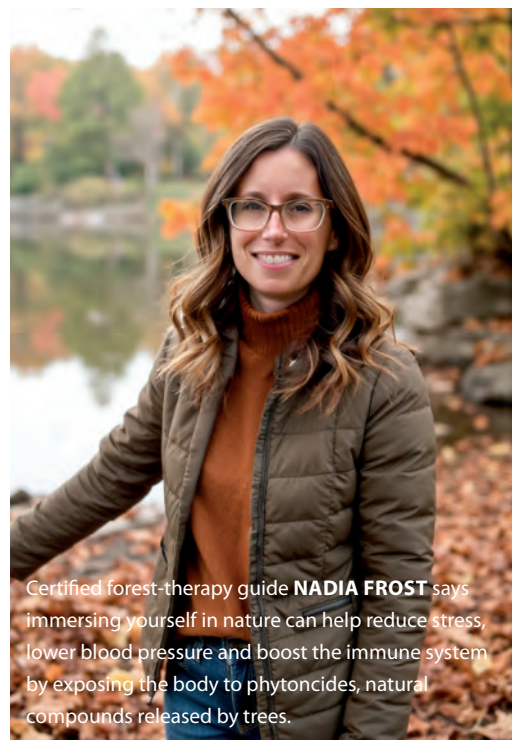
I have had to review my answer to this recently as I headed to the forest with my dog. There are a few wrong ways to do forest therapy. My dog, Cedar, is the not the best trained Labrador in the world and he pulls me in multiple directions. I could let him guide me, but he does not usually want to stay on the trail. If you want to head out with your dog, find a trail that allows dogs to be off leash and notice the dog having fun as part of your mindfulness practice.

You also don't want to choose a terrain that is too challenging, but if that is what you have, I suggest keeping the distance short and stopping often to notice. If heading out with a friend, you just have to communicate with them that you are both going to have moments of silence where you will be focused on your environment and not on each other.

You can start with a sit spot, the action of simply sitting in one spot somewhere in nature (while making sure you protect yourself from ticks), and noticing what is around you. I would also recommend that you find a guide in your area to benefit from being guided and experience it as part of a group.

If you could suggest one first step for people who are experiencing burnout and anxiety—what would you say?

As a psychotherapist, my first go-to tool for my clients is to start living more in the present by taking 30-second micro-moments to focus on your breathing or focusing on one of your five senses and repeating several times a day. This practice can be done anywhere and anytime! This practice can also lead you to



Certified forest-therapy guide **NADIA FROST** says immersing yourself in nature can help reduce stress, lower blood pressure and boost the immune system by exposing the body to phytoncides, natural compounds released by trees.

spending less time on your phone during the in-between moments of your day.

What are some of your favourite places to practise forest therapy?

- Hilton Falls at Conservation Halton in Milton, Ontario
- High Park in Toronto
- Etobicoke Creek trails in Toronto
- Pacific Spirit Park in Vancouver and the trails in North Vancouver
- Vallée du bras du Nord in St-Raymond, Québec, where I grew up

More info: Find my website at wanderoots.com, Instagram at [@wanderootscom](https://www.instagram.com/wanderootscom) or on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/in/nadia-frost-corporate-wellness/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/nadia-frost-corporate-wellness/). Check out the Nature and Forest Therapy Canada website to find a guide in your area or get more information: natureforesttherapycanada.org. 🌲

Playing Patient

Theatre grad **Laura Anne Harris**, BFA '07, has a thriving career as a “simulated patient,” helping train medical professionals to be better, more caring healthcare workers.

BY JOHN THRELFALL, BA '96



LAURA HARRIS has used her acting chops to help train hundreds of medical professionals in Canada and the US.

“A good simulated patient tends to be quite normal, benign and grounded—but you also need to be able to access your emotions pretty freely, because there are times when you have to get really upset.”

Name: Laura Anne Harris

UVic degree: BFA in Theatre (acting specialty), 2007

Other degrees: MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia

Current role: Simulated Patient; Sensitive Exam Teaching Associate. By accurately simulating specific symptoms of medical situations like appendicitis, cancer, stroke recovery or bipolar psychosis, her experience as an actor helps to train hundreds of medical professionals in Canada and the US, where she now lives.

Other roles: Known for her creative work as a playwright, director and actor through solo shows like *Pitch Blonde* and *The Homecoming*.

How did you end up becoming a professional patient?

I actually got into it through word-of-mouth: I was doing murder-mystery dinner theatre with a friend in Toronto who knew a company that was looking for new “patients.” I needed a side gig while I was auditioning and acting, and it opened up a whole world for me. I’ve been doing it for about 14 years, and right now it’s about 75 per cent of my acting work. I love doing it!

How many different medical situations have you simulated?

Hundreds! Anxiety, delirium, depression, lupus, mania, STIs, alcohol withdrawal, bipolar psychosis, heart conditions, skin conditions, suicidal ideation... any sort of ailment you can think of, and many very strange ones I don’t ever remember the names of. I’ve also worked with

chiropractors and nurses for insurance companies and educational programs where we were acting as parents at PTA meetings or doing parent-teacher interviews. One school even had people doing simulations with a priest—which I didn't get to do, but would have been really interesting!

What does it take to be good at what you do? And how does it all actually work?

You don't have to be an actor to do this job, but it's better if you are because you can create better simulations. It feels like film work in the way you perform; it's actually some of the most grounded acting I've ever done.

There are many different ways to learn a case. We work from scripts or rehearsal videos—which can include prompts, background information or describe your position on the bed or in the room—and preparation can take as little as 30 minutes or as much as three hours. Timing varies from 15- to 45-minute in-person sessions to one-hour online sessions. Other times it's a full day where I'm getting a series of simulated vaccines or IVs, doing heart or lung exams, checking for edema... it depends on the learning objectives. A lot of it is focused on improving diagnosis, medical skill sets and a doctor's ability to communicate.

Because this falls under the applied or educational theatre umbrella, you have to really understand improvisation: you need to be comfortable with thinking on your feet and going with the flow because you're working with learners who could do things that are not in the script. A good simulated patient tends to be quite normal, benign and grounded—but you also need to be able to access your emotions pretty freely, because there are times when you have to get really upset.

What's the hardest part of this kind of work? Conversely, what's the most rewarding part?

The biggest challenge is maintaining your character. If, like me, you're doing a lot of different sims in one week, you can get your wires crossed, which can be very difficult. And it can really be draining to play the same patient all day, so you need to pace yourself.

The best part for me is the feedback sessions after the simulations, which I approach from an active-learning perspective: Did you have any goals coming in? What did you find particularly challenging? I want the learners to feel good about how they communicate with their patients. They need to realize they're going to meet all types of people from all walks of life and must be prepared for that. There's a lot of negative aspects of the healthcare profession, but we're trying to make positive change—which is a wonderful thing. It can really be amazing and quite rewarding to be part of their learning.

When you were in theatre school, did this ever come up as a professional option?

Well, there's that famous episode of *Seinfeld* where Kramer is a simulated patient in a wacky situation with a group of student doctors—but otherwise, no, I'd never really heard of it before.

Has doing this changed the way you experience being an actual medical patient yourself?

Absolutely! I always have a checklist of things I'm going to talk about with my doctor. I'll be as prepared as I think *they* should be, which I don't think most people do. I also teach



gynecological exam techniques, so I've given notes about that in real time, too: I've had that experience where I've said, "OK, I'm going to give you some notes about how that went..." which is hilarious! For that work, we're called Sensitive Exam Teaching Associates, and we get trained very specifically on this kind of trauma-informed and gender-affirming care.

What's next? What do you still want to accomplish?

I'm currently working on two new scripts and co-writing a screenplay. In terms of this career, I hope to keep doing it: since simulated patients are all ages, there's no generational gap. It's a great working environment and I feel really blessed to be working in this field! †

Outstanding Grads Honoured

Recipients and supporters gathered at the Victoria Conference Centre event in March.

PHOTOS BY ARMANDO TURA



Recipients of the ᐃᐃᐃᐃ ᐃᐃᐃᐃ ᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃ | SIÁMĆĚĚ | 2026 Distinguished Alumni Awards gathered on stage at the Victoria Conference Centre.

In March, recipients of the ᐃᐃᐃᐃ ᐃᐃᐃᐃ ᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃ | SIÁMĆĚĚ | 2026 Distinguished Alumni Awards were celebrated at a reception held at the Victoria Conference Centre.

Go to uvic.ca/alumni or scan the QR code to read profiles of each recipient.



This year's award recipients are:

PRESIDENTS' ALUMNI AWARDS

- Richard Brown, BSc '70
- Bruce McKean, BA '70
- Justice Scott Morishita, JD '05
- Luc Simard, PhD '96

EMERGING ALUMNI AWARDS

- Kyle Empringham, MBA '24
- Patrick Makokoro, Dip '16, PhD '21
- Harsh Rathod, PhD '20
(could not attend the reception)
- Karolina Valente, PhD '20

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ALUMNI AWARDS

- Patricia Barkaskas, BA '05
- Yataltenat, Kelley McReynolds, MSW '22
- Sqwulutsultun, William Yoachim, BSW '06



Emerging Alumni Award recipient **KYLE EMPRINGHAM**.



Presidents' Alumni Award recipient **LUC SIMARD**.



Emerging Alumni Award recipient **PATRICK MAKOKORO** and his son are all smiles.



Presidents' Alumni Award recipient **BRUCE MCKEAN** (second from left) with his family.



Indigenous Community Alumni Award recipients **SQWULUTSULTUN, WILLIAM YOACHIM; YATALTENAT, KELLEY MCREYNOLDS; and PATRICIA BARKASKAS**.



Emerging Alumni Award recipient **KAROLINA VALENTE**.



Uvic Acting President Qwul'sih'yah'maht Robina Thomas presents Justice **SCOTT MORISHITA** his Presidents' Alumni Award certificate.



Uvic Associate University Librarian, Reconciliation Ry Moran, Uvic Acting President Qwul'sih'yah'maht Robina Thomas and Presidents' Alumni Award recipient **RICHARD BROWN**.

The Family that Gives Together

The inspiration for the Arscott family scholarship was generations in the making.

BY SARAH TARNOPOLSKY



The Arscott family gathers by the University Club after finalizing the details for the Arscott Family Fund Scholarship.

DOUG and **DAAN ARSCOTT**, BSc '19 and MBA '22, father and son, share the same values when it comes to charitable giving. Doug and his wife Joyce purposefully included their son in philanthropic decision-making, and this became more formalized when Doug and Joyce created a family foundation.

“My entire upbringing my parents were always talking about giving back, and we are very fortunate to be able to do that, so I think it’s our duty to find those opportunities,” says Daan. “The start of the family foundation was really this solidification... that this is a priority for the Arscott family.”

The family’s philanthropy is focused on issues they collectively care about, including education, health and the environment. But the idea for the Arscott scholarship at UVic germinated two generations earlier in the family, in the mind of Doug’s late father, Eric.

ERIC’S STORY

Born in Jamaica, Eric immigrated to Canada in his 20s, with little to his name other than a strong ambition to make something of himself in what he saw as a land of opportunity. His formal education had ended at high school, but he was a lifelong learner who always believed in the power of education. Eric was well read and loved to travel, which led to passionate discussions on a variety of subjects. He was known to open these discussions by quipping, “I wonder what world problem we are going to solve today?”

The inspiration for setting up a university award came from one of Eric’s mentors in the insurance business. Throughout his life, this mentor supported young adults to further their education. When his mentor died, Eric was impressed by how many of these graduates attended his funeral. That’s when Eric resolved to create a similar legacy with his own savings.

THE UVIC CONNECTION

Eric’s grandson Daan is one of the first in his family to complete a university degree. As captain of the UVic Vikes men’s rowing team, Daan’s time at UVic centred around training, competition, friends and community.

Daan met his wife, **SHAYNA ARSCOTT (PLOTNIKOFF)**, BEd '19, shortly after completing his degree in geography, and later returned to UVic for his MBA. Ten years later, he maintains a deep connection to the rowing program and keeps in touch with rowing coach Aalbert Van Schothorst. Daan, Shayna, Doug and Joyce contribute to Vikes Giving Day and Vikes Championship Breakfast to help keep the program competitive and inclusive.

GRANDPA’S LEGACY

Eric passed away in January of 2022 at the age of 94. While he was getting his affairs in order, he shared with Doug that his last wish was to create an Arscott family scholarship.

“I kept reassuring my dad we would organize things,” Doug says. “He asked me, ‘Can you imagine one day there’ll be all these Arscott scholars?’ I told him, ‘Dad, this is going to happen.’” Perhaps Eric was thinking back to his mentor’s funeral, imagining the line of graduates, supported by him, stretching far into the future.

Within two years of Eric’s death, the family had established the award at UVic. As with all foundation decisions, Doug, Joyce, Daan and Shayna all contributed to the terms of the award, aligning with Eric’s wishes. The Arscott Family Fund Scholarship is an endowed, renewable award that supports a student through each year of their degree, totaling \$30,000. One requirement of the scholarship application is a 500-word essay on “the value of education.”

“This scholarship is Eric’s legacy,” says Doug. “He hoped that this award will encourage students with great aspirations to always think about the broader impact they can have on others. And who knows? Maybe they’ll solve a couple of the world’s problems along the way.” †

Class Notes

News and photos from around the alumni world

1960s

UVic grad **STEVE STARK**, BA '68, has released *Black and White Are Colours Too: A Photo Journey Vol 2*. The book contains 63 black and white photographs taken in 25 countries, plus Antarctica.



STEVE STARK

Stark retired to Nanoose Bay on Vancouver Island with his wife, Mary, in 2014 after practising law in Vancouver for 40 years. Having beat cancer for the second time, Stark is donating all proceeds from the sale of his book to BC Cancer.

1970s

DIANA HAYES, BA '78, published two books in late 2025.



DIANA HAYES

In the novella *Looking for Cornelius* (Wipf & Stock/Resource Publications), Hayes explores her Irish ancestry and the music and mythology of Ireland. UVic professor emeritus Bill Gaston writes: "Diana Hayes's graceful poetic touch serves this novella well. Haunted by ancestral presence, rich with lore and magic, like the Irish language itself, *Looking for Cornelius* sings."

Hayes's eighth book of poetry, *Hawking the Surf* (Silver Bow Publishing), draws from her mid-1970s journals and correspondence with her former instructor and mentor, the late Charles M. Lillard. The poetry explores her deep immersion in West Coast seascapes and mythology, and the book includes 16 of her monochrome photographs.

UVic grad **MARILYN MCCRIMMON (MCCALL)**, BSc '75, Dip. Ed '78, MA '78, has reprinted her first book, *Custodian of Yellow Point: The Biography of Gerry Hill*, for a second time. This third edition features new material and new photos and is available at three Victoria bookstores—Munro's, Bolen Books and Russell Books—as well as Yellow Point Lodge on Vancouver Island. McCrimmon enjoyed a satisfying career as a secondary school counsellor in the Victoria School District, with some time-outs to work in the counselling departments of both Camosun College and UVic. At the same time, she has had a busy freelance career, writing

newspaper and magazine articles as well as two books. She has established two bursaries at UVic in gratitude for the degrees that led to such a fulfilling and rewarding career.

1990s

Congratulations to **KAREN SOLIE**, MA '95, the winner of the 2025 Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry for her book *Wellwater*. If that weren't enough, Solie was named co-winner of the 2025 Forward Prize for Poetry. The award annually honours new poetry published in the UK and



KAREN SOLIE

Ireland by emerging and established poets. *Wellwater* explores the intersection of cultural, economic and personal ideas of value, while also addressing themes of aging, housing and environmental and economic crises.

NITA SENGUPTA, BA '98, has been named a finalist for the 2026 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching. Selected from nearly 600 nominations, Sengupta is one of only 30

educators recognized this year for the impact they are making in their classrooms and communities. Sengupta, who teaches grades six through eight



NITA SENGUPTA

at Chicago's Salazar Elementary Bilingual Center, brings mathematics to life through hands-on, real-world application. This year, Sengupta's students organized a fundraising initiative to support cleft-lip surgeries for children in South America. They applied ratios and proportional reasoning to manage sales, calculate profit margins and fundraising totals, and use statistical tracking to monitor progress. More information at goldenapple.org.

BOBBY ROSS, BSc '96, has been inducted into the North American Indigenous Athletic Hall of Fame. Ross was the first Indigenous athlete to gain world recognition as a leading player on the Canadian men's national rugby team. A proud member of the Songhees Nation, Ross has been honoured with inductions into the BC Rugby Hall of Fame (2019), Victoria Sports Hall of Fame (2020) and Rugby Canada



WENDY DONAWA

and museum curator. Returning to her Victoria birthplace, she turned to poetry. *The Time of Falling Apart* (Harbour Publishing, 2025) is her third poetry collection. According to the publisher, “In a voice that shifts from ironic and quirky to contemplative and speculative, *The Time of Falling Apart* follows the poet through the inevitable passage of memory and time, and a search for meaning in a world rife with injustice.” More information at harbourpublishing.com.

2010s

MIREILLE (Mimi)

LAMONTAGNE graduated from UVic’s Cultural Resource Management program in the Faculty of Fine Arts, 2011, with a professional specialization in Cultural Sector Leadership from the Faculty of Public



MIREILLE LAMONTAGNE

Administration. She recently received a Governor General’s Award in History in the category of Community Engagement for her work on the Dawson Trail Arts and Heritage Tour. Lamontagne served as researcher and curator on the project, which was sponsored by the Dawson Trail Museum and project managed by Pierrette Sherwood, a Red River Métis artist.

The Dawson Trail Arts and Heritage Tour follows the historic Dawson Road, a 19th-century route linking what is now Winnipeg to northwestern Ontario. A central focus of the project was reframing the historical narrative to reflect Indigenous and Métis perspectives, in keeping with principles of truth and reconciliation.

UVic double grad and fire ecologist Dr. **KIRA HOFFMAN**, BSc ’12, PhD ’18, was recently honoured as one of the *National Geographic* 33, a list of changemakers from around the globe who are making the world a better place. Earning her PhD in Environmental Studies, Dr. Hoffman’s work brings together science and Indigenous knowledge through collaborating with First Nations in Northern BC on prescribed and cultural fire research. Through projects like Fighting Fire with Food with the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, a three-year long research project about restoring food and medicinal plants with cultural fire in partnership with the Gitanyow Nation, Dr. Hoffman is leading change in ecosystem resilience, food security and community

well-being. More at nationalgeographic.com.

QUILL CHRISTIE-PETERS, MA in Indigenous Governance 2017, recently published the book *On Wholeness: Anishinaabe Pathways to Embodiment and Collective Liberation*. Through reflections on childbirth, parenting, creative practice and expansive responsibility, Christie-Peters explores how reconnecting with the body can be an act of resistance and healing. She shows that wholeness—despite pain and displacement—is not just possible but essential for liberation, not only for



QUILL CHRISTIE-PETERS

Indigenous people but for all of us. An Anishinaabe educator and self-taught visual artist from Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation located in Treaty 3 territory, Christie-Peters has spoken at Stanford University, the University of Toronto and California College of the Arts. She is also a mother, beadwork artist and traditional tattoo practitioner.

EVA JEWELL (MA in Indigenous Governance program, 2012) has been named as the 2026-27 Distinguished Visiting Indigenous Faculty Fellow at University of Toronto’s Jackman Humanities Institute. Jewell’s award-winning

research supports Anishinaabe community reclamation movements of culture, language and governance. Her multi-year, co-authored Calls to Action monitoring advocated for higher standards of accountability in Canada’s reconciliation practices. Her current work blends critical



EVA JEWELL

Anishinaabe perspectives on concepts of care with anti-colonial practices and reclamation of original Indigenous worlds. She is an Associate Professor in the sociology department at Toronto Metropolitan University.

ANNICK MACASKILL, MA’10, was shortlisted for the J.M. Abraham Atlantic Poetry Award and the Maxine Tynes Nova Scotia Poetry Award for her fourth collection of poetry, *Votive* (Gaspereau Press). The book is a follow-up to MacAskill’s Governor General’s Award-winning collection *Shadow Blight* (Gaspereau Press, 2022). Her short story “Best” also received an honourable mention at the 2025 National Magazine Awards.

Creative Writing grad **PORTIA ELAN**, MFA ’13, has released her debut novel *Homebound* (Simon & Schuster). *Homebound* is the story of a queer teen in the ’80s

and the computer game she writes that echoes 600 years into the future. Writer Emma Donoghue describes it as “a fascinatingly plausible and atmospheric story of a future



PORTIA ELAN

shaped by tech and love intertwined.” More info at simonandschuster.ca.

In April, members of the UVic community Amanda Farrell-Low and **STEPHANIE HARRINGTON**, MFA '17, launched *Naming A Crisis*, a multimedia installation marking 10 years since BC's declaration of a public-health emergency related to the toxic drug crisis. The exhibition, which was held at the Victoria Arts Council space in the Bay Centre, featured art, photography, participatory



**Amanda Farrell-Low and
STEPHANIE HARRINGTON**

works, speaking events and workshops. Farrell-Low and Harrington co-facilitate a grief group for people who have lost siblings to substance use-related

harms. Harrington, who's also a frequent contributor to *Torch* magazine, recently won the *Malahat Review's* 2026 Open Season Award for creative nonfiction for her piece “Chimera,” which addresses the loss of a loved one during the pandemic. †

What's New With You?

Be in the next *Class Notes*.
Send news and photos to:
torch@uvic.ca

Farewells

ROBERT “Bruce” DUTTON passed away July 10, 2025, in Victoria. Bruce was born in Regina, Sask. on July 4, 1938, attended Oaklands Elementary, S.J. Willis Junior High and Victoria High School, graduating in 1956. He studied music and played piano at the Coach and Four Restaurant in Bastion Square, where he was known for his unique and skillful piano stylings of popular songs and show tunes. He graduated from UVic in 1969 with an Honours degree in French Language and Literature and then attended Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. He also studied in France. On his return to the US, Bruce began a 30-year career at the Agnes Irwin School for Girls in Philadelphia teaching French and directing the Audio-Visual Department. Upon retirement, Bruce returned to Victoria where he participated in performance groups and founded VAMPS

(Victoria Adult Music Performance Society), a group of dedicated non-professional musicians who enjoyed working and performing together. Bruce was predeceased by his brother Douglas in 1967 and is survived by his sister Dorothy Dutton Chuhuran, niece Jennifer Chuhuran Rosenquist, nephews Christopher Douglas Chuhuran and David Michael Chuhuran, as well as two great-nieces and two great-nephews.

RAYMOND DARYL MCDICKEN (BE'd '81) lost his battle with Alzheimer's on Dec. 28, 2025. He taught elementary grades in Smithers from 1981–88 and then Learning Assistance in Castlegar from 1988–2016. His love of children, devotion to family and friends, and passion for the outdoors will be missed by all who knew this kind and gentle man.

Acclaimed fabric artist **CAROLE SABISTON**, known for creating

colourful, textured fabric pieces, died peacefully at age 86 earlier this year. Carole graduated from Victoria College in 1957 and received an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts in 1995.

Born in London, England, on Oct. 1, 1939, she immigrated to Victoria with her family at age nine. Her parents owned Slater's Meats, where she worked while attending Vic High. Here artistic talent blossomed as she studied fine arts at the University of Victoria and the University of British Columbia before teaching art at Oak Bay High School in her early 20s.

Carole was a “pioneer of textile art” whose large-scale works adorn the likes of Christ Church Cathedral, Pacific Opera Victoria, Victoria City Hall, the Pacific Forestry Centre and Victoria High School, as well as her iconic panels in Munro's Books. A pillar of the local arts scene, she belonged to the Limner Society, served as a board member of the

AGGV and was awarded the Order of British Columbia, the Saidye Bronfman Award, plus the Queen's Silver and Diamond Jubilee medals.

MARLENE (SAKS) OLIVER passed away on March 30, 2026, at the age of 77 after a decades-long battle with breast cancer. She was born in 1948 in Washington DC and is survived by her husband of 56 years, Brian Oliver, their daughter and son-in-law Erica and Timur Engin, their two grandsons Joseph and Bryson Engin, and her brother and sister Michael and Marilyn Saks. She met her future husband as an undergraduate at UCLA, where they both worked part-time at a medical testing laboratory. After Brian moved to Victoria to pursue a doctorate degree in Physics from UVic in 1968, Marlene transferred to UC Berkeley, where she received her biology degree in 1970. Marlene joined Brian at UVic and earned a



MARLENE (SAKS) OLIVER

master’s degree in biology in 1973. Their daughter Erica was born in Victoria in 1975. In 1977, Marlene moved back to Los Angeles with her family. Marlene began a career in medical sales and innovation, working with a variety of companies. Marlene also owned her own company for many years selling cutting edge medical devices. In 2015, Marlene and Brian retired and moved back to Victoria. In 2021, Marlene became a Canadian citizen.

Marlene was a fervent advocate for alternative medicine, supplements and organic foods. She was also an avid gardener and traveller. In retirement, she became a devoted member of Rotary International serving local projects and doing community service. Her loving and generous spirit will be missed by many family members and friends here and abroad.

The astronomical community is in profound shock following the tragic passing of Dr. **CARL JOHANN GRILLMAIR**, a distinguished Caltech astrophysicist whose brilliant career was cut short in a senseless act of violence in February 2026. A dedicated researcher at Caltech’s Infrared Processing and Analysis Center, Carl was 67, a man of immense

curiosity, partner of Louise, and a beloved colleague to many. Born in Calgary, Carl’s journey to the stars began with a BSc from the University of Calgary, a master’s degree from the University of Victoria and a PhD from the Australian National University.

He spent over four decades studying the cosmos, earning distinction as a principal investigator on NASA’s Spitzer and Hubble space telescopes. Carl was a detective of the night sky, best known for his pioneering work on stellar streams—shredded remnants of galaxies orbiting the Milky Way, many of which he discovered himself and had the honour to name them after mythological rivers. His work didn’t stop there; he was instrumental in uncovering molecules, likely including water, on distant exoplanets, for which he earned the NASA Exceptional Individual Achievement in Science Medal in 2011. He also contributed to our knowledge of Earth-threatening asteroids and comets. Colleagues often praised his ability to see patterns where others saw only chaos.

Beyond his impressive academic accomplishments, Carl was a man of varied interests. He lived in the quiet, rural community of Llano, Calif., where he delighted in his passions for flying gliders and observing the skies with the three telescopes at his home observatory. Carl often sought tranquility away from the busy suburbs, yet his work took him to the furthest reaches of the universe. Colleagues described him as a brilliant detective of the cosmos—meticulous, creative, and deeply invested in mentoring others. He brought a quiet

passion to everything he pursued, embodying the spirit of a true explorer.

The news that he was shot and killed on his own property, seemingly at random by a stranger, has left a void in the scientific community that cannot be filled. He leaves behind a legacy of brilliant research and profound discoveries, particularly his work with the NEOWISE team, which watched over our planet, and which will continue with the NEO Surveyor mission, of which Carl was a part for several years.

In mourning this loss, we remember not just the stellar streams he traced, but the warmth and intellectual generosity he shared with all who knew him. He looked at the vastness of space with wonder, and he will be deeply missed.

— contributed by UVic Emeritus Professor Chris Pritchett

In April, Songhees Elder **LEXIXELEK**, Dr. **BAPTISTE HARRY “Skip” DICK** died at age 85.

Dr. Skip was more than a respected Elder, he was a guiding light, a teacher, a Knowledge Keeper and an advocate for Indigenous education, culture and community. His life’s work has left an everlasting mark on the University of Victoria, Camosun College, the Victoria Native Friendship Centre and across communities throughout these territories and beyond.

For many, Dr. Skip’s was the first voice they heard at UVic, a warm, grounding presence offering a territorial welcome at week of welcome, convocation ceremonies, and gatherings both large and small. His words carried

not only protocol, but heart, humour and a deep sense of responsibility to the lands and peoples he represented.

As a founding member of the Elders’Voices program, Dr. Skip helped shape a space of guidance, care and cultural grounding for students, staff and faculty. From his early days as an Indigenous counsellor at Camosun College, at what was then the Institute of Adult Studies, to his leadership in developing programs that continue to support thousands of Indigenous students, his impact continues to ripple across generations. In recognition of his extraordinary contributions to education, community, and the advancement of Indigenous knowledge, the university awarded Dr. Skip an Honorary Doctor of Education in November 2015.

He cofounded the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, supporting youth through sport and uplifting Indigenous voices across education, culture and community life.

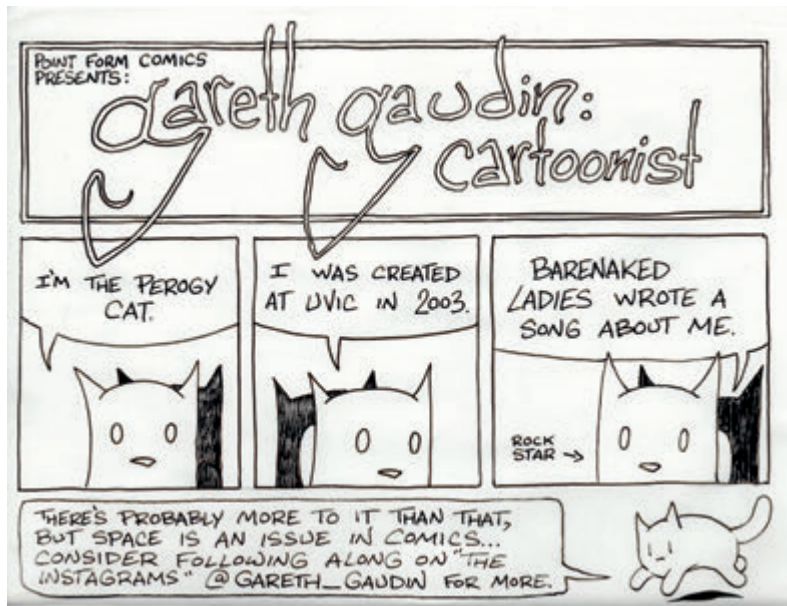
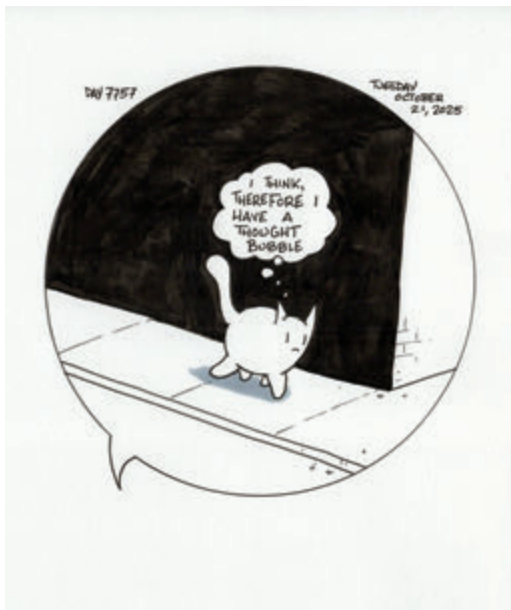
As a residential school Survivor, he transformed his experiences into a lifelong commitment to making the world better for others. He chose to lead with kindness, to uplift with compassion and to walk with purpose.

The university honours Dr. Skip by continuing the work he believed in, by supporting one another, by building respectful relationships, by creating space for Indigenous knowledge and ways of being, and by walking with good minds and good hearts. †

Drawing Inspiration

Fine Arts grad **Gareth Gaudin** documents his life through comics, writing a cartoon a day as part of his craft.

BY GARETH GAUDIN, BFA '03



My name is Gareth Gaudin, I'm a cartoonist and I graduated from UVic with a Visual Arts degree in 2003. What else do you need to know about me? Let's see... I was born and raised in Victoria, got a job at a comic book store when I was a teenager and have written and drawn comic books my entire life.

I was born on Feb. 22, 1973 and discovered my love of the comics medium with a copy of Marvel Comics' *Godzilla #17* that my mum bought for me at Turner's Confectionary in October 1978. That was the catalyst. I started drawing cartoons immediately and have yet to stop. My first one was about a cat in a space suit named Cosmic Kitty. Twenty-five years later, I invented my most famous character, The Perogy Cat, while at UVic taking a late-night history of art course. Cats again. Why do cartoonists draw cats? I dunno, maybe it's the "mews."

On July 27, 2004, I wrote "Day One" at the top of a page and committed myself to drawing one cartoon a day for the rest of my life. As of today, I've written, drawn and published 7,943 consecu-



tive daily cartoons documenting my life and my interests. Meeting my wife (who also attended UVic), getting married, going on our honeymoon to Europe, having kids (our two daughters are the stars of the graphic novel series "The Monster Sisters" from Orca Books) and travelling the world meeting other cartoonists, are a few of my favourite subjects.

Along the way, I befriended Ed Robertson of the Canadian rock band Barenaked Ladies and, somehow, he was inspired enough to write a theme song for my cartoon character. *The Perogy Cat* hardcover kids book that my wife **BRONWYN LEE**, BA '03, and I wrote together suddenly came with a record and a CD by the guy who wrote the *Big Bang Theory* theme. That seems like a big deal for a small cat.

Tomorrow I'll be drawing Day 7,944... Follow along on Instagram: @gareth_gaudin.†



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ON CAMPUS



PHOTO MICHAEL KISSINGER

In Living Colour

Visitors take in the vibrant “Origins” series of paintings by Sean Seto at an art show featuring work from the graduating students of the Bachelor of Fine Arts program. UVic alumni were welcomed at a special evening to view the art, enjoy refreshments and connect with the artists.