Community health is focus of new Canada Research Chair

by Beth Hayatow

Healthy eating and lifestyle advice is falling on the wrong ears, says Dr. Aleck Ostry, who joins the University of Victoria this month as the Canada Research Chair on the Social Determinants of Community Health.

"Educated, well-off people can afford to change their habits, but people with low incomes and low education tend to have more difficulty making those healthy changes," says Ostry, who has spent the better part of his career investigating the social and economic factors underlying health, and the damaging health effects of poverty and lack of education.

"This is one area (of research) that has been ignored for too long," says Ostry, a Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research scholar and, until recently, an associate professor of health care and epidemiology at the University of British Columbia.

"Greater awareness may lead to a shift in public policy... and addressing inequalities will make a significant impact in terms of healthier people and healthier communities," he says.

Ostry is a Tier 2 chair recipient, which means he is an "exceptional emerging researcher who is acknowledged by his peers as having the potential to lead in his field." The chair provides him with $100,000 annually for five years.

While at UVic, using census data, surveys and interviews, Ostry will examine the underlying factors that make up a strong community social fabric and how these differ between urban and rural communities. He’ll also research what happens to a community and its social networks when it gets an economic boost, such as a mill closing, and assess how the current accelerated pace of economic change is affecting individuals of all ages.

Ostry’s research complements work already underway at UVic, which has become a leader in community-based health research through the faculties of Human and Social Development, Science, Social, Sciences and Education and in the interdisciplinary research centres in aging, community health promotion, youth and society; addictions.

SEE NEW RESEARCH CHAIR P.6

Farquhar Auditorium sports new look

Have you noticed that concerts and lectures in the University Centre seem a little more comfortable these days?

The 1,233 seats in the Farquhar Auditorium were replaced last August, as the original seating, installed in 1978, had started to show its age.

In addition to the improved comfort and appearance of the new seats, the seat numbering system was simplified and seats in the choir loft were stained a dark brown to improve the aesthetics of the stage area.

"This project complements other recent upgrades, including new carpeting and an improved sound system, that are helping us attract higher profile bookings," notes Farquhar Auditorium co-ordinator Heather Regan.

Terry Williams, architect for the University Centre, was retained as a consultant to oversee the project. Williams worked with facilities management and auditorium staff to ensure that the new seats were installed over a right summer timeframe.

Upcoming events in the Farquhar Auditorium include Axé Capoeira in February and the Soweto Gospel Choir in March. For more information visit http://auditorium.uvic.ca/

Biologist wins national Young Innovator Award

by Christine Roulston

British Columbians have always had an intricate relationship with their conifer forests both recreationally and economically, but according to UVic research scientist Dr. Brett Poulis, the relationship may become even more intertwined.

Poulis’s research shows that conifer secretion compounds that could provide a powerful antidote against human illness.

His work on the subject has earned him the 2006 Young Innovator Award from the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE), a federal organization aimed at turning Canadian research and entrepreneurial talent into economic and social benefits for Canada.

In December, Poulis attended a ceremony in Ottawa to accept the award from Canada’s Minister of Industry, Maxime Bernier.

“Trees are ancient and they have a defensive system that has worked for them for hundreds of millions of years. I believed there were compounds present in these trees that would not only help defend plants and crops, but humans as well,” says Poulis, who completed his PhD at UVic in 2004.

Early on during his research, Poulis sensed that some commercial applications may emerge from his work. His hunch came true last February when his research inspired the start-up of a biotechnology company developing innovative medical and cosmetic products.

“My research has always been guided by product-driven discovery and I’ve really enjoyed transferring my research from the lab into a commercial setting,” he says.

Over $3.1 million in new funding will link University of Victoria researchers to a powerful computer consortium that spans Western Canada and connects to a national network providing high performance resources to member institutions.

The grant—awarded by the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council—will enhance UVic’s existing high performance computing (HPC) facilities.

Current research ranges from simulating the Earth and its climate and probing the fundamental nature of matter and the structure of the universe, to simulating fuel cell concepts for faster introduction of clean energy technologies, and studying the computer grid itself.

“This funding will integrate UVic’s high performance facilities with WestGrid, a consortium of seven universities in four western provinces, giving our researchers access to the computational resources of the member facilities,” says Nikitas Dimopoulos, chair of the electrical and computer engineering department.

“Through integration with WestGrid we also join Compute Canada, an umbrella organization representing the high performance computing community across the country. We will gain, in effect, 6,000 additional colleagues across Canada who, in turn, access the significant resources and data now housed at UVic.”

The university will receive over $3.1 million for equipment and more than $1.2 million for operating expenses. UVic will use the funds to add significant capability in the computational and storage facilities it houses, and to provide easy and effective access to them.

Over the past several years, rapid developments in HPC technology have revolutionized the way research is done. Capable of performing calculations thousands of times faster than a regular desktop computer, HPC technology can produce results in a matter of seconds that produce definitive conditions. But until Poulis began to delve...
It may seem like something from an
other planet but fish that skip across pools of molten sulphur do exist and have
been captured on video in the western Pacific.

The newly discovered flatfish, which
live around sulphur pools caused by
underwater volcanoes, are the subject of
research by University of Victoria ocean
scientists Dvo. John Dower and Vetena Tunnicliffe.

"No one has ever found fliminous in
a hydrothermal area and no one
expected to see them in such abun-
dance," says Dower. "In some cases
they may unlock some of the mysteries surrounding the origins of large
galaxies around us today," says Chapman.

Nelson X-ray and infrared space
telescopes (the Chandra and the Spitzer space
telescopes), along with radio telescopes on the
ground, scientists are able to peer through the
dust to see what is going on in the
deepest recesses of galaxies.

University of Victoria climatologist
Dr. Andrew Weaver is one of the
world’s foremost leaders on climate
change and is among a handful
of scientists working on the UN
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate
Change’s next assessment, due for
release early next month.

Each weather station consists of
a series of small, solar-powered
instrument packages mounted on
the school roof. The instruments
provide real-time measurements of
temperature, humidity, wind speed
direction, precipitation, solar and
UV radiation, and atmospheric
pressure.

Wireless technology sends the data
from each station to classrooms
across the school district and to a
central computer in Weaver’s lab at UVic.
There, the information is compiled
and displayed graphically via the
Internet at www.victoriaweather.ca.

The network is catching on
fast with web browsers looking for
weather information more specific
to their neighbourhood. During last
November’s snowstorms, for example,
the website logged 73,123 visitors
in a week—that’s more than 10,000
visitors a day.

"We’ve had requests from schools
cross the island," says Weaver,
who shows students how to use the
weather station data and helps teach-
cite integrate the weather stations into
their curriculum. "It’s really rewarding
to see the kids get excited with the
science of weather."
UN climate conference inspires action

by Christine Roulston

University of Victoria student Naomi Devine returned last fall from the 12th annual United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change with a mission—to act locally in the fight against climate change.

The conference, held in Nairobi, Kenya, saw 6,000 participants from 180 countries meet to discuss pressing environmental issues affecting the globe. Devine attended the conference as a member of the Canadian Youth Delegation, a group of 21 young Canadians emphasizing education and leadership on climate change.

Devine’s trip was sponsored by UVic, the Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter, and the BC Sustainable Energy Association.

“Canada’s position on the world stage has slipped since last year’s conference on climate change held in Montreal. As youth, we must now fill Canada’s climate leadership void and make sure climate change is not swept under the political carpet,” says Devine, an environmental studies and political science student.

At the conference, Devine chose to attend the “post-2012” discussions, which involved reviewing the Kyoto Protocol and developed countries’ commitment to the protocol after the year 2012. Youth delegates also met with federal Environment Minister Rona Ambrose, representatives from various non-governmental organizations and official opposition critics.

While the conference dealt with global issues, it also emphasized to Devine the importance of national and sub-national actions on a world stage.

“I think it’s important to bring what I learned as part of a global process back to Victoria and see how we can make change locally and send messages back to government,” she says.

Over the next year, Devine will be a 1st year student in the Common Energy Project, a network of students, staff, and faculty working with community partners to develop a community energy data system. Devine is also involved in the BC Pilot Alcohol and Other Drug Monitoring Project.

Message in a bottle

Researchers look to alcohol sales for clues to substance abuse in British Columbia

by Jennifer Cador

Ask any responsible person to stand if they or someone close to them have ever had a problem with alcohol, and you’ll likely end up with everyone in the room on their feet.

There’s no question that alcohol spells trouble for many, and that’s why psychologist Dr. Tim Stockwell comes in. As director of the Centre for Addictions Research (CARBC) at the University of Victoria, Stockwell is examining drinking patterns and their consequences across the province.

It’s part of a major pilot project initiated by Health Canada and led by CARBC to monitor alcohol, drug and tobacco use on a national level. Part of that process includes studying liquor consumption habits in BC—as measured by alcohol sales—to calculate per capita rates of alcohol consumption, area by area.

“We use demographic data to work out what the average is per person in each area, and we’re putting that up on the CARBC website,” says Stockwell.

The information comes directly from liquor licensing authorities and is broken down into 28 colour-coded areas so that it’s easy to identify where the heaviest drinking is going on, and how one area compares to another. Of course, some areas can be tricky to measure. “There are tourism areas where the local rates appear to be very inflated,” Stockwell explains.

“For example, around Tofino it’s much higher than the rest of the island. That’s because sales are divided by the number of residents, making it look like a lot of alcohol is being drunk by a very few people. We have to factor that out.”

So who are BC’s biggest drinkers? You might think it would be people in major centres, such as Vancouver or Victoria. But, in fact, south coasters tend to tipple less than their northern neighbours. “In northern BC we see higher consumption than in the rest of the province,” observes Stockwell.

Why? There’s no definitive answer yet, but getting to the root of these patterns is one of the main reasons for the project.

There is a need, explains Stockwell, to collect consistent and reliable data to identify where the worrysome consumption trends are. Then policy-makers, health authorities and the public can come up with solutions to persistent substance abuse problems.

CARBC will play an active role in finding solutions by using the data collected to evaluate alcohol and drug policies. For example, if there was a move to privatize alcohol sales, as in Alberta, CARBC could evaluate the implications.

Stockwell is on familiar ground. Until arriving at UVic two years ago, he headed Australia’s National Drug Research Institute. It was his successes there that drew Health Canada’s interest.

“We used the data to evaluate big policy changes, such as changes in alcohol tax, and they [Health Canada] said, “We need this for Canada.”

The BC Pilot Alcohol and Other Drug Monitoring Project is funded by the federal and provincial governments, including the Michael Smith Foundation and the Provincial Health Services Authority. Funding for the measurement of BC alcohol use patterns comes directly from the BC Mental Health and Addictions Research Network.

FastFacts

BC alcohol sales data show the Stikine and northern Rockies regions as having the highest alcohol consumption rates. Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley have the lowest. To compare alcohol consumption rates in your area with the rest of the province, visit the CARBC website at www.carbc.ca/research.htm.

A 2004 CARBC survey showed that almost 75 per cent of reported alcohol consumption in BC was above Canadian low-risk drinking guidelines.
by Beth Haysom

Four individuals and a four-member team have won the fifth annual President’s Distinguished Service Awards, which were announced at the president’s holiday reception in December.

The awards were created in 2002 to honour the achievements of UVic’s 4,000 staff members.

“Each of these UVic employees demonstrates exceptional dedication to their work resulting in an enriched university experience for us all,” said UVic President David Turpin. “Their contributions make UVic a great place to learn, live and work and generate benefits for the campus community and beyond.”

Employees are nominated in two categories. The Award for Distinguished Service honours employees for their contributions to the university’s learning and working environment. The Team Award for Innovation goes to a team or group for innovations that improve an educational, administrative or organizational process.

This year, the selection committee received 22 nominations for the Award for Distinguished Service and six nominations for the Team Award for Innovation. Each recipient received a framed certificate.

From his earliest days in the UVic army huts to planning the new science building, Albert Labossiere has been the behind-the-scenes planner and designer who makes things work no matter what.

“Labo,” as he is affectionately known after more than 30 years with the university, is little short of “a magician,” say colleagues in the biochemistry and microbiology department where he works as technical services manager.

Labossiere is someone who goes way beyond his electronics technician role, helping researchers or laboratory instructors needing a new instrument to achieve a research or teaching goal. “He always goes the extra mile, quickly and effectively expanding his expertise to meet new needs,” says John Hall, the department’s administrative officer.

During his lengthy service, Labossiere has kept everything on track, often working well past regular hours to maintain or repair vital scientific equipment. A survey during the ‘90s estimated that Labossiere and his staff saved the department over $350,000 in equipment repairs, service calls and service contracts annually.

A talented planner, Labossiere is credited with contributing to the successful construction of the Petch Building, the UVic aquatic facility and the future new science building.

For 29 years Michael Motek has been Mr. Technology at UVic where, as software development officer, he has assisted the university to navigate technology as it evolves from its earliest systems to the latest Nova installations.

During this technological revolution, Motek has contributed imaginative and well-constructed systems solutions to address a myriad of UVic business process challenges.

Among “Michael’s modules” are: TelReg, the phone-in registration system (the precursor to online registration); AutoReg, a sophisticated process for moving students from a class waitlist and automatically registering them when spaces become available; and Convroll and CermRoll, systems that allow graduating students to organize all their convocation needs online.

More than just a technological marvel, Motek has proven to be an inspirational leader and a calm voice in a crisis. Taking charge when a hidden bug in the system threatened to ruin convocation for hundreds of students and their families, he solved the problem in the nick of time.

“We could not have done it without him,” says Alison Ducharme, director of university ceremonies and events.

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“We could not have done it without him,” says Alison Ducharme, director of university ceremonies and events.
As a co-op coordinator in the Engineering, and Computer Science/Math Co-op Program, Toni Garrett has touched the lives of thousands of students, many of whom believe she was pivotal in their successful careers.

"Everyone has a good Toni story to tell," says student Kevin Garwood, who credits Garrett with saving him from the potentially harmful behaviour of obsessive studying.

Passionate about her role, Garrett has made a point of visiting each student in the program under her care at their worksite, whether in Vancouver, Ottawa, Calgary or beyond. She even took to a snowmobile to reach students working in the Northwest Territories.

"By her devotion to the university and the students, Toni Garrett has provided the university with a human face and that has greatly benefited students as they adjust to their academic challenges," says David Goodenough, senior research scientist at the Pacific Forestry Centre, which regularly employs UVic co-op students.

Recently, Garrett has been focusing her talents on helping international students and has developed a personal and creative technique for helping foreign students improve their language and written skills through regular "pen-pal" correspondence.

Manager of counselling services Joe Parsons has never been too busy to lend an ear to students, staff and colleagues. Since arriving at UVic in 1980, Parsons has supported the mental well-being of students through initiatives such as the Peer Helping Program and the BC Campus Project, addressing mental health issues and the impact of substance abuse on campus.

As part of his demanding portfolio, Parsons has also helped to develop and coordinate UVic’s Learning Skills Course that helps students become better learners while coping with the challenges of the university environment. "ThinkFast," a software program developed by Parsons, has helped countless students to develop fluency with basic facts and terms in their courses and has been adopted in a variety of courses around the world.

But it’s not just what he does but how he does it, say Parsons colleagues. His ability to "stand beside, rather than teach in front of the learner," has impacted the lives of thousands of students and many staff and faculty members. However busy, Parsons is always willing to stop and talk to a student, says David Polson, a faculty member in the psychology department. "Joe has never forgotten what it’s like to be a student. He’s sympathetic to their concerns. He’s on a mission to improve their lives, and he has.”

All photos by UVic Photo Services

Distance Education Services Online Help Desk team members Manesh Bhathella, Katy Chan, Susan Doner and Keith Webster are "the invisible people" who help to bridge the technological gap between instructors and students whether they are on campus or thousands of miles away.

The Online Help Desk, established in September 1996, supports thousands of distance students in three undergraduate degree programs, three graduate degree programs, eight certificate programs and ad hoc online distance courses developed by individual departments or faculties. Dozens of grateful messages are testimony to how much the team’s calm, highly-professional and expert assistance is appreciated, especially at crucial times, such as the day they helped to troubleshoot a technological glitch in an online exam program.

"Most of us wouldn’t know if we were standing beside a member of this team while we wait in line at the cafeteria to buy our cup of coffee," says Dean of Human and Social Development Mary Ellen Purkis.

"Because of their work, they permit all of us engaged in teaching students to do our work so well, to engage in the exchange of interesting and important knowledge with students and colleagues right here on our doorstep—or living half a continent away.”

The Ring January 2007 Page 5
The arrival of 2007 marked the end of a special year for the University of Victoria’s School of Nursing, which celebrated its 30th birthday in 2006. The school was established against all odds on March 23, 1976. It took countless letters to the editor by prominent nurses and sustained pressure from the Registered Nurses of BC to persuade the government to create the school. A budget of $165,000 was deemed as “appalling” at a time when $35 million was being spent on the expansion of UBC’s medical school.

The first nursing course description was called “eerie,” somewhat Pavlovian, clockwork description was called “eerie,” somewhat Pavlovian, clockwork

by Christine McLaren

and Aboriginal people’s health. “I’m looking forward to developing a multidisciplinary approach,” says Ostry, who is based in UVic’s geography department. Ostry expects to continue collaborating with leading health researchers in other regional universities. He is director of a Canadian Institutes of Health Research “New Emerging Team,” funded by a $1.5 million grant to promote research on the social dimensions of community health in BC. It involves partnerships with scholars at UBC, Thompson Rivers University and the University of Northern British Columbia.

Ostry has also developed international research partnerships with the School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne. “Canada is something of a world leader in the social determinants of health,” says Ostry, who regularly travels throughout North America and overseas to promote greater awareness of his projects. Another aspect of Ostry’s health research is work balance and the effects of workplace stress. “Unfortunately, I don’t practise what I preach nately, I don’t practise what I preach...” says Ostry, who is looking forward to redressing the balance awareness of his projects.

Despite all the ‘noise’ about a crisis facing the health care system, nurses are at the bedside and in the community every day delivering effective care,” says Dr. Mary Ellen Purkis, dean of human and social development. “The future of Canada’s increasingly integrated health services sector relies on professionals who work well together in interprofessional teams. Our nursing school continues to show real leadership in this area.”

The school celebrated its anniversary in 2006 with the introduction of an Alumni Award of Excellence. Darlene McGougan, BSN ’98, is the first recipient. She’s currently the manager of nursing for Aboriginal health at the Vancouver Island Health Authority.

“I don’t do what I do alone and I couldn’t do it without the education,” said McGougan, who also shared the wisdom that “for Aboriginal people, you are the medicine if you bring a good heart”.

Jane Milliken, interim director of the school and master of ceremonies for the anniversary celebration, said in her address: “It’s no wonder that we can be proud of what we have accomplished in just three short decades, with so many dedicated people all contributing to our success. Our school continues to demonstrate a commitment to generating knowledge and advancing the nursing profession to improve health for individuals, families, communities, and society.”

For more information on the school visit http://nursing.uvic.ca.

New research chair continued from p.1 and Aboriginal people, you are the medicine...” says Ostry, who is looking forward to redressing the balance awareness of his projects.

New research chair continued from p.1

McGougan CA

New research chair continued from p.1

McGougan CA

New research chair continued from p.1
Friday, January 12
Learning & Teaching Centre workshop 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Technology for Successful Teaching. 

Wednesday, January 10
Physics & Astronomy 2 p.m. Modelling the Global Climate System: Reproducing History and Forcasting the Future. Greg Flato, Canadian Centre for Climate Modelling and Analysis. Elliott 602. 721-7700

Center for Studies in Religion & Society 4 p.m. Responses of the Major Religions to Genetically Modified Animals. Harold Coward, UVic. UVic, Strong C116. 721-6695

Friday, January 12
Learning & Teaching Centre workshop 12:30 p.m. Award for Excellence in Teaching: Tips for Nominees. Co-sponsored by the UVic Alumni Assoc. Hickman 128. 721-8571

Friday, January 19
Learning & Teaching Centre workshop 12:30 p.m. School of music keyboard students. MacLaurin B125. 721-7904

Wednesday, January 24

Friday, January 19
Learning & Teaching Centre workshop 12:30 p.m. School of music brass students. MacLaurin B125. 721-7904

Wednesday, January 17

Friday, January 12
Fri 12:30 p.m. School of music students in a program for various instruments. MacLaurin B125. 721-7904

Business co-op student wows Chinese employer

By Danne George

Fourth-year business student Nick DiCastri is no stranger to breaking new ground, whether on home turf or abroad. Here at home, he has co-founded ACE Victoria (Advancing Canadian Entrepreneurship) for business students. He’s also the first UVic co-op student ever hired by the Shanghai branch of the Standard Chartered Bank (SCB).

He impressed his employers to such a degree that they nominated him for the UVic Business Co-op Student of the Year award. “I’ve never met an intern with so much professionalism, drive and competence,” says DiCastri’s supervisor John Brown, head of cash management sales for China. Worldwide, Standard Chartered employs about 50,000 people. Because of DiCastri’s abilities, he was asked to lead the team organizing the bank’s participation in the Eurofinance conference, which is attended by more than 170 of the world’s largest companies.

In his spare time DiCastri also helped two UVic classmates organize a high-popularity launch party for a charity they had created to help malnourished rural Chinese children. “I’m honoured to have been selected as this year’s award recipient,” says DiCastri, who returns home this month to accept his award after completing an exchange term with the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing. “I’m very grateful for the generosity of the TD Financial Group and would like to thank the members of SCB, the business faculty, and the business co-op office for all their help and support during my co-op placements.”

Students are nominated by their co-op placement employers and evaluated on their contributions to the company, UVic, the business co-op and career centre, and to the community. Each student must also maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 6.5. To be considered for the award, the candidates must also write a letter describing their work-term experiences. Twenty-four of the nominees wrote letters and DiCastri was chosen as the best submission.

As the award winner, DiCastri receives $1,000 from the TD Bank Financial Group and is invited to represent UVic in the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education Canada-wide search for its co-op student-of-the-year.

Storm damage clean-up to take weeks

The winter storms that wreaked havoc on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland throughout November and December left their mark on the University of Victoria as well.

The campus was closed for only the second time in its history on Nov. 27 after heavy snow and icy streets brought down trees and made travel treacherous. Facilities management crews plowed out campus roads, parking lot entrances and some pathways but BC Transit buses could not navigate many routes, prompting the closure.

No sooner had the snow melted than a series of windstorms caused more damage, bringing down a half dozen campus trees along with heavy limbs and branches. In the wake of the most serious storm on Dec. 15, the campus jogging trails and Mystic Vale were closed for several days due to fallen debris and the threat that more trees could collapse.

Calling the storms “nature’s way of pruning,” grounds manager Bentley Sly says that his crews will be conducting some post-storm major pruning over the next couple of months for “the shape and the health of the trees.”

In the aftermath of the snowstorm, there were concerns about severe damage in Fintry Gardens but Sly says that the plants “have a way of refurbishing themselves … green time and better weather.” Sly says the storm aftermath presents opportunities to cut back new plants to replace those lost in arguably the worst storm season on record.

Simpson Insurcentre

Simpson Insurcentre #321 - 3900 Shelbourne St. Victoria (University Heights Mall, next to March's Office Supply) (250) 477-7234

Our Smoking Cessation Program...helps tobacco users quit and stay smoke free.

We're at the forefront of helping seniors manage their health care costs.

The Ring January 2007  Page 7
A DAY IN THE LIFE of Graham Donachie is much more than pushing a cart to deliver the mail. He's been a mail clerk at UVic for 12 years. Previously, he worked for more than 20 years with the Royal Mail in Dundee, Scotland.

Starting at 7 a.m., cags full of mail left by Canada Post are sorted. Customs forms on overseas packages are handled, as are priority, express, registered and COD items. “Sometimes a package arrives with a minimal address for someone who isn’t in the directory,” says Donachie, “but we eventually make a connection with the correct department.”

Once the first delivery is finished, sorting starts again. Mail picked up is metered and packages checked for secure wrapping. After the second delivery, which includes paint shop items, they prepare all mail and parcels for Canada Post to pick up in the afternoon.

“I love my job,” he says. “I get to go around to 150 different departments and meet a diverse group of people. In Dundee, I worked with guys, mostly Scots, but here I talk with people from all parts of the world… it’s broadened my experience.”

Donachie loves the quality of life in Canada. “When I was a postie in the 60s, an old lady on my route would give me a British BC Magazine to read. That publication and the lyrics of Gordon Lightfoot are just two of the reasons I eventually came to discover Canada.”

He’s also a member of the Club Teal hiking group in Victoria. When not hiking or painting, he attended Victoria College of Art. He works in oils and acrylics, and does freelance drawing. One of his paintings hangs in a private Scots Guard museum in Perthshire, Scotland.

Donachie

Young innovator continues from p.1

into this new area of research, it was unknown how conifers protected themselves during these important reproductive events. He discovered that conifers use an array of defensive compounds with antibacterial and antifungal properties. As he purified, identified, and characterized the various compounds, the commercial potential became increasingly clear.

“This was completely novel research,” says UVic biologist Dr. Patrick von Aderkas. “Brett certainly deserves this award, as he is single-handedly responsible for taking the research and developing it for the benefit of others.”

Von Aderkas is Pouls’ past academic advisor and now business partner in the company FloraPure BioSciences Inc. The company’s research to date has focused on developing methods to produce and purify these defensive compounds and incorporate them into cosmetic and medicinal applications such as skin-based therapies and unique cost-effective antibiotics.

Four University of Victoria astrophysicists were contributors to a paper in a recent edition of Nature that is causing quite a stir in astronomical circles.

The paper describes how a stellar explosion known as a type Ia supernova is more than two times brighter than accepted theory says it should be. This is significant because these supernovae are used as cosmological beacons—they’re very bright and can be seen at large distances—to measure the expansion of the universe.

“These supernovae are the lynchpins in the measurement of dark energy in the universe—arguably the most exciting development in cosmology in the last century,” says UVic astrophysicist Dr. Chris Pritchet, one of the paper’s authors.

The problem is, no one is sure how type Ia supernovae are born. Two popular theories involve “white dwarf stars”—the corpses of dead stars that have a mass roughly one million times higher than the density of water. Both theories rely on the assumption that a white dwarf star can never exceed the so-called “Chandraeshakkar mass”—roughly 1.4 times the mass of the sun.

But now—using software designed by the UVic team—an international group of astronomers has discovered a type Ia supernova that reached a magnitude 2.2 solar masses before it exploded. "This was completely novel research," says UVic biologist Dr. Patrick von Aderkas. "Brett certainly deserves this award, as he is single-handedly responsible for taking the research and developing it for the benefit of others."