New Trudeau Scholar seeks change for Indigenous peoples

BY MARGARET SUDEMAN

UVic Law student Aaron Mills’ doctoral work, which explores conflicting legal orders and the workings of contemporary colonialism, has earned him substantial praise and cemented his position as a leading scholar on Canadian constitutionalism and Indigenous law.

Mills is a Vanier scholar and a former Ivy League Fulbright scholar. This May, he was handed yet another honour when he was named a Trudeau scholar—one of only 14 given out this year.

On May 27, 2014, the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation made the much-anticipated announcement of the winners of the most prestigious doctoral award for the social sciences and humanities in Canada.

Mills is currently working towards a PhD in Law and Society at UVic with his dissertation, "Riding Atishioonah's Waves: A Theory of Anishinaabe Constitutionalism.

Like many great scholars, his work has been inspired by his own background. Mills is a Bear Clan Anishinaabe from Couchiching First Nation (Treaty three territory), and from North Bay, Ontario (Robinson-Huron Treaty territory).

His research seeks to respond to the political problem of colonialism in Canada and how Canadian law is used to serve colonialism’s end. Mills suggests the problem can be addressed if we empower Indigenous peoples to restructure their systems of law and are willing to have Canadian law enter into constitutional dialogue with these systems rather than having it assume power over them.

“It is fabulous that Aaron has received this honour. He is an amazing individual: intelligent, engaged, equally knowledgeable about his Anishinaabe legal tradition and non-Indigenous law, with the skills to manoeuvre between them,” says UVic Law Dean Jeremy Webber. “He has a wonderful way of combining a soft-spoken demeanour, respectful of all, with a forthright and incisive commitment to knowledge.”

“Winning a Trudeau scholarship affords me an opportunity to share my ideas with an incredible community of thinkers and actors committed to social change,” says Mills. “I’ll have the opportunity to test and strengthen my arguments with many of Canada’s most creative and students dedicated to making Canada a better home for all.”

“I think my scholarship also indicates the tremendous contemporary relevance for all Canadians of learning about Indigenous legal orders within their own normative frameworks,” he adds.

Prior to coming to UVic, Mills obtained his JD from the University of Toronto in 2010. In 2011, he completed articles at Olthuis Kleer Townshend LLP. He later returned to academia and earned an LL.M at Yale Law School as a Fulbright Scholar in 2012.

Mills then went on to become a senior researcher for an oral traditions and Indig-
More than 30 years ago, UVic established a program that, through the enthusiasm of community leaders, delivers expertise from every area of academic inquiry to audiences throughout Greater Victoria. An early example of the university’s deep commitment to community engagement and knowledge mobilization, the UVic Speakers Bureau is Canada’s only university-wide initiative of its kind. And this May, Rosa Stewart, professor of Hispanic and Italian studies, gave the bureau’s milestone 10,000th talk: a travel piece focusing on England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Stewart’s talk is a good example of what sets the bureau apart. In addition to the wide range of academic topics that the bureau features, it also hosts speakers who engage students and retirees present in the community, the bureau also offers topics that draw on the personal interests and experiences of its volunteers.

The range of topics offered through the bureau is as diverse as its audience itself. This year, 159 volunteers made themselves available to give presentations on 619 different topics. From travelogues like Stewart’s to world-leading expertise on health care and Earth and ocean sciences, the bureau connects the campus with the publics throughout the community. This past season, volunteers presented 871 talks to 9,342 attendees. The variety of groups booking speakers is impressive: government ministries, seniors’ residences, churches, libraries, schools (K-12), community centres, Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs, and many others.

School group bookings have been on the rise, with K-12 speaker requests tripling in the last three years. More talks are now given in schools than to any other audience, including senior groups. Teachers across the region see the bureau as a tremendous opportunity to expose their students to topics that may fascinate, inspire and point them down new paths.

And it’s not just the audience that benefits from the bureau. In 1992, the dean of graduate studies encouraged students to join the bureau as a way to share their knowledge and research with members of the community—and to help graduate students prepare for their oral exams. At the time, Dr. Lara Lauzon was completing her master’s degree in what is now the School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education. Speaking to those community groups had a major impact on Lauzon’s academic and professional life. She encourages members to continue on a doctorate and professorship at UVic. ‘It’s very rewarding to be able to connect and engage with community groups all over the region,’ says Mandy Crole, the bureau’s coordinator for the last 24 years. ‘It’s fantastic to see the popularity and success of the Speakers Bureau grow each year.’

Shelagh Rogers named as next UVic Chancellor

Nationally recognized broadcaster Shelagh Rogers was announced May 29 as the next Chancellor of the University of Victoria. The popular national talk host, writer and champion of reconciliation for Aboriginal people, long-time advocate for adult literacy and mental health awareness and an acknowledged “voice” of the country will become the university’s 11th Chancellor on January 1.

Rogers’ appointment was announced in the William C. Mearns Centre for Learning—McPherson Library. Former UVic presidents and chancellors—and along with a crowd of happily surprised and enthusiastic faculty and staff—joined President Jamie Cassels in welcoming Rogers to the position.

Rogers said she views her new role “as the perfect opportunity to serve.” Rogers’ warmth, character and humour were as much a part of the event as her instantly recognizable voice. “I’m thrilled out of my being,” Rogers said. “I thank you for making me the Chancellor-designate, and I’m looking forward to serving UVic in whatever way I can.”

In choosing to accept the position, Rogers noted the shared values and aspirations that connect her to the university. “I appreciate the values that UVic holds, in particular civic engagement. I really value the Indigeneous focus—this is a very powerful thing for me and for the healing of Canada, I believe.” Rogers also spoke about being named an Honorary Witness for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in June 2011, and how she saw a correlation with her new role.

“Witnessing is a very, very important thing,” she said. “I really believe this is the key part of what a chancellor does witnessing one of the most important days in the life of a student, that crossroad day, that benchmark day when you turn the corner into your new life and work to build a better country.”

Cassels spoke enthusiastically of her predecessor’s qualities that Rogers will bring to the role of chancellor. “Shelagh Rogers is a distinguished Canadian, an engaged citizen, an outstanding professional and a wonderful communicator,” Cassels said. “She possesses an amazing array of talents and abilities and represents the values that align so well with our university’s goals and mission.”

“She’s recognized across Canada as a communicator par excellence.”

Dedicated to building our non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal communities, and each other and dedicated to the dissem-ination of knowledge, she’s perhaps the country’s best communicator—and education is a lot about listening.”

To enthusiastic applause, Cas-sels captured the sentiment of the room. “Shelagh, you certainly pos-sess the right stuff to be UVic’s next chancellor.”

A veteran broadcast journalist, Rogers is currently the host and a producer of The Next Chapter, a CBC program about Cana-dian writers and songwriters. She moved to BC in 2003 after 23 years working on CBC’s national radio shows from 1991 to 2011. In 2008, she was named an Officer of the Order of Canada for her contributions as a promoter of Canadian culture, and for her volunteer work in the fields of health and literacy. She has committed herself to working toward recon-ciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people from coast to coast to coast.

Rogers will continue as host of The Next Chapter while serving as chancellor.

Chancellor Murray Farmer, first elected in 2008, completes his second and, by law, final term at the end of 2014. He was out of the country for the announcement of Rogers’ appointment, but his wife Lynda spoke in his place, delivering his message of congratulations.

“Touched to be welcomed Ms. Rogers to the UVic community,” Farmer said. “I look forward to as-sisting you in any way I can as you make the transition into the role and into the UVic family. The appointment of Rog-ers as university Chancellor will take place during Spring 2015 convocation.”

Navigating the ever-changing market

A long-time resident and UVic grad, Dave is helping local residents and clients navigate their way through the real estate market. Whether buying or selling, he will ensure smooth sailing. Just ask his many clients at UVic.

PHOTO: PROVIDED

Rogers, Monika reviewed

Culling retired information INCOME OPTIONS June 2014 Minimum Pension $4,580.00 $4,640.00 $4,700.00 $4,760.00 $4,820.00 $4,880.00 Total Pension at Age 65 $16,570.00 $16,930.00 $17,290.00 $17,650.00 $18,010.00 $18,370.00 Accelerated Pension: Income over $7,700 $7,960.00 $8,220.00 $8,480.00 $8,740.00 $9,000.00 $9,260.00 Total 65 year payment $17,270.00 $17,630.00 $18,000.00 $18,370.00 $18,740.00 $19,110.00 Income over $12,700 $13,960.00 $14,220.00 $14,480.00 $14,740.00 $15,000.00 $15,260.00 Total 65 year payment $20,670.00 $21,030.00 $21,390.00 $21,750.00 $22,110.00 $22,470.00 Income over $18,700 $19,960.00 $20,220.00 $20,480.00 $20,740.00 $21,000.00 $21,260.00 Total 65 year payment $26,670.00 $27,030.00 $27,390.00 $27,750.00 $28,110.00 $28,470.00 

Note: Payments cease on death $497 $503 $509 $515 $521 $527 Joint Life: 10 year guarantees $497 $503 $509 $515 $521 $527 Life income options are insured through Manulife Securities Insurance Corporation.

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Manulife Securities Incorporated is a Member of the Canadian Investor Protection Fund.
Four academic leaders will take new posts on campus this summer, with the appointments of Dr. Catherine Krull as dean of social sciences, Dr. Ball Hi. Stur as dean of education, Dr. Bruce Wright as head of medical sciences and Dr. Rhobina Thomas as the inaugural director of Indigenous academic and community engagement.

Krull is currently associate dean of arts and science at Queen’s University. A sociologist and member of the Queen’s cultural studies graduate program, Krull is cross-appointed to the Department of Gender Studies at Queen’s. She is also a past editor of Cuban Studies and current editor-in-chief of the Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Krull has a considerable publication history with a focus on Cuba, and in 2009 co-organized a large international conference focusing on 50 years of the Cuban Revolution.

She will serve as Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences for a five-year term effective July 13, 2014 to June 30, 2019.

St. Clair’s leadership and administrative experiences stretch from Europe to North America—including roles directing a state literacy centre, First Nations and Inuit education programs, and as dean of graduate studies and chair of a large interdisciplinary department. He has been actively involved in creating international partnerships and recruitment opportunities.

St. Clair’s research areas include adult literacy and community initiatives, the formation of aspirations among First Nations youth, and research patterns in higher education. His research includes partnerships at the local, national, and international levels, and over the last five years he has received $1.4 million in research funding. His current portfolio includes a national partnership study among First Nations communities in several Canadian provinces.

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St. Clair’s teaching includes educational and social research, adult and continuing education, understanding educational inquiry, and critical influences on educational practice. He has a long track record of engagement with First Nations education and online and distance learning platforms and approaches.

St. Clair will serve as Dean of the Faculty of Education for a five-year term effective August 15, 2014 to June 30, 2019.

Effective July 1, Wright will begin his term as head of Head, Division of Medical Sciences at UVic (a land Regional Associate Dean, URC Fac- ulty of Medicine). He joins UVic from the University of Calgary, where he specialized in geriatric medicine. He has also recently been involved in international medical curriculum development, including work in Nepal, Laos and Tanzania.

Beginning on July 1, Thom- as—currently Associate Professor in the School of Social Work—will serve as the inaugural director of Indigenous academic and community engagement during an initial three-year term. Thomas’ expertise as a teacher and a researcher who has focused her work within the context of Indigenous programs and communities—along with her knowledge of local protocol and her relationships with Indigenous community members—will serve the entire campus in this important new leadership role.

As previously announced in the March issue of the Ring, incoming Vice-President Research Dr. David Castle begins his term on July 1, 2014. Faculty and staff are invited to a reception on Wednesday, June 18 to acknowledge the contributions of Dr. Howard Brunt during his seven years as vice-president research. The event begins at 4:00 pm at the University Club. Please RSVP by June 11 to cplc@uvic.ca.

UVic’s EcoCAR 2 team of engineer- ing students wasn’t just getting hands-on experience while they study—they’re getting their hands dirty.

Since April 2011, close to 60 students in mechanical, electrical, computer and software engineering, and business have been hard at work re-designing and retrofitting a while retaining the vehicle’s performance and consumer appeal.

The challenge is to reduce the environmental impact of the stock vehicle by improving its fuel efficiency and reducing its emissions, while retaining the vehicle’s performance and consumer appeal.

After three years of work, the team is taking their new and improved Malibu down from the hoist and shipping it off to the Advanced Vehicle Technology Competition—EcoCAR 2. Plugging into the future—-an elite challenge established and supported by General Motors, the US Department of Energy, Natural Resources Canada, and 28 other industrial and government sponsors.

UVic is one of 15 universities in North America, and one of only two in Canada, invited to participate. And the last stages of this multi-year competition take place at GM’s Vehicle Proving Ground in Milford, Michigan, and in Washington, DC from June 1 to 12.

The vehicle retrofit that the UVic student team has done means the vehicle can run in pure electric mode, or in different hybrid electric modes. In electric-only mode, it can run for 55 kms on a single charge, satisfying the needs of 80 per cent of North American commuters. This kind of hybrid-electric combination is especially suited to places like Victoria, where more than 90 per cent of commuters drive within that daily range, and where BC Hydro provides electricity that is relatively cheap and generated through cleaner technology, says John Jankowski-Walsh, MASc student and Mechanical Team Lead.

“UVic’s program is very research-focused,” Deng says, “and industries value this very highly.” The students who have participated in the EcoCAR program (now six years since the launch of the first EcoCAR) have been in big demand, he explains. “Over the past three years, GM has hired 16 of our past members to work in their hybrid power-train technology research and development, in Michigan and Toronto.”

And what’s next for UVic’s “Green Garage”? Future prospects include hybrid Formula SAE racing cars, as well as marine applications for ferries, tugboats and other ships.
CONVOCATION 2014

Congratulations, grads!

Thousands of UVic students and their families and friends will gather on campus this month to celebrate the achievement of an academic milestone. During Spring Convocation, from June 9–13, nine ceremonies will be held to confer degrees, diplomas or certificates upon 3,554 graduating students. This spring marks the 50th anniversary of UVic’s first convocation ceremony. Members of the class of 1964 will attend the 10 a.m., June 13 ceremony to commemorate their part of university history. Congratulations and best wishes to all convocating students. In the following pages, we present profiles of a few of the many outstanding members of this year’s graduating class.

Education grad shows leadership on the learning curve

BY KIM WESTAD

Gulf Islands Secondary students know they had a different type of science teacher when a lesson on heart function had them running around a room pretending to be red blood cells.

Nikita Pardiwala created the outline of a huge human heart on the floor of a large multi-purpose room for her Biology 12 students. Then they became red blood cells, running through the heart to the lungs, dropping off carbon dioxide.

Such a lesson combines Pardiwala’s teaching—biology and physical education—and is the kind of fresh, interactive approach to teaching that saw her with a job offer the day after her teaching practicum finished. She looks forward to teaching this September at Gulf Island Secondary, the same school she graduated from in 2006.

“Every day of my practicum, I tried to do something different and enticing so the students would have fun and learn,” said the 25-year-old, who graduates this June with an education degree, specializing in secondary curriculum.

For her practicum, Pardiwala created course content from scratch instead of using the existing resources, and rethought how some things are taught and marked. To gauge leadership, one of the criteria for a physical education degree, Pardiwala drew on an activity she had done in third grade. She had her Grade 9 and 10 PE students divide into groups of four, with each challenged to create an activity station for kindergarten students. They had a week to work together to create a station from the ground up, with two area kindergarten classes coming to put them to the test.

“I wanted the leadership to evolve more organically, to have them work collaboratively, problem-solving, and learning from each other. The kindergarten students had a blast,” Pardiwala said. “From that day forward, my PE class was different from the day before. I think they surprised themselves—they proved to themselves that they were very resourceful.”

It also taught students another lesson that Pardiwala views as key—school doesn’t exist in a bubble. What is learned in a class impacts others and has a bigger application to the world.

“I try to show students that what they’re learning doesn’t just exist in the classroom, to show them that what they’re learning fits into their lives overall.”

Pardiwala loves both biology and being active, so choosing teaching specialties was easy for her. The two also provide balance—something Pardiwala views as essential, regardless of age.

“Growing up, I was very academically focused but that alone is not enough. You need a social life, you need to take care of your body and to eat properly. It is about more than just getting that ‘A.’ I am a huge believer in finding a balance in life.”

Having said that, Pardiwala said she’s never worked harder than during the four-month practicum at Gulf Islands Secondary. It paid off with a job offer and notes like the one she received from a Grade 9 biology student. It said, “You showed me love for a subject I thought I could never love.”

It’s those kind of small things, Pardiwala said, that make teaching so rewarding.

Planning on a small scale pays off big for grad

BY ANNE MacLAURIN

Many people associate municipal planning with large urbanized communities. For geography and environment studies grad Richard T. Buchan, however, some of Vancouver Island’s smaller communities offered much larger opportunities. Living, studying and completing co-op work terms in Port Hardy, Campbell River, Courtenay, Duncan and Cowichan Bay gave Buchan great opportunities for hands-on learning in community planning.

“I think everyone has to take the co-op option and apply for work in small towns,” says Buchan, “you gain work experience and often have more responsibility in a smaller community.”

Those big projects in small towns gave Buchan a range of experiences during his co-op work terms that are directly relevant to his future career goals as a community planner.

During his co-op work term for the City of Campbell River, for example, Buchan was the main driving force behind the city’s online food map. The tool connects consumers with their food sources—farmers, stores, restaurants—and with land for growing and gardening. Also during his co-op term Buchan led the development of Harvest Campbell River, a short film showcasing the food map and opportunities for local food growing in Campbell River.

“People don’t often think of their community as made up of an energy system, leisure system, health system, economic system, agricultural system, and so on,” explains Buchan.

“As a community planner I can look at multiple aspects of our community and create the tools needed to meet overarching goals, such as how we address climate change or how we beautify our city.”

It was Buchan’s upper-level Environmental Studies and Geography courses that led him in the direction of community planning. “The field work opportunities were fantastic and classes like ES 301 Poli/Ecology really bridged the real world with the classroom,” Buchan said interacting with Saanich city planners was not only relevant to his studies but led him in the direction of his chosen career.

“My ideal career is one where I have a meaningful impact on my community, and leave it better for the next generation,” says Buchan.

Buchan continues his studies this fall at Waterloo University where he was accepted into a Masters of Arts in planning.
Co-op placements build career options for humanities grad

BY SUZANNE AHEARNE

It's probably not on many graduates’ lists of what to do after convocation, but it's at the top of Christine Falconer’s: she's going to get cracking on the post-apocalyptic novel she's had in her head for almost as long as she’s been at UVic.

The English major (and Humanities, Fine Arts and Professional Writing Co-op student) promises that no UVic prose will figure in her dystopian fiction, nor will the dystopian future, leading to a career in social work that she so broadly. While she was considering her options, her mind kept going round in a Nuby family.

By the time she started at UVic, Falconer had been out of high school for nearly a decade. “I didn’t really have the option of going back home for university, or traveling, I had to start a career right away and cop and really made that happen,” she said.

While she studied, co-op helped her build practical job-seeking skills and provided access to a network of local and national—even international—paid co-op positions.

During her two years in the program, Falconer did eight months of paid co-op work. Her most recent was a 16-week gig as a communicators writer at Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt, a local employer who hires about 50 students each semester across the humanities, business and engineering faculties.

She wrote everything from video scripts, web content and press releases to briefing notes for the admiral.

“It was fun putting myself into the mindset of an admiral,” Chelsea said. “I’m creative, so it was a great exercise.”

And she's found her way to give back to the program she credits with making such a difference in her university experience: she just started a job as a Marketing and Events Coordinator at UVic Co-op and Career. Which still leaves her in the evenings for dreams about dystopias.

Noted children's advocate seeks wider impacts

BY KIM WESTAD

Carolyn Peacock has always been an advocate for children, even when she was herself.

In grade three, she often went home with bloody hands after getting into the strap at the Edmonton school she attended. Her crime? Defending other children who were being bullied. Those children were usually immigrants and picked on, as she too had been at school.

Peacock is Cree, a member of the Ennech Nation just outside Edmonton, and grew up with her grandparents in the city.

“I held my head high and wouldn’t cry,” Peacock, now 37, remembers. “I wouldn’t give the nun the satisfaction of knowing they had hurt me because I didn’t think I was wrong.”

At the end of the year, she was given the award for best citizenship.

That resilience and sense of justice has followed her throughout her life, leading to a career in social work where she did precedent-setting work in the field of Indigenous adoptions.

Now Peacock is back on her homestretch teaching. She received one of the top marks in UVic’s social work master’s program this year and will graduate this June.

And she did this while working full-time and helping raise her 10 grandchildren, one of whom is se-

She executed much of her academic work via distance education, which UVic offers in several faculties. It allows students to do the majority of their studying in their communities.

Peacock worked on her masters while in Edmonton, where she was the executive director of the Yellowhead Tribal Services Agency and later in Hobema, near Calgary, where she is the executive director of Kashekahow’s Children’s Society on the Samson First Nation.

“Tuition has been very disciplined. I went to work, then came home and did housework and cooked supper for my family, and then I sat and studied,” Peacock said she had “wonderful family support” and was determined to finish her masters.

“I loved every minute of it. I can’t say enough about the UVic program. It was validating to learn that a lot of the practices and programs that I had developed were already best practices, that they were innovative, creative and culturally appropriate.”

One of the highlights of the UVic program was the respect and recognition of Indigenous knowledge, Peacock said.

“The things I know as an Indigenous person were recognized and written about. It was clear in the teaching that Indigenous knowledge can be learned from.”

At the June convocation, 24 of the students being awarded their master’s in social work are Indigenous, as are several of the professors and the director of the School of Social Work.

Jacquie Green—also known by her Haisla name, Kundoqk—is the first Indigenous director of any school of social work in Canada.

“Carolyn has been pivotal with respect to support for First Na- tions child welfare across Canada,” Green said. “She is one of the best students I’ve had the privilege of working with.”

Peacock also hopes to see the number of Indigenous graduates from the UVic program increase, and to see the power structure in society become more balanced.

“For so long, so much was written about us, and not from us,” she said.

A large group of Peacock’s family are coming out to UVic for this June’s ceremony, including grandchildren who have never been on a plane before. While they might be most ex-

pected about that, their grandma can’t wait for them to be on the university campus where Indigenous culture is welcomed.

“For hope among mutual respect and understanding of people of different cultures and I think that is happening more. That is what I loved most about UVic—that respect. It wasn’t my experience attending school before.”

MILLS CONTINUED FROM P1

Ainus law project organized jointly through the Indigenous Bar Assocation and UVic’s Indigenous Law Research Clinic. Currently. Mills balances his work as a doctoral student with his role as a member of the Board of Directors of the Indigenous Bar Association.

Mills is the fourth UVic law student to be named a Trudeau scholar since the faculty's graduate program was first established in 2004.

The UVic AERO Team — 40 mechanical, electrical, and computer engineers involved in the design of undergraduate and graduate students who design, build and fly unmanned aerial vehicles — came away this year’s national student armament systems competition with a third-place win in the operational phase category. This year, the unmanned aerial systems competition is sponsored by the Department of Defense, and the eight-month program includes one term spent abroad and one term at home.

The UVic AERO Team — 40 students from 40 universities across 35 nations will be showcased at the 12th annual IPN conference in Brussels, Belgium, in Sept. 2014. Launched in 2009, the CANEU-COOP program is a partnership between UVic, the University of Waterloo, FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences in Austria, Baden- Wuerttemberg Co-operative State University in Germany. CANEU-COOP offers UVic and Waterloo students the opportunity to gain from their academic courses by applying the knowledge they have gained from their academic courses by participating in the startup competition with a third-place win in the operational phase category. This year, the unmanned aerial systems competition is sponsored by the Department of Defense, and the eight-month program includes one term spent abroad and one term at home.

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Far from her comfort zone, grad grows and shines

BY LINDSAY GAGEL

As recipient of the Jubilee Medal for the Faculty of Science. Leslie (Luyan) Ren is finishing top of her faculty. Despite earning a near-perfect 90+ grade average, for Ren, the university experience was about more than just academics.

“It was a pretty challenging last five years,” she admits with a smile. “I wasn’t even aware there was an award, so I’m actually pleasantly surprised!”

After completing high school in her native China, Ren was determined to move to Canada. Learn English and get a university education. She chose UVic for the climate, beauty and size, and because it was a research-based university. “It was the best decision I ever made,” she says confidently.

Ren began liking school more and more as her English improved, and she says her senior year as a financial mathematics student was quite enjoyable. “Language is one of the biggest barriers internationally students face,” she explains. “I worked really hard on it my first year. As recipient of the Jubilee Medal I’m quite enjoyable. “Language is one of the biggest barriers internationally students face,” she explains. “I worked really hard on it my first year.”

Ren says confidently.

Ren is taking some time off of scholarly endeavors this summer to enjoy her accomplishments, but she’s staying busy networking and gathering the RBCM’s transition from a government agency to a Crown corporation. It was an historic turning point for the institution, with its new corporate structure allowing it to raise its profile and secure a more solid financial footing. The new organization—incorporating the RBCM, BC Archives, Helmcken House, St. Ann’s Schoolhouse, and the Netherlands Carillon—provided the flexibility to plan major exhibits and to embark on fundraising efforts. A number of international exhibitions were launched during Rafferty’s tenure and successful partnerships were formed with other leading institutions, including the British Museum.

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BY JOHN THRELFALL

Few students would be proud of being called a scam artist, but theatre grad Max Johnson is—just note the alternate spelling. Johnson, who has been working for local professional theatrical company Theatre SKAM since 2011 (associates are charmingly dubbed “SKAM artists”), is graduating this June with a double major in writing and theatre. And the practical experience he learned at Phoenix Theatre has made him a valued member of SKAM’s team.

As with many students in the Faculty of Fine Arts, Johnson didn’t wait until graduation to put his experiential learning to work. He was hired into a part-time position at SKAM while only in his second year. “Theatre is a department where you absolutely get out of it what you put in,” says Johnson. “My entire time at university was spent stepping sideways into things that would lead me places I never expected—which is how I got into marketing and Theatre SKAM in the first place.”

Even though marketing and communications wasn’t his first choice as a specialization, that’s where he was needed at SKAM. “They needed someone with writing experience—and I was part of a group where I needed to solve a lot of crises,” he recalls. And when Johnson’s communications team of three lost two members due to illness and the Tohoku earthquake in Japan, so she was out of the picture making sure her family was okay), he soon found himself as a solo act. “It was a crash course on marketing, publicity, photography and media relations,” he says. “It definitely acclimated me to the whole trial-by-fire scenario.”

No surprise then, that SKAM thought Johnson would be a good fit when they found themselves in a similar situation: just as they were beginning to plan a tour of their show Cariboo Buckaroo, a medical crisis and an unexpected resignation left them bust in the dust.

While it sounds funny now, Johnson recalls it as being anything but. “I had never planned a tour before, but suddenly I was the sole person responsible for finding venues,” he says. “Then while the show was on tour, I was the only person left in the office. But it turned out to be a very harmonious fit—I got the vibe of the company very quickly.” While he started as a tour coordinator, Johnson is now SKAM’s full-time Administrative Assistant, and soon to be Artistic Associate.

Given the current drumbeat of practical employability, does Johnson ever worry about pursuing a career in the arts? “I took a couple years off after high school to try and come up with something more practical than the arts, but I couldn’t think of anything I wanted to study outside of that,” he admits. “I could have become an electrician, but that’s not where my skills lay.”

Ultimately, says Johnson, studying theatre at UVic revealed his true passion. “I wanted to better myself, and that’s not where my skills lay.”

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Ben McConnell, a law graduate whose success is a life-study in perseverance. bit.ly/14-persennce

Amy Becker, an anthropology grad who’s undergraduate research project is helping to restore First Nations place-names on Vancouver Island. bit.ly/14-place

Johnson in the Theatre SKAM office. Behind him are interns Colette Hubel and Chase Herbert—also UVic theatre students.
A decade ago he was recording the likes of A-list rockers R.E.M., Bryan Adams and the Foo Fighters, but those days you’d more likely find Kirk McNally tweaking the levels in the MacLaurin Building’s recording studio. But as the Audio Specialist and Recording Engineer for the School of Music since 2004, the best part of McNally’s job is that he doesn’t really have a typical day.

“I can be teaching a recording class or mentoring a work-study student or collaborating with a faculty member on a creative project,” he says with characteristic quiet humour. “Every day is a varied day, and that’s a good day for me.”

With a Masters in Music from McGill and a professional career working at some of the industry’s top recording studios, McNally has spent much of his past decade on campus putting UVic on par with other Canadian institutions. Not only does he teach with the joint Computer Science/Music program, but he also designed and maintains four digital studio rooms, trains the technicians responsible for the recording and sound reinforcement of all School of Music concerts, and supports any faculty, staff or student with audio needs.

Across campus, McNally is also a member of the Computer Advisory Committee and worked in collaboration with the Mearns Centre for Learning to upgrade the library’s multi-media rooms.

Not that he’s given up on his recording background. Just as this interview was happening, McNally was completing his latest CD collaboration with the School of Music’s Colin Tilney—an internationally renowned harpsichord, clarinettist and fortepiano artist. He’s recorded albums for the Lafayette String Quartet and music for filmmaker and composer John Celona as well. “I also work with external people, like Victoria Symphony’s Terence Tam and his wife, the pianist Lorraine Min, and Symphony cellist Brian Yoon, as well as Pacific Opera,” he says.

What brings this level of classical talent to UVic, rather than record at the Royal Theatre? “We’ve got a good recital hall that’s quieter than any of the options downtown,” he says. “And we’ve got great pianos in our Stevewares.”

McNally has also started collaborating with local radio stations CFUV and CBC, the latter of which he assisted with their recent “Blues for Eat” concert supporting Giller Prize-winning author and UVic alumnus Esi Edugyan’s Half-Blood Blues as a contender for the Canada Reads competition. “We sent a student down and by all accounts he did a really great job,” he says. “That was the first inkling that we could be a valuable partner for doing remotes, because CBC simply can’t afford to bring people over from Vancouver anymore.”

McNally looks at both this kind of community engagement and the increasing popularity of his sound courses—demand for which has more than doubled since he came on board—as evidence that his work here has only just begun. “The studios still have plenty of room to grow,” he says.

Given all McNally does at UVic—collaborating as part of the live electronics trio The Krells—it’s almost hard to believe he has time to miss his old rock-and-roll lifestyle. “I miss the environment, and I miss the people who are drawn to work in big studios... The hours, not so much,” he laughs. “I do miss the scope of the projects—working on something that goes out to that many people in the world is a pretty cool feeling. And so is training the next generation of recording artists.”

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Witness blanket at CU VIC

The Witness Blanket, created by Kwakwaka’wakw artist and Master Carver Carey Newman pictured above with UVic’s Dr. Leslie Brown (right), was presented May 20 for the first time during CU VIC 2014, a global conference hosted by the University last month to highlight innovative community engagement and the increasing popularity of his sound courses—demand for which has more than doubled since he came on board—as evidence that his work here has only just begun. “The studios still have plenty of room to grow,” he says.

Given all McNally does at UVic—in addition to his personal creative collaborations as part of the live electronics trio The Krells—it’s almost hard to believe he has time to miss his old rock-and-roll lifestyle. “I miss the environment, and I miss the people who are drawn to work in big studios... The hours, not so much,” he laughs. “I do miss the scope of the projects—working on something that goes out to that many people in the world is a pretty cool feeling. And so is training the next generation of recording artists.”