A glance back as Cassels presidency winds down

BY JODY PATERSON

Even when the opportunity that came knocking was an invitation to become the president of the University of Victoria, Jamie Cassels had to really think about whether he was prepared to give up teaching.

He loved seeing his law students fired up by what they were learning, but Cassels also recognized that as president, he’d be helping shape the education of every UVic student, not just the ones who passed through his law classes. He’d be helping shape a collegial, collaborative and inclusive workplace, too, “the kind of place that I’d like to work at.”

So he said yes. And eight years on, his many admirers at UVic are very glad he did.

Cassels will end his term as president in November, when incoming president Kevin Hall takes the helm. It’s a time of reflection for Cassels, who has taught and worked at UVic for almost 40 years in roles ranging from law professor to Vice President Academic and Provost, and on up to president.

Cassels doesn’t like the word “legacy,” but does hope that his time as president has helped the university identify and tap into its authentic strengths.

“UVic’s research culture—along with its focus on students, engagement with community and work tackling global challenges like climate change and reconciliation—was already well-established. Those weren’t things I imposed. They were in the DNA of the university,” he says. “Perhaps my legacy has been helping the university shape its own narrative around these

Indigenous languages as lessons in hope

Onowa McIvor becomes the third recipient of the UVic President’s Chair for contributions to Indigenous language scholarship and for the impacts her work is having on communities revitalizing culture.

BY JODY PATERSON

In another time, Onowa McIvor would have learned the language of her ancestors from her mother, who in turn would have learned it from her parents, back through the generations. That personal truth has fed McIvor’s passion for the revival of Indigenous languages in Canada for more than 20 years.

McIvor’s vital contributions to this important field of research have now earned her the prestigious President’s Chair, the highest academic honour the University of Victoria can bestow on a faculty member, replacing Distinguished Professorships at UVic. She is the third person to receive the award, which was created to recognize faculty who have achieved great distinction in research and research-inspired teaching; made substantial contributions to UVic and the wider community; and championed the pursuit of excellence in research, teaching and community-university engagement.

“UVic has a longstanding commitment to working with communities on Indigenous language revitalization, and the impact of revitalized language in communities is profound,” says UVic President Jamie Cassels. “Onowa McIvor’s work is inspiring and uplifting, and we are so fortunate to have a researcher and teacher of her calibre at UVic.”

McIvor, an associate professor in UVic’s Department of Indigenous Education, says she’s honoured to have been chosen for the President’s Chair. She acknowledges some discomfort with the way awards single out one person for recognition, when in fact the work of Indigenous language revitalization and Indigenous culture overall is so much about the wisdom and efforts of the collective.

SEE PRESIDENT’S CHAIR P.8

A UVIC PHOTO SERVICES

UVIC PHOTO SERVICES

The University of Victoria’s community newspaper

ring.uvic.ca

OCTOBER 2020
it is one year since the tragic bus accident in Bamfield, May 31, 2019, near the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre. In a message to the UVic community at the start of term, President Jamie Cassels shared his profound sadness for the deaths last year of Emma Machado and John Groves, two first-year biology students, and for the difficult aftermath of the accident for all students involved and their families.

In remembrance

The university, in honour of the wishes of Emma and John, is establishing two scholarships in remembrance. The scholarship in Emma’s name has already been awarded to a UVic undergraduate student in the Department of Biology. The scholarship in John’s name will be confirmed in the coming months.

A memorial bench—graced with a plaque about Emma and John, and featuring two bicycles, one of which belongs to the family of John Groves—will be installed as this place of remembrance and reflection.

Progress on recommendations

Following the accident, the university conducted an external review by an external consultant with relevant expertise. UVic released the subsequent recommendations that were submitted in June and also announced important changes for UVic field trips to Bamfield in response to the recommendations.

The report identifies 43 recommendations of varying complexity—all of the university fully accepts and is actively working to implement in their entirety.

There are three complete, twenty recommendations are currently in progress and 20 in are planning stages, with a number of these on track for completion by the end of this year. All recommendations related to travel and trip planning will be completed before field trips recommence.

Due to COVID-19, the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre is not booking field trips until at least April 2021. Last month, the BC government and Hais-aah Kw Towards First Nations announced they have partnered to make improvements to Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre.

UVic encourages students, faculty and staff who, in thinking back to this time last year, also find they need support to contact the available services.

Cassels’ full text can be found in his September online article at bit.ly/20-hr-learn for details of how UVic is remembering John and Emma, as well as progress on the recommendations and a link to the government news release on the road improvements.

Abandoned bicycles

Since March 2020, Campus Security staff have collected approximately 100 bicycles from campus bike racks. If your bike was left on campus, you’ll need a description of your bike or proof of ownership to retrieve it. Bicycles not claimed by Oct. 31 will be recycled, donated or disposed of through the UVic Surplus Asset Disposal Program, with any funds received going to student bursaries. Contact Campus Security to claim your bike. More info: uvic.ca/security

CASSELS PRESIDENCY CONTINUED F-1

things, and for me it’s been a chance to live out my own values through my work.

Spending the final months of his presidency in the grips of a global pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges, with COVID complicating every facet of UVic operations. “It has turned the lives of our students, staff and faculty upside down,” says Cassels. But at the same time he notes that there couldn’t be a more vivid example of the importance of lifelong learning, one of the tenets he most values.

“Just think about how much we’ve all learned through this,” Cassels emphasizes. “The pandemic has shown us the importance of higher education, of having researchers ready to respond to the questions we need answers to, and students on pathways to adapt to a changing future. It demonstrates that what really matters is not what you know, but having the skills to go and find the answers. Education is the bridge over the gap that we are currently looking across."

In 2009, when he was vice President Academic and Provost, Cassels’ commitment to UVic’s distinct research and teaching led to the creation of a program of undergraduate research awards that were subsequently—and and his great surprise—named in his honor as the Jamie Cassels Undergraduate Research Awards (JCURA).

The annual financial awards encourage third- and fourth-year undergraduate students to pursue original research and to develop an understanding of the research discipline. Each year, more than 100 students receive a JCURA every year. “Jamie has identified the strengths of UVic and given them a structure through which they embrace all of our students,” says Felix Hege Thorson, a UVic professor in the Department of German, Austrian and Slavic Studies.

For Jamie, it is part of that for faculty, he implemented the Strategic Framework for 2011 and onward, which would drive us together across faculties with a common goal.

Cassels has been fortunate to work at an institution that shares his commitment to building the continuity from the classroom to the world. He appreciates that UVic’s diverse co-op education options, field schools and lab experiences give students the opportunity to get their hands dirty in their field of knowledge.

COVID has complicated that effort. He acknowledges, but the limitations imposed by social distancing requirements are also helping the university understand where it most needs to step up to meet new challenges.

“What are the experiential learning opportunities that really do require us to push back on COVID? How can we safely deliver field schools and lab experiences? We’re asking those questions,” says Cassels.

Cassels values any chance to connect with students, whether it’s a casual chat on the number seven bus, or in more formal ways, such as interacting with student government or in consultations during the run-up to a new strategic plan. But honours events remain his favourite venue to engage students.

“The students are just on fire at those events, and you get a sense of what they want, what they need, what they worry about,” says Cassels. “Every single one of the posters at the event defines a problem that’s important to all of us.”

UVic staff also appreciate Cassels’ open way of engaging. Karissa Sovdi, UVic’s human resources program and projects manager, has been struck by his genuine interest in everyone he meets.

“He’s extremely professional and never pretentious. Humility is the word that comes to mind for me,” says Sovdi, who has worked with Cassels through...
This year, COVID-19 safety restric-
tions kept us from coming together in
person to commemorate and honour
the healing journey of residential
school survivors and their families on
September 30. An extraordinary
virtual Orange Shirt Day nevertheless
inspired UVic's students, faculty, staff
and alumni living in every part of the
world to reflect on how our edu-
cational systems can bring together
Indigenous and non-Indigenous Can-
adians in the spirit of reconciliation.

Orange Shirt Day is a national movement
that takes place every year on September 30. Since its inception, the event has inspired schools and universities across Canada to develop and implement curriculum and ac-
tivities that recognize the damaging impacts on Indigenous peoples who were forced to attend the federally funded, church-run schools. Close to 150,000 Indigenous children and youth attended the schools from the mid-
1800s to 1996, when the last school
closed, and it's estimated that close to
6,000 died while attending residential
schools.

One of the highlights of UVic's on-
live event this year was a conversation
between UVic Chancellor Shlagh Rog-
ers and Phyllis (Jack) Webstad, whose
childhood story about residential
school inspired the Orange Shirt Day
movement.

The event also included messages
from Indigenous Elders and UVic com-
nunity members, and a Lekwungen
drumming presentation.

Countless UVic faculty, staff and
students were present on September 30,
as a visual symbol of our awareness of
the need for ongoing reconciliation—and shared photos
of themselves on social media using
#OrangeShirtDayUVic.

There's also plenty of time to show
your support by making a contribu-
tion to the Elders Engagement Fund,
#UVicEngage. LTE: learning from
one another. This initiative ensures
meaningful engagement and increases
the opportunity for students, fac-
culty and staff to have access to Elders'
knowledge, teachings, and support.
This fund will also support events and
activities such as faculty seminars,
classroom visits, elder honourariums
and meetings with community groups
and local First Nations communities.


UVic’s second annual report on
the Strategic Framework

On May 29, 2018, after months of consultation with more than 2,500 members of the UVic community, the Board of Governors approved A Stru-

The second annual Strategic Framework Implementation Report builds on the efforts of the previous year, emphasizing new initiatives, and
highlighting accomplishments over the past year towards achieving the university's shared vision and goals.

This report also acts as a record of how the university community re-
sponded to the COVID-19 pandemic so far.

The report highlights major in-
itiatives, such as UVic’s activities in
the Office of the President and the
central website, the opening of the
Student Wellness Centre and 24/7
mental health program, and the
Health Sciences initiatives—and also
tells the story of our dedication to
involvement to contribute to a better
place.

In partnership with the Senate of
the University, UVic is bringing together changemakers to help generate solutions to some of the world's most divisive problems.

On Nov. 13 and 14, a virtual forum
will explore topics and issues on the
theme of bridging this divide in times
of COVID-19. The two-day event will
draw on emerging trends and lessons
learned through the bi-weekly webi-
inars which have taken place since
May and continue through October.

Three years ago, the inaugural
Victoria Forum in November 2017
brought together approximately 500
participants representing different
levels of governments, business,
ademia and civil society to take
stock of the state of diversity and
inclusiveness in Canada on its 150th
anniversary, and to look to the future.

“We are honoured to have the
Senate of Canada partner with us for the
2020 Victoria Forum,” says Paul
Klein, chair of the Victoria Forum
and dean of UVic's Gustavson School
of Business.

The Virtual Victoria Forum 2020
(webinars) and Victoria Forum
knowledge, teachings, and support. This fund will also support events and activities such as faculty seminars, classroom visits, elder honourariums and meetings with community groups and local First Nations communities.


Victoria Forum bridges divides in
wake of global pandemic

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Great BC ShakeOut

Even during this time of COVID
we all need to be prepared for other emergencies, including earthquakes. The annual Great BC ShakeOut earthquake drill takes place Oct. 15 at 10:15 a.m. Whether you’re in the classroom, at home or in the office, the five minutes to become prepared. Visit
uvic.ca/shakeout for resources and
practice the Drill. Cover and Hold On for 60 seconds. Remember you are.

More: uvic.ca/shakeout or
epmanager@uvic.ca

Leed Gold for
District Energy Plant

The university’s District Energy
Plant (DEP) recently became the
ninth UVic building to earn LEED
Gold certification from the Canada
Green Building Council. LEED is a
system for building using sustainable
construction practices, the DEP’s
efficient boilers fitted with new
control systems, and ultra-efficient
energy transfer stations across
Campus will lead to a minimum of
10 per cent in energy savings annually
and a reduction in GHG’s by 6,500
tones. You can see the DEP in action in parking lot 6, near the
Interfaith Chapel, and take a self-guided tour of the interpretive
panels outside the building.

bit.ly/20-DEP

New mobile
camping app

You can now use a contactless
app to pay for daily or weekly
camping parking. Download the
FreeHonkMobile app from the
AppStore or Google Play, and pay for parking directly from your phone.
Drivers can also opt to receive
a 15-minute reminder before their
camping session is set to expire, and
are given the option to add more
time remotely. The ability to top up
to the next hour and adjust the need
to run out and feed the meter
when classes or study sessions run late. More info: uvic.ca/parking

Campus Cycling
Plan work begins at
University Drive

Construction is kicking off on
the first phase of the Campus Cycling
Plan implementation. A separated
cycle lane and pedestrian pathway
will be installed at the University
Drive and Ring Road intersection
during October and November.
Watch for safety signage and
intermittent path closures.

bit.ly/20-cycling

UVic Campus
Pharmacy

We’re in the SUB! UVic SUB, 3800 Finnerty Rd., 250 721-3400 • Monday – Friday 9:00-5:00
www.UvicPharmacy.com

Why go off campus to fill a prescription?
Save yourself some time and use our on-campus pharmacy, conveniently located in the SUB. Our professional staff is ready to
listen and help you with all your health needs.

Drop by and experience our Heartfelt service.
“We’re putting better tools in place,” says Evins. “It’s always been the case that improved efficiency has been the buzzword since my PhD years, but this new modelling approach allows for the more intuitive kind of process that subjects, engineers and developers use when they’re thinking about building design.”

The result is a real-time tool that puts machine-learning algorithms to work exploring more important world issues than how to connect social media users to more cat videos, says Evins with a smile.

The multi-disciplinary research fund is by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Canada Research Software Program and consulting engineering firm WSP—one of eight companies and 10 other entities helping review and advice.

The tools being developed will help these partners to meet the stringent new BC Energy Step Code, which incentivises energy efficiency performance that the research professionals can quickly and easily assess and improve.

“Energy “optimization” has been a hot topic for university researchers for more than a decade, but has had little traction in industry. Surrogate modelling provides an opportunity for building designers to achieve optimal designs while working in their usual intuitive way. It’s very hard to sit down with someone and say, ‘list everything you want in a building,’ which is how optimisation works. With surrogate modelling, it isn’t necessary to state the problem like that,” notes Evins.

The data generated for Evins’ surrogate modelling tools is revealing information that no one has seen before. The work is bringing unprecedented insight into the intricate relationship between individual design elements and how that interplay affects energy efficiency.

Surrogate modelling is multi-disciplinary. Evins’ team features researchers with backgrounds in mathematics, physics, computer science, architecture and engineering.

Evins is in fluid dynamics, which could prove useful as his research team expands its surrogate modelling work to encompass how air flow in and around buildings affects energy efficiency.

Q & A with Sarah Hunt / Talidilaogwa

UVic Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Political Ecology

Sarah Hunt / Talidilaogwa, a member of the Lax Kw’alaams and Kwakwaka’wakw Nations from the northern part of Vancouver Island, grew up locally on the Songhees reserve and is descended from the coast Haida. Hunt completed her undergraduate degree at UVic, and PhD at Simon Fraser University. She currently serves as Professor of BC First Nation government professor position given to Canada’s best and brightest scholars. Here she sits down with The Ring in discuss her research, her return home, and what it’s like to be a role model for the huge number of Indigenous students who are changing the way academia works across the country.

In addition to being a professor, you’re also a UVic alum. What brought you back to the island?

Since completing my undergrad at UVic, I’ve spent over two decades collaborating with Indigenous communities across Turtle Island. After working in different places like BC for the past five years, I was eager to come back home to the island so I can work more closely with my community.

What questions have you taken up in your research with Indigenous communities?

My research has focused on various kinds of violence—systemic violence, interpersonal and gendered violence—and the aftermaths of violence. This work has exposed the problems within Canadian systems of law and governance. My work has been about having to try and achieve justice for Indigenous People—whether in relation to questions of land title, environmental decision making, child welfare, or the crisis of gendered violence that has resulted in thousands of women and two-spirit people being murdered. In recent years, I’ve kept this focus but deepened my engagement specifically with Indigenous nations on the coast, so returning back to UVic and to the island lets me really immerse myself in these coastal communities.

What can you share more about your research chair?

In May, I started a faculty position in Environmental Studies, as Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Political Eco-

In this new role, I will be taking up questions of justice from within the perspectives of Indigenous Peo-

People from the island nations—the Coast Salish, Nuu-Chah-Nulth and Kwak’waka’wakw. Our nations have always lived beside one another, and have worked in relationship while making decisions about our waters and lands, fish and trees, and wellbe-

ning of our families.

Over the next five years, I will be working on testing and exploring with people from the island nations to look more closely at how we under-

stand justice with one another, specifically with all ecologically specific teachings and practices. Within many of our teachings, we as Indigenous people have to be deeply interwoven with the be-

ings of the ocean, lands, plants, fish, animals and spirit world that exist within our territories.

We don’t view these as resources or environments separate from us, but as living beings, or in some cases as expressions of the same spirit that animates who we are as peoples. So the research I’ll be doing will centre on these teachings in order to understand what this means for achieving justice for our people, on our terms.

For us, our lands and waters interwoven with justice for young people in our communities? How do we think of ending violence against women, when we understand women’s lives to be inseparable from our ancestral obligations to ocean life? These are big questions, and I’m really excited to have this opportunity to immerse myself in research that allows me to practice my culture, learn my language, and connect more deeply with people and places that my ancestors have always known.

How will you connect with Indig-

enous students?

As an Indigenous professor, I take my responsibility to Indigenous students very seriously. When I started my undergrad at UVic in the 1990s, I was one of very few Indigenous faculty members here—Lorna Williams in the Faculty of Education. Since then, the landscape for Indigenous faculty and students has drastically changed. But universities can still be a daunting place, and often a hostile place, for Indigenous youth, community and faculty. I try to make my classroom places where Indigenous students are seen and heard, and where their re-

alities are centred. I work closely with Indigenous grad students to support them in their graduate research that addresses the needs of their own communities. I’m also committed to supporting Indigenous student leadership, and believe in the power of student resistance movements in transforming colonial institutions—including much of my own activism started here when I was an undergrad involved with the Native Students Union.

What does it mean to be a role model?

Primarily, being a role model means walking the talk. By this I mean that it’s not enough for scholars to talk about social change or what to write about questions of justice—we need to put our bodies on the line and immerse ourselves in the struggles that are considered difficult. For me, this means showing up and actively supporting community events related to struggles over land, as well as over murdered and missing women and 2S2P people. It also means working in solidarity with struggles for racial justice, like Black Lives Matter, as well as housing justice, harm reduc-

tion and many other pressing issues of inequality that our communities are facing. I come to this work as an activist first, and scholar second, and I want to show young people that they don’t have to leave your activism or your culture behind in order to suc-

However, it is possible, to bring your whole self to a job like this.

What do you hope your research will achieve?

On a personal level, I hope that this research on coastal justice will allow me to learn my Kwak’wala language and to spend time in Kwakwaka’wakw territories where my ancestors have al-

ways cultivated a sense of themselves by knowing intimately the ocean, the shorelines and lands that sustain us as a people.

On a larger level, I hope to create space for us to change the way justice is talked about for Indigenous People, both within our own communities and in environmental movements, conversations on climate change, water governance and land rights. I hope the research will reveal tools and resources for Indigenous People to deeply understand our expressions of self-determination and to know that the land is our homes and lands that sustain us as a people.

evins at the new campus district energy plant. UVIC PHOTO SERVICES
Kaoru Atagi watched his father, Tsugunori, fish in the summers and build boats in the winters. The Atagi Boatworks opened in 1905 and Kaoru had thought one day his son, Tseshaht chief Yelikóx, might inherit his family’s business. But in 1939, they were served Murakami strawberries from the Salt Spring Island farm cleared by Keizo Murakami’s father.

These are some of the untold stories of dispossessed Japanese Canadians who experienced profound loss in the 1940s following their permanent residence and total liquidation of their property. This fall, the Landscapes of Injustice project—launched six years ago and led by the University of Victoria—opened a new exhibition on the lesser-known aspects of Japanese Canadian interment in the 20th century.

“Broken Promises,” which opened last month at the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre in Burnaby, frames the truth about the dispossession of Japanese Canadians through the personal histories of seven families who lost their homes, personal property and livelihoods—along with their civil and human rights—despite government guarantees of protection.

The dispossession and multi-generational trauma are a direct result of a sustained federal campaign initiated by the Canadian government eight decades ago.

“This exhibition launches in the midst of long overdue conversations about racism in Canada,” says project director Jordan Stanger-Ross (historian). “It is a time for excavating how our present realities are shaped by past inequalities.”

Using a wealth of previously unreleased photographs, personal interviews, official documentation and letters of outrage and protest to explore this disturbing past, “Broken Promises” invites the public to grapple with the complicated legacies of racism in Canada.

BY TARA SHARPE & PHILIP COX

What did ancient wool dogs eat? Mostly fish that people fed them.

The study’s co-authors say that such perspective allows us to better understand human-dog relationships, animal husbandry practices and the cultural and economic significance that those dogs had in Tseshaht Territory and beyond.

Der St. Claire is an adopted Tseshaht community member who has worked in partnership with the Tseshaht First Nation since the early 70s. He has been instrumental in connecting scholars, students, and Indigenous youth with Tseshaht history through archaeology to develop scientific capacity to confirm and expand what is often common knowledge amongst Indigenous people.

“New tools and techniques can be useful to expand and refine our collective knowledge about a place,” says St. Claire.

He explains that a value of this study is how the Tseshaht and other First Nations relied on the wool dog for its thick hair that was used for textiles, such as, blankets and other regalia. The wool was considered a status symbol and was worn by high-ranking individuals. The importance of the wool dog, however, lessened with the arrival of a cheaper, more plentiful supply of sheep’s wool and other imported textiles.

McKechnie has been working with St. Claire for over 15 years in Tseshaht territory. McKeehn and his colleagues who study dogs recently published a second related paper, “Domestic Dogs and Wild Canids of the Northwest Coast of North America.” This study looks more broadly at domestic dog husbandry across the Northwest Coast and reveals that southern BC was a hotspot for domestic dogs.

“Domestic dogs appear to be a substantial and enduring part of village life in coastal Indigenous communities over the past 5,000 years but were especially prominent in areas historically associated with the use of small white dogs for wool,” says McKechnie.

“Dog are especially prominent in sites around the Salish Sea and western Vancouver Island and for sites where skeletal measurements were taken, small sized ‘woolly’ dogs were proportionally more abundant than larger ‘village’ dogs,” he adds.

For Hillis the time spent with Tseshaht community members during the fieldwork on Keiziko Island (Kakamikil) was a highlight of his UVic education. Using scientific methods to corroborate and extend Indigenous knowledge is something he is continuing in his graduate program. McKeehn and St. Claire and their future field school students are grateful for the ongoing collaboration with Tseshaht First Nation and Parks Canada and the many other First Nations who support archaeological research in their territories.

Anthropology undergraduate Dylan Hillis’ work in collaborative coastal community research confirms Indigenous knowledge of dogs’ diet.

BY ANNE MACLAURIN

Along Vancouver Island’s west coast, the Tseshaht First Nation span the Broken Group Islands, with thousands of years of village history.

For the past few summers the Tseshaht First Nation has generously collaborated with UVic archaeologists Iain McKechnie and Denis St. Claire, Parks Canada, the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre and Hakai Institute to bring UVic students into the field. Tseshaht First Nation community members including project members, Donna Robinson and Cole Gomez-Leishman as well as the Tseshaht Beach Keepers played a significant role in sharing culture and knowledge with the students.

An exciting outcome of this collaboration has been the isotopic analysis of domestic dogs remains dating back 3,000 years including an ancient breed of ‘woolly dog’ on Keiziko Island (Kakamikil), an ancient Tseshaht settlement in the Broken Group Islands. For UVic student and lead author Dylan Hillis, the analysis of ancient dog remains was the cornerstone of his undergraduate honours research and won him a competitive $2.5-million grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and 83 million in matching contributions from institutional partners.

The exhibition opened to the public Sept. 29 and runs till April 2022, ahead of a national tour which is scheduled to start in Toronto in May 2021, followed by Victoria in early 2022, with dates in Halifax and other regional locations yet to be announced.

The project is supported by a $2.5-million grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and $3 million in matching contributions from institutional partners. The exhibition received an additional grant of $285,000 from Canadian Heritage.

The untold stories of dispossessed Japanese Canadians

BY VERA SHARPE & PHILIP COX

It is the culmination of six years of award-winning research by Landscape of Injustice, the multimillion-dollar research and public history project begun in 2014. One of the largest humanities-based research projects in Canada today, Landscapes of Injustice is based at U Vic’s Centre for Pacific Initiatives and involves 15 other partner institutions including four other universities, two government agencies, four major Japanese Canadian organizations, one provincial and one federal museum, and three international heritage organizations, as well as researchers in two faculties (humanities and social sciences) at UVic.

Also unveiled last month was a new website (bit. uvic. ca/canadian-heritage) that complements the exhibition and presents the findings of Landscapes of Injustice in an accessible, compelling narrative format. “Broken Promises” involved a collaborative approach to learning and teaching a history of injustice that enables those with lived experiences to tell their own stories in a way that speaks to a broader, collective history. The process was grounded by community-based knowledge and priorities.

The community engagement continues with the exhibition’s launch live-streamed Sept. 26, has already been viewed more than 4,000 times. Visit bit.ly/20-untold to learn more about the families featured in the new exhibition, to view archival photos and find out more about this multi-year project and, for those who cannot visit the exhibition in person, a virtual tour will be available in the near future.

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The Ring

October 2020

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The untold stories of dispossessed Japanese Canadians
Student support in a time of uncertainty

BY DOROTHY EGGENBERGER

Regina Eryılmaz moved to Victoria a year ago to enroll in UVic's Continuing Studies diploma program in business administration. She was no stranger to living abroad, as an entrepreneur, she’s experienced operating across borders.

Eryılmaz studied architecture in Turkey and landscape design in Germany. She combined the two fields in 2008 when she founded her own firm, BGM Design. The international company has completed major projects with leading architectural firms in Italy, England, Libya, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

Eryılmaz was traveling for work amidst her studies when the COVID-19 pandemic reached Canada. “I was stuck in Istanbul during the pandemic. My business trip combined with the pandemic and my flight turned into a complete nightmare,” says Eryılmaz.

Doctors hesitated to clear Eryılmaz for travel, but she also had to return to Canada immediately to keep her student visa. So she reached out to UVic for help.

The English Language Centre and Continuing Studies teams were tremendously supportive, she recalls. “They did whatever was necessary to protect my rights, and even gave me information about the scholarships I could receive, in case I needed any financial support during this period. Knowing that I could get financial support and also the support of the team was priceless.”

Eryılmaz is now back in Victoria with her student visa and on track to complete her program.

English Language Centre adapts

Eryılmaz was just one of more than 300 international students at UVic this March. The team at the English Language Centre—part of Continuing Studies—had a lot of questions about how to best support their students’ needs when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Canada. The centre has offered intensive English programs at UVic since 1970, and is now one of the largest on-campus English schools in Canada. And their students—each uncertain and vulnerable in their own way—needed timely help to change direction.

The small team of eight ELC staff had confidence and trust in each other, having worked together for a very long time—some for over 20 years. So even facing a shifting mass of circumstances—a patchwork of new travel restrictions, evolving rules for campus gatherings to share information, and the overall looming uncertainty of how much the COVID-19 would turn the world upside-down—they adapted by focusing on their principal shared priority: supporting the needs of the students. “Our goal is to help the student and everyone buys into that. So we help each other the same way. No one is left alone with a student they can’t help,” says Stefan Girbach, Director of Finance and Student Services. The team worked on a case-by-case basis, helping each student with their unique situation and often coordinatig with parents overseas, homestay families, visa agents, and airlines.

“I would like to express my sincere thanks to the whole team, especially Kate McDonald (Admissions & Immigration Assistant) and Jolene Kendzel (Business & Management Program Assistant),” says Eryılmaz. “They were always with me on the other end of the phone and mail every minute.”

Six months into the pandemic, ELC continues to develop and deliver online programs. Their new student-centred, innovative suite of online English programs combine real-time lessons with expert instructors, class chats, interactive activities and assignments. Visit uvic.ca/eld for details.

Digital app helps families increase physical activity and healthy eating

BY JODY PATERSON

Doctors hesitated to clear Eryılmaz for travel, but she also had to return to Canada immediately to keep her student visa. So she reached out to UVic for help.

The English Language Centre and Continuing Studies teams were tremendously supportive, she recalls. “They did whatever was necessary to protect my rights, and even gave me information about the scholarships I could receive, in case I needed any financial support during this period. Knowing that I could get financial support and also the support of the team was priceless.”

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Science Venture’s summer online a smashing success

BY ANNE TOLSON

As they catch their breath and look back over the last few months, leaders of UVic’s Science Venture are astounded at how successfully their team managed to transition its hugely popular youth summer camps to a virtual format.

This summer, Science Venture ran 55 week-long camps for more than 1,600 young people—close to the same as last year’s total—at no cost to families. Science Venture provides high-quality, year-round programming in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) to thousands of children and youth on Vancouver Island each year with summer camps, clubs and workshops that are known for their strong emphasis on hands-on, in-person learning.

“In March 12, we suspended our programming and it was hard to imagine then how our summer would end up. I had a lot of apprehension,” recalls David Jackson, acting director of Science Venture, which is supported by UVic’s Faculties of Engineering, Science and Education. As educational institutions moved primarily online, Science Venture did the same. Most of the camp leaders—who numbered 35 this summer instead of the usual 40—worked quickly to rearrange summer camp formats, adapt content, rewrite job descriptions and hold a trial session in April and May.

Each week starting in mid-June, the camps focused on a different theme, including exploring the great outdoors, comics and cartooning, oceanography and kids’ cooking. Campers were organized by age into groups of 24, with each group meeting online daily for 30 to 90 minutes, depending on the cohort’s age. “I think we were all surprised by how overwhelmingly successful our staff were in what they accomplished,” said Jackson. “We got great feedback from parents, the kids had a great time, and I think it’s safe to say that we now feel very capable and confident about delivering hands-on STEM experiences for youth in a virtual setting.”

The goal was to inspire and prepare campers to participate in specific activities at home, immediately after each online session, said Taylor Reynolds, acting manager of programs. For example, after a session of Exploring the Great Outdoors, younger campers were asked to go outside to create a model of Earthworms, while older campers were challenged with tracking the presence and behaviour of different animals in geographical areas of study.

“We were basically getting them stoked on UVic and providing them with hands-on outdoor activities that they could do themselves at home,” said Reynolds. “Our big goal was to create something that didn’t demand a lot of screen time and to see the seeds of exploration and inquiry in them.”

The group undertook many other activities, including providing virtual STEM homework clubs for grades 4 to 12 in May; sending pre-recorded STEM workshops to 63 classrooms across the province; offering special coding camps for girls; and holding five remote camps in partnership with Indigenous partners. (A separate story about Science Venture’s Uu-a-thluk summer campers for the Nuu-chah-nulth nation is at bit.ly/2O/zRmST.)

Remarkably, Science Venture was able to provide its 2020 summer programming at no cost. This year, part of the funding came from Actus, a national charity that prepares youth to be leaders by engaging them in STEM experiences. Actus provides training, resources and support to its many members, which are located at universities and colleges across Canada.

“Other funding came from Canada Summer Jobs, which funded some of the camp leader positions held by UVic students as part of co-ops. Jackson and Reynolds agree there are many organizations and individuals that helped make Science Venture a success this summer, and some of their highest praise is for parents. “Parents played such a vital role this summer—the camps this year involved families like never before,” said Reynolds. For example, many younger children needed help logging onto Zoom, some kids needed guidance with activities and sometimes parents had to pick up and return equipment loaned by the program.”

“The Science Venture camps not only offered a robust and interesting science curriculum, the instructors were engaging and encouraged student participation and active learning,” said one parent, whose two children participated in several camps. “The Science Venture online classes opened up my children’s eyes to different science topics and jobs in this field.”

This fall, Science Venture continues to offer many online clubs and activities, most with a registration fee. The group, which began operating in 1991, looks forward to being able to phase in-person delivery—when the time is right, in consultation with UVic and on government regulations.

PHILANTHROPY

Lifetime of giving culminates in an endowed chair

Over the course of her life, mathematician Betty Kennedy contributed to UVic and the community in so many ways that to a non-mathematician they may seem countless. And with the same generosity that characterized her life, in her passing Kennedy bestowed UVic with a $3.6-million gift. Through this gift in her will, Kennedy may be best known for creating endowed graduate scholarships in engineering, law, and math and science. She asked she was endowed because, “I love music, I taught mathematics, my husband was a lawyer and my father was an engineer.”

Any additional funds that are received from the gift will be directed towards creating endowed graduate scholarships within the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, and supporting existing endowed chair created by Kennedy. Kennedy may be best known for her contributions as a teachers to hundreds of mathematics and statistics students, first at UBC before coming to UVic where she taught for nearly three decades. As an unpaid mentor to both students and colleagues,” says Professor Emeritus Pauline van den Driessche, Kennedy’s colleague and lifelong friend. “In addition to supporting and empowering generations of mathematicians and statisticians, her leadership played a pivotal role in starting the university’s much lauded co-op program.”

Kennedy was also an instrumental leader in the early development of UVic and was pivotal in the founding of the university’s annual plant sale. The remaining $600,000 will be added to the existing Betty and Gilbert Kennedy Entrance Scholarships in engineering, law, and math and science. Kennedy was also an instrumental leader in the early development of UVic and was pivotal in the founding of the university’s annual plant sale. The remaining $600,000 will be added to the existing Betty and Gilbert Kennedy Entrance Scholarships in engineering, law, and math and science.

“Betty was unique, funny, friendly and kind,” says Rob Lipson. “She lived her life on her own terms. A true original.”

She and her husband spent most of their time at their Galano cottage where she was able to more fully nurture her garden. At the same time, Kennedy remained deeply involved with UVic—particularly as a loyal friend and supporter of Finerty Gardens, as an organizer of the university’s annual plant sale.

It was at her property on Galano where she started more closely considering the interactions between the subjects of mathematics and statistics and biology, converging with her lifelong friend van den Driessche. “At the intersection of mathematics and biology is a critical area of study that allows us to better understand the impact of climate change, pest control and economics,” says van den Driessche. “But perhaps none of these applications is so prominent these days as that this area allows us to understand pandemics.”

Van den Driessche is at the centre of a small but prolific research team working in this area, and the university recently created a joint math—economics and biology degree option in response to student interest. The impact of these researchers has been particularly evident over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, working to understand how the disease spreads and estimate hidden cases.

“The endowed chair in this area will provide an anchor to mathematical biology at UVic,” says Peter Loock, the dean of science. “Betty Kennedy contributed so much to the university over the course of her life, transforming the lives of those whom she taught, worked with and mentored. With this endowed chair, her contributions will be felt well beyond our community, creating a truly global impact on the scientific community.”

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Uncovering hidden COVID-19 cases

Better estimate of true cases can help fight new outbreaks

BY VIMALA JEEVANANDAM

With detected cases of COVID-19 relatively low on Vancouver Island and the province of BC lauded internationally for its comparative success in handling the global pandemic, it’s no surprise some residents see a reason to celebrate. But British Columbians have been warned that the province is still not out of the woods. Large gatherings, continue to be discouraged. While the province has gradually re-opened in recent months, uncertainty remains about the unpredictable ebb and flow of new cases. This uncertainty is partly due to the unknown number of hidden cases.

“...for each case of COVID-19 that we can see and count, there are a number of undetected cases out in our communities,” says Laura Cowen, a University of Victoria statistician. “Those undetected cases can kindle new outbreaks as we continue to re-open. We need to be able to estimate what’s causing us the most concern and understand the scope and help tell the full story of the pandemic.”

Asymptomatic patients, limitations on testing, and the overlap between confirmed cases and other factors, mean that unknown COVID-19 cases are going undetected. Scientists, including Cowen, need to be able to estimate the detection rate so as to evaluate the risk of future waves and the impact of re-opening.

In research funded by the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, a partnership with Victoria Hospitals Foundation and the Canadian Statistical Sciences Institute, Cowen is leading work to uncover this mystery.

“The suite of tools the team is creating will help us understand the characteristics of outbreaks as the province continues to re-open and rules are relaxed. He is building models that focus on identifying patterns of homelessness or certain contact situations, such as within households and in long-term care facilities.”

“By looking at these close contact situations we will allow us to evaluate testing strategies that can effectively and quickly identify outbreaks and potential future waves,” says Ma.

“The team’s research will be used to provide guidance on scenarios where people are in close contact, so we can relax the public health restrictions safely and consider what social and gatherings can safely occur.”

The collaborative research project combines UVic’s top ranking mathematical research with Island Health and Victoria Hospitals Foundations’ health service delivery expertise and data on BC’s COVID-19 cases.

Indigenous languages finding a way forward during COVID

BY LAUREN FROST

In the face of a global pandemic, language revitalization continues to thrive in Indigenous communities across Canada and the world, according to new research by Indigenous education scholar, Onwe McIvor. In June, McIvor received COVID-19 funding from the Faculty of Education to conduct a short-term study of the effects of COVID-19 on Indigenous language revitalization work.

Over the summer, a small research team sought to understand how language teachers and learners responded to the pandemic through use of an online survey and analysis of language revitalization social media pages. Early findings show that many communities have successfully adapted in ways that allowed for the continuation of language revitalization. The study also illustrates the vital role that language is playing in keeping communities safe and informed during a time of crisis.

McIvor discussed these findings as part of a Sept. 21 panel focused on accelerating community resilience during the pandemic.

Virtual language learning

“The pandemic crisis that hit in March of 2020 had the potential to silence Indigenous language work and reduce it to non-critical activity, once again,” says McIvor. But, “what Indigenous Peoples do and have always done in the face of danger and adversity—exercise collective strength and agility.”

According to the team’s surveys, when the pandemic put a pause on face-to-face language revitalization work, nearly 60 per cent shifted their work online.

“Indigenous communities quickly began to create digital resources in their own languages to teach community members about the new virus as well as how to protect themselves,” says McIvor. People also learned how to read public health warnings in their own languages, and the words for COVID-19 symptoms, and shared them on social media.

Switching to virtual language learning may also have lasting benefits for language revitalization work. Their study shows greater accessibility to new online classes from those who were previously unable to participate in face-to-face learning due to geographic location.

Finding the way forward, together

From McIvor’s perspective, collaboration across national and global Indigenous communities has always been at the heart of the Indigenous language revitalization movement, and the sharing of knowledge and experience will continue to play a large role in sustaining the movement during the pandemic. The team’s research will be used to develop resources that draw on the solutions and innovations of diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. These resources will then be shared on an open-access website for Indigenous communities, organizations, and individuals seeking to continue their language work during the pandemic and beyond. “Using these available tools, platforms, and opportunities, the work can safely propel forward and not lose the precious language work that fell away in this time of crisis,” says McIvor. “Indigenous communities’ responses to the pandemic show that, just like the water, our languages always find a way forward.”

Coven's expertise is in studying animal demographics, and the methods that she is adapting are ones she most often applies in fisheries research to measure population size. “To study wildlife and COVID-19, you are looking at a smaller subset of a population to better understand what is going on in a much larger group,” says she. As part of her collaborations to better understand at-risk groups during the pandemic, Coven is currently using modelling approaches to estimate the homeless population of Vancouver Island, and has previously applied related methodologies to estimate the population size and needle sharing behaviour of people who use injection drugs in Victoria.