The University of Victoria’s longstanding commitment and work in research, campus operations and partnerships to protect the environment and improve conditions for the planet and people were recognized by a global assessment of universities. The University of Victoria (UVic) was ranked second in the world among 1,406 institutions, measured in the Times Higher Education (THE) global assessment measures how universities help advance the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Rankings are based on 1,406 institutions identified by the United Nations as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that require urgent action. UVic’s 12th placement in 2022 is in part due to strong performance in multiple areas including tracking and measurement, a key indicator of sustainable campus operations.

As an integral part of its mission as a public institution dedicated to education, discovery and knowledge, UVic continues to apply itself to what matters most to our community members and our shared global existence. “The results show UVic’s deep commitment to advancing the SDGs through research, stewardship, engagement and teaching,” says Kevin Hall, UVic’s president and vice-chancellor.

At UVic we care deeply about what the UN SDGs stand for and their calls to action to create an equitable planet and a sustainable and inclusive economy. We know our university community can make a difference with each innovative research program, campus project and community engagement we undertake—we’ve taken big steps this year, including the launch of a global blueprint for action for people, our planet and prosperity.

UVic’s 12th placement in 2022 is in part due to strong performance in several sustainable development goals. Globally, UVic is second for SDG 13 (Climate Action) and for SDG 15 (Life on Land), and among top five for SDG 14 (Life Below Water). Rankings are based on 1,406 institutions including 24 in Canada. UVic was also the top university in Canada for SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), a key indicator of sustainable campus operations.

The overall rankings reflect UVic’s performance in multiple areas including tracking and reducing the university’s own carbon footprint, its high-quality academic programs, as well as UVic-wide campus sustainability initiatives, and hands-on learning opportunities with diverse communities and Indigenous Peoples.

In the impact areas of climate, environmental change and sustainability, UVic is helping to improve communities and ecosystems locally and internationally. UVic is also among five top universities in Canada, including 24 in Canada.

Four years ago, UVic launched the world’s first law degree to combine the study of Indigenous and non-Indigenous laws. This innovative joint degree program in Canadian Common Law and Indigenous Legal Orders (JD/JID) is breaking new ground for legal education in Canada and has earned UVic’s Faculty of Law a well-deserved national and international reputation for leadership in Indigenous legal education and research.

During convocation ceremonies this June, this memorable first cohort of 25 graduates will cross the stage to receive their degrees. “This is an historic moment, and I am honoured to recognize and congratulate the graduating students of the first JD/JID cohort,” said UVic President Kevin Hall. “They are equipped with unique knowledge, skills and experiences that will enable them to build bridges between multiple legal systems. I look forward to seeing the impact they make on the legal landscape in Canada, and on our ability to move meaningfully and collaboratively towards resolution of the significant and ongoing problems caused by colonialism.”

In April, the class of 2022 gathered with family and friends to celebrate their upcoming graduation at a special recognition event hosted at the Songhees Wellness Centre. Greetings and congratulatory messages were sent by prominent leaders from across the country, including Governor General Mary Simon, Justice Minister and Attorney General of Canada David Lametti, BC’s Advanced Education Minister Anne Kang and former Senator and Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Murray Sinclair.

“Congratulations to the graduating students in this unique program. They are leading the change that we hoped for when we issued the TRC report,” said Sinclair. “I encourage them to go out into the world and to be bold and creative with their unique legal skills and knowledge.”

Interim Dean of Law and JD/JID co-founder Val Napoleon hosted the recognition event, and expressed great enthusiasm for how the new graduates are poised to positively impact law and society.

“Indigenous law is an essential part of Indigenous Peoples being peoples, and it is foundational to Canada’s multi-jurisdictional system,” she said. “Law is an essential ingredient of every society because it is the ingredient of every society because it is the ingredient of every society because it is the ingredient of every society because it is the ingredient of every society because it is the foundation of every society.”

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Molson Prize for sociologist’s advocacy

BY RICHARD DAL MONTE

The University of Victoria acknowledges and respects the lək̓ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and Northern British Columbia and the University of Victoria for most of the last 19 years. She has a bachelor’s degree in economics from UVic and holds CHA and CA designations.

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Sustainable Campus

UVic has been named as one of Canada’s Greenest Employers for the eighth time. The national awards recognize Canadian employers that lead the nation in creating a culture of sustainability and climate action.

“We are proud to be honoured as a green employer again this year,” says Mike Wilson, director of campus planning and sustainability. “The university’s commitment to creating and maintaining a green campus and providing leadership and action on climate change and sustainability is an integral part of our identity. We are looking forward to the launch of our new institutional Climate and Sustainability Action Plan, which was developed in consultation with students, faculty and staff, and it will focus on creative and integrated sustainability solutions and respecting Indigenous ways of knowing.”

Sustainable initiatives that support UVic’s selection in the Canada’s Greenest Employers list for 2022 include:

• A commitment that all new buildings are constructed to meet the LEED Gold standard and better. The new student housing and dining buildings have been designed to meet LEED Gold and Passive House standards. In addition, as part of its building plan, the university prioritizes building on parking lots to help preserve our natural spaces.

• Mobile employees and students to increase sustainabilty on campus through the Campus Sustainability Fund, which provides financial support for new projects, student and staff research, and other sustainability initiatives.

• The University of Victoria has been recognized as one of BC’s top employers and as a Top Diversity Employer in 2022. This recognition is based on the university’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and its efforts to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all employees.

The opening of Building 1 of the Student Housing and Dining project, constructed to Passive House and LEED Gold construction standards while adding 621 new residential spaces for students living on campus.

• Implementation of the Campus Cycling Plan, which will create an AGA and Abilities (AAA) cycling network on campus, and

• Implementation of the Campus Greenway, an east-west greenway across campus.

Canada’s Greenest Employers competition, now in its 15th year, is organized by the Canada’s Top 100 Employers project. UVic was also recognized as one of BC’s top employers for 2022 and was second on Forbes 2022 Canada’s Best Employers list.
Anthropologist awarded for fostering improved Indigenous–municipal connections

BY ANNE MacLAURIN

A local anthropologist who has dedicated much of his career to supporting Indigenous Peoples’ land rights is the latest recipient of the Leadership Victoria Award for Extending Reconciliation.

UVic anthropologist Brian Thom is a leading expert in the interplay between Indigenous cultural connections to place, and the legal and political consequences of colonial discourses in Canada and internationally. The extending reconciliation award acknowledges his latest work with W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council and the District of Saanich to Indigenize municipal land use planning in the Cordova Bay area.

“Arriving in my new community of Cordova Bay five years ago, I realized I knew next to nothing about the particular Indigenous histories of this place, so I spent some substantial time reviewing ethnographic and archival records, connecting with members in the W̱SÁNEĆ community and becoming more informed,” says Thom.

After attending a public meeting about the proposed Cordova Bay Local Area Plan, Thom offered his expertise to the District of Saanich and the local land use planners, who had little information about Indigenous histories and values related to Cordova Bay.

“I showed my preliminary findings to senior planning staff and walked them through a Google Earth map I had compiled with records from the UVic Library, Archives and the Royal BC Museum,” says Thom.

In his archival research, Thom also found numerous archaeological and burial sites that had been reported from 1946-1984, but never incorporated into the province’s archaeological database, says Thom.

Thom worked with BC Archaeology Branch staff to get the information into BC’s records system, which in turn triggered new consultations with W̱SÁNEĆ First Nations and a last-minute archaeological investigation before a major new development in Cordova Bay got underway.

Recognizing the opportunity the proposed Local Area Plan gave to move the municipality’s relationship with First Nations to a proactive stance, Thom facilitated the very first joint meeting of the leadership of the District of Saanich and W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council in May 2019. The meeting ended up forming part of a grant from the Faculty of Social Sciences, followed Coast Salish protocols, with a Speaker and Witnesses, and became a platform to bring out Indigenous oral histories and teachings related to Cordova Bay. For elected officials and senior staff, hearing the histories and priorities of W̱SÁNEĆ peoples was an inflection point, igniting new commitments to incorporate these values into land use planning and build relationships for other municipal processes.

Together with Elder Eric Polkey and staff from W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council, Thom developed a detailed report for how the District of Saanich might incorporate a more fully realized vision of Indigenous land values into their Local Area Plan, land use bylaws, official community plan, and suggestions for future research. They also worked together to educate and inform the public about the histories of the ancient village of Tz, u n c in Cordova Bay.

The new Cordova Bay Local Area Plan was unanimously approved in Indigenous Law; a revelation in the context of the need to reimage the future and not just resolve the immediate crisis. For UVic Outstanding Alumna and Thom, she’s already put her new legal education to work for her home nation, where she’s working as a legal assistant in the area of child welfare and looking forward to a future career applying an Indigenous lens to entertainment and media law.

Home away from home
At the opening of the circle, Songhees Nation Elder Dr. Skip Dick spoke of UVic and the First Peoples House as a home away from home for Indigenous students—a gathering place where young people and Indigenous leaders could “talk directly to the powers that be” as equals for the first time in history.

That description of a home away from home resonated for Simon, who spoke of her own experiences of being home-schooled by her father and feeling initially anxious about being part of the Nunavik community who were leaving for residential school.

“I felt left out,” Simon recalled, “but after the first year they went, I saw them two years later and they had the more they changed.”

Onuma McVer of UVic’s Department of Anthropology was awarded for the tremendous growth in language revitalization over the past 15 years at the university. What began as an effort at the undergraduate level to preserve at-risk Indigenous languages has developed into masters and doctoral programs for students who are already proficient and now learning strategies for building language revitalization across all sectors in K-12 education to youth counselling.

Simon’s dialogue at UVic was part of a BC visit that began on May 30 and included meetings with government and Indigenous leaders, a tour of an ocean science research institute and a visit to an elementary school. Simon also participated in a ceremony in Kamloops marking one year since the discovery of as many as 200 unmarked graves on the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. Simon told the UVic circle that advancing reconciliation will be a primary goal in her term as Governor General.

To see an education system that once failed to pass on his culture or language,” said one member Shayla Praud told Simon and the Governor General.

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Together with Elder Eric Polkey and staff from W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council, Thom developed a detailed report for how the District of Saanich might incorporate a more fully realized vision of Indigenous land values and priorities in the community for the next 20-30 years.

“I hope the process of incorporating Indigenous priorities into land use planning can be an inspiration for other municipalities to go beyond the territorial acknowledgment to recognizing and respecting First Nation’s territories and ancestral places,” adds Thom.

Government Mary Simon visits UVic to learn about UVic programs in Indigenous language revitalization and Indigenous legal orders

BY JOEY PATERSON

To see an education system that once failed to pass on his culture or language,” said one member Shayla Praud told Simon and Whit Fraser, Simon’s spouse. “So I grew up without that, ashamed of my Indigenous identity.”

“Arriving in my new community of Cordova Bay five years ago, I realized I knew next to nothing about the particular Indigenous histories of this place, so I spent some substantial time reviewing ethnographic and archival records, connecting with members in the W̱SÁNEĆ community and becoming more informed,” says Thom.

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Three Excellences the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, and Mr Whit Fraser (centre) participate in a circle at First Peoples House at UVic. PHO TO: SEE SPORTS

The Canada Research Coordinating to senior planning staff and walked around the ring bar labors to address barriers to equity

This fall, UVic will be launching our first Equity Action Plan. The plan has been in development since early 2021, including four phases of campus engagement. Calling it a plan is a bit of a misnomer because what we are building is more of an iterative process than a static plan,” says EQHR Executive Director Cassidrea Dewis. One of the tools being employed to encourage the development of bold actions in Action Labs, Action Labs put into practice an equity-centric design approach by bringing together diverse stakeholders to find new solutions or barriers at a systems level, as opposed to the individual or interpersonal level. UVic’s first pilot Action Lab developed more than 100 new ideas—a promising start for the new tool.

More info: uvic.ca/eap

Appointment of new Associate Vice-President Research

UVic chemist Fraser Hof has been appointed as the new associate vice-president research. Hof will begin his appointment July 1, 2022 for a five-year term. Hof will be one of two AVPR positions in the realm of research at UVic, in addition to its current AVPR Cynthia Milton.

The Canada Research Coordinating Committee announced the appointment of UVic Libraries’ Associate University Librarian Reconciliation By Morgan as one of 18 members in the inaugural Indigenous Leadership Circle in Research. The Leadership Circle will advise the president of Canada’s federal research funding agencies—including CHRI, NSERC, SSHRC, and CIFF—on the implementation of the Indigenous strategy in the federal research plan, setting new directions to support Indigenous research and research training in Canada 2019–22, and ensure that the path to building new models for Indigenous research and research training will be informed by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

Librarian Pia Russell received two fellowships from the British Columbia Library Association (BCLA)—the BCLA Champion of Intellectual Freedom Award for her work in intellectually challenging a difference. Russell leads the team for the BC Historical Textbooks Project, and the BC Academic Libraries Section Outstanding Contribution Award for her scholarly work in British Columbia. Russell’s fellowships come in addition to the BC Academic Libraries Section Outstanding Contribution Award for her scholarship on the British Columbia Textbooks Project, and the BC Academic Libraries Section Outstanding Contribution Award for her scholarship on the British Columbia Textbooks Project, and the BC Academic Libraries Section Outstanding Contribution Award for her scholarship on the British Columbia Textbooks Project, and the BC Academic Libraries Section Outstanding Contribution Award for her scholarship on the British Columbia Textbooks Project, and the BC Academic Libraries Section Outstanding Contribution Award for her scholarship on the British Columbia Textbooks Project, and the BC Academic Libraries Section Outstanding Contribution Award for her scholarship on the British Columbia Textbooks Project, and the BC Academic Libraries Section Outstanding Contribution Award for her scholarship on the British Columbia Textbooks Project.
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A tradition of courtesy and respect, rekindled

Honorary degrees have been awarded at UVic since its inaugural convocation in 1964. Installation ceremony for new UVic Chancellor guided by Coast Salish traditions

BY JODY PATERSON

Many of those who gathered earlier this spring for the installation of the University of Victoria’s 12th chancellor had never been part of a Coast Salish welcoming ceremony before. Songhees Elder May Sam gave a moving Coast Salish blessing that extended to everyone in the room.

For the Coast Salish, these ceremonies would be done in our Big House, and we’d have dirt floors and fires burning at either end,” Sam told the audience.

“May late father Sammy Sam did a lot of this, but always within our own culture, in our own Big House. My dad always said, ‘Don’t you ever say no to anybody—if somebody needs your voice, you give it to them.’ So I’ve been doing that now for three decades.”

University protocols re-imagine

“The installation of a university chancellor is typically steeped in British tradition. The oath of office is administered by the Queen’s representative—in this case, BC Lt. Gov. Janet Austin. The orator brings the voice of the university senate. The regalia that the chancellor receives carries the colours and symbols unique to the university. All of that took place at Buller’s installation, but within the context of a traditional Coast Salish welcoming ceremony.

Sam’s grand-nephed and elected Songhees Counsellor Norman Garry Sam represented the Songhees First Nation throughout the ceremony. Songhees Elder May Sam gave a moving Coast Salish blessing that extended to everyone in the room.

Four witnesses from other First Nations—including Buller’s brother Edward—were called upon to carry word of the ceremony and the particu-

A fearless approach to academic policy

Buller became BC’s first female First Nations judge when appointed in 1994, just seven years after graduating from UVic with her law degree. She went on to found and lead BC’s Indigenous Court, a criminal sentencing court based on Indigenous principles of restorative justice.

After retiring as a provincial court judge in 2016, Buller was appointed chief commissioner of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, whose powerful final report is reshaping thinking and policy in Canada and around the world.

With your permission, I will work here with a good mind, a good heart, and what I hope will be a very generous spirit,” Buller said to the Coast Salish leaders providing at the ceremony. She was briefly overcome by emotion as she followed her own First Nation protocol in naming all her relations. “The difficult and inspiring work of leading the inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls will inform her work as chancellor, Buller told the audience.

“That hope for change, and the willingness to work for it, is what has brought me here today,” Buller noted. “I’ve never been interested in what is easy, but what is good, just and right. I want to see academic policy guided by a full and fearless understanding of our history.”

A new era of installations

UVic anthropologist Bob Hancock was master of ceremonies for the event. He identified his Cree–Metis heritage in his address and highlighted the profound impact of Buller’s work on the lives of Indigenous People. “She is perhaps too modest about her many accomplishments, but here are two examples: as Chief Commissioner, Marion called out the Canadian government for committing genocide against Indigenous People. She estab-

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This spring, UVic is awarding seven honorary degrees that recognize notable achievements in scholarship, research, teaching, the creative arts and public service. Honorary degrees have been awarded at UVic since its inaugural convocation in 1964. An honorary degree is the highest honour the university can bestow for distinguished achievement in scholarship, research, teaching, the creative arts and public service.

Senate confers honorary degrees based on the recommendations of a nine-member committee on honorary degrees and other forms of recognition. That committee, in turn, bases its selections on nominations invited from UVic faculty, staff, students and alumni.

This spring’s recipients include:

Hon. Carole James

Honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD)
The Honourable Carole James has been a fixture in the BC Legislature for many years, and is perhaps best known for her role as leader of the BC New Democratic Party. As a lifelong activist, volunteer and public servant, Carole James has dedicated her life to the betterment of our province. She has also served as a foster parent for over 20 years for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

Dr. Perry Kendall

Honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD)
Dr. Perry Kendall’s long career in public health has been devoted to improving the health of British Columbians, particularly those who are marginalized. He served as the Provincial Health Officer from 1995–2018, championing the creation of safe consumption sites, declared a public health emergency to address the opioid crisis, managed the H1N1 pandemic of 2009–10 and the SARS crisis of 2001.

Gordon Denford

Honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD)
Gordon Denford is the founder of family owned Berwick Retirement Communities and is a community leader and philanthropist. He was a founding member of the Canadian Western Bank, which assists small businesses in Victoria and western Canada. He was a driving force to improve the Victoria Airport, where he spent eight years on the Board, two of those as Chairman.

Lawrence Lessig

Honorary Doctor of Education (DEd)
Lawrence Lessig’s early career focused on law and technology, primarily as it affects copyright—and that work was instrumental in shaping knowledge in the digital era. He was the co-founder of Creative Commons, a non-profit organization that promotes learning and open scholarship on the Internet by providing legal mechanisms to share creative work while still upholding intellectual copyright.

Arvind Gupta

Honorary Doctor of Science (DSc)
Arvind Gupta has worn many hats during his career, most notably serving on the federal government’s Science, Technology and Innovation Council and as CEO of MIT’s mediaX, a national, non-profit research organization that funds student researchers. He has made major contributions to theoretical computer science and championed student internships and work-integrated learning.

Rev. Lyle McKenzie

Honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD)
Rev. Lyle McKenzie has served as part-time chaplain at UVic for 19 years. A visionary leader, he helped to develop programs within congregations to advance Truth and Reconciliation and the inclusion of queer siblings. He was instrumental in developing the recent Memorandum between UVic and faith communities and has been a strong contributor to the growth of multi-faith cooperation on campus.
CONGRATS, GRADS!

There will be more grads and families celebrating on campus this year. UVic has added an extra week of convocation ceremonies for alumni who graduated in 2020 and Spring 2021 when large gatherings were not allowed due to COVID-19 restrictions. This year will see over 3,700 students crossing the stage at the Farquhar auditorium during 14 ceremonies. In a regular year, approximately 2,400 students graduate in 10 ceremonies.

Student leadership a pas de deux of one and many

3M National Student Fellow proves that creating community and collaboration are at the heart of extraordinary performance

BY PHILIP COX

In the summer of 2020, as the pandemic wore on and it became clear that the next academic year would be spent online, fourth-year honours English student Anne Hung worried that incoming students wouldn’t have the same richness of experience that she had had on campus in her own first year at university—so she decided to do something about it.

By September, she’d established a virtual mentorship program through the English Students’ Association that paired 85 first-year students with 25 upper-year student mentors, fostering new community connections built on solidarity, sharing and support.

That winter, as blood supplies in the city’s health system ran dangerously low, Hung and fourth-year economics student Jeremy Lacey collaborated to create the UVic Blood and Stem Cell Drive—a campus-wide effort that connected representatives from five student course unions to prompt donations from their members.

“This is the type of selfless and thoughtful leadership that will define Hung’s legacy after she walks across the convocation stage to receive her degree this June—a practice that’s also able to [dance competitively] and pursue my academic interests, and even luckier that the skills from one have transferred so well to the other,” says UVic English professor Mary Elizabeth Leighton. “But make no mistake: Anne has changed the undergraduate experience in humanities and improved the lives of people in and outside of the university.”

In the classroom, these skills have helped Hung maintain straight A’s throughout her degree, earning her several awards for academic distinction along the way, while also informing her research. After receiving a Jamie Cassels Undergraduate Research Award (JCURA) in 2021, for instance, she chose to focus on the relationship between the development of Romantic ballet and 19th century print culture and technology, resulting in a project titled En Points, in Print: Dance and the Early Nineteenth-Century Press in 2022.

Outside of the classroom, Hung’s work as vice president of the English Students’ Association (ESA), managing editor of the undergraduate journal The Albatross, editorial assistant for The Malahat Review, student ambassador for the Faculty of Humanities, and co-producer of a podcast for the SSHRC-funded Crafting Communities project show the stamina and dedication of a competitive athlete.

In virtually all of her work, Hung’s commitment to the values of respect, equity and diversity through collaborative practice shine through co-organizing events for the ESA such as a public reading by Oji-Cree Saulteaux poet jaye simpson, whose writing explores their experiences with Indigenousity and marginalization; or supporting seniors and those recovering from illness or surgery through the Canadian Red Cross Health Equipment Loan Program, for example.

She is currently developing an open-access digital exhibit for UVic Libraries’ Special Collections, interviewing previously-excluded women of colour and queer and gender non-conforming people involved in UVic’s women’s movement since the 1960s.

“Anne focuses her efforts on problem solving in ways that will benefit and spotlight others rather than herself,” says UVic English professor Mary Elizabeth Leighton. “But make no mistake: Anne has changed the undergraduate experience in humanities and improved the lives of people in and outside of the university.”
Second-chance scientist

BY DOROTHY EGGENBERGER

The world is full of second chances, and is better for the people who have taken them. Julian Smazynski didn’t have the university experience he was hoping for the first time around, but he took a second run. This year he graduates with his PhD in biochemistry and is now a research associate at the BC Cancer Deely Research Centre (DRC).

Smazynski says you don’t need to be an academic all-star in high school to become a great scientist or artist: “I’m a big pusher of Don’t let anyone else tell you what to do. Do what you actually think you’re passionate about.”

Unlikely academic after the unknown

“If you’re doing pure research, what you’re really doing is studying the unknown,” says Smazynski. “Understanding that unknown is what drew me to science.”

Like many high school students, Smazynski launched into post-secondary immediately after high school. He left before the year was out, “I realized it just wasn’t the right time for me,” says Smazynski, reflecting on competing obligations at home and the dramatic transition from classroom to lab.

Three years later, he decided to give it another shot, but this time at Camosun College. Smazynski excelled in the smaller class sizes—a quality shared by university third and fourth year classes, he would later discover. There he learned about immunology, the study of the immune system.

“Our immune system evolved to detect foreign organisms and pathogens on a scale that basically transcends evolution,” explains Smazynski. “There are organisms that don’t yet exist, but your immune system could mount an immune response against them today. That blew my mind.”

He completed a diploma at Camosun and enrolled in UVic’s Bachelor of Science program a second time, fast-tracking through first- and second-year courses via UVic’s transfer credit options.

“In third year I took a course in immunology taught by Terry Pearson. He has an infectious passion for science,” recalls Smazynski. “We learned about a few groups on the island specializing in immunology research. One of them was the DRC. At that point, I knew I had to find an opportunity to get in there.”

So, as a third-year student Smazynski sat in on fourth-year lectures to connect with researchers from DRC. He asked about volunteer opportunities, and the snowball started rolling.

“The volunteer opportunity became a co-op opportunity, the co-op an Honours Fest project, the project a work term, the work term a graduate studies focus, and from there eventually his master’s and PhD. “Trust yourself when you see something that really excites you and when you find it, seek those opportunities. Don’t wait for them to fall into your lap,” says Smazynski.

Next generation cancer therapies

Great ideas spin out of academic research. Now Smazynski specializes in cancer immunotherapy, a form of treatment that uses the body’s own immune system to prevent, control and eliminate cancer. Researchers genetically modify T cells (immune cells) from a patient’s blood sample to improve their cancer-tracking and cancer-attacking ability—called chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy. The newly engineered cells are multiplied into an army and given back to the patient.

“Immune cells, despite our tinkering with them, are quite capable of detecting cancer cells on their own,” explains Smazynski. “But cancer cells have mechanisms to inhibit that immune system. Sucking to that inhibition, the T cells are too weak to kill the cancer on their own.”

Smazynski is designing new mechanisms for the immune cells to overcome this inhibition. He’s also working on moving CAR T-cell therapy trials from blood-based cancer into the solid cancer space using oncolytic virus therapy—a type of targeted therapy that infects and breaks down cancer cells but not normal cells.

“It’s a challenge to find ways to allow those engineered cells to enter a solid tumour environment,” explains Smazynski. “If we can initiate a viral infection in a solid tumour, creating an inflamed immune-ready environment, and engineer our T cells to interact with those virally infected cancer cells—that could be a big step forward.”

“For me, cancer immunotherapy research offers this endless supply of intrigue and questions,” says Smazynski. “I really think the biotech industry is pushing the bounds in next-generation therapies.”

Grad’s research a breakthrough in understanding dementia risk

Both of this year’s UVic Governor General’s Gold Medals go to students in the Faculty of Social Sciences

BY ANNE MACLAURIN

Tomiko Yoneda, who graduates with a doctorate in psychology this June, is finding tantalizing clues to healthy cognitive aging—research that has been recognized by two of the UVic Governor General’s Gold Medals awarded during convocation.

The second gold will go to Andrea Mellor, a PhD graduate from UVic’s interdisciplinary social dimensions of health program who collaborated with Indigenous urban youth on a graphic novel.

Early detection of cognitive decline and dementia is a passionate occupation for Yoneda, and a primary focus in her PhD work at UVic. During her graduate research, Yoneda identified protective factors and early indicators of cognitive decline which could provide a potential for greater risk of developing dementia. She says that people with a high level of conscientiousness and a low level of neuroticism are less likely to develop mild cognitive impairment as they get older.

A deeper understanding of risk factors, protective factors and early indicators of cognitive decline is what drives Yoneda in her work. Also, seeing firsthand the people living with dementia and their caregivers provides strong motivation for Yoneda to keep going with her research projects.

Throughout her time at UVic, Yoneda is grateful for the multi-year fellowships from both the Alzheimer Society Research Program and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, as well as several scholarships from UVic’s Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health, and the Department of Psychology. “I also feel incredibly thankful that I have been a part of the Lifespan lab—Scott Hofer has always been incredibly enthusiastic and generous in funding research assistant work, research materials and activities (e.g., national and international conferences) throughout my degree,” says Yoneda.

Equal praise is given to Yoneda’s supervisor Andrea Piccinin, who was an exceptional mentor during her graduate training. “The Lifespan lab has always been so encouraging to pursue my research interests, as well as her thorough and insightful feedback,” says Yoneda. “Throughout her degree, Yoneda’s campus memory is walking or running through Mystic Vale and the alumni trails. As an avid outdoor explorer, she enjoys biking, camping and making beach forts with her six-year-old son.

Yoneda will continue to pursue her passion for research and teaching as a post-doctoral researcher at Northwestern University. “I truly love teaching and researching, and hope to continue along this academic path in the future,” says Yoneda.
Visual arts grad has big designs on life

BY JOHN THRELFALL

If you ask international student Dieu Anh Hoang what aspect of her undergraduate degree had the biggest impact on her, she’ll tell you it wasn’t the pandemic, it wasn’t her co-op terms and it wasn’t even earning her BFA in visual arts with honours—it was actually a teacher’s advice about living with fear.

“At the start of my second-year sculpture class, my professor told me, ‘If you’re not scared, you’re not in the right place’—and that stuck with me,” she says. “It changed my attitude completely. I was scared of that professor and wanted to drop the class, but I realized it was good for me. I was leaving my comfort zone and step out of my comfort zone. Now, I just tell myself ‘I can do this’ and I don’t think there’s anything I wouldn’t be able to do.”

That “no-fear” attitude perfectly sums up Hoang on the cusp of graduating in addition to her academic and artistic accomplishments, her work study positions with the Faculty of Fine Arts and her leadership as chair of the Visual Arts Student Association, she also stepped up as the architectural lead for UVic’s Seismic Design Team and as a Community + Engage Leader, representing both the faculty and her department.

“I like to put myself in a working environment and take charge of whatever I can,” says Hoang on a Zoom call from her family home in Hanoi, Vietnam. “That’s how I learn leadership skills, communication skills, managing skills . . . I actually put my studies at the bottom of my priority list, as it was always the least of what I was doing.”

Hoang wasn’t even phased by the pandemic. “I was really lucky,” she admits. “I did my co-op terms online working with UVic’s Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation (LTSI), and my classes were among the few held in person during the pandemic. And my family manager was okay in Vietnam, too, so I didn’t have to worry about that. It was actually pretty good for me!”

Describing herself as a visual designer (“I like to solve problems within any existing design to make it better and more accessible for everyone”), it was an interest in art and architecture that drew her to UVic after completing the International Baccalaureate diploma in Abbotstown—but it was her online abilities that probably had the biggest impact on campus life: her three co-op terms with LTSI saw her managing the transition from CourseSpaces to Brightspace.

“I was there the entire time migrating the platforms during the pandemic, facilitating the Zoom workshops for faculty and students,” she says. “As well as organizing training sessions, I also created helpful infographics and content for the campus community. ‘It was great problem-solving!’

As for her art practice, Hoang has a clear preference towards geometric and design imagery—whether that’s an exploded cube-based wall sculpture or culture-jamming a bag of groceries as a commentary on consumerism and food fads. (“Do people actually read the labels on what they’re eating?”) Looking into the future, she can see herself working at a design agency in Seattle’s tech hub (“It’s very fast-paced and competitive there—I like that environment”) and possibly earning a master’s in computer science.

In addition to having learned the positive side of fear itself, Hoang feels one of her biggest degree takeaways is her enhanced people skills. “Knowing how to work with people, learning how to focus on their strengths rather than their weaknesses . . . those are skills I can apply anywhere.”

COMING FULL CIRCLE TO LEAD THE CLASSROOM

BY MICHELLE BUTTERFIELD

Brittany Johnson is just a few weeks away from completing her BFA in visual arts with Honours, and she’s already working close to full-time as a teacher-on-call (TOC) for K-8 classes across Greater Victoria.

Today, she taught grade twos. “Oh yeah, it was fun,” she says. “It was a good day.”

Johnson’s personality is bubbly and engaging. She exudes confidence and seems to enjoy being very busy: “I like trying to squeeze out every drop from the day. A dancer, hobby actor and drop out of my comfort zone, being totally technology-based, it’s still stressful, but you’re supported.”

In 2021, Johnson took on a position with UVic Libraries Digital Scholarship Commons, building workshops and creating learning tools with technology like 3D printers. “It was out of my comfort zone, being totally technology-based, but I wanted to try something different.”

The use of technology in the classroom is a complex conversation, and young teachers like Brittany are bearing in mind both the ethical and practical considerations using technology as educators.

“It’s evolving so fast, and can be a really useful tool. My little brother, who has a learning disability, benefits hugely from using technology. But with creative approaches to learning, the computer can present limitations. It’s very interesting to think about.”

She cites the many online resources like Google Read&Write that have useful applications in the classroom. “It’s an inclusive approach to learning because it can read out loud to you, and it can be in different languages.”

When Johnson is asked if she is now one of those teachers? “Absolutely.”

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Scott Simpson couldn’t be happier with the capstone project that he embarked on two years ago alongside three other cohort members of UVic’s custom MBA program for Telus.

Not only does the outcome of Simpson’s capstone project—the Telus Esports affiliate program, which was launched by the telecom giant in February—have the potential to change the way young online communicators work with gamers, it also aims to combat bullying, racism and sexism in the gaming community.

Simpson, who is director, business development for the Indigenous Student Society of Acadia, has been looking for an opportunity to combine his business background with his heritage and witnessed the perfect solution: as a Telus representative, he had sought a promotion at Telus and been shot down, the capstone project would never have come about.

In 2008, after graduating from UBC with a business administration degree, Simpson opted for a company that is 65,600-plus people strong and spans more than 20 countries. After some inward contemplation and research, he landed on Telus as a part of his upward trajectory.

Simpson approached his manager to discuss his next advancement, only to be told, “You need to be more holistic in your thinking and find where it impacts the rest of the organization.”

A somewhat dejected but undeterred Simpson wondered how to think “holistically” about a company that is 65,600-plus people strong and spans more than 20 countries. After some inward contemplation and research, he landed on Telus as the perfect solution: as a Telus representative, he would apply to complete the custom MBA that Telus had a part of governance, it is a part of how we manage ourselves and it is a part of how we are responsible to ourselves, to each other, and to our global community. I hope our graduates will take with them the ability to centre Indigenous law in the world as a collaborative and creative way to solve problems, that is never reduced to just words on paper, because it is so much more than that.”

Looking at UVic’s decision to continue to build upon its position of leadership and to be home to the National Centre for Indigenous Laws in the world being the Indigenous Law Program grad.

Four of this year’s 23 program grads are:

Jolene Ashini

Jolene Ashini is the first Labrador Innu woman to become a lawyer. She grew up on reserve and within the Innu territory of Nisissantun, and is a member of the Innu Nation. Before enrolling in the Indigenous Law Program, she completed her undergraduate degree in history at UVic in 2018. Thomas Hawthornthwaite

Thomas Hawthornthwaite was born and raised in Nainamoo and is a member of the Squamish Nation. Before enrolling in the JD/JID program, he completed his undergraduate degree in environmental law and land use and its connection to Aboriginal rights and title, which he plans to complete at UVic in 2023. Beth Fox

Beth Fox is a Blood Tribe member from Treaty 6 territory in southern Alberta. She graduated with a bachelor’s and then a master’s of law, and is currently a law student at UVic.

These wins are, Simpson, who convocates with his cohort this June, has gained a much longer term sense of satisfaction—”that of having forged business bonds with classmates he knows will last a lifetime.”

The opportunities to learn from some of the leading Indigenous legal scholars has made my law school experience special,” she notes. “I would encourage any student interested in enrolling in the program to take opportunities to learn from and be mentored by the professors here.”

Skeena Lawson

Skeena Lawson is a settler who grew up on Wet’suwet’en territory in Smithers. After completing her undergraduate degree in history at Mount Allison University, she worked on Parliament Hill through the non-partisan Parliamentary Internship Programme, and taught middle school English in France before starting law school at UVic in 2018.

“My favourite moments were where we could see sources of law outside the classroom and ground what we were learning in a place or activity,” she says. “Some highlights were drum making in First Peoples House, learning how to build fishing spears at Ye’yuunnams during our field school on Coast Salish territory, digging up rice Vice bulbs at Cache Creek and our entire cohort paddling two dugout canoes in Kwakwaka’wakw territorial waters.”

She is particularly interested in the nexus between environmental and Aboriginal law pertaining to conservation, resource use, and land rights and title. Looking ahead, she sees a future working in this field and would like to help Indigenous nations assert sovereignty over their own lands. In her spare time she loves to ski, cycle, do crosswords and play the piano.

Last summer, she worked with OKT Law in Yellowknife where she learned more about environmental law and land use and its connection to Aboriginal rights and title, treaty rights and the Crown’s fiduciary obligations to First Nations.

She is under articling in Victoria at the Ministry of Attorney General’s Legal Services Branch.
Conversation set grad on path to engineering

BY ANNE TOLSON

As Meg McPherson graduates this month with a BEng in electrical engineering and a new job in Vancouver, she recalls a pivotal conversation that started her on the path where she finds herself today.

“I was at a trade fair in my high school and got talking with a woman who was an electrician,” says McPherson, who is originally from Calgary and was in grade 11 at the time. “We talked for quite a while, and what she told me about her career really inspired me.”

McPherson told the electrician that from a young age she always loved immersing herself in tasks that involved designing and building.

“By the end of our conversation, she had me excited about the field and convinced me to apply for a summer job as a pre-apprentice electrician.”

McPherson spent the next two summers of high school working for a local electrical company, pulling wire, running conduit, installing pot lights and writing receptacles. Following grade 12, she enrolled in an engineering technology program at Camosun College, and then transferred to Uvic to complete her degree.

“Change of heart brought mature student to nursing

BY STEPHANIE HARRINGTON

Nursing may not seem like a common career path for an arts grad, but health care runs deep in T. Ilamparithi’s family.

Growing up in a family of doctors—both her parents and step-parents are physicians—Ilamparithi says she wasn’t a “science kid” and had never considered a career in health care. Instead, she earned a double degree in international relations and Latin American Studies from the University of British Columbia.

But after volunteering at a health resource center where she worked with a university group, she decided to pursue something that would make a difference, she says. “The only people who get so sick we can’t help them are the people who are unvaccinated. That made it feel a lot less unmanageable than it felt at the beginning of the pandemic,” she says.

After graduating from her first degree during the pandemic, Cundiff says, is the increase in people coming to hospital very ill with other diseases because they didn’t get adequate care during covid. Cundiff is concerned about the number of experienced nurses retiring early, as well as the general state of our health-care system.

“We need dramatic health-care reform, in terms of health-care delivery, nurse compensa- tion and people’s access to primary care, which is really suffering,” she says. Despite the challenges, Cundiff wouldn’t trade her new career for a desk job.

“I think I was really a homebody growing up, so I think working on computer and not being more active and engaging with other people.”

McPherson. PHOTO: SUBMITTED

Her first co-op was with Riverside Energy Systems in Kamloops, where she helped to design and simulate renewable energy systems—specif- ically solar technology for grid-connected and off grid systems.

Over the longer term, McPherson says she’d like to participate in more engineering volunteer opportunities overseas, perhaps by getting involved with an organization such as Engineers Without Borders.

“In the meantime, she feels like she’s in the right place. I don’t know exactly where in the field of elec- trical engineering I want to end up in. Right now, I’m interested in everything,” she says. “With engineering consulting, you can get experience in so many different areas, so I think for starting out in my career, this is a great place to be.”
Innovative, inclusive teaching is the most fundamental element in Scott McIndoe's courses.

**BY DOROTHY EGGENBERGER**

The transition from a high school to university classroom can be tricky—moving from a class size of 30 to literally hundreds. Yet, the structure of a university classroom can be tricky—one of the class and their understanding of the material, "says UVic chemistry professor Scott McIndoe. "It wasn't until I started using clickers that I realized the majority of the class was struggling." Clickers are an interactive technology that enables instructors to pose questions to students and immediately collect and view the responses of the entire class. Now, instead of a handful of students, 200 or more will answer a question at the same time. McIndoe also uses Google Form for anonymous questions during class—the QR code is posted in the classroom and McIndoe receives the questions over the phone. For his creativity, innovation, and inclusiveness, McIndoe was named a 3M National Teaching Fellow this Spring—one of 10 post-secondary educators across Canada to be recognized for their exceptional leadership in undergraduate education.

**Transformative teaching**

McIndoe is an international expert in mass spectrometry of organometallic compounds and catalysts. Since joining UVic in 2003, he has introduced new ways of teaching chemistry and helped rejuvenate the chemistry department’s first-year core curriculum. "I’m struck by how Scott has consistently changed his delivery and methods over the years, while also maintaining a high level of structure and organization to ensure students benefit," says UVic chemist and Canada Research Chair Fraser Hof. "There are no gimmicks here—Scott is an educator who is incredibly skilled and profoundly committed to his students.”

McIndoe establishes a level of trust and engagement that keeps students coming back for more. Since he began innovating in the classroom, lab and more students than ever have signed up for—and succeeded in—higher-level chemistry courses.

**Borders and barriers in harm reduction**

Drug-checking programs can track the flow of fentanyl across North America—and shine a light on new substances that could make the drug-poisoning crisis more deadly.

**BY AMANDA FARRELL-LOW**

Mexico and Canada may be physically separated by thousands of kilometres, but people like Jaime Arredondo Sanchez Lira are working to bring them closer together when it comes to harm reduction and drug policy.

Arredondo is the new Canada Research Chair in Substance Use and Health Policy Research, a professor in UVic’s School of Public Health and Social Policy, and a scientist with the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (CISUR). He comes to UVic from the Centre for Research and Teaching in Economics in Aguascalientes, Mexico, where he was a professor in the drug policy program.

"I had a not-so-traditional transition to academia," Arredondo explains. "Before grad school, I worked in the Mexican government in the Ministry of Public Safety in the state of Quintana Roo, where the popular Cancun resort community is located." This means his first experience in public policy was closely related to public safety, particularly policing. After leaving government to start his graduate studies in San Diego, he began to look at violence and the US-led war on drugs as public-health issues, not criminal ones, and worked to understand how police themselves could be risk factors for HIV—both for people who use drugs, and for officers themselves, as aggressive tactics used by police against people who used drugs put them all at risk.

**Canadian connections**

Arredondo’s work in Tijuana implementing a fentanyl drug-checking program with the harm reduction organization PreventCasa led him to the BC Centre on Substance Use in Vancouver. Getting to know the Downtown Eastside community helped him explore new research ideas around implementing innovative projects in his home country of Mexico and his temporary home in Canada.

"I got to know many of the interventions that are now standard in British Columbia, like naloxone distribution and overdose prevention sites and adapt them to the reality of Mexico and the US-Mexico border," he says.

Arredondo returned to Mexico, specifically Mexicali and the border town of Tijuana, to help put policies such as overdose prevention sites and drug checking into place. He has worked with charities such as Integración Social Vértex, which set up a Salà, the only supervised consumption site in Latin America, and the fourth in the world specifically for fentanyl. He also started a safe smoking distribution program in Baja California. But given the very different status of harm reduction and drug markets in Mexico versus Canada, there are hurdles to overcome, particularly around the power of organized crime in Mexico and how it relates to harm reduction.

"Trying to create a drug-checking service might be a little scarier in Mexico where a lot of community organizations, leaders, journalists or people who used substances are getting killed by disputes with organized crime," Arredondo says. "In our surprise, we haven’t had any problems with violence from organized crime when it comes to harm reduction. It was more the government who showed resistance to the idea.” The Mexican government cut all funding for harm reduction in the country in 2018, making it hard to sustain services without external help or research grants.

**Harm reduction without borders**

With his new CRC appointment, Arredondo says, “In our surprise, we haven’t had any problems with violence from organized crime when it comes to harm reduction. It was more the government who showed resistance to the idea.” The Mexican government cut all funding for harm reduction in the country in 2018, making it hard to sustain services without external help or research grants.

**Mapping the North American drug supply**

A new project Arredondo is involved in will help connect his Mexican and Canadian research with what is happening on the US West Coast. This region is also seeing a need for harm reduction services, like drug checking and supervised consumption sites, to face the rising fentanyl-related overdoses due to a contaminated drug supply largely coming from Mexico. "As a scientist working on the US West Coast and a Mexican, I find it very natural to try to implement community-based drug checking similar to UVic’s Vancouver Drug Checking Project." This new community service in San Diego has the potential to be one key element in the development of a pan-American project. Having the lecture book filled with McIndoe's infectious enthusiasm combats the pervasive view that chemistry, even introductory chemistry, is harder and less approachable than other disciplines. In doing so, he opens up the field to students who may have disliked or even feared this area of science.

"Chemistry strives to answer the question ‘how do things work?’ at the deepest level comprehensible by scientists at the level of molecules and atoms,” McIndoe. He maintains that our understanding of molecules better can we solve today’s urgent problems.

"Clean energy. A pristine environment. Cures for cancer. How to feed the world. Sustainable manufacturing. Molecular computing. I’m not pretending that I’m going to solve any or all of these problems, but someone I teach just taught me, and that makes my work as a researcher and educator both hugely rewarding and a lot of fun, he adds.

**Not your usual office hours**

McIndoe’s key to success is focusing his efforts on improving the undergraduate experience for the larger student body, rather than showcasing star pupils. Case in point: he transformed his office hours by relocating from his office to a lecture hall. Instead of one student, he meets with anywhere from 30 to 150. In 2020, McIndoe’s Zoom class included both live, virtual office hours as well as an online discussion forum, which housed thousands of student posts. "I appreciate how valiantly he tackled the ridiculous amounts of forum posts,” commented one student. Volume is no deterrent for McIndoe. Also in 2020, he flipped the virtual Zoom classroom by presenting a pre-scribed Zoom lecture to engage students in a live chat during the video. A chat log for one 50-minute class was hundreds of lines long; students ask ing for a simple, catch-up clarification: students asking follow-ups to help form basic ideas; students posting ideas and questions and extend the lesson to a higher level.

A signature of his Chemistry 101 class—called a ‘godsend’ by many students—is a lecture book with partially completed PowerPoint slides containing passages in the textbook. As McIndoe lectures, he fills in missing text, numbers, and molecular diagrams on the slides, and the students do the same in their own lecture books.

"I like the way lectures are done in this book. You have a textbook which we fill in forced me to actually participate, and had me more engaged in the lecture than I had in other courses did,” says another student.

**Changing students’ minds about chemistry**

McIndoe’s engaging and approachable teaching style (and perhaps also his infectious enthusiasm) combats the pervasive view that chemistry, even introductory chemistry, is harder and less approachable than other disciplines. In doing so, he opens up the field to students who may have disliked or even feared this area of science.
The energy modelling landscape in Canada is fractured and the hub hopes to link the modelling community and decision-makers. Energy modelling is a process of using computers to simulate various parts of energy systems, which are too vast and complex to test in the lab. These models help researchers understand the ramifications of various large-scale "what if" scenarios and serve as crucial tools in making effective decisions about decarbonization, or the broad, systemic reduction of carbon.

"We're trying to make predictions 20 or 30 years into the future and we're trying to understand complex things like how our building energy infrastructure will impact climate and vice versa," McPherson explains. "Energy models are tools that allow us to ask those exploratory questions before we make massive investments in new systems that last for decades and cost us billions of dollars."

**GLOBAL IMPACT**

**CONTINUED FROM PRIOR PAGE**

and around the world.

Helping remote communities switch to renewable energy from diesel. Discovering evidence of the climate effect on native ecosystems to help protect this precious resource. Building on Indigenous ecological knowledge to create environmental DNA solutions. Placing students in sustainability jobs so they can put classroom theory to practice. These are just a few examples of UVic’s long-established commitment to actions taken in the values and solutions-focused priorities as articulated in the UN SDGs.

"We are part of a global community that cares about the well-being of people and our planet. We are determined to empower our students, faculty and researchers to pursue bold ideas and turn ideas into action with impact that creates a better world for all," says UVic Vice President, Research and Innovation Lisa Kalynchuk. "I am so proud of this year's impact ranking results because it reflects the hard work, passion and creative courage of our UVic community."

UVic also recently established CIFAL Victoria, a UVic-affiliated training centre and resource that is part of an international network, in partnership with United Nations Institute of Training and Research, CIFAL—International Training Centre for Authors and Practitioners. This new centre has joined the executive committee, with McPherson as its executive director, and the EMH will form the technical foundation of the new national hub. McPherson was convinced that Canada needed its own central hub—with energy models and data that reflected Canada’s social, political and historical realities, such as Indigenous community ownership, for example.

McPherson returned to Canada to determine if the hub and found a perfect fit at UVic. UVic researchers focus on the deep decarbonization of energy systems, ranging from buildings and transportation, to power systems and geographical regions of every size.

"I think it’s important to say that the ESC is the powerhouse for energy systems modelling in Canada," she says.

**Laying the foundation**

Since arriving at UVic in 2018, McPherson has built up a team of more than 20 graduate students and researchers, who have worked with her to develop three key software platforms: a database of energy system information; a growing repository of energy system models that span sectors, scales and vectors; and a visualisation platform, which produces graphs and other visual aids to quickly communicate results.

When contacted by an eligible organization, McPherson works with that stakeholder to explore possible energy scenarios, using this software capacity.

"The number of organizations that have reached out over the last few years for modelling work has been overwhelming," she says. "It is important work that I really believe must get done, but there is just too much volume for our team to handle on our own—this work needs to be institutionalized." Examples of organizations that have reached out include the David Suzuki Foundation, the City of Regina, the Transition Accelerator charity and several research labs.

Determining which energy model (or models) to use depends on what the organization is trying to accomplish. For example, The Transition Accelerator—a charity devoted to net-zero emissions by 2050—requested a study on how integrating the power systems of the four western provinces could help decarbonize the region as a whole. In another case, the David Suzuki Foundation wanted to explore different pathways to get to net-zero electricity in Canada by 2055. Going forward, the three software platforms developed at UVic will form the technical foundation of the new national hub. McPherson will be hiring five engineers and researchers to further develop these platforms and work with stakeholder organizations.

**Advancing climate action**

The new EMH builds on the work of an earlier initiative, which was also funded by Natural Resources Canada. From 2019 to 2021, that group (with a similar name of the Energy Modelling Initiative) gathered data, held workshops and forums, and built an inventory of the different modelling groups in Canada and the types of models they use. One of the key recommendations of the earlier initiative was to create an institution like the new EMH.

The three researchers who led that earlier initiative are now part of the four-person executive committee leading the new hub: McPherson at UVic, and Normand Mousseau and Louis Beaumier, both of Polytechnique Montréal. More recently, Blake Shaffer, of the University of Calgary, has joined the executive committee.

Ultimately, McPherson’s team will begin transferring the technology platforms developed at UVic to the central EMH for maintenance and development over the long term. It’s expected the hub will eventually become self-sustaining by transitioning to a service model.

The work done by McPherson’s group—and the EMH—is open source, meaning that their energy models, other tools and training materials will be available to anyone working in the area.

“I’m delighted for other researchers and energy modellers to use our models, data and visualizations, and for other organizations to benefit from them," she says. "The more of this work in decarbonization that we can do, the better for everyone, and the better for the planet."
Thrust onto the public stage, interviewed for CNN and New York Times was watching the news in his kitchen in Victoria, would relay news about the life or death of their Historian of Ukraine thrust into public role by war nothing more than to return to hiking with his media outlets around the world.

This constant, global connectivity has enabled Yekelchyk not only to stay in contact with his family back home throughout the invasion, but also to do a duty that he sees as his vocation by rallying support and countering disinformation from here in Canada with his pen, his voice and his vast knowledge for the Ukrainian people.

“I am a historian and a citizen, really, of two nations,” he says with an accent that friends here might say is Ukrainian and family there might say is Canadian.

Throut the public stage

Internationally, Serhiy Yekelchyk is recognized as an esteemed scholar, public intellectual and advocate for democracy in Ukraine. Since February, this fact-check for the New York Times, interviewed for CNN and writ- ten for BBC History, the Wall Street Journal and Politico— all while speaking at conferences and fundraisers and offering expert commentary for media outlets around the world.

In March, an impromptu public teach-in at UVic about the crisis featuring Yekelchyk and fellow UVic public policy scholar Tamara Kraw- chenko attracted more than 650 participants from across North and South America in less than 24 hours.

Last month, he regretfully declined an invita- tion to speak at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, because his calendar was already full up.

For most researchers, this might be the defin- ing moment of their career. For Yekelchyk, it is a matter of duty.

“I am an introvert, actually. I love solitary work in the archive. But there is no choice. This is my contribution to the defense of Ukraine and I am happy to do it.”

The war, he notes, has been ongoing for almost a decade. It is the only relatively recent escalation and full-scale invasion that has made it seem new to some Western audiences.

Yekelchyk has written about the conflict long enough to have become a specialist on the matter. His book, Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know, published by Oxford University Press, is currently being reprinted in Russian translation by Russia against Russia at Cambridge. Serhi Plokhy, the director of the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard, calls it as “an ABC of the current conflict and the war, written by a very good historian.”

“In this defining moment of my career, but I’ve lived through several defining moments now,” Yekelchyk says with a gentle laugh. “The collapse of the Soviet Union, the Orange revolu- tion of 2004-5, the Maidan revolution of 2014, the war in Donbas since 2014 and now the full-scale Russian invasion, which started in Febru- ary. The war has given the greatest media attention for me, because of Ukraine’s increasing strategic importance to the West.”

Living memories

When the war ends, Yekelchyk would like nothing more than to return to hiking with his spouse and son in the mountains, tinkering with woodwork in his garden and building small fires by the ocean in his spare time.

The area of Victoria where he now lives is remarkably similar to his hometown in central Kyiv, with mountains and forests and a high riv- erbank overlooking a wide body of water nearby. Yekelchyk describes Kyiv as a city of grassy, sandy beaches and small islands peppering the Dnieper watershed, which flows through the centre of the city. It is a place steeped in history, he says, which shaped both his childhood and his life’s work.

“My dad would take me for walks in a local park that had memorial plaques to rival princes who lived in the ninth century. When I was just learning to read, I would try to decipher the names on these plaques. So this history was a part of my everyday life,” he recalls.

Another part of his everyday life as a child was constant reminders of the second World War—traces of trenches in many of the city’s neighborhoods, unexploded bombs and am- munition unearthing children digging in their backyards or in forests nearby.

Visits to his mother’s family often included strolls through the park developed after the war around Babyn Yar, a ravine near their home where the Nazis massacred 33,771 Jews in 1941— now a major Holocaust memorial.

“Like for many Europeans, World War II is not fully ‘history’ for Ukrainians. It is also living memory,” Yekelchyk explains. “Every family has its stories. Everybody has grandparents who either fought during the war or lived under the Nazi occupation. So that war is always present.”

One family story that had been kept secret from his aunt and mother when they were children concerned a young Jewish girl whom their illiterate, religious mother had hidden from the Nazis for a few days in her wardrobe, and whom Yekelchyk’s mother recalls seeing alive after the war.

Among his classmates, Yekelchyk was one of the few students who knew both of his grandparents—one a Red Army private during the war and another a colonel. It was far more common for children his age to know only famed photographs of fallen soldiers.

“Why was there so much death and destruc- tion in our land? Why could we only speak of it in the way the state wanted? These were the types of questions that I grew up thinking about,” Yekelchyk says. “It took me a long time to realize how important all these thoughts and experi- ences were for me.”

Yesterday, today

In February, Russian rockets pounded the neighbor- bhood east of Kyiv where Yekelchyk and his spouse, Olga Prasich—a poet and language instructor who also teaches Slavic studies at UVic—had lived after getting married as under- graduates in the late 1980s.

Ukrainian air defenses that covered the central region of the city were mobilized over its eastern bank, showering explosive debris on late Soviet housing blocks that had once stood as signs of progress, before decades of economic stagnation turned them into symbols of isolation and neglect.

“Most people living there today were young adults when they bought their homes in the early 70s and remained there through retirement into old age, leaving few in a position to flee the destruction brought about by the Russian onslaught.”

The Russian government calls its invasion “de-nazification, despite Ukraine having a Jewish president and no members of the extreme right represented in its parliament, unlike in many other European countries.

“De-nazification, to Mr. Putin, refers to us—to the West,” Yekelchyk explains. “He sees Ukrainians as Nazis because they have democracy and they are fighting for the ideals of the West, which represents a threat to his regime. In Mr. Putin’s mythological version of ‘Nazism,’ everyone against his authoritarian rule is a ‘Nazi.’”

“Through the war front has moved south-east from Kyiv, military checkpoints clutter the city’s centre and keep key areas cordoned off from most civilians. The subway system that once carried Yekelchyk to the beach with his friends is now locked down for government use. Its stations, among the deepest in the world, were designed as nuclear shelters, equipped with re- tractable heavy metal doors meant to withstand a nuclear attack.”

“Kyiv’s subways were built in the 1960s, when everyone was expecting nuclear war with the Americans,” Yekelchyk states. “We never thought we would see them put into action, except for testing. But they’ve been put into action now—and, of course, it’s not the Americans who are attacking us.”

Professors and writers play an important role in Ukraine as public intellectuals. They are often the stars of Ukrainian television because the media approaches us constantly for commentary about current events. This tells you something—that Ukrainian society is in an active search for truth and justice and for a better life for ourselves and our children.”

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HISTORIAN OF UKRAINE THRUST INTO PUBLIC ROLE BY WAR

BY PHILIP COX

Democracy today, democracy tomorrow. Although Ukraine is still a young nation-state that has transformed itself radically since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the last 20 years, it has undergone two major popular democratic revolutions and embarked on a nationwide process of decentralization most visible in the elimination of cultural signs from the Soviet empire, including the replacement of colonial street names and the removal of monu- ments to imperial Russian figures. A new public intellectual identity as a citizen of Ukraine was formed during this post-Soviet period and galvanized by the twin revolutions, which rejected ethnic nationalisms and croony imperialisms in favour of the rule of law, economic freedom, anti-corruption enforce- ment and democratically elected leadership.

“Ukraine today recognizes the previously sup- pressed diversity of its heritage and celebrates the cultural contributions of non-ethnic Ukrainian groups such as the Jews, Greeks, Poles and Crimean Tatars,” Yekelchyk says. “It doesn’t really matter where you come from, as long as you believe in the nation of self-organized society determining the life of the country.”

It is within this context that Yekelchyk learned to engage with the media and translate his academic expertise for a general audience, offering evidence-based perspectives on the country’s recent communist past, the wars and atrocities it has endured, the cultural and histori- cal transformations that have followed since, and now the current invasion by Russia.

“Professors and writers play an important role in Ukraine as public intellectuals. They are often the stars of Ukrainian television because the media approaches us constantly for commentary about current events,” Yekelchyk says. “This tells you something—that Ukrainian society is in an active search for truth and justice and for a better life for ourselves and our children.”

Looking forward

Because travel to Ukraine is restricted for the foreseeable future, Yekelchyk will continue his work on the conflict with Russia from Canada, offering his expertise wherever possible and writ- ing what he describes as increasingly in-depth, reflective articles as the war drags on.

He has a third article for BBC History in the works, alongside a second edition of his book Ukraine Birth of Modern Nation, and a third edi- tion of Ukraine: What Everybody Needs to Know. At UVic, he is helping to launch a new emer- gency fund for Ukrainian students, which will offer doctoral fellowships for students currently enrolled in Ukrainian universities and provide them with an office space and faculty mentor on campus.

More than anything, Yekelchyk looks forward to a time when the invasion ends, things go back to normal, and he can return to his quiet life as a historian and professor of Slavic studies.

“I was on a study leave that I had to end in February because I was giving interviews and speaking at events all the time,” Yekelchyk says. “I had an elaborate agenda to finish several book manuscripts, which for now are waiting to be completed when my duty as a citizen of Ukraine is done.”